

Cleanliness and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century London

PhD

Law

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies the ways in which the urban poor both experienced and engaged with cleanliness during the long eighteenth century. It argues that the poor not only participated in acts of cleanliness but they did so multiple ways, sometimes as a client, at others as a service provider but more often than not as a strategist engaging in actions that enabled them to acquire clean clothing, bodies or surroundings. By drawing on a wide range of archival and printed sources it examines aspects of everyday plebeian life that have hitherto remained uncharted.

It suggests that no single cleanliness regime – neither based on full-body immersion, nor ‘clean linen’, existed in eighteenth-century London. Instead, it posits that at least two regimes were present, and that, if anything, working men were most likely to pursue bodily cleanliness through river bathing. It also argues that even among the institutions of the capital, there were real disagreements about cleanliness, with most institutions adopting a clean linen regime, while prisons and lock-ups preserved an older regime. Overall, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that eighteenth-century cleanliness cannot be understood, without locating it in the specific circumstances of class, community and gender.

Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Abbreviations

LL London Lives

LMA London Metropolitan Archives

OBP Old Bailey Proceedings Online

TNA The National Archives

WCA Westminster City Archives

Spellings, capitalisation and punctuation have been left as they were in the original documents.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Indeed, the Reason of all these shocking Scenes of Want, seems but too plain and obvious. The Poor refuse or neglect to help themselves, and thereby disable their Betters from effectually helping them. They have an abject Mind, which entails their Miseries upon them; a mean sordid spirit, which prevents all Attempts of bettering their Condition. They are so familiarized to Filth and Rags, as renders them in a Manner natural; and have so little Sense of Decency, as hardly to allow a Wish for it a Place in their Hearts.¹

John Clayton, *Friendly Advice to the Poor* (1755)

Eighteenth-century commentators were quick to characterise the poor as filthy, emphasizing the rags in which they were clothed and their dirty itchy bodies. Their self-neglect, John Clayton complained, and inability to accept help only compounded the issue, so that in the view of many, the poor began to accept filth as their ‘natural’ state. Likewise, Joseph Hanway cautioned his readers that pauper children were put in the hands of ‘indigent, filthy, or decrepit women’ so that ‘lice, itch and filthiness’ were passed to and fro.² Bodies were not the only problem. William Buchan pointed out, in his widely read medical treatise, *Domestic Medicine* that ‘fevers commonly begin among the inhabitants of close dirty houses, who breathe unwholesome air, take little exercise, and wear dirty clothes.’³ The condemnation of those towards the bottom of the social scale as dirty, filthy or otherwise unclean was not confined to eighteenth-century commentators. In the twentieth century, historians and others continued to perpetuate this notion.⁴ Laurence

¹ John Clayton, *Friendly Advice to the Poor; Written and Publish'd at the Request Of the Late and Present Officers of the Town of Manchester* (Manchester: Jos. Harrop, 1755), 4.

² Jonas Hanway, *An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor, Particularly those Belonging to the Parishes Within the Bills of Mortality, Appointed by an Act of Parliament to be Registered, Being a General Reference to the Deserving Conduct of the some Parish Officers, and the Pernicious Effects of the Ignorance and Ill Judged Parsimony of Others* (London: J. Dodsley, J. Rivington, H. Woodfall and N. Young, 1766), 42-43.

³ William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; or, The Family Physician: Being an Attempt to Render the Medical Art More Generally Useful, by Shewing People What Is Their Own Power Both with Respect to the Prevention and Cure of Diseases*, 2nd American Edition (London: Joseph Crukshank, R. Aitken, 1774), 74.

⁴ For a discussion on the creation of working class Victorians as filthy see Michael Brown, “From Foetid Air to Filth: The Cultural Transformation of British Epidemiological Thought, ca. 1780-1848,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 3 (2008), 516–517.

Stone suggested that the early modern period was a time when, ‘personal and public hygiene was largely disregarded. Men and women rarely, if ever, washed their bodies, and they lived in the constant sight and smell of human faeces and human urine.’⁵ Historians of medicine, James Riley and Simone Smala, asserted that ‘personal hygiene remained a matter of infrequent concern in the eighteenth century.’⁶

However, foreign visitors to London, like Charles Moritz in 1782, remarked that ‘persons, from the highest to the lowest ranks, almost all well-looking people’ were ‘cleanly and neatly dressed.’⁷ Moritz went on,

I rarely see even a fellow with a wheel-barrow, who has not a shirt on; and that too such an one, as shews it has been washed; not even a beggar, with-out both a shirt, and shoes and stockings. The English are certainly distinguished for cleanliness.⁸

Somewhere between the polemic writings of eighteenth-century commentators, the travel literature of those eager to give a good account of their visit to England, and the clichés of later historians rests a history of the poor and their cleanliness. This thesis seeks to lay foundations for such a history by examining aspects of the urban poor’s experiences of and engagement with cleanliness during the long eighteenth century.

This introduction will consider some fundamental questions about cleanliness by examining how hygiene is conceptualised and studied in other disciplines. It will outline how cleanliness was understood in the eighteenth century and in doing so it will identify those areas of study that are under-represented in the existing historiography. It will then mark out the topics at the heart of this study and how they are identified and more

⁵ Lawrence Stone, *The Family Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 159

⁶ James C. Riley, and Simone Smala. *Eighteenth-Century Campaign to Avoid Disease* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1987), 95.

⁷ Charles P. Moritz, *Travels, Chiefly on Foot, Through Several Parts of England in 1782 Described in Letters to a Friend*, 2nd ed. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), 23-24 as mentioned in John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

importantly how plebeian ‘agency’ might be defined in the context of this thesis. Finally, it will delineate the chapters that make up the body of this thesis by identifying its major themes, notably immersive bathing, women and the economics of cleanliness and institutional care together with the ‘white linen regimen’.

What is cleanliness?

In 1966 Mary Douglas’s anthropological study, *Purity and Danger*, was published.⁹ Initially receiving little attention, it has nevertheless remained in print and has become the single most influential text in the study of hygiene. This work continues to provide a foundation for the study of cleanliness in a wide range of disciplines including history.

As an anthropologist of the late sixties, it is unsurprising that Douglas was a structuralist, directly influenced by the work of Edward Evans-Pritchard and to a lesser extent that of Lévi-Strauss. Her work focussed on a comparative analysis of central African peoples and their attitudes towards pollution, dirt and taboo.¹⁰ The book makes two central claims, firstly that ‘Taboo protects the local consensus’ in that it bolsters ‘certainty’ and secondly it causes ‘cognitive discomfort through ambiguity’ therefore, allowing it to seem ‘threatening’ and thus add to ‘the category of sacred’.¹¹ This second claim, in turn, implied the ‘sacred’ might be engaged with through ritual, thus returning it to the system. In the context of cleanliness, contemporary culture might use alternative terms for these taboos and label them as something ‘dirty or dangerous’ and the discomfort or threat may be ameliorated by conformity achieved through social pressure, alternatively

⁹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁰ Douglas specifically mentions E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940) in Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, viii.

¹¹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, xi.

non-conformity may bring into question a person's 'morality or propriety'.¹² All constructions of cleanliness, however, are dependent on a form of 'community-wide complicity' which is hedged by a 'vocabulary of spatial limits and physical and verbal signals'.¹³

A key to understanding Douglas's work is her belief in the universal need for classification and subsequent order. Anything outside the system and thus disordered, such as dirt or other pollutants, create a potential threat or taboo. However, she concedes, that in a system that is not necessarily predicated on religion 'the avoidance of dirt' and its 'neutralisation' can be conceived as a ritual which is simply understood as a 'matter of hygiene or aesthetics'.¹⁴ Her contention is nevertheless, that, 'Where there is dirt there is a system' and, in her own much quoted words, 'uncleanliness is matter out of place'.¹⁵ Both of which presuppose a shared and acknowledged order.

Douglas's work provided a much needed intellectual framework in which cleanliness might be understood. Perhaps, her most important observation is that cleanliness can only be fully comprehended in its relevant context, as an integral part of a system which operates within shared communal standards. However, this remains an ahistorical concept that creates serious difficulties when trying to retrospectively fit this analysis to historic communities. First, there is a temptation to aggregate a population and to assume that cultural values are shared across it. This becomes particularly problematic where that community was relatively large and the gap between the rich and poor significant; and where the records of popular attitudes are limited by a lack of literacy.

¹² Ibid., xii.

¹³ Ibid., xii-xiii.

¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

¹⁵ Ibid., 44, 50.

At the turn of the twenty first century, anthropological ideas of dirt as a ‘social construct’ waned, and a new paradigm began to emerge.¹⁶ In 2001, Curtis and Biran published a paper noting a recent trend in psychology, namely the study of disgust and its relationship to hygiene and cleanliness.¹⁷ As long ago as 1872 Charles Darwin identified disgust as a ‘core emotion’, however, it was more than 120 years later that cross-cultural elicitors of disgust were identified.¹⁸ These typically included bodily products, spoiled foods, death and decay together with certain moving or crawling organisms and were largely synonymous with what we might term ‘dirt’ or ‘filth’. Research showed that exposure to these stimuli triggered a specific neurological reaction.¹⁹ In turn, this elicited common physical reactions which include particular facial expressions together with the desire to remove and or avoid the item precipitating disgust. These ‘avoidance’ actions frequently involve ‘hygienic behaviours’ including washing or grooming.²⁰

In addition to these physical elicitors of disgust, certain ‘social or moral threats’ in which the contemporary consensus is broken, lead to interpersonal or moral disgust.²¹ Research has identified a strong relationship between moral disgust and the formation of moral and ethical judgements.²² It is hardly difficult therefore to make the link between moral pollution or contamination and the notion of moral and spiritual cleanliness, particularly when it is couched in the religious language of redemption. Both concepts of

¹⁶ Valerie A. Curtis, “Dirt, Disgust and Disease: a Natural History of Hygiene,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 61, no. 8 (January 8, 2007), 660.

¹⁷ Valerie. Curtis and Adam. Biran, “Dirt, Disgust, and Disease: Is Hygiene in Our Genes?” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 44, no. 1 (2001): 17–31. From the late 1980s Paul Rozin, together with other colleagues, has been the leading researcher in this area, first examining disgust and oral incorporation and later encompassing a wider theory of disgust including hygiene. See Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon, “A Perspective on Disgust,” *Psychological Review* 94, no. 1 (1987): 23–41.

¹⁸ 1872 is noted by V. Curtis, R. Aunger, and T. Rabie, “Evidence That Disgust Evolved to Protect from Risk of Disease,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 271, no. Suppl_4 (May 7, 2004), 1.

¹⁹ M. L. Phillips *et al.*, “A Specific Neural Substrate for Perceiving Facial Expressions of Disgust,” *Nature* 389, no. 6650 (October 2, 1997): 495–498 as quoted in Curtis and Biran, “Dirt, Disgust and Disease,” 18.

²⁰ Curtis and Biran, “Dirt, Disgust, and Disease,” 18.

²¹ Bunmi O. Olatunji and Dean McKay, *Disgust and Its Disorders: Theory, Assessment, and Treatment Implications*, vol. xvii (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2009), 12.

²² For a full discussion see Andrew Jones and Julie Fitness, “Moral Hypervigilance: The Influence of Disgust Sensitivity in the Moral Domain,” *Emotion* 8, no. 5 (October 2008): 613–627.

either dirt as a ‘cultural construct’ or disgust as an innate concept are not mutually exclusive, particularly in their relationship to cleanliness. They may be combined to form a more nuanced analysis in the study of hygiene and cleanliness and not the simple binary opposite of nurture versus nature.

During the same decades, while psychologists pursued the understanding of innate meanings of disgust, William Miller examined its socially constructed meanings in *The Anatomy of Disgust*, largely through associated emotional connections.²³ Arguably providing a link between Miller’s analysis and that of Mary Douglas. Keith Thomas argues, in a 1994 article, that cleanliness, in religious terms is connected to moral purity rather than bodily hygiene.²⁴ Symbolic acts of cleansing like baptism prompt the faithful to remember that sin might be purged and our souls returned to a state of purity. Miller’s discussion is in turn, built on Norbert Elias’s *The Civilizing Process*, shares with that foundational work, a number of important omissions.²⁵ Elias posited a ‘top down’ system in which codes of civility emerged from conventions or accepted systems of manners including those concerned with aspects of cleanliness, such as nose blowing and spitting. In Elias’s accounts, these ‘manners’ became internalised and acted as a form of self-restraint and thus, trickled down from the élite. Miller largely reproduces this form of cultural knowledge transmission, but adds religion to Elias’s narrative of change, and argues that through the medieval period, religion effected substantive transformations in the beliefs systems of Western Europe. As well as building on Elias’s work, Miller also reproduces the observations of historians such as Simon Schama, whose work includes a

²³ William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

²⁴ Keith Thomas. “Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England,” in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, eds., *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 56-83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170–178. First published as separate volumes in 1939 and 1978 in English translation Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenic and Psychogenic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Revised Edition. (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).

seductively rich version of Dutch cleanliness. Schama argues that Dutch concerns regarding cleanliness were shaped by Calvinist religious beliefs which, in turn, were moulded by temporal laws that ‘commanded the Dutch to conspicuous observation of their washing ritual’ and ‘were moral rather than material’.²⁶ Schama goes on to characterise this blending of moral and spiritual ideals as forming a type of patriotism that saw women become sentinels against filth.

In Miller’s criticism of Elias, he also suggests, the restraints of the late 1930s, led Elias to avoid discussion of ‘indelicate’ issues relating to women. As Miller suggests, Elias ‘simply cannot imagine women blowing their noses on the tablecloth or spitting on the floor’.²⁷ Whatever the reason, according to Elias, women played only a minor role in regulating the changing thresholds of disgust which allowed for concomitant changes in ‘notions of purity and cleanliness’.²⁸ However, recent work undertaken by Bas Van Bavel and Oscar Gelderblom suggests that a wide spread economic reliance on women in dairying in the Dutch Republic led to an understanding of the fundamentals of cleanliness that stretched from the farm to the home.²⁹ As growing urbanisation led to families with one or two cows continuing production in towns and cities, former rural dwellers were able to transfer knowledge and skills to these growing towns and cities. This knowledge transfer was bolstered by the continued employment of rural girls and women in domestic capacities in these newly urbanised areas, thereby ensuring that there was a continual ‘renewing’ of this impetus to maintain domestic cleanliness in Dutch urban homes. This detailed view of the dairy industry is significant in that it not only offers an economic explanation for the pervasiveness of the attention to cleanliness in the Dutch Republic but

²⁶ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), 381 and 378.

²⁷ Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust*, 174.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Bas van Bavel and Oscar Gelderblom, “The Economic Origins of Cleanliness in the Dutch Golden Age,” *Past and Present* 205 (2009): 41–69.

also argues cultural transfer was a made from the bottom up and particularly through women.

Elias accounts for notions of cleanliness in the form of table manners and ‘public presentability of the body’ while Miller posits that concepts of cleanliness were relative and indeed might be retold as one of moral and spiritual cleanliness in which purity was of growing importance.³⁰ However, he acknowledges, contemporary society has ‘secularised’ cleanliness ‘by making it so much a matter of soap and water’.³¹

What emerged from these interlocking and evolving literatures was an increasing recognition that regimes of cleanliness were culturally specific, and that in the post-reformation West, they evolved in direct relationship with both national cultures and religious ones. Throughout, there remained a largely teleological bent to this story, and a general failure to take account of class divisions, and the variety of cultures that could co-exist at a single time and place.

An alternative account can be found in recent sociological work where Elizabeth Shove, examines how ‘conventions of comfort and cleanliness’ change over time, through examining aspects of the ‘social organisation of normality’.³² Building on a distinct and different literature, Shove draws on John Crowley’s work concerning comfort in the eighteenth century.³³ She highlights his assertion that the meaning of comfort shifted to become a ‘self-conscious satisfaction with the relationship between one’s body and its immediate physical environment’.³⁴ This is clearly identified in philanthropic literature of the period especially that relating to hospitals and the poor. Shrove does not explicitly link this to cleanliness, although the notion of comfort is extended to necessities such as

³⁰ Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust*, 174.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

³² Elizabeth Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience: The Social Organization of Normality* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 187.

³³ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

clothing. She however, draws on twentieth-century examples to remind the reader that bathing and laundry should not solely be related to cleanliness but also to ‘experiences of pleasure, the power of routine as a force in its own right, and the tools and technologies of the day.’³⁵

Each of these traditions and approaches will be drawn upon to a greater or lesser extent, in the thesis that follows. In the process, however, this thesis self-consciously seeks to add a specific recognition of the role of class, and class division, in our understanding of cleanliness in the unique context of eighteenth-century London. But, before we can move on to that specific case, we also need to be aware of the competing approaches to ‘cleanliness’ that, building on the body of literature reviewed above, historians have developed to help understand the broader case of the eighteenth-century European world as a whole. Over the last two generations distinct groups of historians have focussed on the history of the body and medicine; on the rise of what has been termed a ‘white linen regime’; and most recently on the perspective from ‘below’. Following an exploration of each of these topics, this chapter will further explore the specific circumstances of eighteenth-century London, before addressing the role of ‘agency’.

Cleanliness and bathing regimen

How bodies were understood in the eighteenth century was central to how cleanliness was constructed. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the body was envisioned as regulated by humours, whereby four fluids or humours maintained health and well-being. These humours were even thought to influence the complexion and sexual difference.³⁶ This belief was predicated on an understanding that the body was essentially porous,

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁶ Laqueur suggests this belief was in decline during the early eighteenth century. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 142-152.

thereby allowing the humours, fluids or even the air to ebb and flow within the body. At times, particularly when pores of the skin were opened through warm water, the body needed to be defended from ingress or at the very least be removed from or prevented entering such harmful environments. However, sweating was thought a natural way of expelling ill-humours and was considered acceptable or even desirable. As the century wore on new and evolving discoveries in physiology and anatomy changed and moulded the understanding of the body.

This intellectual underpinning of English cleanliness in the long eighteenth century is outlined in a thesis by Virginia Smith, submitted in 1985 and entitled ‘Cleanliness: Idea and Practice in Britain 1770-1850’.³⁷ Smith enfolds an evolving knowledge of the body into her thesis as she examines changing attitudes towards cleanliness between c.1650 - 1850 and in more detail during the period 1770-1850. She uses the lens of advice books and popular medical texts to identify broad categories or regimens of hygienic therapy which she argues developed into applied sciences by the end of the period.

She helpfully lays out eighteenth-century regimen concerned with the non-naturals, that is to say ‘cleansing therapies’ concerning the use of particular foods, water and the air.³⁸ These therapies were thought to ‘physically cleanse the body’ and soul towards a ‘pure’ existence’ through the removal of pollutants.³⁹ The cooling regimen of water was popular as a way of strengthening the body in preventative therapies. This was taken up by the élite as a popular pastime in spas, baths and subsequently as sea bathing.⁴⁰ Some of the early debates surrounding cold water bathing are taken up by Mark Jenner in his essay on

³⁷ V.S. Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice in Britain 1770-1850,” (PhD., diss. London School of Economics, 1985).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Phyllis M. Hembry, *The English Spa, 1560-1815: A Social History* (London; Rutherford [N.J.]: Athlone Press ; Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990); John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750–1914* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1983).

Sir John Floyer, although these debates continued throughout the century.⁴¹ The history of the plunge pool is usefully delineated by Elizabeth Graham in her recent PhD on the élite journey towards the indoor bathroom.⁴²

Air was the final ‘elemental’ connected with cleansing therapies of the eighteenth century. This was inevitably connected with smell. Some of these were imbued with the notion of ‘good smells’ those that were, fresh, pure, sweet and wholesome; and others were considered fetid and vile.⁴³ Ventilation provided a way of mediating the air, with cooling cleansing qualities. This was particularly so in the hot regimen that was thought to cause or encourage fever. By the 1770s there was scepticism of the humoral model although no theoretical alternative proved satisfactory.⁴⁴

In 1986 French author, Alain Corbin’s work, *The Foul and the Fragrant* was translated and published in English.⁴⁵ Corbin took up this notion of odours, particularly those concerned with ventilation and deodorization. Working within the *Annalist* tradition, Corbin, emphasises the richness of cultural and social history, which he explores through an examination of the history of attitudes. Although not ostensibly about cleanliness, his work is nevertheless an integral part of its story just as the olfactory elements of cleanliness are of equal importance to those of the visual and physical. His broad sweep traces the rise of sanitization, through bathing and personal hygiene.

In many ways Emily Cockayne’s 2007 publication, *Hubbub* takes up this tradition of thick immersive description as she examines the way in which ‘bodies and minds

⁴¹ Mark S. R. Jenner, “Bathing and Baptism: Sir John Floyer and the Politics of Cold Bathing,” in *Refiguring Revolutions: Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), 197–216.

⁴² Elizabeth Ann Graham, “Pleasure and Utility : Domestic Bathrooms in Britain, 1660–1815” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2013).

⁴³ Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice,” 114.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴⁵ Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, trans. Montaigne, Aubier (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986).

experience their environment'.⁴⁶ However, it is fair to say the work is largely a history of nuisance; and by her own admission is 'unashamedly skewed towards the negative' arguing that poor city dwellers passively accepted whatever befell them.⁴⁷ This may well have been the case in some instances. However, Cockayne seems to imply that those at the bottom of the heap, had little if any agency, and were unable to formulate strategies which ameliorated their circumstance. In many ways Cockayne simply reproduces the contemporary sentiment with which this thesis began.

In the same manner, the work of Michel Foucault ascribes a similar lack of agency to those recipients of hygienic intervention. In his *Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* Foucault suggests that:

the necessities of hygiene called for an authoritarian medical intervention into what passed as the privileged entry-way for diseases: the prisons, ships, port facilities, the general hospitals where vagabonds, beggars, and the disabled were brought together.⁴⁸

Even though there may have been elements of truth in his assertion Foucault often uses the broad brush of history to remove the individual from his work. Historians such as Hitchcock and Shoemaker contend that Foucault underestimates the 'semi-autonomous culture of the poor' by emphasising the 'overarching role of (elite) language'.⁴⁹

Cleanliness and the 'white linen regimen'

Richard and Claudia Bushman's article on early cleanliness in North America begins by echoing Keith Thomas's 1978 comment about the lack of work on the history of

⁴⁶ Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England 1660-1770* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," Translated by Richard A. Lynch. *Foucault Studies* 18 (October 2014), 120.

⁴⁹ Tim Hitchcock, and Robert Shoemaker. *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City, 1690-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21.

cleanliness.⁵⁰ It wasn't until the 1980s and a renewed interest in social history together with the emergence of cultural history that this was remedied.

Georges Vigarello's *Cultures of Cleanliness* was published in 1985, though it was not translated into English until 1988. This was the first substantive work to examine the historic cultural meanings of cleanliness.⁵¹ Vigarello was careful to set out early in the volume that 'there existed a set of ideas about the body which had their own history'.⁵² He went on to argue, that a history of cleanliness should identify how 'new requirements and restraints gradually emerge'.⁵³ To that end he notes how 'the authors of manuals of etiquette, experts in manners, not scholars' provide impetus for change which was largely taken up by the élite.⁵⁴ Vigarello traces the history of French cleanliness in long view from the medieval 'pleasures of water' to the twentieth century's obsession with privacy. It is this intellectual comprehension of the body that has influenced its relationship to water and thus to intricate notions of cleanliness.

Vigarello was one of the first to argue that an external display of cleanliness was achieved through the wearing of white linen. He traces this from a point in the sixteenth century when there was a 'growth in bodily privacy' as personal linen became the 'new physical space for cleanliness', to an internalisation of the subject in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁵ In this transition cleanliness came to be understood as part of a more complex system of hygiene that encompassed the wider community. Vigarello's assertion that cleanliness of the body was represented and regulated through the wearing of white linen next to the skin was a paradigm shift in the understanding of cleanliness in the eighteenth

⁵⁰ Richard L. Bushman and Claudia L. Bushman, "The Early History of Cleanliness in America," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 4 (March 1, 1988): 1213–1238.

⁵¹ Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans. Birrell, Jean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

century. Sweat and other bodily excretions, he argued, were absorbed by bodily linen allowing the textile to become the site of cleanliness. Immersion of the body was largely avoided and any ingress of water through the skin thus minimised. He suggested that by the end of the eighteenth century ‘cleanliness was legitimised by science’ and ‘to be clean meant protecting and strengthening the body’.⁵⁶

By the twenty-first century Vigarello’s assertion that white linen as both a provider and indicator of personal hygiene had become the orthodoxy. In 2009 Amanda Vickery was more than happy to assert to her readers that in the middling sort of families, ‘clean linen was the most ubiquitous statement of moral worth, a snowy cuff being a universal mark of personal cleanliness, dignity and self-respect.’⁵⁷ Likewise, in 2013, Susan Vincent was confident that ‘The ‘dry wash’ and the quality and cleanliness of personal linen was fundamental to hygiene’.⁵⁸

Cleanliness and history from below

Most of the literature of eighteenth-century cleanliness, particularly cultural histories, dwell for the better part on the élite and to some extent the rising middling sort. Little of what George Rudé termed ‘the lives and actions of the common people’ form the focus of academic histories.⁵⁹

However, the American author Douglas Biow who writes about the Italian Renaissance, a period of high art and culture, is still able to examine the underbelly of cleanliness.⁶⁰ Drawing on the classical cannon of writers and fine art he depicts a history

⁵⁶ Ibid., 229.

⁵⁷ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 122.

⁵⁸ Susan Vincent, “From the Cradle to the Grave: Clothing the Early Modern Body,” in *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body, 1500 to the Present*, ed. Sarah Toulalan, and Kate Fisher (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013), 167.

⁵⁹ George Rudé quoted in Frederick Krantz, “George Rude and “History from Below,” in *History from Below*, ed. Frederick Krantz (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 3.

⁶⁰ Douglas Biow, *The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy* (Cornell University Press, 2006).

of cleanliness by focussing on the washerwomen and sewer cleaners of Renaissance Italy. He largely ignores spiritual cleanliness and purity in favour of a visceral discussion of the shit and filth that made up the everyday experience of these working people. In a similar vein Kathleen Brown's book, *Foul Bodies*, encompasses the history of personal hygiene and domestic cleanliness in early America.⁶¹ Brown is very thorough in her considerations of cleanliness; from women, to Native Americans and enslaved people she contextualizes meaning for each of these groups, and sifts through the fine detail of everyday laundry to unpick sin and uncleanliness. Tim Hitchcock gives a tantalising glimpse of the cleanliness of the poor and marginalised in *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London*, when he discusses their expectations of clean clothing and the lengths to which they would go in order to acquire it.⁶² However, in a more comprehensive work on garments and textiles belonging to the poor, John Styles's *The Dress of the People*, offers a close examination of the life cycle of clothing and the make do and mend attitude which allowed for the care and cleaning of favoured apparel.⁶³ Styles's work draws on the 'linen regimen' outlined by Vigarello and provides the basis for further work on this material.

The poor, plebeian and working Londoners

This thesis focusses on London's men, women and children at the bottom of the social scale. Collectively they incur a number of names: lower orders, commoners, humble, lowly, poor or plebeian. In many of the chapters they are defined by the institutions with which they engaged, so in addition to being poor or, because of their poverty, they may have been; recipients of poor relief, inmates, objects of charity, hospital patients or prisoners. None of these terms are wholly defining. As well as institutional categories,

⁶¹ Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America*, 1st ed. (Yale University Press, 2009).

⁶² Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004) 99-102.

⁶³ Styles, *Dress of the People*.

these men and women might also follow an occupation in order to maintain a livelihood. Chapter four examines one such occupation, laundry work, where women were variously laundresses, washerwomen or laundry-maids. A few of these women made a very comfortable living, most however, remained firmly among the ranks of the ‘respectable poor’. As can be seen, terms for these men and women were very porous; individuals could elide categories, slip from one to another or merely fall into the abyss of poverty and thence to the bottom of the social scale through no fault of their own.

Hitchcock and Shoemaker define the plebeian Londoners that they study as sharing a ‘common relationship to authority’ by being ‘confronted with the need to negotiate from a position of relative weakness’.⁶⁴ In their quest to define these people they point out the lack of common ‘identifiable socioeconomic characteristics’ which was hampered by very slippery and ‘imprecise’ contemporary language.⁶⁵ Penelope Corfield notes this ‘fluidity of style and expression’ of the eighteenth century where this ‘interacted creatively with social changes’ to form new vocabularies of classification.⁶⁶ One of these categories was ‘class’, Corfield identifies this as moving from ‘specifications of ‘rank and order’’ to social class, although without the explicit Marxist analysis of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷ She particularly notes Jonas Hanway’s use of ‘lower classes’ in 1757.⁶⁸ At the same time, the terms ‘working People’ or ‘labouring and industrious Families’ were emerging into common usage.⁶⁹

Mark Hailwood’s recent comments suggest that historians are still searching for a ‘useful shorthand’ for these men and women, particularly those working on the early

⁶⁴ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ P. J. Corfield, “Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *History* 72, no. 234 (February 1987), 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

modern period.⁷⁰ However, he goes on to note that the term ‘the people’ is currently favoured by many of those who write ‘history from below’, although it is not without its problems.⁷¹ In a similar way he also draws our attention to the problematic use of terms such as plebeian or common, which he maintains, have associated ‘negative connotations’.⁷² This thesis uses a variety of terms when referring to Londoners at the bottom of the social scale, the most common of which are ‘poor’ and ‘plebeian’. However, as noted above, sometimes these terms are slippery and do not represent precise terminology, their use is not intended to imply a single unified definition.

Agency

Plebeian cleanliness was not a passive activity. Men and women had to actively seek out ways of acquiring clean clothing, to clean their bodies or to merely wash their hands and faces. This thesis is concerned with how plebeian Londoners experienced cleanliness or went about securing some measure of it for themselves and their families, whether this was to be found in small acts of defiance, innovative modes of working, or merely tactics to negotiate London’s institutions.

Many of these actions fall under the general term ‘agency’. Pauper or plebeian agency is an expression much favoured by authors of social history, although is it rarely defined with any precision.⁷³ In her 2016 thesis, Megan Weber identifies the principal markers of this very ‘slippery’ term as ‘choice, autonomy, control, and manipulation.’⁷⁴ More importantly she flags up the contested nature of agency and the ways in which

⁷⁰ Mark Hailwood, ‘The Rise of “The People”’. *The Many-Headed Monster* (blog). Accessed 9 February 2015. <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2015/02/09/the-rise-of-the-people/> .

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ The most comprehensive discussion of pauper agency in the long eighteenth century appears in Megan Webber’s PhD completed in 2016. Megan Webber, “London Charity Beneficiaries, c. 1800-1834: Questions of Agency” (PhD diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2016), 2-22.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3, 2.

historians might use it for more ‘subtle interpretations’.⁷⁵ Agency and its associated actions are imbued with intent or are ‘knowing acts’ in which the protagonist seeks to provoke or set in motion further events in order to manipulate circumstance. However, some activities fall far short of this deliberate and knowing intent, although resulting effects may nonetheless influence outcomes in favour of the perpetrator.

For the social historian agency has moved from E.P. Thompson’s working class acts of political resistance to Andy Wood’s characterisation of a ‘darker, more pessimistic’ form of agency in which ‘self-protective’ methods of plebeian denunciation through informing on neighbours became central to some notions of agency.⁷⁶ Wood’s intervention is a timely reminder that agency was not necessarily an altruistic act but might also include selfish and self-centred modes of action. This mutable concept lends itself to the multifarious ways of writing history that have emerged in recent years, from consumption and the world of goods by way of the spatial turn to agency as expressed through objects.⁷⁷ Many of these forms of agency have been explained as narratives of resistance or of survival, especially those which concerned the poor. This is particularly so in the work of David Green, who suggests paupers’ small acts of defiance formed a concerted way to thwart the poor law authorities.⁷⁸ Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker take this notion further and suggest that plebeian agency, that is to say agency displayed by both paupers and criminals, had the power collectively to influence London’s social policy and the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁶ Andy Wood, “Subordination, Solidarity and the Limits of Popular Agency in a Yorkshire Valley, c. 1596-1615,” *Past and Present* 193 (2006): 70-72.

⁷⁷ Jonathan White, “A World of Goods?: The “Consumption Turn” and Eighteenth-Century British History,” *Cultural and Social History*, 3 (2006): 93-104. 99, for example Cynthia Imogen Hammond, *Architects, Angels, Activists and the City of Bath, 1765-1965: Engaging with Women’s Spatial Interventions in Buildings and Landscape* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Fiona Williamson, ed. *Locating Agency: Space, Power and Popular Politics* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010); Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790- c. 1845* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2010); Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce, eds. *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn* (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁷⁸ David R. Green, “Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-Century London Workhouses,” *Social History* 31, no. 2 (1 May 2006): 159.

nature of its institutions. They situate this form of agency in the work of Michel de Certeau, embedded between ‘tactics’ as the everyday behaviours used to ‘make the world bend to their desires’ and the ‘strategies’ used to engage with ‘systems and institutions’ of the everyday.⁷⁹

John Brewer also takes on this notion of historic agency in everyday life. His historiographic essay foregrounds the work of social historians of the past forty years who have ‘explored the values, beliefs and feelings of their subjects and gave their protagonists a degree of agency, whether in the circumstances of the everyday or the extraordinary.’⁸⁰ By using microhistories Brewer emphasises the ‘agency, motives, feeling and consciousness’ of historical figures, and identifies the need to ground further work in ‘human agency and historical meaning in the realm of day-to-day transactions’.⁸¹

Scope and Sources

Eighteenth-century London is a huge canvass on which the enormous upheaval of the poor is writ large. In particular, ‘new’ forms of institutional care burgeoned, providing assistance throughout a pauper’s life-time. These nascent forms of social care provide a backdrop to many of the ways in which the poor engaged with cleanliness. This, together with newer economic opportunities and evolving ideas about the body make the eighteenth century an important transitional period for the study of plebeian cleanliness. Thus, this thesis is concerned with the practices of plebeian cleanliness in the long eighteenth century, from the 1680s when the first Turkish-style bagnios were established in London to the 1820s when the Vagrancy Acts were revised to restrict public bathing. However, most chapters vary according to the institutions or themes examined. For instance, the

⁷⁹ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 17-20.

⁸⁰ John Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life,” *Cultural and Social History* 7, no. 1 (2010), 89.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

chapter on workhouses focusses on the period after 1720 when these institutions began to appear in the metropolis. Likewise the chapter on children examines two particular types of charitable institution in the second-half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, again, because these specific organisations were active during this period.

London was clearly a vibrant city. It was also vast, and by the end of the eighteenth century had almost one million inhabitants.⁸² It spread well beyond the confines of its economic and trading heart in the City of London to parts of the surrounding counties of Middlesex, Surrey and Kent. London now encompassed a huge geographical area stretching westwards from the smart new terraces of Kensington and Chelsea, to the maritime parishes of Stepney and Wapping in the east, and thence to the southern parishes of Lambeth, Southwark, and Deptford where many of the manufacturing trades were accommodated. Its growth and development is captured in numerous writings on the subject, but two of which do this particularly well are Roy Porter's, *London, A Social History* and more recently, Jerry White's *London in the Eighteenth Century*.⁸³ As the metropolis grew organically jurisdictions became complex and names increasingly slippery. The City of London technically embraced only the roughly square mile around the port of London, the City of Westminster, the political heart of the town to the west of that and south of the river lay the City of Southwark, although all came within what was generally known as 'London'. These administrative jurisdictions and the social and cultural landscapes of London are helpfully considered by Peter Clark in his chapter published in *Two Capitals London and Dublin*.⁸⁴ During the eighteenth century, as

⁸² Jeremy Gregory, and John Stevenson, *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Eighteenth Century, 1688-1820*. (London: Longman, 2000), 289.

⁸³ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994) and Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: Bodley Head, 2012).

⁸⁴ Peter Clark, "The Multi-Centred Metropolis: The Social and Cultural Landscapes of London, 1600-1840," in *Two Capitals London and Dublin 1500-1840* ed. Peter Clark and Raymond Gillespie (Oxford: The British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2001), 239-256.

London's population continued to expand, then so did the metropolis. No administrative boundary was formally set until 1889 when the County of London was created. Following the work of Porter and White, this thesis has taken a generous definition of 'London', to include the wider metropolitan area and parts of semi-rural Middlesex.

The thesis is divided into two broad sections, the first third, comprising chapters two to four, examines immersive bathing and women's economic activity in the form of washerwomen and laundresses. The final two thirds, chapters five to eight, considers institutional cleanliness by focussing on those eighteenth-century organisations that poor Londoners were likely engage with over their life time: workhouses, associational charities, hospitals and prisons.

The surviving archive has shaped this thesis by its limitations, but it has also provided possibilities and opportunities to explore the rich cultural and personal lives of London's poor. Much of the existing literature concerning cleanliness draws on conduct books and medical treatise. Only when considering recent work by John Styles and Tim Hitchcock do we see a widening of material to include the voice and experiences of the poor.⁸⁵ Hitchcock outlines some of these sources in his review essay *A New History from Below*, where he notes the 'imaginative use of these materials gives us access to a new level of detail'.⁸⁶ This thesis builds on this model by drawing on the archive to piece together fragmentary stories that frequently only allow fleeting glimpses of plebeian cleanliness. The wide range of institutions studied calls for a concomitant range of sources. Therefore, from the settlement and bastardy examinations of the parochial archive to its vestry and workhouse committee minutes, and from thence to hospital minutes and papers the archival net is cast wide. Manuscript sources, newspapers, polemic treatise and

⁸⁵ Styles, *Dress of the People*; Hitchcock, *Down and Out*.

⁸⁶ Tim Hitchcock, "A New History from Below," *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 57, Issue 1, 1 January 2004, 297.

contemporary books and manuals are also used to provide context or counterpoint to archival sources. On the whole, the nature of surviving archival sources does not allow this thesis to take a quantitative approach; although some figures have been repurposed to demonstrate particular points and a single surviving item from an early century bagnio has been analysed to provide details of expenditure in a specific bathing house.⁸⁷

Throughout this thesis, cleanliness is discussed in varying forms and occasionally the terms hygiene, hygienic or sanitary are used interchangeably with cleanliness. It is acknowledged that these were not terms used in the eighteenth century and some of their modern meanings such as antiseptic, sterile or germ-free lacked context during the period. However, in order to provide variety in the text these terms have been adopted to mean or refer to cleanliness, particularly personal cleanliness. The thesis that follows is organised into the following seven chapters:

Chapters two and three: Immersive bathing

A 'white linen regimen' was the common form of bodily cleanliness adopted across a broad section of London's population during the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, other modes of cleanliness were embraced. One of these was immersive bathing. However, although still uncommon, it was particularly taken up by plebeian men in the form of river or open water bathing in London's waterways. Chapter two examines this largely unexplored form of plebeian men's engagement with cleanliness by considering where and how men and boys bathed. It traces changing attitudes towards plebeian male bodies as river bathers became more visible. This chapter focusses on how attitudes became increasingly problematic, eventually resulting in criminalisation of male naked bathing in public places. It considers how this was achieved through several iterations of the

⁸⁷ TNA: E 101/528/19, Account book from an unidentified bagnio, May-Nov 1725.

legislation, during which time young working men and boys continued to push the boundaries of what was considered ‘decent’ behaviour. It argues that while the wealthy retreated to increasing ‘private’ forms of cleanliness, the poor continued this very public form of bathing which ensured personal comfort by way of clean skin.

As the élite and middling sort were increasingly drawing away from plebeian forms of public bathing in the later eighteenth century, during the early eighteenth century they too embraced a form of public immersive bathing. This was by way of the bagnio or public bathing house. Chapter three investigates this institution from its inception as a model of therapeutic and fashionable warm bathing to a period in the mid to late eighteenth century when its clientele became increasingly diverse. This chapter eschews the commonly held belief that all bagnios were brothels. More recent work by Dan Cruickshank has proffered a wider interpretation of the London bagnio by acknowledging that some of these institutions existed as bathing houses in the Turkish-style providing both hot and cold bathing facilities.⁸⁸ The chapter builds on this observation through an analysis of customer expenditure, providing a more rounded interpretation of the institution.

Chapter four: The business of cleanliness

The eighteenth century saw a rise in general standards of cleanliness. Streets were regularly cleaned, crossings swept and boots blacked. Large houses were scrubbed and polished by a veritable army of servants. Middling and élite men and women came to rely upon a ‘regimen of clean linen’ in order to conform to polite notions of bodily cleanliness. In turn, this provided economic opportunities for many Londoners at the bottom of the social scale. Working men and women might become scavengers, crossing sweepers and

⁸⁸ Dan Cruickshank, *The Secret History of Georgian London: How the Wages of Sin Shaped the Capital* (London: Windmill, 2010), 215-227.

boot blacks. But perhaps the most ubiquitous of all was the washerwoman, laundress or laundry-maid. Chapter four examines these women who formed a significant element of the female working population. It draws on initial work by John Styles, although the chapter's concentration on the urban washerwoman and cleanliness moves past Styles's primary focus of clothing and textiles to the women, their work, and its relationship to cleanliness.⁸⁹ It explores their extensive knowledge and flexibility of practice which allowed them to 'make shift' for themselves and their families. It identifies how laundry services were taken up by Londoners at all levels from the lowly servant to the affluent domestic household and concludes with an examination of the agency deployed by washerwomen in pursuance of their profession. In doing so it recognises how these women became respected and respectable members of their communities while enabling and sustaining a supply of clean linen, which, in turn, underpinned the respectability of a large proportion of London's populace.

Chapters five to seven: Institutional cleanliness

London's institutions for the poor, that is to say workhouses, associational charities and hospitals were by and large predicated on the 'clean linen regimen' of personal cleanliness. Chapters five, six and seven examine how this regimen was both implemented and sustained in these institutions. Tim Hitchcock's assertion that the poor and marginalised used 'Clean linen, washed once a week' as an absolute marker of decency was both promulgated and reinforced by these institutions.⁹⁰ Chapter four begins by examining parochial workhouses, the earliest of which were closely modelled on the Christian household. This patriarchal and gendered version of institutional organisation ensured that

⁸⁹ Styles, *Dress of the People*, 78-83, 130-132, 209.

⁹⁰ Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, 98-99.

women and girls more often dealt with the laundry or other issues concerning workhouse cleanliness. The inmates were enmeshed in a system of ‘obligations and rights’ that afforded them access to clean clothing, a fresh bed and ways of eradicating infestations. In return they would be expected to wash and clean as part of the workhouse ‘system’.⁹¹ This exchange was hedged about with rules that ensured the system ran smoothly. This chapter argues that this ‘system’, predicated on cleanliness, was flexible and able to adapt to local conditions. Paupers were able to use and mould it to maintain personal cleanliness through the regular supply of clean clothing. In addition, the number of Londoners churning through the workhouses suggests that this was sufficient to maintain the value and importance of a ‘clean linen regimen’ amongst the poor.

Children represented a very particular problem in terms of institutional care. They were routinely separated from parental care or already without a parent. Small children in particular were unable to tend to their own cleanliness and were reliant on others to make these decisions on their behalf. Chapter five examines how children’s cleanliness was embedded in the wider welfare systems of the eighteenth century. It focusses on what Patricia Crawford has termed ‘civic fathers’ - men who often dominated public service yet were distant from the very children they sought to assist.⁹² An examination of charitable concerns, particularly the Foundling Hospital identifies how cleanliness was imposed on both children and servants in these institutions. Yet Sunday schools, opening in the 1780s and 1790s moved the focus of concern to children’s families, by insisting that children who attended Sunday schools were neat and clean.

Hospitals were largely institutions for the poor, and networks of connections through family, friends, occupations or willing parishes often provided the key to a place

⁹¹ David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Wickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 353.

⁹² Patricia M. Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193-239.

in one such institution. Most were charitable, but differing modes of finance encouraged very different regimes of cleanliness, some more successful than others. Chapter six examines these institutions by focussing on the regimes of very distinctive types of hospital in London, some offering specialist care while others took general medical patients. However, all were centred on the ‘clean linen’ mode of cleanliness.

Chapter eight: The institutional journey towards cleanliness

The final institution considered is the prison or House of Correction. This was unusual in that it was the only institution examined that was not predicated on a ‘clean linen regimen’ during the eighteenth century. Indeed, during the first half of the century most prisons were self-regulated by the inmates. What forms of cleanliness there were relied largely upon sweeping and tidying, and a prisoner’s ability to secure whatever they were able from outside of the institution. This ‘pre-history’ of eighteenth-century cleanliness in prisons is difficult to examine and to a certain extent remains beyond the scope of the thesis. Chapter eight therefore traces the narrative of changing ideas of prison cleanliness from mid-century and the ‘Black sessions’ of 1751, towards a new model of cleanliness at the end of the century. It considers what Michael Ignatieff called the ‘problems of hygiene’ in the wider context of Middlesex prison administration.⁹³ It moves beyond the prison wall to acknowledge the problems of the early years of the hulks that mark a new found confidence in the work of the Middlesex Bench by examining the criticism of a contractor’s premises.

⁹³ Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain : The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*. 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989), 45.

This introduction has sought to delineate a viable framework for the historical analysis of cleanliness. Building on the observation that most of the current historiography concerning eighteenth-century cleanliness is predicated on a study of the wealthy and middling sort leaving significant gaps both in the study of the cleanliness and of the urban poor; the thesis that follows seeks to fill this gap by providing the foundations for a new history of plebeian cleanliness. By using the voices and experiences of the poor it will show how they actively sought out and engaged with aspects of cleanliness. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that they were not the ‘great unwashed’.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ First used in Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford*. Vol. I. (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1830), xiii.

Chapter 2

Public immersive bathing: men's bodies and open water bathing

A little before ten o' clock on the first Sunday in August 1799, Thomas Cousins asked his shipmate Joseph Hawes for a 'bit of soap to wash himself'.¹ Both men were aboard the Brig *George and Francis* out of Penzance, which was moored a little to the east of London Bridge. Cousins came up from the hold and went off to find a place closer to the shore where he could bathe. There was nothing remarkable or unusual in this request. However, a short time later, Hawes saw a crowd gathered on Battle Bridge Stairs. He was later told Cousins had 'gone into the water from a barge near the Shore to wash himself' and before anyone could do anything about it he was carried off by the strong river tide and drowned.²

While immersive bathing in London was still uncommon well into the late eighteenth century, a variety of bathing forms were actively pursued throughout the period. One of which was open water or river bathing. This was taken up by men of all social classes, although by the early nineteenth century the general consensus settled on river bathing as more likely amongst men of the 'lower orders'. Parliamentary discussion reflected this view when, in 1815, naked bathing was briefly prohibited in the Thames by a clause inserted in the Thames Police Act during one of its regular renewals.³ Opposition to the clause was described in the House of Commons as an 'injurious encroachment on the comfort of the lower classes'.⁴ Likewise, a century of newspaper reports concerning drownings in the metropolis, including those drowned while bathing, confirmed that most came from the lower end of society and were exclusively male.

¹ City of London Coroners: Coroners' Inquests into Suspicious Deaths. Thomas Cousins, 10th August 1799. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, LMCLIC650120650. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 26 October 2015), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

² Ibid.

³ 54 Geo III c. 187 s. 27.

⁴ United Kingdom, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 1st ser., vol. 31 (1815), 614.

Initially, bathing was a slippery term, and may have narrowly referred to men swimming or splashing about in a body of water without specific discussion of ‘washing’. However by the 1770s men and boys bathing in the New River were explicitly reported as washing themselves. Public discussion of the phenomenon suggested that bathing was ‘a great service for the preservation of health’.⁵ Debates in London’s newspapers suggested that there was a general acknowledgment of cleanliness as a desirable quality in everyone, even the poorest members of society. Indeed some even went as far as advocating a subscription for erecting public baths.⁶ However, it was almost another 50 years until those like Thomas Cousins on his ship in the Thames, could take a piece of soap and use it in the safety of a public bath house.

Alongside plebeian men’s bathing ran an intellectual debate that saw the decline of cold water bathing as a ‘therapeutic’ practice, to be replaced in the last third of the eighteenth century by a more general belief that bodily cleanliness, achieved through warm bathing, was central to an individual’s well-being.⁷ However, a hitherto largely unexplored alternative history of cold water bathing for ‘cleanliness’ saw the use of river bathing becoming both visible and progressively restricted to working class men. In doing so it became increasingly problematic as a result of changing social attitudes to the labouring poor and the naked male body. Virginia Smith suggests, in her study of the literature of cleanliness, that the last quarter of the eighteenth century gave rise to a changed emphasis in the vocabulary of hygiene.⁸ In turn, this ‘change’ in the public voice contributed to an evolving attitude towards plebeian men and boys washing in London’s rivers and clean waterways.

⁵ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Saturday, August 15, 1778; Issue 456.

⁶ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Tuesday, August 18, 1778; Issue 458.

⁷ Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice,” 67-68.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 40-75.

This chapter will examine aspects of plebeian men's engagement with cleanliness, through open water immersive bathing. It considers where and with whom men bathed and how changing attitudes towards this form of bathing led to the criminalisation of public naked bathing. It explores how bathing the practices of the wealthy and poor became increasingly divergent in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While poor men and boys remained comfortable bathing in London's ponds and waterways a certain sub-section of the rising middling sort found common cause in rejecting this on grounds of public morality. Yet other sections of the community sought to defend the rights of the poor in maintaining their health and well-being by bathing and seeking to keep their bodies clean. As notions of privacy changed then so did notions of bodily cleanliness and the practical benefits which might accrue from it, although immersive bathing was still far from commonplace amongst the general population.

River Bathing

For those with money cold water bathing was easily achieved by visiting one of the many spas established during this period. The cold bath at Hampstead, which was opened in July 1705, was one such institution.⁹ However, little of this was relevant to the poor. For men and boys without means almost any open water, pond or river made for a suitable bathing place. Women and girls in the metropolis, it seems, rarely if ever, bathed in open waters.

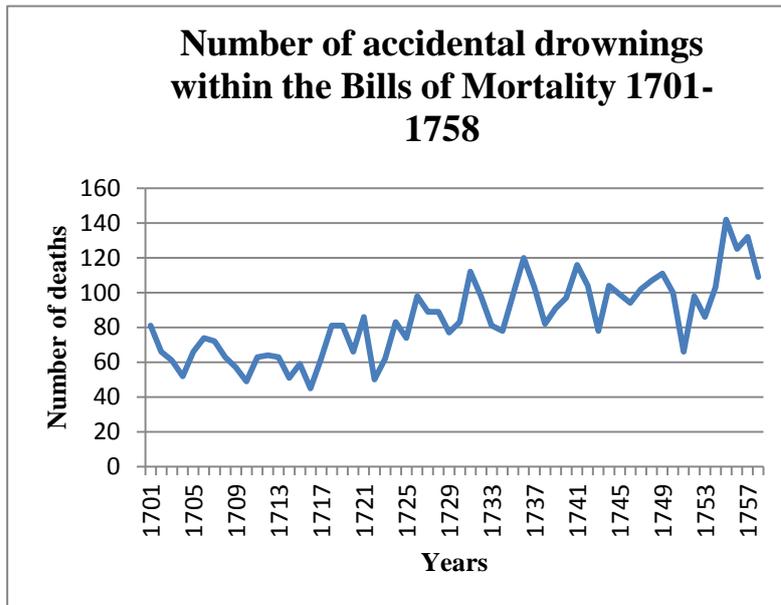
Hugh Smythson, a physician and preacher, noted in 1785 that,

the skin of your whole body be washed as often as conveniency will permit; women, and such as have not an opportunity of bathing, will find a bason and cloths, though not equally salutary, yet extremely useful.¹⁰

⁹ *Post Man and the Historical Account* (London, England), July 31, 1705 - August 2, 1705; Issue 1432.

¹⁰ Hugh Smythson, *The Compleat Family Physician; or, Universal Medical Repository*. (London: Harrison and Co., 1785), 103.

It is impossible to put a figure on the number of men that took to the water, although each year several of them perished while bathing in London's rivers and waterways. An examination of the London Bills of Mortality identifies statistics for those drowning in metropolitan parishes.¹¹ However, these annual figures did not differentiate those who drowned in the course of their riverside work from those who drowned while



bathing.¹² Nevertheless, they provide useful confirmation, particularly when combined with newspaper reports and fragmentary series of coroners' inquests, of the presence of male bathers in London's waterways throughout the century.¹³

Figure 2.1 Accidental drownings within the Bills of Mortality, 1701-1758.

The figures show that from a low of forty-five deaths by drowning in 1722 to a high of 142 in 1755, there were an average of eighty-five drownings per year between 1700 and 1758.¹⁴ In addition each year, London's newspapers reported between two and six drownings of young men while bathing in the Thames. In 1758, four men were recorded in

¹¹ Note on parishes within the Bills of Mortality and exclusion of those drowning as suicide.
¹² Suicides were recorded separately.
¹³ The bills become progressively less reliable particularly during the second half of the eighteenth century. The exclusion of rapidly growing parishes in the western part of the metropolis, notably St Pancras and St Marylebone are at the heart of their declining dependability. See M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*. New edition. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1966), 35-36 and Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz, "Yet Another Inquiry into the Trustworthiness of Eighteenth-century London's Bills of Mortality," *Local Population Studies* 85 (2010): 28-45.
¹⁴ Number rounded to nearest whole number. Total number of deaths by drowning 1700-1758 = 4904. *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, From 1657 to 1758 Inclusive* (London: A. Millar, 1759).

the newspapers as having drowned while bathing themselves in the Thames.¹⁵ In 1750, a hundred people were recorded as having been drowned by the Bills of Mortality. These deaths consistently took place during the warmer spring and summer months, between May and September, and invariably those noted by the newspapers as bathing were male and young. They were described variously as an ‘apprentice’, a ‘lad’ or ‘boy’, or the son of a local shopkeeper, trader or other minor profession.

The Thames, the Serpentine and the New River were amongst a host of customary places for young men to bathe after a long day’s toil. Each posed a particular risk for young men since most were unable to swim. Unlike most places, though, the Thames was especially dangerous with tidal currents and deep channels. Daniel Defoe commented on the dangers of the Thames in 1725, when he criticised ‘Ballast men’ who, rather than making the river safer, made ‘Holes in other Places of the River, which is the Reason so many young Persons are drown’d when swimming or bathing’.¹⁶ A typical year was 1778, when during the notably hot July and September a number of men and boys lost their lives while bathing in the Thames. John Wells, who went into the river at Westminster Bridge to bathe on the afternoon of Sunday the 5th of July was swept under by the tide and drowned, his body coming to lodge at Lord Lincoln’s Stairs.¹⁷ Likewise, James Hamson, an apprentice ivory turner, who on the following Sunday went to bathe at Whitehall Stairs with another apprentice, slipped and fell off the causeway only to be drowned in the river.¹⁸ A slightly safer method was to use one of the bathing barges moored in various

¹⁵ *Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette* (London, England), May 13, 1758 - May 20, 1758; Issue 7 and *London Evening Post* (London, England), June 10, 1758 - June 13, 1758; Issue 4774.

¹⁶ Daniel Defoe, *Every-Body’s Business, Is No-Body’s Business: Or, Private Abuses, Publick Grievances: Exemplified in the Pride, Insolence, and Exorbitant Wages of Our Women-Servants, Footmen, &c. With a Proposal for Amendment of the Same; as Also for Clearing the Streets of Those Vermin Call’d Shoe-Cleaners, and Substituting in Their Stead Many Thousands of Industrious Poor, Now Ready to Starve. With Divers Other Hints of Great Use to the Publick* (London: W. Meadows, 1725), 31.

¹⁷ City of Westminster Coroners: Coroners’ Inquests into Suspicious Deaths. John Wells, 7th July 1778. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, WACWIC652180268. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 12 July 2017), Westminster Abbey Muniment Room.

¹⁸ *LL*, Westminster Coroners: James Hamson, 13th July 1778 (WACWIC652180290).

locations on the Thames. In the 1790s Mr Astley owned one such barge, moored above Westminster Bridge.¹⁹ Here, young men could undress on the barge and bathe in relative safety at a cost of one shilling. In a similar manner, the floating bath, off Waterloo Bridge supplied attendants to assist its customers, some of whom were clearly swimming and exercising but others were washing and bathing in the river.²⁰ Occasionally however, things went awry, as when in July 1792 Thomas Summers strayed too far from the barge near Westminster Bridge and drowned.²¹

Ponds provided a far safer environment in which to bathe. Unlike the Thames they were non-tidal and often fairly shallow. Many of them did not lend themselves to swimming, making bathing and washing a more likely reason to enter the water. The pond, off Tottenham Court Road, was one such place. It was formed by the extraction of gravel used in the construction of London's growing number of roads and frequented by local boys in order to bathe.²² Access to London's ponds however, was variable. Ponds on common land usually conferred a general right of access, but sometimes the right to bathe in a particular pond was granted at the discretion of the local landowner. A case tried at the Old Bailey in the August of 1687 brought the friction between landowner and bather into sharp focus. Each Sunday afternoon during the summer of 1687, men and boys gathered to wash at the pond of Thomas Griffiths, in the parish of St Andrew, Holborn. Sometime during the afternoon a small boy, John Hind, removed his clothes in order to join the others washing in the pond. While he was bathing, a servant of Mr Griffiths took Hind's clothes and when the child tried to retrieve them a dog was set on him. This may have been

¹⁹ The balance of probability suggests this was owned by Philip Astley, equestrian showman and circus owner. The bathing barges were close to their equestrian base on the southern side of Westminster Bridge. It is probable that they provided an income during the spring and summer months when shows were suspended at the riding school. http://www.circopedia.org/Philip_Astley accessed 31st October 2016.

²⁰ *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Thursday, August 4, 1825; Issue 17539.

²¹ *LL*, London Coroners: Thomas Summers, 20th July 1792 (LMCLIC650050136).

²² *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 12 July 2017), September 1785, trial of John Fray (t17850914-27).

intended as an amusing practical joke by the landowner but it triggered a series of escalating conflicts which led to a mob besieging Griffiths' house. In turn, Griffiths and his men grabbed several of the 'mob' and held them in his house, demanding their names. When local constables were unable to control the crowd, Griffiths summoned some Grenadiers in order to calm the situation. But in the ensuing melee one of the mob was shot dead by a soldier. By way of explanation to the court, Griffiths declared that his cattle refused to drink from the pond 'by reason of the Boys frequently washing in it'.²³ This of course did little to clarify matters, and the court case turned on who had commanded the soldiers to fire, rather than issues of access to water for bathing. Griffiths was eventually found guilty of manslaughter, having ordered the soldiers to 'Charge and Fire with Ball', however the court chose not to punish the landowner.²⁴ Clearly the situation had quickly deteriorated although its seriousness was unusual, even by the standards of the time. Nevertheless the incident serves to confirm that young men regularly washed in their local pond. As this became customary it engendered sufficient community cohesion that bathers were prepared to defend a fellow bather when they perceived a threat to their wellbeing.

A pond in Bethnal Green, like many on the edge of the growing urban sprawl of metropolitan Middlesex, was also regularly used for bathing. In June 1763, John Ashton was washing his legs and feet in the pond at Owen's Field when a group of boys gathered to torment him. They pushed and jostled him, eventually putting him in a wheelbarrow and tumbling him about until they dumped him in a dry ditch where he died from his injuries.²⁵ In eighteenth-century London these semi-rural ponds were still reasonably common, and there is mention of them in many of the places and parishes which encircled the

²³ *OBP*, 31st August 1687, Thomas Griffith and James Houghton (t16870831-1).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Middlesex Sessions: Sessions Papers – Justices Working Documents, June 1763, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, LMSMPS505230039 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 12 July 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

metropolitan core, including: Islington, Limehouse, Hampstead, Hackney, Kensington, Mayfair, Shepherd's Bush and Northolt, as well as Maze pond in Southwark. London's built-up centre was home to several, including one in St Giles-in-the-Fields and another in the parish of St George, Hanover Square. Some of the urban ponds provided drinking water for horses, while others resulted from the excavation of clay for brick making in London's rapidly growing suburbs. The ponds' depth and size still provided an element of risk for bathers, like the two chairmen, Dennis Norton and Thomas Core, both of whom were drowned while bathing in a pond behind Portman Square in August 1769. The young men had been beating a carpet in the square, becoming hot and very dirty. They stripped and entered the water, and when one got into difficulties the other was pulled under by his desperately thrashing friend. They both drowned.²⁶ Towards the end of the century private ponds were still sought out by bathers. Even Lord Mansfield, the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, was not immune from men trespassing in order to bathe in a pond in one of his fields – probably part of his estate at Kenwood in Hampstead.²⁷ The Serpentine, an ornamental lake in Hyde Park, was also popular with bathers. On the 14th of September 1778, William Parslow's clothes were 'found by the side of the Serpentine', he was presumed to be drowned while bathing in the park.²⁸

Women were rarely recorded as bathing in open water. Occasionally a female child might be noted as washing, such as two year old Elizabeth Tame, who was taken to Harrow pond by her older sister Mary in order to wash her face in 1719.²⁹ Or, Mrs Perrot, 'an antient Woman' and widow of a local gardener, who knelt down to wash her hands in a

²⁶ *Lloyd's Evening Post* (London, England), August 4, 1769 - August 7, 1769; Issue 1886.

²⁷ This document is damaged and the name of the parish is not visible however, this is likely to be part of Mansfield's more extensive property in Hampstead. *LL*, Middlesex Coroners: William Slaughter, 12th August 1782 (LMCOIC651010130).

²⁸ *LL*, Westminster Coroners: William Parslow, 19th July 1778 (WACWIC652180396).

²⁹ *OBP*, 3rd September 1719, Mary Tame (t17190903-33).

ditch that flowed into the Neckinger at Southwark, only to fall in and drown.³⁰ In 1752 a woman committed suicide and was noted in the *London Daily Advertiser* as having gone down to the river ‘under pretence of bathing’.³¹ This seems a sufficiently plausible explanation for her actions, although it is unlikely that she intended to fully immerse herself in the river as men and boys were frequently observed as doing. The rarity of reports such as this is noteworthy.

In contrast, elite women and those of the middling sort were increasingly engaged in sea-bathing, entering the ocean, often from bathing machines, wearing appropriately modest bathing apparel. These same women also embraced the use of spas or plunge pools in England’s county towns. This form of bathing was largely undertaken by the fashionable and often rationalised as a therapeutic activity, although it undoubtedly conferred a certain amount of social kudos amongst its participants. It also appears to have largely excluded plebeian women. Part of the reason was undoubtedly the expense of appropriate attire. Specialist garments worn by wealthier women provided a form of respectability while bathing in public.³² These garments were unavailable to poor women and bathing in a shift provided little cover when wet. As a result, plebeian men and women – even more than elite men and women – used public bathing very differently, strongly reflecting different, gendered, notions of privacy in which women were at a disadvantage when it came to immersive bathing.

Sundays were by far the commonest day for men to bathe. This is born out in newspaper reports and coroners’ inquests. For example, in July 1750 a very melancholy report appeared in *Read’s Weekly Journal*,

³⁰ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, May 27, 1760; Issue 7974.

³¹ *London Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, July 21, 1752; Issue 434.

³² Julia Allen, *Swimming with Dr Johnson and Mrs Thrale: Sport and Exercise in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2012), 254–55.

Last Sunday a young Fellow went into the River, at Dorset Stairs, to wash himself, and was drowned. The same Evening five naked Bodies were seen floating on the River Thames, all supposed to be drowned as they were washing themselves.³³

Or, as an impassioned letter to the editor of *The Morning Post* noted,

The indecent and improper manner in which persons expose themselves while bathing in the Thames, particularly on Sundays, in view of passengers from the bridges and walks along the river, calls loudly for the interference of persons qualified to suppress it.³⁴

In line with Christian tradition, most work or trade was set aside on Sundays and there was a general assumption that members of a household would attend church. However, many apprentices and young labouring men ignored this obligation and chose instead, to socialise with friends and colleagues, although even the godly found time to both bathe and attend church.

During the summer months bathing often formed part of a routine in which a visit to the river or other bathing spot was common, particularly amongst younger men. Solitary bathing was not unusual but more generally pairs or small groups bathed together. Thomas Cousins discussed at the beginning of this chapter, sought out a convenient place to wash on his own. More frequently though, one or two friends or small family group would accompany each other to the river or bathing place. This included men such as William Hutchins Martyn, a servant, and his friend, George Dodd who went to bathe in the Thames at Parliament Stairs in July 1762.³⁵ Or William Clark and his friend, Matthew Robinson, a carpenter, who ‘went to Bathe themselves in the River Thames at a wharf near Hungerford Stairs’ in the summer of 1764.³⁶ These small, intimate groups suggest that bathing and washing was the primary purpose for going to the river rather than the sociability of large groups of men. Only occasionally did large groups of bathers congregate together. This

³³ *Read's Weekly Journal Or British Gazetteer* (London, England), Saturday, July 21, 1750; Issue 1352.

³⁴ ‘Bathing’ *The Morning Post* (London, England), Thursday, September 06, 1810; Issue 12355.

³⁵ LL, Westminster Coroners: George Dodd, 26th July 1762 (WACWIC652020270).

³⁶ LL, Westminster Coroners: William Clark, 6th August 1764 (WACWIC652040300).

more commonly happened when there was pressure of space, particularly during hot summer months and in safer, shallower bathing spots like those on the New River and Serpentine or later on, London's canals. Clothes were a particularly difficult issue since there was always a chance that they might be stolen while the men were bathing. Henry and James Skinner, young brothers from Plough Court near Fetter Lane, went to bathe in the New River in July 1822. Fearing that their clothing might be at risk, the boys took it in turns to remove their clothes and bathe in the river while the other looked after them. However, on this particular occasion a group of boys managed to rob the younger boy of his shoes. Punishment was swift as the headborough of Shoreditch saw the boy running off and immediately apprehended him.³⁷ Occasionally a man might pay someone a penny or two to mind his clothes although this was beyond the pocket of most of bathers, and did not always work in any case. Richard Williams, a servant in the affluent household of Robert Walpole, offered John Greathead two pence for minding his clothes while he was bathing in the Serpentine in June 1815, something he later regretted since Greathead made off with his watch.³⁸

It has been noted that single bathers and small groups of two or three were the norm, however, occasionally circumstances brought together much larger groups. This was the case during the 1770s and 1780s, when several small groups of bathers were drawn together after public criticism of their presence in the New River at Clerkenwell. In a display of numbers the men were able to peaceably assert their right freely to bathe in one of London's waterways and in a heady mixture of anxiety over plebeian men's bodies, a lack of understanding surrounding plebeian male cleanliness and particular notions about privacy, as I will show, Islington residents sought to rid themselves of male bathers.

³⁷ *OBP*, 11th September 1822, Frederick Clark (t18220911-293).

³⁸ *OBP*, 13th September 1815, John Greathead (t18150913-72).

The New River and public debate surrounding cleanliness

The New River was an artificial waterway, built in the early seventeenth century to bring fresh water to the City of London and its burgeoning western suburbs. It ran from Ware in Hertfordshire through the Middlesex countryside terminating at Clerkenwell on the northern edge of the metropolis. Unlike the Thames it was not tidal and remained relatively shallow throughout its course. These distinctive conditions meant that the New River quickly became a favoured bathing place for London's men and as such, it forms a strong exemplar for the wider story of plebeian male bathing in London.

There was a growing body of literature on cold water bathing during the first half of the eighteenth century although, washing and bathing in London's waterways went largely unremarked. By the 1760s however, reports of naked men washing and bathing in the New River began to appear in the press. These accounts referred to 'an abundance of fellows' who were 'shamefully permitted to wash in the New River near Newington'.³⁹ The reports were particularly notable for their explicit references to men 'washing' rather than the more ambiguous 'bathing themselves' often used earlier in the century. They also marked the beginnings of a long running newspaper campaign to discourage men from habitually bathing in the New River. Bathing however, was not a new phenomenon in the north London waterway. The New River Company had previously tried to curtail access to the waterway by building fences and posting notices forbidding bathing. But as groups of plebeian men took to the waters of the New River during the 1770s a regular argument began to play out on the pages of London's newspapers.

The opening salvo came at the beginning of July from a self-proclaimed 'lover of decency' who complained of the 'nightly increasing Nuisance of Persons washing

³⁹ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, September 4, 1765; Issue 11382.

themselves in the New River; who are now so far divested from any Sense of Shame, that they strip themselves naked'.⁴⁰ Over the next several days newspaper correspondents exhorted the officers of the New River Company to prevent the 'washing of dogs and two-legged animals' as they had done in previous years.⁴¹ The following Sunday, no doubt encouraged by the newspaper exchanges, a great throng appeared on the banks of the New River. From Canonbury House to Islington, the 'whole footpath was a fair' and became quite impassable.⁴² The matter had moved from small groups of men and boys washing and bathing in the river to a public display of defiance. The newspapers reported that the crowds were entertained from sun-rise until late in the evening by the 'spectacle of dogs, men and boys, washing in the river.'⁴³ The atmosphere was still very convivial, punctuated by the boisterous activity of the men. There was no evidence to suggest that behaviour of the crowds became intimidating or threatening towards the bathers. Indeed it appeared to be quite the opposite. However, the debate had stepped up several notches, marking an escalation in the activity of both bathers and newspaper critics. There was now an expectation on all parts of the confrontation having reached a critical moment.

Public complaints initially concerned the 'filthy fellows' that performed their ablutions close to the New River Head.⁴⁴ The focus of these early complaints fixed on the purity of the water drawn out for domestic consumption. The correspondents to the *Morning Chronicle* arguing that it left little time for the water to 'cleanse and purge', rendering it unwholesome for family consumption.⁴⁵ The argument lasted only as long as it took a correspondent to the *General Advertiser* to point out that there were 'hundreds of necessaries running continually' into the Thames thus leaving the consumer with little real

⁴⁰ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, July 4, 1778; Issue 13197.

⁴¹ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, July 6, 1778; Issue 2847.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Friday, August 14, 1778; Issue 455.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

choice.⁴⁶ However, complaints very quickly moved on to the ‘indecent and impropriety of men and boys washing themselves.....sights highly offensive to the eyes of modesty, to the virtuous of both sexes, but particularly injurious to the untainted minds of children’.⁴⁷ The naked male body and its inherent disorderliness had in effect come to the forefront of this minor drama. While the naked plebeian female body might easily be seen as lustful or morally corrupting by their contemporaries, the plebeian male body resisted such simple classification or associations. These male bathers were unlikely to have the aesthetically pleasing bodies that Joanne Begiato identifies as part of a narrative of working men’s idealised body types.⁴⁸ Nor was there any suggestion that these were ‘inadequate bodies’ that might mark the bathers as ‘outsiders’.⁴⁹ To many the New River bathers were morally ambiguous, they were not actively soliciting or seeking sexual favours, but neither did they make any apparent effort to hide their nakedness. However, to some viewers, it may have seemed that they lacked the necessary self-control and discipline in the emphasis of the sheer physicality of their bodies.⁵⁰ Steven King notes the use of threatened nakedness in pauper letters seeking clothing from parochial authorities. He identifies that ‘Nakedness and the absence of clothing were thus potentially powerful rhetorical instruments for paupers’ with a capacity that went beyond the mere threat of such action.⁵¹ The naked body thus created a ‘vehicle for pauper agency’ and this was no less the case for the bathers in Clerkenwell and Islington.⁵²

⁴⁶ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Saturday, August 15, 1778; Issue 456.

⁴⁷ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, July 21, 1778; Issue 13211.

⁴⁸ Joanne Begiato, “Between Poise and Power: Embodied Manliness in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century British Culture,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (December 2016): 129, 132-134.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Alison Montgomery, “(The) Man, His Body, and His Society: Masculinity and the Male Experience in English and Scottish Medicine c.1640-c.1780 ” (PhD diss., Durham University, 2011), 3, Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3452/> accessed 10th May 2016.

⁵¹ Steven King, “I Fear You Will Think Me Too Presumptuous in My Demands but Necessity Has No Law”: Clothing in English Pauper Letters, 1800-1834’. *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 2 (August 2009): 225.

⁵² *Ibid.*

The difference between those writing to the press and the New River Company and those perambulating along the paths adjacent to the river was stark. One deeply offended by the bathers' nakedness and the other seemingly at ease with it. These polarised public positions both drew on and influenced the moral discourse. At one end of the spectrum there was a view which defended the men's right to bathe and promoted cleanliness as a healthy and even a necessary activity.⁵³ John Coakely Lettsom published on the advantages of bathing, particularly for the poor, as it cleansed 'the surface of the body and restored perspiration'.⁵⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, was a view that condemned the bather's morality in displaying their naked bodies.

Peter Jones, in his article on clothing the poor, identifies nakedness as an involuntary state which emphasised extreme poverty.⁵⁵ Pauper applications for clothing drew on notions of decency, and by 'implication covering their decency, to exert subtle pressure on parochial and other charitable sources to provide clothing.'⁵⁶ Yet here were a group of men inverting what Jones identifies as shared notions of decency in order to become clean. Most of the bathers were merely young boys and their fathers seeking to wash and enjoy the opportunity for cleanliness. But in a society that perceived bodily cleanliness as primarily marked by clean linen, the notion of a clean body was perhaps anachronistic.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the vista of fifty or a hundred naked men and boys created a powerful impression.

Much of the concern promulgated through the newspapers cast the men as 'idle' and 'extremely disagreeable'.⁵⁸ Other newspaper correspondents recognised the

⁵³ Elizabeth Graham notes, 'By the end of the eighteenth century, physicians had come close to a consensus about the value of bathing for health' Graham, "Pleasure and Utility," 97.

⁵⁴ J. C. Lettsom, *Of the Improvement of Medicine in London on the Basis of Public Good*, 2nd ed. (London: James Phillips for E. and C. Dilly, 1775), 52.

⁵⁵ Peter D. Jones, "I Cannot Keep My Place without Being Deascent": Pauper Letters, Parish Clothing and Pragmatism in the South of England, 1750-1830," *Rural History* 20, no. 1 (April 2009): 38.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁷ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 1.

⁵⁸ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, September 4, 1765; Issue 11382.

Clerkenwell bathers as merely ‘imprudent and indecent’ but not dangerous.⁵⁹ They suggested that the bathers should retire to the further parts of the river, where they would be less visible. These exchanges brought to the fore underlying anxieties surrounding the inherent disorderliness of plebeian men. Sarah Jordan suggests these anxieties were connected to the notion of an ‘idle’ body, in that any plebeian body which was ‘not industriously engaged in work that would benefit “society”’ was seen as ‘disgustingly appetitive, dirty and uncontainable.’⁶⁰ The incongruity of men and boys engaging in various hygienic practices being described as ‘filthy fellows’ was lost, though perhaps more likely understood as a criticism of the moral probity of the men.⁶¹ Although these bodies were clean, they were not exhibited in the disciplined manner that the middling sort had become accustomed to through the eighteenth century. Leslie Tomory’s examination of these events is contextualised as a matter of water purity, although he does suggest that there was a moral dimension to the bathing.⁶²

Over the next several days the newspapers offered various ‘helpful’ suggestions as to how the situation at the New River might be ameliorated. Again, the *Morning Chronicle* was first with the proposal that the New River Company might ‘throw pieces of broken glass into those parts of the river that are most frequented for bathing’ in order to discourage potential offenders.⁶³ Directors of the New River Company seemed deaf to the oft repeated complaints that they should take action. However, it should be noted that in June 1771, the New River Company agreed to consult Sir John Fielding, senior metropolitan magistrate, ‘upon proper means to be used for preventing for the future the

⁵⁹ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Thursday, July 9, 1778; Issue 2850.

⁶⁰ Sarah Jordan, “From Grotesque Bodies to Useful Hands: Idleness, Industry, and the Laboring Class,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25, no. 3 (2001): 62.

⁶¹ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Friday, August 14, 1778; Issue 455.

⁶² Leslie Tomory, “The Question of Water Quality and London’s New River in the Eighteenth Century,” *Social History of Medicine* 27, no. 3 (2014): 488–507.

⁶³ The New River Company was established in 1613 as a joint stock company. It administered the building of the river and associated infra structure designed to deliver water to the City and its environs. *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Thursday, July 9, 1778; Issue 2850.

Great Nuisance occasion'd by people washing in the New River'.⁶⁴ It is unclear whether he answered. However, the following week the New River Company published a notice directed to the 'idle and disorderly persons. . . . Bathing and washing themselves in the New River'.⁶⁵ It confirmed that they would be prosecuted for breaking down the banks of the New River or other 'Damage, Nuisance or annoyances' should they persist.⁶⁶ On several occasions the magistrates and constables were also called upon to 'take the offenders into custody, for the purpose of serving his Majesty either by sea or land.'⁶⁷ Pre-trial enlistment was a common option, particularly for property offenders during this period where an 'element of choice' was offered to the prisoner; essentially enlistment or public prosecution.⁶⁸ But for those like the New River bathers, where the 'crime' was indeterminate at best, the 'catch-all' Vagrancy Act of 1744 permitted a Justice of the Peace to imprison men and for the court to subsequently send them to military or naval service.⁶⁹ This act was aimed at those unable to give a 'good account of themselves' or so called 'idle and disorderly' persons.⁷⁰ It gave local magistrates the option of punishing a wide range of behaviours by ordering several days in the local House of Correction or for the more serious cases concerning 'rogues and vagabonds' accused of repeated offences, a public whipping. However, in practice, most of the bathers were working men and arguably neither idle nor disorderly.⁷¹ The substantive issue of public bathing was an increasingly ambiguous area not explicitly covered by the Vagrancy Act 1744. Despite

⁶⁴ LMA: ACC/2558/NR/01/001, Thames Water, New River Company Minute Book, p. 51, 6th June 1771.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.52, 13th June 1771.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, July 13, 1778; Issue 2853.

⁶⁸ Peter King, "Press gangs and prosecution rates, 1740-1830," in *Law, Crime and English Society, 1660-1830*, ed. Landau, Norma (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 112.

⁶⁹ 17 Geo. II c. 5. s. II.

⁷⁰ Audrey Eccles suggests that 'idle and disorderly' was particularly used in prosecuting the settled poor. Audrey Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice under the Old Poor Law* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 173-174.

⁷¹ Coroner's inquests and newspaper accounts of those drowned while bathing suggest that bathers were invariably employed.

continuous attempts to criminalise bathers, those writing to the newspapers sought to move the public conversation towards the health benefits conferred by bathing. Beyond the London newspapers this was already widely acknowledged.

By the 1770s it was generally thought that bathing produced health benefits for the poor. John Lettsom noted in a short chapter entitled ‘Advantages of Baths’, in his 1775 publication, *Of the Improvement of Medicine in London on the Basis of Public Good* that,

Amidst the number of benevolent plans in this metropolis, baths, for the use of the poor, have never yet been constructed, except for a few hospitals, where they are only open to their own patients.⁷²

Yet, many of London’s institutions catering for those at the bottom of the social scale including workhouses, prisons and charitable establishments had begun to embed cleanliness in their various daily routines and rules.⁷³ By 1774 legislation even required prisons to acquire bathing tubs.⁷⁴ As this thesis will argue, a clean pauper became emblematic of institutional orderliness. Yet, male open water and river bathing continued to provide cause for concern throughout the century.

On Tuesday July 21st 1778, it was reported that constables had impressed a number of men found bathing in the New River the previous Sunday. As a temporary expedient they lodged them in the nearby New Prison at Clerkenwell. It is uncertain if this discouraged the bathers but for several weeks there were no new reports of bathing in the New River. By mid-August a more measured article on the bathers emerged, which suggested that there was no desire, as such, to debar men and boys from ‘the liberty of washing in the New River’, since cleanliness was conducive to their health and wellbeing and its importance ‘too well known to be disputed.’⁷⁵ This concern for health and

⁷² Lettsom, *Of the Improvement of Medicine*, 53.

⁷³ This thesis will examine the institutional role of cleanliness see chapters 5-8.

⁷⁴ Health of Prisoners Act, 14 Geo. II c.59 (1774).

⁷⁵ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Saturday, August 15, 1778; Issue 456. *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Tuesday, August 18, 1778; Issue 458.

cleanliness, led the newspapers to remind their readers that the poorer part of the population, that could not afford to pay for baths, should not be prevented by the ‘different proprietors of the different waters’ from bathing at all.⁷⁶ Indeed a proviso was suggested whereby bathers were to observe ‘decency, and go into the most retired place they can from the view of the people.’⁷⁷ The article went on to suggest that those criticising the bathers were perhaps ‘envious’ of what was clearly a very pleasurable experience and that they would seek to ‘hinder the poor of every innocent enjoyment.’⁷⁸ Comparisons were made between bathing in the New River and in commercial cold baths; a privilege which was acknowledged as being beyond the purse of most of the New River bathers. It was also noted that men and boys were ‘suffered to wash themselves from Morning until Night as if they were making use of a pleasure Bath to which they had a Right by Purchase.’⁷⁹

By 1779, the summer cycle of bathing and outrage began with the discovery that the railings from Sadler’s Wells to Islington, adjacent to the river, had been broken down and the signs discouraging bathers removed. There was a threat to mount a parish petition in Islington and Clerkenwell in order to have the railings replaced, although this never materialised. The newspapers of summer 1779 were reporting ‘hundreds of ladies were passing and repassing’ up and down the paths adjacent to the river and that numbers of boys and men ‘were jumping into the river, and running along the fields naked’.⁸⁰ Again, after significant encouragement from the newspapers, a press gang was used to apprehend the bathers, this time nineteen men and boys from the riverside, sending several of them

⁷⁶ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Saturday, August 15, 1778; Issue 456.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (London, England), July 17, 1779 - July 20, 1779; Issue 2862.

⁸⁰ *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Saturday, June 12, 1779; Issue 692.

fleeing without their clothing.⁸¹ Correspondence in the press now moved to a consistent discussion of impressment and the need for the New River Company to take an active role in the prosecution of bathers. This response was not wholly unexpected since Britain was at war with rebel forces in its American colonies. In June 1779 Spain besieged Gibraltar and also entered the war against Britain. Since additional resources were required by the navy, 1779 became the year of a 'hot press' in which the usual rules and statutory exemptions from impressment were all but suspended. Men were taken into the navy regardless of all such regulations.⁸² The following Sunday a further twenty-five bathers were impressed, 'and lodged in the New prison'; in this instance however, all but four were able to negotiate their release by 'asking Pardon, and promising never to offend again.'⁸³ Their reprieve may also have been influenced by their poor physical condition, as the *Public Advertiser* suggested they were 'not stout enough to make able-bodied Sailors'.⁸⁴ A week later a further eleven were taken up.⁸⁵ Clerkenwell bathers bore the brunt of the impressment gangs, although men from across the metropolis were impressed, including so called 'vagrants' washing in the canal at Chelsea Bridge, who were taken by the impress constables, and secured in Tothillfields Bridewell.⁸⁶ The press were now referring to the bathers as the 'buff regiment' on the basis, 'that the audaciousness of those who delight to dabble in the fresh water near Islington may do their country better service in the salt sea.'⁸⁷ However, this did not discourage the bathers and they continued to assert their rights to use the New River for washing themselves, their dogs and their children.

⁸¹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (London, England), July 17, 1779 - July 20, 1779; Issue 2862.

⁸² Nicholas Rogers, *The Press Gang: Naval Impressment and Its Opponents in Georgian Britain* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 34.

⁸³ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, July 20, 1779; Issue 13972.

⁸⁴ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, July 19, 1779; Issue 13971.

⁸⁵ *London Chronicle* (London, England), July 24, 1779 - July 27, 1779; Issue 3533.

⁸⁶ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, August 18, 1779; Issue 3197.

⁸⁷ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, July 20, 1779; Issue 3172.

There amounted to a cycle of passive resistance by London bathers that continued over a number of years.⁸⁸ In 1786, an alternative tactic was tried by the critics when a subscription was opened by the inhabitants of Gwyn's Buildings, a new terrace located at the northern end of Clerkenwell. The rear of these houses over-looked the New River, and its residents agreed to 'raise a sum of money to be applied to the purpose of preventing the indecent Custom of persons Bathing in the New River'.⁸⁹ The New River Company was persuaded to subscribe five guineas to the cause. In the following year, encouraged by this minor success, the inhabitants of Colebrook Row and 'other parts adjacent to the New River' requested that the New River Company pay the expenses of one or more constables.⁹⁰ Their principal duty was to 'prevent persons bathing' which they estimated to be 'near thirty pounds'.⁹¹ The New River Company had clearly had enough and declined their request, dismissing it as 'too trifling for their Notice.'⁹²

Criminalisation of bathing

Even though open water bathing had taken place throughout the eighteenth century, the 1770s saw a rise in public complaints concerning bathers. Some of these complainants advocated impressment or summary prosecution by a magistrate. The law however, was somewhat vague and did not encompass a specific offence prohibiting naked bathing. It is possible that many were taken up and prosecuted under the terms of the vagrancy acts. The 1744 Vagrancy Act allowed those deemed to be 'idle and disorderly' or 'unable to give a good account' of themselves to be prosecuted. However, between the paucity of records and the generic way of recording such offences, it is not possible to specifically identify

⁸⁸ David R. Green, "Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-Century London Workhouses," *Social History* 31, no. 2 (May 2006): 137–59.

⁸⁹ LMA: ACC/2558/NR/01/003, p 17, 20th July 1786.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.46, 19th April 1787.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 26th April 1787.

those prosecuted for bathing. In 1814, this rather opaque method of prosecuting bathers was remedied during the renewal of the Thames Police Act, when a clause was inserted into the Bill specifically prohibiting bathing in the metropolitan section of the Thames. This was enacted with little comment or public scrutiny. By the following year there was much consternation and parliament was obliged to amend the act and remove the offending clause. The Thames Police Amendment Act, 1815 eventually lessened the ban on bathing by restricting bathers from using public stairs and other popular openings onto the river; otherwise bathing was again permitted in the Thames. However, the matter continued to cause friction between local residents and the bathers. A slew of subsequent prosecutions followed, made under new local acts passed on the creation of London's canal system. Likewise the recodification of the vagrancy acts in 1822 and again in 1824, tackled the difficult issue of bathing in the Thames, this time focussing on the bathers' nakedness. The premise moved from the value of bathing to the morality of the bathers; and in quick succession a link was made with the low social rank of the bathers, underlining the widening gap between notions of privacy in the working poor and middling and elite men.

Criticism of the Clerkenwell bathers during the 1770s and 80s was encouraged and ostensibly orchestrated by a small minority of Islington residents, initially supported by the New River Company. It began by characterising the bathers as idle, disorderly and morally loose. This was very much the language of vagrancy and accorded with the use of the 1744 Vagrancy Act.⁹³ However, there is little evidence to suggest its use as a prosecutorial tool other than vague reports and threats in the press. It is notable however; that the first time complaints concerning naked bathers arise in the press was the mid-1760s, after the end of the Seven Years War, only to disappear and re-emerge in the later 1770s, when Britain was

⁹³ 17 Geo. II c. 5. For a fuller explanation see Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "Vagrancy", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 23rd September 2014).

again at war.⁹⁴ This period saw an increased tension over the visibility of plebeian men and women on London's streets. Hitchcock and Shoemaker highlight the 1760s and 1770s as a period of activity that echoed the 'increasingly systematic prosecution and removal of vagrants' which began in the 1750s.⁹⁵ A crisis-point emerged in 1780 during and immediately after the Gordon riots, when accommodation for vagrants was restricted in London's carceral institutions.⁹⁶ In 1783 the demobilisation at the end of the American war brought with it renewed concerns, particularly about plebeian men on the streets. Again, vagrancy removal was deployed as a method of reducing the visibility of the very poor.⁹⁷ However, throughout this period the New River bathers remained steadfast, continuing to wash and bathe on a regular basis, occasionally moving up or down the river as circumstance dictated. The vagrancy acts seemingly had little effect on their bathing habits or indeed their nakedness.⁹⁸ It was not until 1814 that nude bathing in the Thames between Blackwall and Battersea Bridge was directly addressed through an amendment to the Thames Police Act.⁹⁹ The following year, this recently renewed Act caused a great deal of public debate including in the House of Commons.¹⁰⁰ Watkins Williams-Wynn was reported in the *Morning Post* as asking 'Why should the population of the country be thus prohibited from taking an amusement which was conducive to cleanliness and health'.¹⁰¹ Wynn went on to address his fellow MPs arguing that 'he would rather that those Ladies

⁹⁴ Douglas Hay, "War, Dearth and Theft in the Eighteenth Century: The Record of the English Courts," *Past & Present*, no. 95 (May 1982): 117–60.

⁹⁵ Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City, 1690-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 305.

⁹⁶ Tim Hitchcock, "The London Vagrancy Crisis of the 1780s," *Rural History* 24, no. 1 (2013): 53–66.

⁹⁷ In October 1782, Thomas Townshend of the newly established Home Office wrote to the metropolitan magistrates instructing them to enforce the vagrancy laws more thoroughly. J. M. Beattie, *The First English Detectives: The Bow Street Runners and the Policing of London, 1750-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 139.

⁹⁸ See Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "Vagrancy", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1 23rd September 2014).

⁹⁹ 54 Geo. III c. 187 s. XXIII.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ 'House of Commons' *The Morning Post* (London, England), Friday, June 02, 1815; Issue 13843.

whose modesty was hurt at seeing persons swimming, should stay at home, than the lower orders be deprived of the liberty of bathing.’¹⁰² Sir John Newport ‘contended that the wholesome and cleanly practise of bathing ought to be encouraged rather than discouraged by the Legislature.’¹⁰³ An amendment proposed by Mr Bathurst was agreed on the bill’s second reading; this permitted the committee to amend the Bill.¹⁰⁴ Its passage through the committee stage however, was not without opposition; two petitions were presented, one from local inhabitants on the northern banks of the river and the other from the Thames watermen.¹⁰⁵ Both objected to the nuisance caused by the bathers. In the Lords, Viscount Sidmouth proposed a compromise clause. This did not prohibit bathing entirely but permitted it only in places ‘a certain distance from public stairs and openings of streets on the river.’¹⁰⁶ Within a matter of days the bill was agreed and the clause prohibiting Thames bathing was repealed shortly afterwards. It was nonetheless, replaced by a clause which restricted bathing to less busy areas of the river. The repeal of the prohibitive bathing clause in the Thames Police Act 1814 brought to the fore the tensions, between those who saw the benefits of cleanliness and bathing, and a minority of puritanical local residents offended by the sight of naked men.¹⁰⁷ These tensions however, remained unresolved with only a partial victory for the bathers.

Within a month of the amendment to the Thames Police Act and the substitution of a slightly less prohibitive bathing clause, two young men, Henry Butler and William Green, were each fined ten shillings for bathing in the Regent’s canal. As neither was able

¹⁰² ‘Thames Police Amendment Bill’. *The Morning Post* (London, England), Tuesday, June 06, 1815; Issue 13846.

¹⁰³ *The Examiner* (London, England), Sunday, June 4, 1815; Issue 388.

¹⁰⁴ *The Examiner* (London, England), Sunday, June 11, 1815; Issue 389. Circumstances suggest that Mr Bathurst was the Hon. William Lennox Bathurst, (1791-1878) and not his father Lord Apsley or brother who was out of the country at this time. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/bathurst-hon-william-lennox-1791-1878> accessed 12th July 2017.

¹⁰⁵ It is not clear whether this petition came from a group of Thames watermen or from the Company of Thames Watermen and Lightermen.

¹⁰⁶ *The Morning Post* (London, England), Tuesday, July 04, 1815; Issue 13870.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Imperial Parliament’ *The Examiner* (London, England), Sunday, June 11, 1815; Issue 389.

to pay they were committed to the House of Correction for a week.¹⁰⁸ A similar case was prosecuted in August 1817 and reported in *The Morning Post*. This time it concerned two children, one of whom was only ten years of age. Both were charged with unlawful bathing in the canal, the penalty for which was a forty shilling fine. However, the presiding magistrate at Marlborough Street imposed the lower fine of five shillings in light of their status as ‘respectable youths’.¹⁰⁹ The newspaper took pains to highlight this new hazard for men and boys bathing in the recently constructed parts of the Regent’s canal. The enabling legislation of 1812, the Regent’s Canal Act, not only permitted the establishment of a company to construct and maintain the waterway. It also set out a number of regulations which governed its use, one of which prohibited bathing along the length of the waterway. Any infringement of these rules could be prosecuted in a police court, and a variable scale of fines was also mandated. The magistrate, in the 1817 case, hoped that ‘the greatest publicity would be given to the case, to prevent others from being ignorantly led into the same snare.’¹¹⁰ In the previous year, 1816, four young men had been brought before the magistrates at Union Hall, Southwark, for a similar offence. On this occasion they were prosecuted under the Surrey Canal Act.¹¹¹ Camberwell’s parish officials and neighbours bordering the Surrey canal provided evidence of their naked bathing. This case, however, was referred to the Surrey quarter sessions. The following years saw regular arrests and charges made against young men in Camberwell. In a cycle that mirrored that of the Clerkenwell bathers in the New River, another set of men were prosecuted the following year, in October 1817. Again the case was referred to the Surrey sessions where a prosecution was brought against James Brown and others. The men had already spent some time in prison since they were unable to afford bail. This led to a certain amount of

¹⁰⁸ *The Morning Post* (London, England), Thursday, July 20, 1815; Issue 13884.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Police Intelligence’ *The Morning Post* (London, England), Thursday, August 14, 1817; Issue 14528.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Saturday, July 20, 1816; Issue 14732.

sympathetic concern on the part of the Camberwell parish officers and constables, who did not seek an exemplary punishment. They did, however, point out certain precautions they had taken in order to reduce the incidence of naked bathing, including the placement of notices and an increased number of parish constables. In consequence the Chairman of the Surrey Bench chose instead to deliver an ‘excellent admonition’ to the defendants declaring that it would be the last time such leniency should be shown.¹¹²

Prosecutions for bathing in London’s newly built canals during the second decade of the nineteenth century used provisions in private acts of parliament enacted for setting up the canal companies. Like the Regent’s Canal Act, subsequent canal acts set out parameters for their administration, which included prohibition of bathing along the route of the canal or severely restricting it to specific hours. Newspaper reports gave only brief details of these prosecutions at sessions and police courts but they almost always hinged on infringements of the permitted bathing hours. The canal prosecutions coincided with a short hiatus in newspaper discussions surrounding public bathing and cleanliness.

However, an exchange of letters to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* in August 1821 again touched on the necessity of cleanliness for those young men who bathed in the Thames. It began with a letter from ‘R’, noting with some disappointment, that boys had to be chased off from a discrete bathing area in front of Millbank prison, an activity which was of ‘the utmost consequence to their health’.¹¹³ In a reply ‘Old Westminster’ wrote,

I am the last man in the world who would deny the lower orders the cleanly and wholesome luxury of bathing; but they are allowed it without interruption to a certain hour in the morning, and they ought to be satisfied with that restriction, when they know it cannot be infringed without a gross annoyance to every female who steps into a boat.¹¹⁴

¹¹² ‘Surrey Adjourned Sessions, Hossemonger-Lane, Tuesday, Oct. 21, 1817’. *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Wednesday, October 22, 1817; Issue 15124.

¹¹³ *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Monday, August 6, 1821; Issue 16317.

¹¹⁴ *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Thursday, August 9, 1821; Issue 16320.

The correspondent clearly identified himself as a riverbank resident of some means. He went on to complain of women having to ‘run the gauntlet through a swarm of naked men and boys’ particularly when going to evening entertainments in the Vauxhall Garden.¹¹⁵ The editor quickly identified Old Westminster’s substantive argument as ‘whether the poor boys should give way to the rich, or whether rich parties should give way to poor boys?’¹¹⁶ Old Westminster had somewhat disingenuously acknowledged the poor’s need for cleanliness but only on his terms and at times convenient for his social engagements. The argument continued to shift from the necessity of cleanliness towards the morality of naked bodies. This left inevitable difficulty regarding the regulation of such behaviours until, in 1822, Parliament repealed the existing vagrancy acts and re-codified them under the provisions of the Vagrancy Act 1822. This temporary act criminalised ‘all persons openly exposing or exhibiting in any Street, Road, Public Place, or Highway, any indecent Exhibition, or openly and indecently their persons’ under a new offence of ‘indecent exposure’.¹¹⁷ M.J.D. Roberts notes the wide ranging affects this Act had, particularly the ‘movement away from the communal and customary to the legal.’¹¹⁸ River bathing had been subject to selectively enforced prosecutions in the previous fifty or more years although an ‘informal consensus’ existed by which the bathers were able to continue their activities.¹¹⁹ However, from 1822 magistrates were constrained to act and prosecute bathers for their ‘indecent exhibition’. According to *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* policing of ‘public’ bathing places now became central to the maintenance of ‘Public decency’.¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ 3 Geo. IV cap. 40.

¹¹⁸ M. J. D. Roberts, “Public and Private in Early Nineteenth-Century London: The Vagrant Act of 1822 and Its Enforcement,” *Social History* 13, no. 3 (1 October 1988): 290.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 292.

polarisation of these differences marked a growing chasm between the bathing practices of the poor and those of middling and elite men.

A few enthusiastic stipendiary magistrates of the metropolis took to prosecuting all forms of exposure under the 1822 Act, encompassing a wide range of men. A backlash came when a number of hitherto respectable men were arrested and prosecuted for nothing more than relieving themselves in a discrete corner. The Act was re-codified in 1824. It now specified that the exposure had to be a wilful act with ‘intent to insult any females’.¹²¹ Removing bathing from the context of the river and linking it to other behaviours that might be construed as undesirable separated it from discussions around cleanliness. Indeed, the parish of St Mary, Islington inserted a clause in their local improvement act of 1825, specifically to prohibit bathing in the New River. This, they believed, would strengthen the parish’s position in prosecuting bathers.¹²² Roberts identifies this ‘move to enforce tighter and more uniform standards of external behaviour on urban populations’ as a marker thrown down before Peel’s ‘overhaul of the metropolitan policing system in 1829’.¹²³ Part of this was the criminalisation of poor men and their bathing habits. As has been noted, bathing and washing in London’s waterways was increasingly identified with those at the bottom of the social scale. The law was now punishing these habits and in the process redefining notions of public and private spaces. However, little could be done without increased means of surveillance offered by a London-wide police force.¹²⁴ Nevertheless men found strategies to avoid prosecution, like a small group who had been bathing in the Thames at Twickenham. These men apologised to the prosecutor who then

¹²¹ Ibid., 289.

¹²² ‘Police’ *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday, Sep 01, 1824; pg. 3; Issue 12432.

¹²³ Roberts, “Public and Private,” 290.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 292.

withdrew charges at Bow Street Police Court.¹²⁵ Another man set his dog on a constable who tried to stop him bathing in the Serpentine.¹²⁶

Ben Wilson suggests the origin of the canal prosecutions lay in an 1809 test prosecution of John Crendon for nakedly bathing at Brighton beach.¹²⁷ But bathing and its criminalisation had a much longer pre-history in London. However, it is almost impossible to quantify before the 1770s, when summary prosecution was ill-defined and poorly recorded. The first real confrontations and public discussion surrounding male bathing arose in the 1770s. Then, much of the public discourse was framed around cleanliness and the health giving properties of bathing, set against the morality of bodily exposure in public or semi-public spaces. Calls for prosecution or impressment were the mainstay of those opposed to the bathers. However, this was difficult in a system predicated on private prosecution. The New River Company was frequently urged to undertake such prosecutions although there is little evidence to suggest that this was undertaken. Nonetheless groups of men were both pursued by impressment gangs and taken into the New Prison at Clerkenwell. Despite this men and boys continued to bathe in London's waterways throughout the century and into the next. It was not until 1814 that a clause prohibiting bathing was inserted into the Thames Police Act. This specifically restricted bathing in the metropolitan area of the Thames. After a public outcry however, it was partially repealed the following year, where again discussion in favour of the bathers focussed on cleanliness. It was only between 1822 and 1824, when the issue of vagrancy and public spaces came under scrutiny during the re-codification of the vagrancy act, that bathing was again reconsidered. This time, discussion of river bathing was very much separated from notions of cleanliness and was only included in the Act by implication. It

¹²⁵ 'Police Intelligence' *The Morning Post* (London, England), Saturday, June 25, 1825; Issue 17009.

¹²⁶ 'Police Intelligence' *The Morning Post* (London, England), Tuesday, July 19, 1825; Issue 17029.

¹²⁷ Ben Wilson, *Decency and Disorder: The Age of Cant 1789-1837* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), xii.

fell within purview of section 6 of the new act, which stated, ‘all Persons openly exposing or exhibiting in any Street, Road, Public Place, or Highway, any indecent exhibition, or openly and indecently exposing their Persons’ would be liable to prosecution.¹²⁸ Here, any direct reference to bathing was omitted. It quickly became apparent that this catch-all clause was being used to prosecute a wide range of men and women, some for discretely relieving themselves. A compromise was reached in 1824 when a new Bill was enacted; this stated the exposure must be wilful, giving bathers something of a reprieve.

Conclusion

Vigarello suggests that the history of cleanliness was, in part, a history of manners, however, plebeian men were far from the ideal of eighteenth-century male politeness.¹²⁹ To many of them, cleanliness was less about a freshly whitened shirt and more about the physical comforts of a clean skin. There were numerous employments in which these men were left with soiled and ‘itchy’ skin.¹³⁰ From sawyers and scavengers to plumbers and painters, dirt and dust adhered to working men’s skin.¹³¹ The pragmatic act of washing dirt from the body not only provided physical relief from the irritation caused by sweat and daily dirt, but also the noxious substances that sometimes accrued on men’s bodies. Washing the body and other regimes of cleanliness became habitual, which was both encouraged and supported by many of the intuitions that were part of the shared experience of poor Londoners. The latter half of this thesis will explore some of these institutions and how they were able to embed cleanliness in their daily routines and the lives of their transitory residents.

¹²⁸ 3 Geo IV c.40, s.3, s.6 quoted in Roberts, “Public and Private,” 274.

¹²⁹ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 2.

¹³⁰ Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 61.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Unlike the urban élite, who became increasingly private in their personal cleanliness – retreating as they did to the newly developed internal bathroom - plebeian men continued this very public form of summer hygiene and in doing so they subverted increasingly authoritarian forms of surveillance of the plebeian body during the long eighteenth century. By choosing when and how their bodies were displayed, these men pushed the boundaries of expected plebeian behaviour; boundaries that were already ill-defined in legal terms, and which proved sufficiently resilient to allow these men to continue bathing. Even after the very porous eighteenth-century laws were strengthened by new vagrancy acts in 1822 and again in 1824, it took a significant increase in new forms of preventative policing to catch and prosecute bathers. This new moral imperative for cleanliness, articulated through London’s newspapers, from the later eighteenth century, embraced the notion of cleanliness for the poor. These ideas raised the concept of public bathing facilities and noted health benefits for those of little means.¹³² Virginia Smith’s work on medical literature notes a similar rise in authors advocating public baths and bathing as matters of personal cleanliness and health during the latter half of the eighteenth century.¹³³ However, this advice, largely aimed at the rising middling classes, lacked the same moral contentions that framed discussions surrounding plebeian men.¹³⁴ The conflict caused by public bathing drew out a very public debate around the value of bodily cleanliness. By the later 1770s and 1780s the arguments did not invoke the benefits of clean clothing for the New River bathers but agreed on the health benefits of immersive bathing. It was even suggested that public bathing should be financed by the public purse. The bathers themselves however, embodied a new ideal of cleanliness – clean skin realised

¹³² Smith notes C.W Hufeland stating: ‘it is much to be wished that public baths were again erected, that poor people might enjoy the benefit, and thereby be rendered string and sound, as was the was some centuries ago.’ Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice,” 253.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 253-257.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 175-181.

through immersive bathing. This ideal was yet to take hold in the general populace, and would not do so for several decades to come; and to this extent, it was plebeian men's insistence on the physical comforts of immersive bathing, and clear skin that would point the way for later developments.

While immersive bathing in rivers and waterways remained a predominantly plebeian mode of maintaining bodily cleanliness, at the beginning of the long eighteenth century another form of immersive bathing was beginning to appear; the public bagnio. The next chapter examines the rise and change in usage of the public bagnio, moving from an institution almost exclusively used by the wealthy to one that had an increasingly wide range of clientele.

Chapter 3

Highlife and lowlife in the public bagnio

Male plebeian river bathing reflected changing ideas about nudity and forms a story of evolving legal regulation of the public sphere. In contrast the history of the bagnio forms an amalgam of changing medical concerns, notions of élite respectability and economics. Both of these distinctive forms of cleanliness ran in parallel with cleanliness identified and mediated by white linen. Together they form part of the shifting sands on which a history of cleanliness can be told, one in which class plays an important role.

The evolution of the London bagnio offers an insight into a complex set of narratives that at first glance do not lend themselves to a history of plebeian bathing. This begins with a shared set of notions surrounding the health benefits of sweating and warm bathing usually undertaken at a public bagnio. However, over the course of the eighteenth century new cultures of cleanliness associated with public bathing emerged. As we have seen, young plebeian men embraced bathing in London's rivers and waterways. These men were largely driven by cost and the pragmatic benefits of cleanliness, although the practice was modified by changing notions of privacy. Yet élite notions of public bathing which were hitherto focused on the bagnios were also beginning to change. The wealthy, driven by the rise of domesticity, retreated to progressively private forms of personal cleanliness in the internal domestic bathroom.

The move away from this form of bathing by the élite led to an increasingly diverse clientele in the London bagnios. The earliest plebeian men and women found among the clientele of the bagnios were sent by parishes seeking to purchase treatment for their sick poor in some of Westminster's bathing houses. By mid-century there was a notable

increase in charitable opportunities for the poor to use the bagnio. This was led, in part by the aspirational bagnio owner, who sought a form of respectability through the provision of benevolent access to bathing. The second half of the eighteenth century saw this ‘new’ form of charitable access, together with a subsequent shift in prices, allow many of those towards the bottom of the social scale access to the London bagnios.

The history of the bagnio is largely fragmentary, and the attempt to locate it in a body of literature draws on a number of sources - principally the histories of spas and waters, medical and therapeutic practice, and homosociability and pleasure. Undoubtedly, the study of the bagnio begins with the rising popularity of spa waters and their use; which Phyllis Hembry examines in *The English Spa*, published in 1990.¹ Hembry’s work places water and its uses in its historic context. Likewise, a study by Anne Hardy particularly considers the nature of natural waters in London.² But it is Roy Porter’s introduction to a volume of essays on waters and spas that moves the central focus of study to water as a therapeutic resource.³

This important use of water and its medical properties, particularly as it related to cleanliness, is discussed by Vanessa Smith in her PhD thesis, where she also explores the intellectual underpinning of its use.⁴ To a lesser extent her book covers some of the same territory, but it is much broader in its purview. It does, however, briefly examine the London bagnio and warm water bathing.⁵ Here, she also touches on the Turkish origins of the bagnio. This aspect is explored in greater depth by Nebahat Avcioglu in her book,

¹ Hembry, *The English Spa*.

² A. Hardy, “Water and the Search for Public Health in London in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Medical History* 28, no. 3 (July 1984): 250–82.

³ Roy Porter, ed. *The Medical History of Waters and Spas* Medical History Supplement, no. 10 (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1990), vii–xii.

⁴ Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice.”

⁵ Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, although she identifies the explicit Turkish connection as being short lived.⁶

Aspects of male sociability and the bagnio are considered by J.J. Keevil in his 1952 article on the London bagnio.⁷ He particularly notes political relationships to be found amongst bagnio clientele during the 1720s. Finally, the pervasive notion that all bagnios were brothels is left largely accepted and unchallenged. This is partly discussed in Dan Cruickshank's *The Secret History of Georgian London*, where he examines bagnios in Covent Garden but does little to dispel this notion.⁸

It is, however, acknowledged that some bagnios offered access to accommodation for those seeking sexual liaisons. Indeed some even encouraged it, though there is little evidence to suggest that prostitutes were permitted to live permanently in the bagnio. To complicate matters, contemporaries used the term 'bawdy house' or 'house of ill-repute' interchangeably with that of 'bagnio' – failing to distinguish between the respectable bathing houses, the prostitute serviced bathing houses, those houses that admitted anyone seeking a bed for the night who could pay, and those that were none of these.

This chapter begins with an outline of water and therapeutic bathing before discussing London's public bagnios. The section includes a detailed examination of a visit to a bagnio, and an exploration of the early century fascination with clear waters. Cleanliness was closely linked to therapeutic treatment, particularly that of cupping. This, together with accommodation, formed important elements of services available at a bagnio. Both are considered, together with an analysis of client expenditure. Plebeian

⁶ Nebahat Avcioglu, *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1728-1876* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011).

⁷ J. J. Keevil, "The Bagnio in London 1648–1725," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* VII, no. 3 (1952): 250–257.

⁸ Cruickshank, *Secret History of Georgian London*, 215-255.

servants of course, were central to the work of the bagnio and they offer a first glimpse of those at the bottom of the social scale engaging with the bagnio.

As well as cleanliness, bathing offered a form of fashionable sociability, to underline this; the locations of bagnios are examined and mapped, and considered in relation to other centres of entertainment. In the final section of this chapter the decline of the bagnio as a place of resort solely for élite men and women is considered. This change in clientele, to encompass a more diverse set of patrons, is charted together with the withdrawal of the wealthy to more private forms of cleanliness. This chapter traces a shared notion of cleanliness, through ‘public’ immersive or whole body bathing, to a point where these practices diverged. It challenges the idea that all bagnios were brothels, and follows the thread of cleanliness to the end of the century.

Water and Therapeutic Bathing

The increasing popularity of water treatments was, in part, ‘promoted by the scientific credibility of ‘hygienic’ medicine emerging in the seventeenth century.’⁹ It was underpinned by an understanding of the body which relied on humoral theory, in which a balance of the four humours or bodily fluids were required for a healthy body. Peter Chamberlen’s 1648 treatise on ‘Public Artificial Bathes’ advocated their use for innumerable medical conditions from ‘Provoking Urine, Cooling, Heating, Drieing, Moistening,’ and ‘Easing Paines’ to ‘the Gout, Convulsions’ and ‘Dropsies’.¹⁰ His mention of ‘Private Hot Houses, And Dr Grant’s Bath’ suggested that bathing houses in some form

⁹ Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice,” 96.

¹⁰ Peter Chamberlen, *A Vindication of Publick Artificiall Baths & Bath-stoves from the Objections and Scandalls Obtruded on Them, by Those That Do Not, or Will Not, Know Their Great Benefit to the Publick, by Way of Answer to Som Fellowes of Our Colledge of Physitians in London, and Others* (London, 1648), 1-2.

were operating during the 1640s.¹¹ This fits Hembry's chronology for the gradual emergence of the provincial English spa.¹²

Although Chamberlen's proposition for a public bath was not taken up, his treatise asserted that there was some cognisance of the efficacy of warm-water bathing amongst physicians of the seventeenth century. Indeed these public 'bathing-houses' were commonplace enough for Pepys to record in his diary of February 1664/5 that his wife was 'busy in going with her women to a hot-house to bathe herself, after her long being within doors in the dirt'.¹³ It is worth noting that this social form of cleanliness was chosen by the women in Pepys' household over and above the domestic tub, which was certainly not unknown to them.¹⁴ However, bathing in the domestic tub probably lingered in middling and poorer households well into the eighteenth century, though few traces remain. Only in the names of public houses, like the 'Bathing Tub' in Panton Street near Leicester Fields, or at the sign of the 'Bathing Tub' in Blackman Street, Southwark, where a cooper's shop was located, recorded this form of immersive bathing.¹⁵

Amongst the wealthy the resurgence of balneological treatments after the Restoration was largely led and sustained through Royal patronage. The court rapidly adopted the habits of the newly restored monarchy, including taking the waters both as a tentative form of medicinal relief, but also as an increasingly fashionable summer pastime.¹⁶ By the end of the seventeenth century warm water treatments, like those encouraged by Chamberlen, were joined by healthy regimens in which cold-water bathing,

¹¹ Ibid., 2. Smith, "Cleanliness: Idea and Practice," 245.

¹² Hembry, *English Spa*, see chapters 3-5.

¹³ Henry B Wheatley, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys M.A. F.R.S. by Samuel Pepys* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893), 21st February 1664/5, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4200/4200-h/4200-h.htm> accessed 19th July 2017

¹⁴ In May 1667 Pepys recounted an anecdote in which it was said that 'Mr. Lowder is come to use the tubb, that is to bathe and sweat himself, and that his lady is come to use the tubb too'. Ibid., 15th May 1667.

¹⁵ *Post Man and the Historical Account* (London, England), May 8, 1707 - May 10, 1707; Issue 1778. *Daily Post* (London, England), Tuesday, August 17, 1725; Issue 1839.

¹⁶ Porter, *Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ix.

gentle outdoor exercise and taking the waters were advocated as a common preventative for ill-health.¹⁷ These were popularised through the establishment of spas, where, as Roy Porter has suggested, ‘city fathers and individual estate-developers were quick to capitalize upon the opportunities for the creation of a speculative hedonic culture’.¹⁸

Sir John Floyer, a Staffordshire physician, is one of those who did much to promote the therapeutic uses and value of cold water bathing.¹⁹ In a pamphlet of 1697 entitled, *An Enquiry in to the Right Use and Abuses of the Hot, Cold and Temperate Baths in England*, Floyer promulgated the notion that bathing was desired by the great multitude for ‘their Pleasure, Beauty, or curing Diseases’.²⁰ Indeed, many of the rural and regional spas made provision for the poor to access the water. Floyer went on to argue that individuals should ‘leave off the imprudent Use of Hot Baths, and to regain their ancient natural vigour, strength and hardiness by a frequent Use of Cold Bathing’.²¹ This argument for natural vigour and hardiness was continued, by Floyer's friend and colleague, Joseph Browne, who in 1707 warned his readers of:

Effeminate Luxurious Men, who have Debauch'd their *Constitutions* by Ease and Delicacy, and cannot think of such rough Treatment as *Cold Water*, so directly opposite to a *Bagneo*, warm Bed, or Flannel Shirt.²²

Floyer maintained his assertions through the next thirty years, insisting that, under the supervision of an appropriate practitioner; cold water would cure ‘Rheumatic-pains,

¹⁷ For elite bathing practices see Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 60-61.

¹⁸ Porter, *Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ix.

¹⁹ D. D. Gibbs, “Floyer, Sir John (1649–1734),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com.idproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/9775> accessed 2 Nov 2013. For a fuller discussion of Floyer see Mark Jenner, “Bathing and Baptism: Sir John Floyer and the Politics of Cold Bathing,” in *Refiguring Revolutions: Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution* eds. Kevin Sharp and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), 197-216.

²⁰ John Floyer, *An enquiry into the right use and abuses of the hot, cold, and temperate baths in England ... to this is added I. an extract of Dr. Jones's treaty on Buxton-Bath ..., II. a letter from Dr. Clayton ... concerning the use of St. Mungus-Well, III. an abstract of some cures perform'd by the bath at Buxton / by Sir John Floyer, Kt. ...*, (London : R. Clavel, 1697).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² Joseph Browne, *An account of the wonderful cures perform'd by the cold baths. With advice to the water drinkers at Tunbridge, Hampstead, Astrope, Nasborough, ...*(London: J. How; R. Borough, and J. Baker, 1707) also suggested by Hembry, *English Spa*, 162.

Lameness, Palsies, Rickets, &c'.²³ Moreover, he believed that cold water furthered the preservation of health, sustained cleanliness and offered 'pleasant Refreshment' to the bather.²⁴ *Psychrolousia*, arguably the most popular of Floyer's works on cold water bathing, found a wide readership, being republished in six editions before his death in 1734. Floyer believed that the judicious use of cold water and the adoption of a modest life-style or 'cool regimen' would drive out the 'hot' and thus maintain the humoral balance in the practitioner's body.²⁵ The dispute between cold and warm water therapies was played out for the remainder of the century with several bagnios adopting both methodologies.

The benefits of bathing were widely acknowledged, largely as a therapeutic activity, but also for pleasure and for reasons of cleanliness. It was, as far as we are able to distinguish this, shared across classes. The immersive bathing hinted at during the seventeenth century by Pepys, gave way, in the eighteenth century, to different forms of 'public' bathing separated by class.²⁶ As we have seen, plebeian men and boys took to river bathing. While numbers of affluent men certainly participated in cold water bathing, it was dominated by those at the lower end of the social spectrum. Meanwhile, élite men in London directed their bathing activities towards the public bagnio.

Public Bagnios

While working men sought out cold water in the New River and the Thames, for most élite men, the same experience entailed direct expenditure. Like rivers and waterways, bagnios provided a space in which a man could wash and cleanse himself and, if he chose, share

²³ Sir John Floyer, *Psychrolousia: or, the history of cold bathing: both ancient and modern. In two parts. The first, written by Sir John Floyer* (London: Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford, 1702), 17.

²⁴ Floyer, *Psychrolousia* (1722), 174.

²⁵ Jenner, "Bathing and Baptism," 200-201.

²⁶ Elizabeth Graham notes a mid-seventeenth century public bagnio in Leith. Graham, "Pleasure and Utility," 146.

the company of intimate friends. In addition, the bagnio offered sweating and scraping to remove dirt from the body. However, both culminated in immersive bathing, although some bagnios offered both hot and cold pools.

As the provincial spas developed at a pace during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, several smaller spas were opened in London and its outer fringes during the 1680s and 90s, notably those in Clerkenwell, Islington and Hampstead. These suburban spas were predicated on the sale of spa water and associated popular entertainments, which included music, coffee houses and card rooms. Some were seasonal, only opening in the warmer summer months, and none seemingly offered immersive bathing or sweating rooms.²⁷ This was mirrored by the establishment of three new and well-resourced bathing houses in London: the Royal Bagnio near Newgate in the City of London, the Hummums in Covent Garden and the Duke's Bagnio in Long Acre.²⁸ These newer bagnios or bathing houses were modelled on the Turkish bath or Hamman.²⁹ Unlike the cold water bathing experienced by so many working men, the first of these London 'Turkish' bagnios favoured steam bathing and warm water baths. The Royal Bagnio in the City of London opened in 1679.³⁰ Its promoters extolled the virtues of Turkish bathing in a pamphlet published the following year, in 1680, addressed:

To those who have been in the Ottoman empire, this paper is insignificant, they knowing already the mighty perfections and wonderful Operations which these bagnios have effected.³¹

The most elaborate of the three London bathing houses, the Royal Bagnio, represented a considerable investment. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren, its architectural form directly

²⁷ Hembry, *English Spa*, 99-104.

²⁸ The Royal Bagnio in Newgate Street opened in 1679, The Duke's Bagnio in Long Acre, Covent Garden opened 1680 and the Hummums Bagnio in Covent Garden in 1683.

²⁹ For a full description see Patrick Conner, "On the Bath: Western Experience of the Hamman," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (1987): 34-42.

³⁰ The Royal Bagnio has been attributed to Wren, see Avcioglu, *Turquerie*, 27.

³¹ *A True Account of the Royal Bagnio, with a Discourse of Its Vertues, by a Person of Quality* (London: Joseph Hindmarsh, 1680).

mimicked some of its Ottoman contemporaries as well as drawing on Wren's experience of the dome created for St Mary Abchurch and designs for nearby St Paul's Cathedral.³² The merchants of the Levant Company in the City provided the impetus for the building, with four merchants holding the five shares of this joint stock venture. A visit to this Turkish style bathing house was designed to impress. Located on the northern side of Newgate Street, in what was to become known as Bagnio Court. The premises incorporated a series of rooms and bathing spaces. In the central bathing space there were steps down to a large cold plunge pool measuring twenty-eight feet and six inches long, crowned with an elaborately decorated cupola and surrounded by three warm bathing pools, each half the size of the cold pool.³³ A circular sweating room flanked the main bathing space with a separate passage from the dressing rooms. A large lobby, which later developed into a coffee house, controlled access to the bathing spaces, including the ladies' smaller cold bath and dressing room. These spaces were not solely therapeutic, but also pleasurable, being spaces for intimate circulation and conviviality with the body central to the experience.

The Hummums bagnio, which was opened in Covent Garden in 1683, also made an explicit link with Turkish bathing houses from the outset, drawing on the experiences of Richard Lasinby and his travels to Aleppo.³⁴ The third bagnio in this trinity of Turkish bathing establishments, the Duke's Bagnio in Long Acre, opened in the 1680s. Its interior styling also reflected the Ottoman architecture on which it was based.³⁵ A pamphlet of 1683 described it as having 'an Oval Figure, covered with a large *Cupola*, which is

³² Avcioglu, *Turquerie*, 27.

³³ Approximately 8.7m.

³⁴ Henry Harris was persuaded by Richard Lasinby, 'chirurgion, in 1681 to obtain a lease in Covent Garden in order to build a bagnio based on Lasinby's experiences in Aleppo in Turkey. Sheppard, F. H. W. (General Editor), "The Piazza: Nos. 1-4 (consec.) Little Piazza with 11 Russell Street," *Survey of London: volume 36: Covent Garden*, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46100&strquery=hummums> accessed 15 October 2013.

³⁵ Cruickshank, *Secret History of Georgian London*, 218.

supported by eight Cylindrical Columns or Pillars'.³⁶ The interior was also noted as being 'paved with Black and white Marble, and its Walls are cover'd with White Gally-tyles.'³⁷ Remarkably for the period, the interior sweating rooms and plunge pool walls were entirely covered with a white Galleyware tile, a tin glazed ceramic tile, modelled on the Dutch Delftware and designed to mimic the interior of the Ottoman bagnio.³⁸

Each of the three Turkish style bagnios used either Galleyware or Dutch Delftware tiles to form significant parts of the interior bathing rooms. By the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century these tiles had become almost synonymous with the London bagnio.³⁹ So much so that, on the death of Mr Edward Apthorp in 1708, the contents of his shop was advertised for sale in the *Daily Courant*. Here, it stated that 'ordinary Gally-tiles fit for a Bagnio' would be available as part of a sale in which 'All sorts of Pots and Glasses for Apothecarys and Chymists' were to be sold.⁴⁰ This early and extensive use of ceramic wall tiles was unusual. These decorative tiles were still costly items and were more commonly used in small panels on chimney pieces or around stoves.⁴¹ In bagnios, however, they were used for practical hygienic reasons, rather than solely for decorative purposes.⁴²

The sweating or steaming which was integral to the Turkish style bath, and which was adopted by many of the London bagnios, was produced by stoves or under-floor heating. Rooms were heated so that each was a greater temperature than the last. The

³⁶ *An Account of the Duke's Bagnio, and of The Duke's Mineral Bath: and the New Spaw of Mineral Drinking Water* (London 1683).

³⁷ *An Account of the Duke's Bagnio*, 1.

³⁸ Ian M Betts *et al.*, *Tin-glazed tiles from London* (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2010). At the end of the seventeenth century a new ceramic industry manufacturing tin-glazed wares was established on the banks of the Thames. For a full discussion see Roy Stephenson, Ian Betts, and Kieron Tyler, *London's Delftware Industry: The Tin-Glazed Pottery Industries of Southwark and Lambeth* (London: Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2008).

³⁹ The other important use for Galleyware wall tiles was dairies particularly those associated with very large fashionable houses.

⁴⁰ *Daily Courant* (London, England), Friday, October 22, 1708; Issue 2083.

⁴¹ Betts *et al.*, *Tin-glazed Tiles from London*.

⁴² Tiled walls were also used in dairies usually in wealthy households in both London and the counties.

Duke's Bagnio had 'convenient Rooms for Degrees of Heat, Seats in the Walls, and a Marble Table in the middle'.⁴³ Similarly, in 1700 the Royal Bagnio in Newgate Street advertised itself as being a place 'where persons may sweat to what degree they please, there being several distinct Rooms'.⁴⁴ From the outset the Duke's Bagnio in Covent Garden offered more than steaming and hot rooms. Clustered around a single court-yard, it described its other facilities thus:

on the other Side of the Court-yard, there's a convenient Building, in which the DUKE'S MINERAL BATH is made ; near which, in the same Yard, is fix'd a Conduit or Fountain, bearing the Name of the NEW SPAW.⁴⁵

The mineral bath or cold plunge pool, together with the fountain for the taking of mineral waters, were similar to those offered by regional spas. The fashionable phenomenon of 'taking the waters' was at its height during this period, with some suggesting that this practice had become almost universal.⁴⁶ Landowners, including those on London's margins, began to capitalise on this new found 'craze'. This incorporation of spa water as part of the metropolitan bagnio might be construed as a response to the encroaching 'business' of the spa in late seventeenth-century London. For those wealthy men and women concerned with the London social 'season' the public bagnios of central London provided on-going access to the therapeutic benefits provided by the regional spas, and undoubtedly the warm and hot bathing proved attractive during the cold winter months.

A new-found respectability was offered by the Turkish style bagnio by ensuring separate bathing for men and women. Specific days were allocated to male and female bathing, with female staff provided accordingly. Their use by women differentiated the

⁴³ *Account of the Duke's Bagnio*, 1.

⁴⁴ 'The Royal Bagnio, Newgate Street,' *Flying Post or The Post Master* (London, England), March 23, 1700 - March 26, 1700; Issue 761.

⁴⁵ *Account of the Duke's Bagnio*.

⁴⁶ Hembry, *English Spa*, 67.

bagnio from river bathing. Here a woman could bathe serviced by an all-female staff and free from the male gaze.

As bagnios became increasingly popular they began to develop their own characteristics. Some retained their Turkish style steam baths and warm washing, while others developed exclusively warm or cold water bathing. The King's Bagnio in Lemon-Street, Goodman's Fields boasted 'An additional Bagnio, with Bathing and Cooling Rooms'.⁴⁷ Like the Duke's Bagnio, others also offered cold plunge pools such as the one at Pero's Old Bagnio in St James's-Street, where in 1741 'all the Hot Rooms and Baths being in complete Order, the Cold Bath constantly supply'd from the best Springs at St Mary le Bon'.⁴⁸ Yet bagnios, together with river bathing, remained determinedly distinct from other forms of bodily cleanliness. That is to say, the clean hands, face and bodily linen practised in most other methods of popular hygiene. Whole body cleanliness, usually practised as immersive bathing, did not become common until the nineteenth century. The precise experience in each bagnio was largely determined by its architecture. However, there was a commonality of experience which is examined in the next section on negotiating the bagnio.

Visiting the Bagnio

At the Hummums bagnio, located in the south eastern corner of Covent Garden piazza, a visitor would almost certainly begin by negotiating their way past the porter by seeking assistance from a liveried waiter. After being shown to a generous dressing-room all clothing was removed and, according to Ned Ward, a small calico cloth 'no bigger than a Fig-leaf' was donned to cover the genitalia.⁴⁹ In the eighteenth century a man or woman

⁴⁷ *Daily Journal* (London, England), Saturday, May 24, 1729; Issue 2614.

⁴⁸ *London Evening Post* (London, England), April 9, 1741 - April 11, 1741; Issue 2093.

⁴⁹ Ned Ward, *The London-spy Compleat, in Eighteen-parts. By the Author of The trip to Jamaica*, Part IX, (London: J. How, 1703), 209.

would rarely find themselves entirely naked. Even a consultation with a medical practitioner could result in a mere narration of the symptoms rather than in a physical examination.⁵⁰ Nakedness or near nakedness not only marked the bagnio out from other institutions but also emphasised its links with river bathing. The only other protection donned by a client was a pair of ‘Brogues’, or shoes with a thick wooden platform that protected the soles of feet from burning on the stone floor.⁵¹ From the dressing-room the visitor gradually proceeded through a series of heated rooms, each hotter than the last, until the heat was almost unbearable. Those who wished might be assisted onto the marble table, ‘where after the *Turkish* Custom, they make all the Joynts crack, which does so loosen and unknit any stiff or unuseful Member’.⁵² Sweating was encouraged by ‘frictive’ rubbing. The waiter or rubber would vigorously massage customers’ skin with a ‘Glove of Hair Chamlet’ or ‘flesh brush’, ‘whereby so much filth and nastiness appears to pollute the skin’.⁵³ Ned Ward described this effusive sweating as making him foul ‘as many *Callico* Napkins, as a Child does double *Clouts* in a Week’.⁵⁴ Then, as the pores of the skin were open, warm or cool water would be gently poured over the client in order to close the pores and thus prevent the patient catching a ‘chill’ or other malady. Rather than pouring water over the client some bagnios offered a ‘Cistern full of Hot Water’ and warm bath in which to relax and complete the process of drawing out the ‘gros Humours’ that

⁵⁰ Severine Pilloud and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier, “The Intimate Experience of the Body in the Eighteenth Century: Between Interiority and Exteriority,” *Medical History* 47, no. 4 (October 2003), 453.

⁵¹ Ward, *London-spy* (1703), 209.

⁵² *True Account of the Royal Bagnio*, 4

⁵³ Ibid. “camlet, n.”. A name originally applied to some beautiful and costly eastern fabric, afterwards to imitations and substitutes the nature of which has changed many times over. ‘A kind of stuff originally made by a mixture of silk and camel’s hair; it is now made with wool and silk’ (Johnson). ‘A light stuff, formerly much used for female apparel, made of long wool, hard spun, sometimes mixed in the loom with cotton or linen yarn’ (Ure). It is uncertain whether it was ever made of camel’s hair; but in the 16th and 17th c. it was made of the hair of the Angora goat. OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com.idproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/Entry/26718?redirectedFrom=chamlet> (accessed August 16, 2017). *London Chronicle* (London, England), April 12, 1764 - April 14, 1764; Issue 1141.

⁵⁴ Ward, *London-spy* (1703), 210.

remained.⁵⁵ This deep cleansing of the skin and thus the body was as much hygienic as it was therapeutic, leaving the client refreshed and relaxed.

Ward recounted a bagnio story in which:

a very fine Lady of the Town, came in to clean her Skin, and supple her Industrious Joints, As I suppose, and make her tender Limbs the more Pliable, and fit for the exercises of Love, which she was doubtless that Night to be engag'd in:.. . .Enrich'd with Essences and sweet-herbs, to add such a fragrancy to her Body, that might render her most Putescent parts, as sweet as a Calves Nostril.⁵⁶

Bathing was clearly a sensuous practice, in which touch and smell were an integral part of the experience, and cleanliness a state to be valued although bought at a price.⁵⁷

This perhaps provided a self-conscious reference to plebeian bathing, in which the working body was soothed, calmed and refreshed before beginning to toil afresh. The King's Bagnio in Long Acre, Covent Garden saw the value of offering bathing, rather than a full panoply of treatments, and by 1725 was advertising 'Bathing without Sweating privately every day in the Week.'⁵⁸ A regular client might supply his or her own linen in the form of fresh towels or a garment to relax in after the bath.⁵⁹ This may have saved a few shillings. Yet choosing a bagnio was influenced by a great number of issues, not least amongst these was the quality of the water.

The Waters

A new-found interest in the chemical properties of spa water from the end of the seventeenth century seemed to encourage more than a passing interest in the waters which

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁷ Eight shillings.

⁵⁸ *Daily Courant* (London, England), Friday, January 15, 1725; Issue 7254.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Graham suggests that Scottish clients in Edinburgh and Leith were able to do so. Graham, "Pleasure and Utility," 146 fn. 23.

supplied London's bagnios.⁶⁰ The intimate surroundings of the London bagnio, with only small numbers of men or women bathing at any one time, allowed attention to focus on the water and its purity. Early eighteenth-century newspaper advertising tended to stress the cleanliness and purity of the bagnio's water over its therapeutic value. They often featured assurances to the potential customer of the clarity and freshness of the water. The Royal Bagnio in Newgate Street promised its clients 'good clear water for Bathing' and Beat's Bagnio in High Holborn kept its water fresh and cool through a 'continual Stream'.⁶¹ The constant renewal and refreshment of the water was a persistent theme – perhaps a remnant of their Turkish origins where flowing or continually renewed waters were obligatory for religious reasons. Or perhaps, to mark out its therapeutic qualities, and to distinguish it from the Thames and other waterways where the waters were noticeably murky.⁶² Clearly these assurances were necessary, so much so that Smith's Large Cold Bath at the Turk's-Head and Woolpack Bagnio in Newgate Street made a feature of emptying the Bath every day at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The cleanliness of the water was not the only issue. The hygienic state of the bodies that went into the water was noted, in 1726, when the Prince's Royal Bagnio in Lemon Street, asserted that 'every Person's Feet and Legs wash'd by the Waiter before their Entrance into the Bath; 'twill be impossible any Thing should remain offensive to the Bathers'.⁶³ As we have seen in chapter two, this anxiety over the purity of the water was mirrored in the 1770s and 1780s, when concerns over the water of the New River were raised.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 254 and N. G. Coley, "'Cures Without Care' 'Chymical Physicians' and Mineral Waters in Seventeenth-century English Medicine," *Medical History* 23, no. 2 (April 1979): 191–214.

⁶¹ *Flying Post or The Post Master* (London, England), March 23, 1700 - March 26, 1700; Issue 761. *Daily Journal* (London, England), Saturday, July 23, 1726; Issue 1723.

⁶² Despite a large proportion of London's drinking water being drawn from the Thames it was noted as a source of water of poor quality. See Hardy, "Water and the Search for Public Health," 252, 255-256.

⁶³ *Daily Post* (London, England), Saturday, March 5, 1726; Issue 2011.

⁶⁴ Leslie Tomory particularly stresses this idea of bodily contamination in the New River. Leslie Tomory, "The Question of Water Quality and London's New River in the Eighteenth Century," *Social History of Medicine* 27, no. 3 (8 May 2014): 488–507.

Therapeutic Treatment

Sweating was one of the principal ways in which Londoners understood the control of disease in the early eighteenth century. In a system of corporeal knowledge that was predicated on the balance of hot, cold moist and dry, sweat that emerged from the pores of the skin might be seen as a way of expelling excessive moisture, thereby maintaining a ‘natural’ balance. If this innate system of perspiring, which included purging the body of invisible vapours, became blocked or inhibited in any way then intervention was required to restore the equilibrium. Thus cleanliness was a preferred state. Hot and warm baths were thought to open the pores of the skin, and conversely cold bathing was thought to close or inhibit the pores, although there was a sub-set of physicians who believed that the cold and damp encouraged an ‘ingress’ of particles.⁶⁵

The London bagnios made claims to cure a range of conditions, although they were often couched in the vaguest of terms. The King’s Bagnio in Lemon Street claimed to have been ‘relieving a greater Number of People (that have been afflicted with various Disorders)’.⁶⁶ For all their advertising, bagnios were curiously reluctant to specify particular maladies which might be relieved, and their claims remained general. This absence of specificity might be explained, in part, by the connection between the bagnio and the treatment of venereal disease. Often in combination with mercurial cures, sweating was used in the treatment of various sexually transmitted diseases.⁶⁷ Daniel Turner’s treatise on the subject published in 1737 describes, at length, various treatments to both cure and ameliorate the effects of venereal diseases. This included sweating whereby he noted that, ‘Instead of Sweating them this way at Home in Bed, our Surgeons now usually

⁶⁵ For a fuller discussion of perspiration see E. T. Renbourn, “The Natural History of Insensible Perspiration: a Forgotten Doctrine of Health and Disease,” *Medical History* 4, no. 2 (April 1960), 143.

⁶⁶ *Daily Journal* (London, England), Saturday, May 24, 1729; Issue 2614.

⁶⁷ Siena, *Venereal Disease*, 22.

send them to the Bagnio for that Purpose.⁶⁸ In contrast to sweating, in 1718 William Byrd's surgeon agreed to his going to a cold bath in order to soothe his inflamed genitals during a bout of gonorrhoea.⁶⁹ Indeed, Byrd continued to use bagnios throughout his infection which lasted more than a year. In June 1718 he and his cousin picked up two women in Spring Gardens where they ate together then proceeded to the nearby bagnio, bathed and spent the night with the women.⁷⁰

Bagnios were not above selling cures and quack lotions including a famous 'Oyl' for relieving gout, 'old *Aches, Pains, Bruises, Strains, Numbness, Stiffness*, the want of Motion, and Weakness of any Part' which, as the paper of directions advised should be used at the bath or bagnio, to be applied when the pores are open.⁷¹

Despite patronage by the wealthy there is some evidence to suggest that at least one Westminster parish sent paupers to the Long Acre bagnio for treatment. Jeremy Boulton notes that in 1726/7 the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields sent at least four poor parishioners to the bagnio for 'sweating' and 'cupping'.⁷² He suggests this was probably as treatment for the 'foul' disease.

Aside from cleansing the body and easing limbs through warm bathing and sweating, other bodily ailments could be treated by the house-cupper. Cupping was fundamentally framed around cleansing the body of ill-humours. It could be used to draw out visible nastiness in the skin like puss, or to remove invisible blockades to promote general health. Dry-cupping was a skilled profession in which the practitioner placed a series of glasses or cups on the body and heated them in order to form suction against the

⁶⁸ Daniel Turner, Siphylis, [sic] *A Practical Dissertation on the Venereal Disease, In Two Parts. The fifth edition, still farther improv'd ... To which, ... is* (London: J. Walthoe, R. Wilkin, J. and J. Bonwicke, S. Birt, T. Ward, E. Wicksteed, and J. Clarke, 1737), 193.

⁶⁹ F. J. Spencer, "Byrd's 'Running'," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 62, no. 9 (November 1986), 921.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *City Mercury* (London, England), Monday, March 20, 1693; Issue 52.

⁷² Jeremy Boulton, "Welfare Systems and the Parish Nurse in Early Modern London, 1650–1725," *Family & Community History* 10, no. 2 (November 2007), 142.

skin, thereby drawing away any ill-humours or blockages, and leaving a series of dense bruises or blisters on the skin. Wet-cupping, although similar in process, was in fact a form of bloodletting, whereby a small bladed tool or scarifier was used to puncture or cut a series of small perforations in the body. The cups were applied in the same manner until sufficient blood had been drawn from the patient's body. Accordingly cupping was most commonly performed on the 'Head, Neck, Shoulders, behind or under the Ears, Occiput, Back and Loins, Legs and Arms and near the Ancles'.⁷³

These bodily sites by and large required the patient to be at least partially unclothed, and, in order to reassure women and to maintain a sense of propriety; female practitioners were advertised for women patients.⁷⁴ Unlike their male counterparts they remained largely unknown, occasionally noted only as wife.

Cupping was also a favoured remedy to be used for 'various inflammatory Disorders in the Head, eyes, ears, Tonsils, and Uvula, particularly violent Head-achs, Ophthalmia, Amauroses, and Suffusions'.⁷⁵ The evidence from St Martin-in-the-Fields, identified by Jeremy Boulton, indicates that at least a proportion of the treatment included that for venereal disease.⁷⁶ This, together with the marked advertising that noted discrete entrances, particularly at the rear of premises, suggests that some patrons may have wished to conceal their visits.⁷⁷ However, it remains difficult to ascertain the precise nature of the complaints that were presented to the cupper for treatment.

⁷³ Lorenz Heister, *A General System of Surgery. In Three Parts. Containing the Doctrine and Management I. Of Wounds, Fractures, ... Part II. Of the Several Operations ...* (London: W. Innys, C. Davis, J. Clarke, R. Manby, H. S. Cox, and J. Whiston, 1745), 309.

⁷⁴ Kevin P. Siena, "The 'Foul Disease' and Privacy: The Effects of Venereal Disease and Patient Demand on the Medical Marketplace in Early Modern London," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 75, no. 2 (2001), 200.

⁷⁵ Heister, *General System of Surgery*, 309.

⁷⁶ Boulton, "Welfare Systems and the Parish Nurse," 142.

⁷⁷ It is however acknowledged that some of these visits may have been for assignations with other men and women.

The cuppers were initially the public face of the bagnio. Well-connected and respected in their profession, they sought to represent this in their advertising. In 1724 Mr Henry Ayme was noted as ‘formerly Queen Anne’s Cupper’.⁷⁸ Ayme, who also styled himself surgeon, cupped at the Royal Bagnio in Long Acre and by this point was the probable owner of the premises. By 1726, Ayme was clearly ailing and unable to repair the bagnio. He was reported to have demolished it later that year, although he still purported to cup at the same house.⁷⁹ Ayme died several months later and was buried at the nearby St Paul, Covent Garden. His will, which was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, confirmed that he died a wealthy man making extensive bequests to his extended family, friends and charities.⁸⁰ John Evans, master of the Brownlow Street Bagnio in Covent Garden from at least 1717, was another well respected practitioner of cupping. Evans maintained his practice there until his death in 1728, when *The Daily Post* wrote of him, ‘the oldest and most eminent Practitioner in that Art; he has left behind him a singular good character, being an honest and just Man in all his Dealings; his death is much lamented by all his friends and Acquaintance.’⁸¹ By the following year, Evan Jones, cupper and claimed Nephew and servant to Mr Evans, used this connection to trade on Evans’s reputation advertising that:

He cups in the same Manner as the aforesaid Mr. Evans; and all these Persons of Quality, whom he hath had the Honour to wait upon, have approved his Performances in this kind, as equal to, if not exceeding those of his justly esteemed Uncle.⁸²

⁷⁸ *Daily Journal* (London, England), Saturday, April 18, 1730; Issue 2896. Henry Ayme was described as Chirurgeon in his will of 13 September 1727. TNA: PROB 11/617/139.

⁷⁹ It is likely that Ayme was ill by this point; his will begins ‘sound in mind but not in body’. *Daily Courant* (London, England), Tuesday, March 8, 1726; Issue 7610.

⁸⁰ TNA: PROB 11/617/139.

⁸¹ *Daily Post* (London, England), Saturday, July 20, 1728; Issue 2755.

⁸² *Fog’s Weekly Journal* (London, England), Saturday, April 5, 1729; Issue 28.

Richard Johnson who styled himself as ‘Cupper to his Royal Highness’, first advertised his connection with the Bagnio in Lemon Street, Goodman’s Fields in the winter of 1724.⁸³

Johnson went on to become an influential property owner and developer in the east end, eventually lending his name to the Great Exchange in Whitechapel when it became known as ‘Johnson’s Change’.⁸⁴ In October 1727 Johnson was appointed cupper to the King, after his accession earlier in the year. At the same time the Bagnio in Lemon Street accordingly became the King’s Bagnio. Johnson’s involvement with the bagnio probably ceased in the late 1740s, when he advertised for a new proprietor who subsequently changed its name to the Turk’s Head Bagnio.⁸⁵

The relationship between bagnio and cupper was clearly symbiotic. The reputation of each was largely dependent on the other, leading to at least several cuppers retaining a financial stake in the business, and since the investment required for building and maintaining such establishments were substantial it was not undertaken lightly. The early bagnios, and some of the more reputable later establishments, maintained links with a cupper, and the therapeutic value of such establishments was widely acknowledged. Even during harsh criticism of the bagnios in 1752 a writer was willing to acknowledge that:

If I take the original design of a Bagnio right, it was intended to relieve the diseased, and afford them such assistances for the recovery of their health, at an easy expence, which the circumstances of the many could not allow them to have at their houses.⁸⁶

The presence of a male or female cupper at a bagnio became the marker of respectability; a practitioner of cupping had much to lose – particularly if a lady of quality felt that her reputation was in question through her attendance at a bagnio.

⁸³ “The Prince of Wales” *Daily Post* (London, England), Thursday, November 26, 1724; Issue 1613.

⁸⁴ Derek Morris and Michael Scott, *Whitechapel 1600-1800: A Social History of an Early Modern London Inner Suburb* (London: The East London History Society, 2011), 83-87.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁶ Nestor Druid, *The Lady's Curiosity: or, Weekly Apollo*, Vol. 1. (London: C. Sympson, 1752), 142.

Accommodation

After treatment clients were returned to their dressing-room where refreshments might be served in the form of cordials or waters. On the night of Thursday August 19th 1725, Col. Hales presented himself at a fashionable bagnio in Covent Garden, where he was a regular visitor; he bathed and ordered a dram or two of ‘Viper Water’.⁸⁷ The Colonel subsequently spent the night there and the following morning he was charged ten shillings and sixpence for a ‘Night & bath’ and five shillings for the viper water.⁸⁸ Viper water was advertised as a form of alcoholic cordial that may have formed some kind of therapeutic or restorative beverage.⁸⁹ A massage was generally encouraged, the recipient might be rubbed with herbs and oils of his or her choice before a resting in order to allow their bodily humours to settle and the pores of the skin return to a ‘natural state’.⁹⁰ As the dressing-rooms were supplied with beds clients tended to rest before being offered an appropriate light calico robe in which they could converse and spend a convivial hour or two with friends, drinking, eating or dealing with some of the more mundane life tasks. Almost all bagnios had accommodation which they rented out by the night, and it was not usual for a gentleman to take a bath and a room for the night. Servants were accommodated at a somewhat lesser cost and occasionally permitted to take a bath which was charged to their employer. Supper could be taken; messages left and sent, a laundress might be summoned to deal with soiled personal linen or a hand of cards played.

The accommodation formed an integral part of the bagnio and by all accounts the rooms were richly furnished. A sale advertised in 1732 consisted of:

All the Household Furniture belonging to the Bagnio in Oxenden-Street near Leicester-Fields. Consisting of very good rais’d Tester Bedsteads and furniture,

⁸⁷ TNA: E 101/528/19. An account book from a hitherto unidentified bagnio (possibly Belton Street Bagnio), 1 Aug 1724-31 Jul 1725. Entry dated 19 Aug 1725.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Spectator* (1711) (London, England), Friday, July 27, 1711; Issue CXXVIII. Although Keevil suggests viper water is some form of aphrodisiac. Keevil, “The Bagnio in London,” 256.

⁹⁰ Heister, *General System of Surgery*, 212.

feather Beds, Blankets, Quilts, Chimney and Pier Glasses, Sconces in Gilt Frames, Stoves and their Furniture, Mahogany and Walnut-tree Chairs, Chests of Drawers and Tables, Marble Tables, pictures, and other useful Furniture.⁹¹

Hogarth's painting of the interior of the Turk's Head Bagnio in Bow Street, Covent Garden depicts a richly decorated and to all intents domestic interior resembling a fashionable bedroom, although the painting is scattered with images to assist the viewer in 'reading' the story depicted. For men the London bagnio provided an alternative form of accommodation in this nascent form of the 'hotel'. Washing and bathing became the distinctive characteristic whereby London's bagnios were set apart from its well-established Inns – although, like London's coffee-houses, it is probable that each bagnio had a distinctive character. This was partly fashioned by a particular common interest or shared preoccupation, and partly by the tolerance or otherwise of illicit sexual relationships by each establishment's management.

Clients and Costs

Little archival material remains from the eighteenth-century bagnios; however a single rough account book survives in the National Archives preserved as part of the records of the King's Remembrancer.⁹² This slim volume consists of rough daily notes recording the name of each client together with the services they requested and the associated cost. The document covers the short period between May 5th and November 10th 1725. There is no precise record of its provenance, or of the name and location of the bagnio, but a note in the volume suggests that a young woman was cupped by Mr Hahn at a cost of five shillings. Hahn was a German cupper, who practised in London from at least April 1710, as a partner at Verdier's Hummums in Belton Street, Covent Garden.⁹³ Hahn very quickly

⁹¹ *Daily Post* (London, England), Thursday, November 2, 1732; Issue 4091.

⁹² TNA: E 101/528/19. An account book from an unidentified bagnio, May-Nov 1725.

⁹³ *Post Man and the Historical Account* (London, England), April 11, 1710 - April 13, 1710; Issue 1870.

gained sole control of the business from Verdier's widow and continued as both cupper and master of the bagnio. In November 1724 advertising confirmed that Hahn was still

Goods and services sold at Bolton Street Bagnio, May-Nov 1725.	Percentage by cost.
Accommodation	32%
Bathing	28%
Drinks	20%
Food	2%
Porter's Services	1%
Miscellaneous Services	5%
Therapeutic Services	7%
Unknown	5%

Table 3.1. Percentage of goods and services sold at Bolton Street Bagnio, May-Nov 1725 by cost (total amount of spending = £322 13s 11^d). Figures calculated from TNA: E 101/528/19.

operating from Belton Street, and indeed he continued to do so until his death in July 1745.⁹⁴ Little more than two years after the bagnio book was compiled, in the December of 1727, Hahn succeeded Henry Ayme as cupper to the Royal family, possibly helped by his ability to speak German or possibly by the influential custom at his Belton Street bagnio. The bagnio book identifies a clientele largely made up of men. Of the 818 identifiable separate visits recorded, 684, or approximately 83.6%, of them were made by a man, and just 41 or approximately 5.1% by a woman. In a further 11.2 % or 92 of the visits the gender was unknown and one (<0.5%) visit was made by two children accompanied by two servants. If this is the Belton Street Bagnio, then there is no evidence to suggest that this establishment operated a policy of admitting women on separate days of the week. The clientele was by and large made up of men and women known to the keeper of the account book. Of the

unknown visitors most are accounted for by damage and subsequent repair to the uppermost parts of the volume, in which the names have been obscured or obliterated. As

⁹⁴ The Survey of London confirms that Daniel Hahn was the rate payer for this property between 1730 and 1746. W. Edward Riley and Sir Laurence Gomme (editors), "No. 25, Endell Street," *Survey of London*: volume 5: St Giles-in-the-Fields, pt II, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=74288&strquery=Hahn> accessed 17th July 2017.

for the others, the book-keeper refers to them as ‘a stranger’ or very occasionally as ‘gentleman’ or ‘gentlewoman’. Clients fall into three broad categories: known men who use the accommodation and ‘hotel’ style services, men who use the accommodation and bathing facilities, and a third group largely made up of unknown visitors, women and some men who use the bathing or therapeutic facilities.

Amongst the male clients there were more than a few military ranks and others that might be identified as career soldiers, for example Lord Charles Hay and Charles Ingram.⁹⁵ Others represented included Members of Parliament and members of the aristocracy. The bagnio appealed to, and was successful in gaining, a wealthy clientele. Many of these men also sought accommodation for their servants; of the total number of nights recorded 18.4% of them were for servants.⁹⁶ The cost of servant’s accommodation varied according to their relative position in the household and was probably reflected in the provision for each, so Lord Londonderry was charged two shillings for a night’s accommodation for his valet although his footman cost him only a shilling. Occasionally only the servant was accommodated while their master made other arrangements.

In little over six months the bagnio sold goods and services worth £322 13s 11d, the relative proportions of this income are shown in Table 3.1.⁹⁷ The three largest categories being: accommodation 32%; bathing 28% and drinks 20%. Only 2% of income was derived from food, probably because the bagnio had no commercial kitchen and sent out for their biggest seller – jellies. Therapeutic services are representative of cupping or sweating with an occasional ‘pot of opiat’ or other medicinal treatment (7% of total

⁹⁵ Jonathan Spain, “Hay, Lord Charles, of Linplum (1700?–1760),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.idproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/12711> accessed 1 January 2014.

⁹⁶ 483 nights.

⁹⁷ Excludes payment of lump sums against accounts in order to eliminate double counting of services and those items where the service and price is obscured or missing although where a service is identifiable the most commonly applied price has been included in the calculation.

income). The remaining category is ‘miscellaneous services’, small charges made for additional services not covered elsewhere, the commonest one being for a fire, but might include the services of a laundress, a newspaper or the calling of a chairman or coach.

Bagnio servants

The first plebeian man or woman a client was likely to see in a bagnio was a servant. The waiters, rubbers, cooks, maids and porters of the London bagnios were their greatest asset, and their skill and experience was frequently emphasised in newspaper advertising. In 1697 the new bagnio in Chancery Lane, at the Turk’s Head, advertised that ‘all the Waiters are old Servants that have lived at other Bagnio’s for several years, particularly Mrs DEANE, Woman-waiter.’⁹⁸ Female servants were valued equally as their male counterparts. Sometimes servants, like Mrs Deane, would be named, similarly Joseph De Lair, a waiter who had been previously at the Old Bagnio in St James’s Street and had moved to the ‘Bagnio of Honour’ in Panton Street in the November of 1725.⁹⁹ Good service was of importance since much of it was intimate and personal. A rubber who took a cloth and vigorously brushed it over the surface of a client’s body; who washed and massaged flesh and was privy to the most guarded of bodily secrets, needed to be a trusted servant, one with whom a client could feel comfortable and at ease. The Royal Bagnio in Long Acre promised that, ‘hot baths, are always ready, with careful diligent waiters to attend’.¹⁰⁰ The Paris Bagnio assured its customers that ‘Attendance will be given by the best English and French Waiters, and every thing provided in the most agreeable Manner’.¹⁰¹ Acquiring such staff was not always easy and when a bagnio in Lemn Street, Goodman’s Fields required a waiter in 1774, it advertised for a ‘good waiter, who can have

⁹⁸ *Post Boy* (1695) (London, England), June 1, 1697 - June 3, 1697; Issue 324.

⁹⁹ *Daily Courant* (London, England), Saturday, November 27, 1725; Issue 7525.

¹⁰⁰ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, May 25, 1765; Issue 11294.

¹⁰¹ *Daily Journal* (London, England), Wednesday, January 26, 1732; Issue 3451.

a good character for sobriety and Honesty'.¹⁰² Likewise, the Royal Bagnio in Newgate Street advertised for a 'strong, sober, honest, Single woman, of genteel Behaviour, for a Guide to the Cold Bath, and to be an Assistant in the House, None need apply but those whose Characters will bear the strictest enquiry'.¹⁰³

Reputation was a double edged sword and could be of equal importance to the servant, particularly a female servant. In the 1750s several agencies for servants were established in Westminster, most of which were careful to establish that premises were reputable. In 1757 the General Register Office in Chancery Lane advertised for a Cook and two House-maids for a 'creditable Bagnio'.¹⁰⁴ As well as those specifically recruited, wives often assisted their husbands in the course of their job. Barbara Pomfrett was probably one such of the many of the women who assisted their husbands in their work at the bagnio. According to her settlement examination in 1713, her husband, Henry Pomfrett, was a surgeon at the bagnio near Conduit Court off Long Acre in Covent Garden. After he died Barbara Pomfrett became a parish-nurse in St Martin-in-the-Fields, specialising in 'keeping the seriously ill'.¹⁰⁵ Undoubtedly, Nurse Pomfrett used her background in administering 'cures' similar to those of her husband.

Location

The identifiable public bagnios fall into three distinct groups, the first and largest of these lay north of the Strand encompassing Covent Garden and Charing Cross and westwards toward St James, the second immediately to the east of the City and the third comprised two bagnios in the City of London. Two of the first three Turkish style bagnios were established on the Duke of Bedford's Covent Garden estate where water in the form of

¹⁰² *Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, January 3, 1775; Issue 13740.

¹⁰³ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Friday, October 8, 1762; Issue 8714.

¹⁰⁴ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, February 8, 1757; Issue 6955.

¹⁰⁵ Boulton, "Welfare Systems and the Parish Nurse," 142.

springs or wells was readily available.¹⁰⁶ The location of these early bagnios proved to be the locus for the subsequent growth of the West End bagnio. This placed them firmly within what Roy Porter termed Georgian London's 'topography of pleasure.'¹⁰⁷ Many of



Fig. 3.1 Location of eighteenth-century bagnios in London, mapped onto Cary, 1792. Red star = bagnio identified from newspaper sources, green star = bagnio identified from other sources and blue star = private bagnio.

London's hedonistic distractions, from the theatres and coffee houses to the inns and taverns, were principally centred on Covent Garden to the west of the City. This area provided close access to the newly fashionable terraces of St George and St James with their wealthy occupants as well as housing for the poor who took up employment in much of London's growing service economy.¹⁰⁸

Conversely a secondary area of entertainment centred on the eastern fringes of the City encompassing Goodman's Fields and the environs of the Tower of London also supported at least two or possibly three bagnios. Accordingly these busy streets also

¹⁰⁶ Natural springs and well were supplemented with water taken from springs in Soho by a licence granted in 1633. F. H. W. Sheppard (General Editor), "The Bedford Estate: From 1627 to 1641," *Survey of London*: volume 36: Covent Garden, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46085&strquery=water> accessed 12 January 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Porter, *London: A Social History*, 169.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Boulton, "The poor among the rich: paupers and the parish in the West End, 1660-1724," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural History of Early Modern London* eds. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 197-225.

mapped onto sites of high activity for prostitution, a co-location that was eventually to be of mutual benefit to both institutions.¹⁰⁹ The locations of London's public bagnios form what Miles Ogborn might term a 'map of modernity'.¹¹⁰ It was a space in which 'new' forms of intimate sociability might be fashioned by both men and women, as well as a space in which a newly defined corporeal cleanliness became central to the experience.

The period between the early 1680s, when several Turkish style bagnios were first established, and somewhere in the mid to late 1720s represented a golden era for the London bagnio. A visit to the bagnio was respectable, even fashionable. Men and women might patronise a bagnio without harming their reputation. The therapeutic treatment received there, whether this was bathing, sweating or cupping was based on the same corporeal understanding in which unwanted matter was removed from the body, whether this was understood merely as dirt or as ill-humours, perhaps mattered little to the client. However, for some bathing was a sensual pleasure and the resulting bodily cleanliness a desirable state.

Changes in the public Bagnio

The 1720s saw the beginnings of a change. The tenants of the Bedford estate which included the area in and around the Piazza in Covent Garden were only then permitted to convert their premises into victualing houses, or sell coffee, tea, chocolate or liquor without formal permission.¹¹¹ The first Coffee House, the Bedford, was established in 1726 and was soon followed by many more. This rapid growth in the number of 'social'

¹⁰⁹ Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis, 1730-1830* (London; New York: Longman, 1999), see chapter 3 'The Geography of Prostitution'.

¹¹⁰ Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies 1680-1780* (Guilford: Guilford Press, 1998), 231-238.

¹¹¹ 'The Piazza: The Social Decline of the Piazza', *Survey of London: volume 36: Covent Garden* (1970), 82-84. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46094&strquery=> accessed 10th December 2013.

establishments had a clear effect on the ambient population of Covent Garden, attracting many more pleasure seekers who joined the theatre goers to throng the Piazza and surrounding streets.¹¹² This increased footfall on the Covent Garden streets led to inevitable tensions. Heather Shore has written of the criminal milieu around Leicester Fields and Covent Garden in the late 1720s and early 1730s, which focussed on female criminality and resulted in a number of raids in which scores of plebeian men and women were rounded up on general warrants.¹¹³ Shore identifies the ‘disorderly house campaigns’ of 1728, 1730 and 1731, orchestrated by the Society for the Reformation of Manners, as a period in which the wider local community, both ‘respectable and disorderly’ were drawn into conflict with local justices and constables.¹¹⁴ The streets of Covent Garden and the surrounding area became contested spaces in which patrons of respectable establishments might find their morality coming under scrutiny.

The bagnio proved to be particularly vulnerable to this moral scrutiny; it had become a profitable business - particularly the accommodation which offered smart fashionable rooms attracting many wealthy men away from home and their wives. Some bagnios saw the temptation this offered and advertised their rules accordingly. The Queen’s Bagnio in Long Acre permitted ‘no Entertainment for Women after 12 a Clock at Night’.¹¹⁵ Others, however, were happy to exploit the opportunity. A slow change, in which some bagnios became embroiled in prostitution, was marked by the emergence of female bagnio keepers. Both ‘Mrs Falkner Keeper of a Bagnio in Suffolk Street’ in 1730 and Mrs Hayward Bagnio Keeper in Charles Street, Covent Garden’ in the 1730s were known as

¹¹² For an account of the early establishment of a Coffee House in Covent Garden see Helen Berry, “Rethinking politeness in eighteenth-century England: Moll King’s Coffee House and the significance of ‘flash talk,’” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (Sixth Series) 11 (2001): 65–81.

¹¹³ Heather Shore, “‘The Reckoning’: Disorderly Women, Informing Constables and the Westminster Justices, 1727–33,” *Social History* 34, no. 4 (2009): 409–427.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 410. Robert Shoemaker has also chronicled rising social tension in the Covent Garden and its locality during a similar period. Robert B. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex, C.1660-1725* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 292-303.

¹¹⁵ *The Tatler* (1709) (London, England), November 22, 1709 - November 24, 1709; Issue 98.

notorious bawds and certainly involved in prostitution.¹¹⁶ Many others, like Sophia Lemoy, were involved on the fringes of criminality with the likes of Richard Haddock and his wife who ran two bagnios, one in Covent Garden and the other in Charing Cross. Although it was probably abundantly clear to the eighteenth-century man or woman about town which bagnios were respectable and which less so, it is more difficult to make this distinction at a distance. Clearly there were establishments at each end of the spectrum and others that walked a fine line, navigating the fringes of respectability.

Concurrent with the emergence of the female bagnio keeper, newspaper advertising began to stress the availability of a 'back-door' to the bagnio.¹¹⁷ Indeed from the mid-1720s it became almost obligatory to mention a rear entrance to the premises, occasionally one in which a chair or coach might be drawn up privately.¹¹⁸ No indication is given as to why there was a sudden requirement for privacy. Was it to allow an individual to maintain his or her privacy while receiving treatment? Or was it to shield it the potential client from an implied lack of probity given the declining reputation of the bagnio? Daniel Hahn, cupper at the Belton Street bagnio, certainly found it necessary to advertise the 'good Character' of his bagnio and to ensure that it was 'distinguish'd from an infamous Fraternity' during 1724.¹¹⁹

Between the 1680s and 1720s metropolitan bathing establishments, that is to say bagnios and cold water baths, were by and large almost exclusively used by the wealthy. However, the conviviality and homo-sociability that both bathing house and river bathing engendered was remarkably similar, although clearly separated by economics. Like their

¹¹⁶ *London Evening Post* (London, England), September 3, 1730 - September 5, 1730; Issue 428; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, February 7, 1736; Issue 396.

¹¹⁷ 'There is a Back-door to this Bagnio, Hedge Lane, The New Bagnio writ over the Door.' *Daily Post* (London, England), Monday, June 7, 1725; Issue 1778. 'There is a Back Door that comes into Castle-street next the White Perriwig' *Daily Post* (London, England), Tuesday, March 8, 1726; Issue 2013.

¹¹⁸ 'There is a commodious Passage for Coaches and chairs in Bridle-Lane. For Company to come private.' *Daily Journal* (London, England), Wednesday, May 6, 1730; Issue 2911.

¹¹⁹ *Daily Post* (London, England), Monday, November 9, 1724; Issue 1598.

compatriots in London's bagnios, men and boys who bathed in London's open waters relaxed and conversed with their friends in a form of uninhibited intimate sociability. By the 1770s the fashion for cold water bathing, which had been in decline for some years, was now in free-fall amongst its almost exclusive clientele in London. This had the effect of depressing entry prices to many of the baths. By mid-century some charged as little as a shilling for a cold water bath and this clearly influenced its clientele. An occasional shilling for a bath may have been achievable for some of the poor, especially in the cold winter months when a warm bath would have seemed particularly attractive. But for some it remained resolutely out of reach. The popular regimens of cold water bathing and modest living advocated by physicians like John Floyer at the beginning of the century, which he claimed would 'restore vitality and strength' thereby making the bather 'clear-headed and hardy' and 'capable of resisting inclement weather' meant little to the urban poor.¹²⁰ Yet many of those at the bottom of the social scale found ways to enter and use the bagnios, at the same time this may have driven many of the respectable middling and élite men and women to more private forms of bathing.

From the mid-1720s there began a slow decline in which the term bagnio became almost synonymous with bawdy-house. In 1744, when *A Present for a Servant-Maid* was published, maids seeking a position were warned:

There are some Houses which appear well by *Day*, that it would be little safe for a Modest Maid to sleep in at *Night*: I do not mean those Coffee-Houses, Bagnios, &c. which some parts of the Town, particularly Covent-Garden, abound with; for in those the very Aspect of the Person who keeps them are sufficient to shew what manner of trade they follow.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Mark Jenner, "Bathing and Baptism: Sir John Floyer and the Politics of Cold Bathing," in *Refiguring Revolutions: Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), 200-201.

¹²¹ Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant-Maid. Or the Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1744), 6.

By the 1770s contemporary literature noted that, ‘many houses of this kind took title of bagnio that had not a bath in them’.¹²² It is clear that prostitutes worked in many of the less reputable bagnios. However, there is little evidence to suggest that prostitutes working in a bagnio also resided there. It is more likely that they lived locally and were called in to visit clients, with the client paying a ‘house fee’, or were picked up on the street. When John Parry, thief and fraudster, was on his final spree relieving the Quality of their portable goods in 1754 he took time and visited ‘the Bedford-Arms Tavern in Covent-Garden ; where a favourite Woman of his met him, and they supped together. From thence they went to Leicester-square Bagnio, where they lay all Night.’¹²³ The protagonist in *The New London Spy* refers to a man at the door of Maltby’s Bagnio in Covent Garden who holds a ‘list of dainty bits he can furnish his lascivious customers with in the flesh way’.¹²⁴ Similar to this was the purported list of *New Covent Garden Ladies* which was advertised as being available in Haddock’s Bagnio from 1757.¹²⁵ Both support the notion that bagnios were a place of sexual assignation in which the client was required to take an active role in providing a partner.

While the public bagnios declined in reputation there is some little evidence to suggest that a much wider range of men and women began to use them. The nature of surviving evidence is such that only small glimpses of these new users remain in the record. One such was Sarah Todd, a single woman who swore on oath that she and Uriah Goose, a butcher, had lay together all night at a Bagnio in Queen Street where she may have conceived the bastard child that she had so recently given birth to in St Martin’s

¹²² Anonymous, *The Midnight Rambler; or, New Nocturnal Spy, for the Present Year. Containing a Complete Description of the Modern Transactions of London and ...*(London: J. Cooke, 1772), 101.

¹²³ Ordinary of Newgate’s Account, 5th June 1754, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, OA175406055406050009 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 17th June 2017). Harvard University Library.

¹²⁴ Richard King, *The New London Spy: or, a Twenty-four Hours Ramble Through the Bills of Mortality. Containing a True Picture of Modern High and Low Life* (London: J. Cooke, 1771), 93.

¹²⁵ Hallie Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies: Pimp General Jack and the Extraordinary Story of Harris’s List* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), 118.

Workhouse.¹²⁶ Uriah and Sarah had managed to pay approximately two shillings in order to spend the night together. Likewise, Esther Jones, pauper, had laid with John Southgate, on several occasions at the Long Acre Bagnio in April 1746.¹²⁷ The bagnio had become a great leveller, just as Sarah and Esther slipped in and out of the sheets of various Westminster bagnios then so did Lady Elizabeth Sewell when she enjoyed a tryst with Lord Tyrconnel in the summer of 1778 at the bagnio in Leicester Fields.¹²⁸

By mid-century those without the means to pay were permitted to bathe free of charge at various bagnios. The Royal Bagnio in Newgate Street advertised that, ‘The Poor shall go into these Baths every Day from Eleven to twelve Gratis, provided they bring a Line of Recommendation sign’d by any Physician, Surgeon, or Apothecary.’¹²⁹ In the same year the Turk’s Head Bagnio in Goodman Fields made a similar offer, ‘if any poor person stand in Need of a Cold Bath, by bringing a Line from any Gentleman, Physician, Surgeon, or Apothecary, that they are real objects of charity they shall be reciv’d, and have Use of the Baths from Ten o’Clock to Twelve in the Morning Gratis.’¹³⁰ The Newgate Bagnio also went on to permit members to send a friend or servant to bathe in the smaller bath free of charge during the period of their subscription.¹³¹ Mary Jones, widow of William Jones, cupper and owner of the bagnio in James Street, Covent Garden began to advertise in 1764 that she cupped poor women free of charge as well as letting children use the cold bath.¹³²

This charitable provision for the poor at mid-century is more redolent of an institution seeking to associate itself with a marker of middling respectability. A brothel or

¹²⁶ St Martin-in-the-Fields Pauper Biographies Project, Settlement Examinations, Sarah Todd, 22nd February 1732, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, smdsset_18_1927 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 19th July 2017), Westminster Archives Centre, Ms. F 5025.

¹²⁷ *LL*, St Martin’s Biographies, Esther Jones, 14th February 1746 (smdsset_101_57622).

¹²⁸ “House of Lords Journal Volume 35: May 1779 1-10,” in *Journal of the House of Lords Volume 35, 1776-1779*, (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 711-728. *British History Online*, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol35/pp711-728>.

¹²⁹ *General Advertiser* (1744) (London, England), Saturday, June 30, 1744; Issue 3004.

¹³⁰ *General Advertiser* (1744) (London, England), Saturday, May 30, 1752; Issue 5496.

¹³¹ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, May 1, 1786; Issue 5291.

¹³² *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Friday, August 24, 1764; Issue 11 062.

prostitute serviced house would be unlikely to offer charitable assistance. The chronology fits with that suggested by Donna Andrew in her study of the rise of eighteenth-century charitable provision.¹³³ It also suggests an alternative narrative to that which characterised all bagnios as brothels.

Another glimpse into the life of the bagnio is offered by a report made in 1767 of a Mrs Jones of Chick Lane, ‘who kept a sort of Bagnio for those Courtezans and Gentleman who purchase their pleasures in the copper way’ implying that, although a bathing establishment, it did not perhaps enjoy the luxury and grandeur of those closer to Covent Garden.¹³⁴ The Shepherd and Shepherdess, on the path leading from Old Street to Islington, advertised a ‘neat Cold Bath, at Six-pence each Time of Bathing’ in May 1757.¹³⁵ This tentatively suggests that there was a growing market for immersive bathing at the lower end of the social scale.

By the 1770s the term ‘bagnio’ had largely disappeared from newspaper advertising. Many former bathing houses adopted the more respectable ‘hotel’ and some referred to their facilities as ‘Medical Baths’, like Dr Dominiceti’s premises at Panton Street by the Haymarket which he entitled ‘Artificial Medical Baths’.¹³⁶ Dr Dominiceti’s bathing establishment sought to re-establish some form of respectability. He insisted that patrons buy woollen and linen garments which were to be worn during hot or cold bathing treatments. By the summer of 1821 the New Hummums in Covent Garden were being advertised as ‘Medicated Vapour Baths’, and in an attempt to make them more respectable emphasis was again put on the therapeutic nature of the bathing rather than bodily cleanliness to which clients were becoming accustomed.¹³⁷ Men and women were also

¹³³ Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹³⁴ *London Evening Post* (London, England), July 2, 1767 - July 4, 1767; Issue 6838.

¹³⁵ *Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Friday, May 6, 1757; Issue 8211.

¹³⁶ *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Thursday, November 8, 1781; Issue 319.

¹³⁷ *The Morning Post* (London, England), Tuesday, July 03, 1821; pg. [1]; Issue 15693.

treated separately and attended by servants of the relevant gender. One even advertised that it admitted only ‘ladies of distinction’ with ‘several Ladies of rank’ already patronising the establishment at three Hanover Square.¹³⁸ Here, Mrs Crosby made promise of ‘Private Baths (Warm, Cold, Shower, and Aromatic Vapour)’.¹³⁹ However some establishments still permitted prostitutes to frequent their premises. After the death of Olivia Harrington, the notorious Haddock’s Bagnio in Charing Cross became ‘Haddock’s Hotel’. In 1781, a wit at the *Whitehall Evening Post* wrote,

Some years since a gay young fellow of my acquaintance, who had slept at a Bagnio (they are now called Hotels, the race of Bagnios being, I believe, extinct in this country).¹⁴⁰

Despite the changing emphasis of newspaper advertising bagnios continued to offer access to baths and bathing facilities.

As we have seen, the decades after the 1720s saw widespread change in the London bagnio, in which the exclusive clientele of wealthy men and a few women was challenged in favour of a much wider custom. Men and women from the lowest echelons of society were able to purchase entry to the metropolitan bagnio, either to use the bathing facilities, or to enjoy a night or two of pleasure. This was partly assisted by the relative fall in the entry price to many bagnios. For example the bagnio in Belton Street, called the Royal Bagnio from 1744, lowered the entry price to the cold bath from two shillings and sixpence in the 1720s to one shilling by 1744.¹⁴¹ In 1785, the *Compleat Family Physician*, noted details of a London bagnio that had extensive bathing facilities on the first and second floors of the premises and beneath were ‘baths constructed or constructing for the lower and middle classes of people’.¹⁴² By their continued presence and need for bathing

¹³⁸ *The Morning Post* (London, England), Tuesday, June 24, 1823; Issue 16382.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Whitehall Evening Post* (1770) (London, England), September 18, 1781 - September 20, 1781; Issue 5528.

¹⁴¹ *Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, December 1, 1744; Issue 4402.

¹⁴² Smythson, *The Compleat Family Physician*, 640.

facilities the poor had created a demand which was eventually met by extended facilities in the London bagnio. By the end of the century, although much changed and diminished, the poor were able to more readily access indoor immersive bathing. This evolving institution, together with the undoubted pressures created by those men who bathed in London's waterways, formed the foundations on which public baths were established in the nineteenth century.

Yet, bathing in one of London's bagnios or indeed, its waterways, remained very distinct methods of maintaining bodily cleanliness. Through most of the eighteenth century personal cleanliness was defined by a regimen of clean linen. As I will show, this was equally so for London's poor. The following chapters will explore the ways in which working men and women engaged with cleanliness through clean linen. It will begin by examining the work of washerwomen, laundresses and laundry-maids and how they enabled and sustained Londoners' cleanliness.

Chapter 4

The business of cleanliness: washerwomen and laundresses

In 1725 Daniel Defoe wrote a pamphlet on the ‘Pride, Insolence and Exorbitant Wages of our Women-Servants’ entitled *Every-Body’s Business, Is No-Body’s Business*.¹ In it he recounted an anecdote concerning an interview with a potential household servant. The putative servant told the householder that she could neither wash nor ‘get up Linnen’ and saucily added ‘if you wash at Home; you should have a laundry-Maid’.² Although this was written as part of an invective against the so called avaricious servant, it raises an important point; ‘if you wash at home’ suggesting that it was indeed common for households in the early eighteenth century, not to do so.³ This important domestic question – how and by whom was the household laundry to be undertaken became increasingly complex in eighteenth-century London. This chapter will examine these complexities by charting the very physical ways in which plebeian women engaged with domestic laundry. It will focus on the enormous body of knowledge they used in performing tasks associated with household washing, and consider the agency employed by them as they went about their business and the respect this engendered. It will examine the use of soap and specialisms afforded by the urban environment. It will conclude with some consideration of the relationships forged by washerwoman in pursuit of their occupation.

Georges Vigarello was one of the first to clearly articulate the link between personal cleanliness and clean linen.⁴ He maintained that personal cleanliness of the

¹ Defoe, *Every-Body’s Business*, Title Page.

² Ibid. 20-21. Quoted in Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London 1650-1750* (London: Methuen, 1994), 126.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 41.

seventeenth century was ‘attached essentially to linen and external appearance’.⁵ Linen, it was acknowledged, would absorb sweat and bodily impurities and therefore cleanse the body, leaving only the linen itself to be washed. Inevitably the ‘whiteness and renewal of linen took the place of cleaning the skin’.⁶ Clothing, and particularly bodily linen, ‘created a new physical space for cleanliness’.⁷ New fashions, for both men and women, in which ‘inner clothing’ became more visible, began to emphasise the whiteness of a cuff or collar. Outer garments such as breeches, coats and waistcoats for men and gowns and cloaks for women required less cleaning than under garments, which required frequent laundering. Indeed respectability, in part, was defined by the cleanliness of a person’s bodily linen and neatness of general appearance. This form of self-presentation began to play an important role in the notion of a, now much contested, version of British ‘politeness’ in the early to mid-eighteenth century.⁸ As fashions and tastes changed then wider sections of society adopted ‘fashionable’ garb, changes in technology allowed for more affordable textiles and perhaps more importantly the second-hand garment trade flourished.⁹ Yet by its very nature this form of display might be said to have excluded the poor.¹⁰ John Styles has done much to dispel this notion, outlining how servants and the labouring poor were able to acquire clothing and express a preference for the style and nature of such items.¹¹ He also suggests that those at the bottom of the social scale embraced these ideals of cleanliness, particularly that of their personal linen. This form of cleanliness or ‘clean linen regimen’ was common through all levels of society, including, as I will demonstrate, in institutions

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 228.

⁷ Ibid., 227.

⁸ Lawrence E. Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (December 2002): 869–898.

⁹ Ibid., 883.

¹⁰ Both Lawrence Klein and John Styles discuss servants clothing in respect to fashion and access to clothing. Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation,” 883; Styles, *Dress of the People*, 71-83.

¹¹ John Styles, “Involuntary Consumers? Servants and Their Clothes in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Textile History* 33, no. 1 (2002): 9–21 and Styles, *Dress of the People*, 71-83.

for the poor. It went beyond clean bodily linen to encompass sheets and table linens. This thesis builds on these assertions by examining the ways and means that plebeian men and women employed to maintain their personal and localised cleanliness, beginning with washerwomen, laundresses and laundry-maids. These women, not only made choices about their own linen but were in a position to facilitate the cleanliness of others through their work.

This significant form of employment, sometimes permanent and at other times transitory, offers relatively little by way of concerted historic investigation. There are however, a few notable exceptions, in particular, Carole Rawcliffe's work on the medieval laundress. Here, Rawcliffe highlights how the laundress is 'generally consigned to the rearguard of the female labour force, where they occupy a shadowy, often marginal position.'¹² This is echoed in Patricia Malcolmson's work on the laundress in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, most of the commonalities between Rawcliffe's work and that of Malcolmson rest on the physicality of laundering, its seasonality and poor remuneration.¹³ This theme of physicality in laundry work is also pursued by Caroline Davidson as she examines the processes of washing and innovation in laundry work. Davidson's book, although not overtly feminist, is notable for being amongst the first serious considerations of women's domestic work. In more recent years, Pamela Sambrook's examination of laundry work through the objects and material culture of laundry offers a more rounded understanding.¹⁴ However, her primary focus is that of the large country house and its rural hinterland. Here, space, capital investment and the

¹² Carole Rawcliffe, "A Marginal Occupation? The Medieval Laundress and her Work," *Gender & History* 21, no. 1 (2009): 147.

¹³ Rawcliffe identified the hard physical work, the unskilled nature of the job, poor payment and very seasonal nature of the job in both periods. Rawcliffe, "A Marginal Occupation," 149. Patricia E. Malcolmson, *English Laundresses: A Social History, 1850-1930* (Illinois, USA: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

¹⁴ Pamela A. Sambrook, *The Country House Servant* (Stroud: The History Press, 2002), 104-217.

small scale wash was less of a consideration, and as a result it offers few insights into the life of the urban washerwoman or laundress. In a valuable essay from Aritha van Herk, some of these common themes are brought together as van Herk begins to unpick the complex meanings in domestic laundry, suggesting that its socioeconomic importance has been largely ignored.¹⁵ She also castigates laundry work for its use as a tool of domestic oppression.¹⁶

Little of this small body of work primarily focusses on the eighteenth century. In small part this lacuna is filled by Colin Bailey's art-historical book, *The Laundress*. In this work Bailey examines Parisienne laundresses in his discussion and contextualisation of a mid-eighteenth-century painting by Jean-Baptiste Greuze entitled '*La Blanchisseuse*'.¹⁷ Here, Bailey offers a thorough examination of the realities of the daily life of the laundress and the imagined life depicted in Greuze's work. This is woven together with a significant number of images of European laundresses engaged in some element of their profession. Yet although it offers a glimpse of the urban laundress, Parisienne washerwomen worked in a very different manner to that of their London sisters. In Paris, laundresses held more of a collective identity, which was strengthened by the use of common washing places, particularly on the Seine. Much of their work was undertaken from small boats. This however, was not replicated in London.

Douglas Biow's work on Renaissance Italy devotes a chapter to the visual and literary representations of washerwomen.¹⁸ He notes their marginal place in these works, yet he hears their clamorous voices and sees their small images as they were 'swallowed

¹⁵ Aritha van Herk, "Invisibled Laundry," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27, no. 3 (2002): 893-900.

¹⁶ *Ibid*: 894-895.

¹⁷ Colin B. Bailey, *Jean-Baptiste Greuze: The Laundress* (Getty Museum Studies in Art. Los Angeles, California: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000).

¹⁸ Douglas Biow, *The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 95-143.

up by the far richer landscape'.¹⁹ Likewise, these marginal representations of washerwomen and laundresses are also prevalent in recent studies of servants and the domestic household.²⁰ Perhaps the most substantive of which are Tim Meldrum's book on domestic service, that devotes several pages to the sharing of laundry duties, and recent work by Caroline Steedman, *Labours Lost*, which puts the domestic servant and their experience at the centre of her work.²¹

Water and washing

By the beginning of the eighteenth century women in the City of London had long since ceased to wash clothing in the Thames. The City had realised the commercial potential of the Thames and issued ordinances prohibiting the building of domestic premises on the riverside. The shore was filled with wharves and warehouses leaving little opportunity for the humble washerwoman to practise her trade. At the same time, the provision of water in the City had evolved into an assortment of civic and private endeavours. Mark Jenner has outlined how access to water was provided by a patchwork of parochial pumps and wells together with commercially piped water provided by the new water companies.²² It was this commodification of water, together with the growing availability of fuel to heat it that helped draw the business of laundry away from the river and into the changing domestic spaces of the metropolis. A visitor to London in the early eighteenth century remarked,

One of the conveniences of London is that everyone can have an abundance of water.... Besides the distribution of water by means of pipes, there are in many

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 143

²⁰ Hecht, J. Jean. *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956); Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 2009).

²¹ Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000). 146-150. Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²² Mark S.R. Jenner, "From Conduit Community to Commercial Network? Water in London, 1500-1725," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* eds. Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). See also Hardy "Water and the Search for Public Health," 250-82.

streets pumps and wells, where poor people who cannot afford to pay for water can obtain it for nothing.²³

However, for those that could afford piped water it was rarely available throughout the day and many homes were restricted to short daily periods of two or three hours. To ensure water was continuously available it was stored in cisterns sometimes located in the kitchen or in the ‘front area’, that small space in the sub-basement which gave access to the coal hole and light to the kitchen.²⁴ Another favoured location was the backyard where they could be near a wash house.

Away from the elegant terraces which typified only part of the ‘new’ building during the eighteenth century, vernacular housing shared in a common aspiration for access to piped water. This ‘humbler domestic architecture’ encompassed a host of small dwellings and proto-industrial buildings.²⁵ Most were occupied by the rising middling sort, many of whom employed a domestic servant. In Peter Earle’s examination of the Marriage Duties Assessment of 1695, he identified 56.8% of households that kept servants kept only one and of those 96% were female.²⁶ Some of these single-servant households chose to either call in extra assistance in the form of a washerwoman or send washing out.

Yet these rising middling households were not the only ones to use washerwomen. Those at the bottom of the social scale also used their services, often because they lacked the facilities to wash for themselves. This embraced a wide range of men and women, including domestic servants, apprentices, labourers and casual workers. John Eustace, for instance, had been employed as upper coachman to Lord Clarendon and Henry Langham

²³ César de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in 1725-1729: The Letters of Monsieur César de Saussure to his Family* reprint (London: The Book Depository, 2015), 31.

²⁴ Neil Burton and Dan Cruikshank, *Life in the Georgian City* (London: Viking, 1990), 88.

²⁵ Peter Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth-Century London: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 7.

²⁶ Table 4.6 ‘Distribution of Domestic Servants’. Total number of households = 176, sampled St Mary le Bow and St Michael Bassishaw because these parishes distinguished between domestic servants and apprentices. Earle, *City Full of People*, 125.

was apprenticed to his brother, an upholsterer, before going into service. During their trial for theft at the Old Bailey in 1779 Sarah Betney gave evidence that she was washerwoman to both defendants, although neither was in employment at the time of the theft.²⁷ In a similar manner, James Bowden stole a great coat from a stable in Rickman Street, where he had been working. At his trial in March 1793, Bowden told the court that he taken a coat to Robert Mulacaster to be pawned for half a crown since he ‘owed a little money to his washerwoman’.²⁸

For households without a servant the burden of laundry, in the first instance, would fall on the wife. Sometimes however this was not possible, in John Ramsey’s lodgings in Compton Street, Clerkenwell his ‘wife had been unwell for a good while’ and as a result he had taken his linen ‘to the washerwoman’ for almost four years.²⁹ In London, washerwomen and laundresses served clients across the social spectrum, from assisting laundry-maids and other servants in élite households, to helping a single servant and her mistress in middling households or washing linen and the occasional item for those without facilities or little money of their own.

Washerwoman and laundresses

Peter Earle’s figures suggest that 11.1% of female workers were laundresses or chars in early eighteenth-century London and a further 25.4% were employed in domestic service.³⁰ Earle draws these figures from female deponents at the London Consistory Court between 1695 and 1725. It may be easy to assume that these figures would

²⁷ *OBP*, 17th February 1779, Frederick John Eustace and Henry Langham (t17790217-34).

²⁸ *OBP*, 10th April 1793, James Bowden (t17930410-16).

²⁹ *OBP*, 7th May 1788, James Wilkinson (t17880507-52).

³⁰ Laundresses and washerwoman attended to laundry while chars might be involved in any form of domestic work particularly household cleaning. Peter Earle, “The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Economic History Review* 42, no. 3 (1 August 1989): 328–53.

disproportionately include women in domestic occupations since much of the evidence considered by the court, in which women might be liable to give evidence, related to the home and its immediate surroundings. Leonard Schwarz's examination of female employment in London suggests that these figures remained 'remarkably similar' in the 1851 census at 11%.³¹ Throughout the century and more, between Earle's figures and the 1851 census Schwarz's also suggests that there was 'no significant expansion or contraction in the variety of trades open to women.'³² Paid laundry work remained a slippery category, often difficult to quantify given that there was a very grey area between domestic servants, laundry-maids, washerwomen and laundresses - some of whom dipped in and out of the workforce, for instance occasionally taking in laundry to supplement their household income at difficult times or to help out a neighbour. This grey area is highlighted by Tim Meldrum who noted how women often assisted one another with the wash, sometimes this help was given by the mistress of the household, like Susannah Burnaby whose mistress helped hang out the washing in the summer of 1679.³³ Other, general servants like Martha Arrowsmith relied on assistance where they could find it, in her case the maid and apprentice next door who 'helped in her washing' in 1697.³⁴ In 1745 Anne Colstone, a washerwoman in the West End, called on her neighbour, Catharine Bradley, to help her iron on Saturday mornings.³⁵ Peter Earle's investigation into women's work in the early eighteenth century noted how even though wives were ostensibly supported by their husbands, some still worked as washerwomen.³⁶

³¹ L. D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 19.

³² Schwarz tempers this assertion with a consideration of the vast number of trades which women were beginning to enter – albeit in small numbers. *Ibid.*

³³ Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, 146.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

³⁵ *OBP*, 4th December 1745, Catharine Bradley (t17451204-12).

³⁶ Earle, "Female Labour Market," 345.

Data collection from the associational charity, the Marine Society, also throws light on the prevalence of washerwomen and laundresses amongst the working poor. This charity initially took poor and vagrant boys and apprenticed them into the sea service. By the 1770s however, ‘the children catered for tended to come exclusively from the settled and respectable poor’.³⁷ Dianne Payne’s analysis of the registers of the 1770s and 1780s identified ‘638 mothers who were employed in a hundred different occupations or trades.’³⁸ Of these, she noted 172 or 27% of the women identified their occupation as ‘washerwoman’. The register also noted these washerwomen’s literacy, 17% of whom claimed that they were able to read and a further 41% claimed they were able to both read and write.³⁹ These notably high figures reflected the constituency from which the parents were drawn namely, ‘the respectable poor’ and ‘artisans and craftsmen’.⁴⁰ By the second half of the eighteenth century ‘washerwoman’ was a respectable occupation for a working woman.

Who were washerwomen and laundresses?

In many ways Sarah Malcolm was a typical young woman from a respectable lower middling family. She was born in County Durham in 1710 or 11 and grew up being able to both read and write. However, through circumstances beyond her control the family was thrown on hard times, and, after some years in Ireland, Sarah accompanied her parents to London where she went into service. Sarah moved from job to job before obtaining a place at a public house near Temple Bar. Here, she was able to gain further employment as a

³⁷ Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "The Marine Society", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 17th January 2017).

³⁸ Dianne Payne, "Children of the Poor in London, 1700-1780" (PhD diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2008), 16.

³⁹ Statistics compiled from National Maritime Museum: MSY/O/1-4, Marine Society Register of Boys sent as Servants on the King’s ships, 1770-1780. Payne, "Children of the Poor," 176.

⁴⁰ Hitchcock *et al.* "The Marine Society".

laundress to several residents in chambers at the Inns of Court including a Mrs Duncomb and latterly Mr Kerrel of the Inner Temple. Sarah was not the only laundress on her landing. Ann Oliphant washed for a near neighbour of the Duncomb household. Indeed, each set of chambers or rooms made their own arrangements for laundry services. However, in early February 1733 Lydia Duncomb, her companion Mrs Harrison, and their servant Ann Price were robbed and murdered. Sarah was subsequently tried and found guilty of the murder of her one-time employer and was hanged in one of the most notorious cases of the 1730s. Aside from the very end of her life, much of Malcolm's story was commonplace amongst London's washerwomen and laundresses – a recent immigrant to the metropolis, some time spent in service, able and literate.

The Inns of Court provided a very specific environment, with many legal and public offices in the locality it was the home and place of work to a large population of legal professions. The Inns and their environs provided both temporary accommodation for those visiting London during the Law terms and more permanent spaces for those living there full-time. As a result, a large service industry grew-up in order to serve the needs of these residents and this naturally included laundry services. Women who washed for those at the Inns of Court were notably referred to as laundresses rather than the customary 'washerwoman' used elsewhere in the metropolis. As lodgings across the Inns left little room for laundry work, space and circumstance dictated that many residents were 'obliged to trust the keys, their chambers, their properties... ..to others' so that they were able to go about their business of providing fresh clothing and linen.⁴¹ Women often combined their work as a laundress at the Inns with other services, for instance cleaning. Martha Mills, in addition to working as laundress to Mr Lloyd at the Inner Temple, also acted as a

⁴¹ Anonymous, *The Annals of Newgate; Or, Malefactors Register*. Vol. II. (London: J. Wenman, 1776), 155-156.

caretaker, keeping his keys when he was not in town. Employment as a laundress was

Age	Total employed as % of total female population	% of employed engaged in laundry
10-14	13.0	1.4
15-19	58.6	2.8
20-24	60.7	3.7
25-29	47.7	5.1
30-34	39.8	8.3
35-39	38.2	11.3
40-44	39.9	14.3
45-49	41.3	16.0
50-54	42.9	17.7
55-59	42.9	18.2
60-64	43.2	18.4
65-70	42.1	17.1
70 and over	35.3	16.2
All women aged 10 and over	43.1	8.6

Table 4.1 1851 Census: women's occupation by age (laundry work).⁴²

largely based on personal recommendation by other residents in the Temple. In many ways the Inns of Court were a very distinct environment yet, they form a very knowing model of the types of arrangements that were common throughout the metropolis.

The flexibility of washing or laundry as an occupation was critical in its adoption at particular points in a woman's life-cycle. Few girls and young women turned towards laundry work preferring instead to work as servants or in the needle trades. A place as a servant offered the security of a place to live, regular food and a wage, albeit a small one. A single woman might also establish her own settlement after a period of employment, thereby ensuring that she would not be returned to that of her birth should she fall on hard times. Working as a washerwoman after marriage and the almost inevitable birth of children was certainly possible. Washing in their own home was relatively common and small children contributed to the business as soon as

⁴² Adapted from Table 2.3 1851 census: women's occupation by age in Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation*, 47.

they were able. Children like Sarah Whatman. The eleven year old daughter of Sarah Allen, a washerwoman, was very quickly drawn into the family business.

In October 1800 she was asked to deliver a bundle of clean laundry to her mother's client, Mr Pennington at the corner of Chapel Street and Lamb's Conduit Street. In the early evening she was robbed of the parcel of clean linen. Luckily for Sarah she was unharmed and able to give evidence at the Old Bailey that saw the thief convicted. Young children were often used to collect and deliver laundry. Married women with a working husband were able to contribute to the household budget, sustaining them in lean times and even permitting small family luxuries at other times. By drawing on rich networks of friends and relatives and even some paid childcare washerwomen were often able to maintain their business throughout their child bearing years. These patterns of work were probably much easier to sustain in a large city like London, where there were many more possibilities for new clients. Poor widows were particularly drawn to laundry work. Of the 46 washerwomen in the Marine Society dataset available on the *London Lives* website all were named as they boy's nearest relative, indicating that they were either widows or possibly deserted mothers.⁴³ Older women offered a wealth of experience in the laundry trade and proffered the 'respectable' face of the industrious poor. One particular drawback, however, was the inability of a woman to gain a settlement through her work as a washerwoman unless she was able to earn sufficient to rent property of £10 per annum. If a widow, she was liable to be removed to her husband's place of settlement - somewhere she may have never lived or had any connection. However, laundering and washing was an occupation that was easy to move into and if a woman was able to support herself and family then parochial authorities were unlikely to want to get involved.

⁴³ *LL*, search = 'All text where the transcription matches 'washerwoman' and document type is 'Marine Society Boys, 1770-1873', 21st January 2017.

This notion of the industrious poor; in this instance a class of women who were able to support themselves by their own hand, provided inspiration for John Fielding's plan for creating a public laundry. In 1758 Fielding, then chief magistrate at Bow Street, published details of a charitable enterprise which he believed would provide employment for both reformed prostitutes and female children of the poor who were at risk of becoming 'prey of the bawd and debauchee.'⁴⁴ The girls were to be bound in apprenticeships at the laundry, where they would be taught to read, write, sew, undertake plain cookery and learn how to wash and iron. It was Fielding's intention that the charity would provide a steady stream of, now respectable, young women for domestic service. He believed that after a few years the laundry would become self-sustaining 'As many families have not the convenience of washing their linen at home, it is to be hoped they will send to the public laundry'.⁴⁵ Fielding's proposal for a 'public laundry' was not without criticism and in *A Congratulatory Epistle from a Reformed Rake*, the author pointed out the innate difficulties in offering a physically gruelling occupation as an alternative to prostitution. The author posited that,

*Washing and Severe Industry, then, are the incentives to Chastity - By these Prostitution is to be defeated, and Whoredom exterminated. An Apprenticeship to Washing, and Hard-labour are the promised Rewards for Chastity - Fornication is punished with fine Cloaths, Good-Living and Indolence!*⁴⁶

Undoubtedly the work of a laundress was hard and physically unremitting and not unreasonably the author went on to point out that many prostitutes had formerly been servant-maids or, using his favoured sobriquet, '*Mop-Squeezers*'.⁴⁷ Thus, it would prove difficult to bind women in an apprenticeship of several years only for them to return to a former employment. In the event only part of Fielding's proposal was put into practice, a

⁴⁴ *London Chronicle* (London, England), February 11, 1758 - February 14, 1758; Issue 176.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Anonymous. *A Congratulatory Epistle from a Reformed Rake, to John F-----G, Esq; Upon the New Scheme of Reclaiming Prostitutes* (London: G. Burnet, 1758), 21-22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*,

home for ‘friendless and deserted girls under twelve years of age’ was established in July 1758 and named the Asylum for Female Orphans. It initially stood in St George’s Fields, Southwark. In the following month, Robert Dingley’s Magdalen Hospital, a home for penitent prostitutes in Prescott Street, Whitechapel, was opened ready to admit its first residents.

Fielding identified laundry work as one of the few occupations available to poor women and by implication we must assume those considered respectable.⁴⁸ Certainly, in charitable circles an occupation given as ‘laundress’ or ‘washerwoman’ was sufficient guarantee of respectability and as we have seen, it was deemed a suitable occupation for ‘reformed’ prostitutes and young women. Their inevitable lowly origins however, made it easy to disparage washerwomen. In Robert Holloway’s satire on the magistracy entitled ‘*The Rat-Trap*’ he uses the allegory of a washerwoman and her laundry to denigrate the Middlesex magistrates, Thomas Bishop and to a lesser extent Saunders Welch. In it, Holloway asks,

Who would have prophecied that the *illustrious* offspring of a BUCKING TUB, the first-born of a washerwoman, swaddled in soap-suds, and stiffened with clear starch, could have attained a post of more importance than mercury to a BLUE RAG, or herald to clean linen.⁴⁹

Holloway’s characterisation shows he had more than a passing knowledge of laundry practices. Likewise, there was an expectation that his readership were equally familiar with terms like the ‘bucking tub’ or ‘blue rag’. The underlying scorn however, revolves around belittling the magistrate’s class and parentage with a similar expectation that the readership would be aware of the implications of the comparison. Occasionally though literature drew on this common body of knowledge concerning washerwomen’s class and physicality to

⁴⁸ The only other he cited in his plan for public laundries was working a ‘green-stall, or barrow.’ *London Chronicle* (London, England), February 11, 1758 - February 14, 1758; Issue 176.

⁴⁹ Robert Holloway, *The Rat-Trap, Dedicated to The Right Hon. Lord Mansfield, Chief Justice of England; Addressed To Sir John Fielding, Knt.* (London: G. Allen, 1773), 28.

provide a form of cross-class sexual frisson. The 1789 edition of *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* recounts an encounter between Miss Gr-t, of 46 Newman Street, Oxford Road and a 'certain merchant, near Leadenhall street'.⁵⁰ Who,

visits her constantly every Saturday forenoon, as there is little to do upon change on that day. No sooner does Miss see Mr. B—enter, than she orders the necessary implements for the washing of foul linen, such as a kettle of hot water, soap dish, wash-tub and the like. These being produced, with the maids dirty bed gown, which he puts on, having first stript off his coat, and tuck'd up his shirt sleeves, he sets to work, and in a few seconds, gets up to the elbows in suds. After thus amusing himself till he is nearly out of breath, he wipes his bands, changes his cloaths, presents her with two guineas, makes his obeisance, and retires.⁵¹

The transgressive act of cross-dressing is compounded by choosing a strong female figure as a role-model. This perhaps hinted at some form of sexual availability on part of the washerwoman, although poverty and class seemed to be the only link between prostitution and laundry work. As an occupation laundry work offered women an opportunity to be independent yet retain a measure of respectability. In part because much of what she did was familiar even to those who had no experience of laundry work themselves. Or indeed so familiar, that it set up a deep need for participatory experience across gender boundaries.

Wages and payment

Wages are difficult to estimate. There are few reliable sources and those that exist are incomplete or fragmentary. But occasionally these fragments allow us to identify household accounts which identify laundry costs. In 1694 the Leveson family paid £1 per week for their family laundry to be washed in London. Since their rent was £3 per week, clean linen was of obvious importance to the household. However, as we are unable to identify the size and nature of the household it is almost impossible to estimate how much

⁵⁰ Anon. *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies: Or, Man of Pleasure's Kalendar, for the Year 1789*. (London: H. Ranger, 1789), 68; Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies*, 172.

⁵¹ Anon. *Harris's List (1789)*, 68-69.

laundry was involved in this weekly task.⁵² For some washerwomen, like Mrs Marriot, their clientele were captive since she was the wife of the landlord. In the 1730s and 1740s, George Thomson, a bachelor lodged with her and her husband. Thomson paid 2 shillings 3 pence per fortnight for his board, which also included payment for his two servants. Mrs Marriot charged him between 5 shillings and £1 8 shillings a month for his laundry, although it is quite possible that her bill also included a certain amount of laundry for his servants.⁵³ Anthony Robinson, employee of the East India Company, was about to board the *Europe*, when he remembered to settle his washerwoman's bill which amounted to seven shillings, a bill which may have otherwise remained unpaid for some weeks.⁵⁴ Alice Dolan suggests that washerwomen's wages outside London were similar to those paid for spinning, although spinning was fairly arduous in itself it was somewhat less physically demanding than laundry work. In rural Northamptonshire during 1754 and 1755, Dolan identified wages of 3^d, 4^d and 6^d per day paid to washerwomen.⁵⁵ Although, Mary Collier, noted poet and Hampshire washerwoman, put women's rural labour at 6^d to 8^d per day in 1739.⁵⁶

This seems a little on the low side for London's washerwomen since even workhouse inmates received between 1^d and 3^d per day as an incentive payment for assisting with the laundry.⁵⁷ In 1790, Susannah Brush was employed on a daily rate of two shillings and sixpence to work for Elizabeth Hall in her wash house in Jermyn Street.⁵⁸

This rate seems completely anomalous compared to others mentioned. If it was sustained

⁵² Sambrook, *Country House Servant*, 186.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

⁵⁴ *OBP*, 21st May 1806, Christopher Dempsey and William Browner (t18060521-48).

⁵⁵ Alice Dolan, "The Fabric of Life: Linen and Life Cycle in England, 1678-1810" (PhD diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2015), 174.

⁵⁶ Donna Landry, "The Labouring-Class Women Poets: "Hard Labour we most chearfully pursue"," in *Women and Poetry, 1660-175* eds. Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 227.

⁵⁷ See chapter five of this thesis, 'Workhouses'.

⁵⁸ Given as 'German Street' but the balance of probability suggests this is Jermyn Street, St James, Westminster. *OBP*, 24th February 1790, Susannah Brush (t17900224-8).

for six days a week then the 15 shillings that Susannah would earn was comparable to a semi-skilled male worker. Yet this was rarely the case since women like Susannah were often employed for only a day or two in order to assist with the wash.

By 1818 laundresses were advertising their prices, Mrs Miller of Old Rochester Row, advertised by piece, ‘Gentlemen’s Shirts, 4d; Ladies Dresses, 6d; Towels &c. 8d per doz; Sheets, 6d per pair’.⁵⁹ Washerwomen, like many of those involved in the service economy were paid on an ad hoc basis. Unless a regular set of clients were established then a washerwoman’s existence was often hand to mouth. Testimony given at the Old Bailey reflected their relative poverty with a number of washerwomen describing themselves as poor. Women like Martha Briant who described herself to the court as a ‘poor washerwoman’ or Mary White, wife of a labourer, who also told the court that she was a ‘poor washerwoman’.⁶⁰ In 1761 Mary Hinds told the court that she was an ironer to a laundress and earned on 3 shillings a week. Her circumstances confirmed her poverty since she lodged in a single room shared with a couple and their small child in Peter Street, Soho.⁶¹ In another example, Joane Lane indignantly told the court that ‘she was a poor WasherWoman , and work'd hard for her Living, and was but an old Woman, not likely to make a Whore’ after Gilbert Mackduggel accused her of being a prostitute and pick-pocket.⁶² For women like Margaret Young, their earnings were never going to be quite enough to enable them to resist the temptation of theft. In 1715 Margaret was convicted of stealing a silver watch and cup, in her defence she said,

that she had work'd hard in washing of cloaths, scowring, etc. for getting an honest livelihood to her self and children, but not being able to subsist by that her labour,

⁵⁹ *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Thursday, June 25, 1818; Issue 15335.

⁶⁰ *OBP*, 27th October 1790, Edward Gardner and Mary Parker (t17901027-6) and *OBP*, 20th February 1793, William Butterworth (t17930220-2).

⁶¹ *OBP*, 9th December 1761, Mary Hinds (t17611209-26).

⁶² *OBP*, 3rd April 1695, Joane Lane (t16950403-9).

and poverty growing upon her, she was easily tempted to use the wicked trade of stealing, which she had follow'd for several years past.⁶³

Not all washerwomen were poor however. Some managed to expand their business, initially in small ways, for instance by taking on an apprentice. Martha Sibley of St James, Clerkenwell was one such washerwoman. She took on Hannah Wisby from the rural parish of Cheshunt in south Hertfordshire. Hannah was probably a child bound as an apprentice through her parish, although by the time she was thirteen or fourteen years old the apprenticeship had foundered.⁶⁴ In the 1730s Ann Palmer told the magistrate in a settlement examination that she had been apprenticed to a Mrs Carwell, a washerwoman near St George's Field in the parish of St Mary at Lambeth for a period of five years.⁶⁵ Taking a parish apprentice was often little more than acquiring labour or a 'domestic drudge' for the cost of feeding and clothing a child. However, the apprentice came with an inducement in the form of a few pounds which the parish would pay to the person taking the apprentice.⁶⁶ For the parish apprentice however, there was some small element of choice, like that made by ten year old Garthrite Richardson. A few days before Christmas in 1788, Garthrite was admitted to St Martin's workhouse in Westminster. Five months later, in May 1789, she was placed as apprentice with Mrs Sarah Landley, a laundress at No. 10 Knightsbridge, 'Upon Likeing'.⁶⁷ 'Liking' was an opportunity for the child to refuse the apprenticeship; both parties had up to 40 days before formally agreeing to the apprenticeship. Within a fortnight Garthrite was back in the workhouse having found

⁶³ Quoted in Robert B. Shoemaker, "Print and the Female Voice: Representations of Women's Crime in London, 1690–1735," *Gender and History* 22, no. 1 (March 2010): 82.

⁶⁴ *OBP*, 12th October 1748, Hannah Wisby (t17481012-14).

⁶⁵ St Martin-in-the-Fields Pauper Biographies Project, Pauper Examinations, Ann Palmer, 5th November 1739, *London Lives 1660-1800*, smdsset_115_58993 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017) Westminster Archives Centre, F5031.

⁶⁶ George, *London Life*, 223.

⁶⁷ St Martin-in-the-Fields Pauper Biographies Project, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Register, Garthrite Richardson, 4th May 1789, *London Lives 1660-1800*, smdswhr_823_82316 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017) Westminster Archives Centre, F4080.

laundry work not to her liking. In June she refused a further placement and only in August, 1789 was she bound as apprentice to a Mrs Lostcamp occupation unknown.⁶⁸

An indicator of the relative wealth of a washerwoman or laundress was the acquisition of property. Some, with sufficient goods and property thought it expedient to take out fire insurance. In 1777, premises in Five Feet Lane, Southwark were insured for the sum of £200, with the Sun Insurance Company. This policy was taken out in the name of Joseph Atkinson, and although Joseph gave no occupation for himself, his wife was identified as a ‘washerwoman’.⁶⁹ Some of the policies were taken out in the washerwoman’s own name. Elizabeth Medes of Meeting House Court in Great Eastcheap took out insurance for £100 in 1780.⁷⁰ While Elizabeth Stanton with a property near the George Stairs in Shad Thames, was insured for £300 and gave her occupation as ‘laundress’.⁷¹ Although the sums insured tended to be amongst the lower values recorded, this was no indicator of their business turnover or necessarily the size of their business. It did however suggest that these business women were not near the very bottom of the social scale living a financially impoverished existence. They had risen above the lowest ranks of many of their sister washerwomen to a more comfortable life. A very few washerwomen and laundresses left wills that were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC). This court administered probate where ‘value of the goods involved was greater than five pounds, and the property was held in two (or more) dioceses within Great Britain.’⁷² It superseded lower church courts and concomitantly the fees reflected this seniority. Only five laundresses living in metropolitan London had their wills proved at the PCC, with a

⁶⁸ LL, St Martin’s Workhouse Admission and Discharge Register, Garthrite Richardson, 30th June 1789 (smdswhr_823_82345).

⁶⁹ Fire Insurance Registers, Fire Insurance Policy Register, 1777-1786, wife of Joseph Atkins, 1777, *London Lives*, fire_1775_1780_92_9223 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017) London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

⁷⁰ LL, Fire Insurance Policy Register, wife of Joseph Atkins, 1777 (fire_1775_1780_591_59109).

⁷¹ LL, Fire Insurance Policy Register, Elizabeth Stanton, 1777 (fire_1775_1780_40_4020).

⁷² Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, “Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills (PCC)”, *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 21st January 2017).

further two in living Richmond, Surrey.⁷³ Of the four washerwomen listed only one lived in metropolitan London and another, Susan Parker, was listed as a ‘washerwoman belonging to His Majesty’s Hospital Ship Union’ one in Surrey and the other in Wiltshire.⁷⁴ Of the two wills examined, those for Elizabeth Buckanan and Susan Parker; neither gave details of monetary bequests nor bequests relating personal property.

Soap and the complexity of the wash

Laundering was a complex business and not always a simple process of soaking, beating and rinsing fabrics until they were clean. Some textiles responded better to washing in hot water. Other, more delicate textiles, like laces, muslins and silks required specialist treatments. Even by the beginning of the century, published advice for female servants on the laundering and starching of household garments was commonplace. Instructions for cleaning ‘Tiffanys or Lawns’ appeared in the *Compleat Maid-Servant* of 1685, the volume ran into several popular editions.⁷⁵ It set out various duties and skills considered essential for female domestic servants. The section on the chambermaid began by outlining general tasks and other requirements for the perfect household servant, including personal cleanliness. The first detailed instructions were for the washing of various delicate or

⁷³ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, probate for those giving occupation as ‘laundress’ 1700-1820: Rebecca Gordon, St Katherine, London, Dec 1709, TNA PROB 11/512/394; Elizabeth Buckanan, St George Hanover Square, Middlesex, Nov 1769, TNA PROB 11/952/316; Susanna Bowdlar otherwise Bowdler, Westminster, Middlesex, Dec 1813, TNA PROB 11/1550/431; Elizabeth Bryan, St James Westminster, Jan 1793, TNA PROB 11/1227/40; Elizabeth Benton, widow of Little Scotland Yard, Whitehall, Feb 1818, TNA PROB 11/1601/6 and in suburban Surrey: Ann Hattway, Richmond, Surrey, Jun 1800, TNA PROB 11/1343/236 and Jane Collick, Richmond, Surrey Jul 1788, TNA PROB 11/1167/297.

⁷⁴ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, probate for those giving occupation as ‘washerwoman’ 1700-1820: Elizabeth Barlow, Widow of Christ Church, Surrey, Jul 1762, TNA PROB 11/877/490; Susanna Coverley, Windlesham, Surrey, Feb 1790, TNA PROB 11/ 1188/271; Susan Parker, His Majesty’s Hospital Ship Union Number 8, May 1798, TNA PROB 11/1307/79 and Elizabeth Barrington, Chippenham, Wilts, Jun 1817, TNA PROB 11/1593/430.

⁷⁵ Anon. *The Compleat Servant-Maid: Or, The Young Maidens Tutor*. 7th ed. (London: printed for E. Tracy, 1704). This volume was an unauthorised version of Hannah Woolley’s earlier household manual. For further details see Considine, John. “Wolley, Hannah (b. 1622?, d. in or after 1674).” John Considine In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., edited by David Cannadine. (Oxford: OUP, 2004). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29957> (accessed June 15th 2016).

difficult textiles. It began by describing how ‘Tiffanys’⁷⁶ were first soaped ‘on the Hems or Laces only with Crown Soap’ then washed in three hot lathers, the last being ‘thin of the Soap’.⁷⁷ Next, the garment was dried over brimstone without rinsing, in preparation for the starching. This began by mixing up some starch of ‘reasonable thickness’ adding laundry blue as required, and some alum, it was then boiled up into a thick paste before straining.⁷⁸ While this paste was still hot it was used to thoroughly wet the textile which was then dried before the fire while being continually rubbed and clapped between clean hands. The fabric was then ironed using a piece of pre-cut paper between the iron and the garment. This would produce a textile looking, according to the manual, ‘glossy like new Tiffany.’⁷⁹ Lightweight lawns were treated in a similar manner, except they were ironed with a wrung out wet cloth instead of paper. Indeed, scattered throughout the sections on the duties of a chambermaid and laundry maid, were increasingly complex instructions for washing, cleaning and removing stains from garments and household items. The *Compleat Servant-Maid* suggested that in large households there was a clear delineation of duties between the two types of servant. The chambermaid dealt with small delicate and fiddly items of personal apparel such as the tiffany and lawns above and the laundry maid dealt with the bulk of the household washing, particularly linens. This was reiterated by Hannah Glasse in *The Servant’s Directory*, first published in 1760, where she noted that a ‘Young Chamber-maid’ should be able to wash laces and small linen, while instructions for the laundry-maid largely concerned linen and the ‘great wash’.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ ‘A kind of thin transparent silk; also a transparent gauze muslin, cobweb lawn’. “tiffany, n.1”. OED Online. June 2016. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/Entry/201887?rskey=3YUdXk&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed June 16th 2016).

⁷⁷ Anon., *The Compleat Servant-Maid*, 59.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ H. Glass, *The Servant’s Directory or House-Keeper’s Companion* (London: W. Johnston, 1760), v.

Glasse suggested that a laundry maid needed little instruction, as ‘she is generally brought up to it from her Youth’ and that ‘every poor Woman teaches her Children to wash, that’s a thing they can’t do without’.⁸¹ Nevertheless, she went on to outline many ‘Hints and Remarks’ from her own experience that might be used for removing spots and blemishes from garments.⁸² These included removing stains from silks, satins, muslins, cambricks and damasks, as well as the more work-a-day linens and woollens. Sometimes this form of small spot stain removal was advocated instead of washing the whole garment. A small patch would be treated and perhaps then dry-brushed and folded before being worn again. Glasse’s *Directory* also contained detailed instructions for drying, starching and ironing much of which required very dexterous work on the part of the laundress. Advice on how to pin garments to frames or boards in order to achieve the perfect finish formed small but important elements of the book.

Washing linen was an altogether more physically demanding job, particularly if it was a ‘great wash’ or wash that included a significant number of large bulky items. A household may have undertaken these washes every month or six weeks, although in some households an annual wash was the norm. The diaries of Richard Hall, a silk hosier near London Bridge, suggested that his household undertook a ‘great wash’ about four times a year.⁸³ Institutions for the poor including workhouses and large charities, ‘shifted and sheeted’ in a regular cycle, with a fresh set of linen for inmates each Sunday and sheets changed once a month.⁸⁴ In the large Westminster workhouses these great washes were

⁸¹ Ibid., vi and 45.

⁸² Ibid., 45.

⁸³ Mike Rendell, “Suds, Soap, and Washday Blues – Time to Invent the Washing Machine!” *Georgian Gentleman: The Musings of Richard Hall 1729-1801*. <http://mikerendell.com/suds-soap-and-washday-blues-time-to-invent-the-washing-machine/> accessed 18 November 2016. Patricia Malcolmson suggests that a monthly great wash was ‘still fairly common in the 1830s and 1840s’ in rural areas and small towns. Malcolmson, *English Laundresses*, 24.

⁸⁴ Bridewell Royal Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 20th June 1765, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, BBBRMG202080167. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

fairly continuous and will be discussed in detail in chapter five. Servants' laundry was often included as a perquisite of their job and done as part of the family cycle of laundry although many had to deal with their own personal linen.⁸⁵

One popular system of washing was bucking or a 'buck wash', this method involved cycles of soaking and rinsing linen in lye or other caustic solution. Lye was generally made by passing water through wood ash in order to produce a strong alkali. But this process was uncommon in London, partly because wood and hence lye was not cheaply and freely available, and partly because the process relied on clear running water to remove the noxious residues from the wash.⁸⁶ Hannah Glasse plaintively told her readers that, 'In some Places they buck their Clothes, which I do not understand, neither is it needful in *London*, nor is their Running-water and Chrystal-streams for that use.'⁸⁷ Preparation for the wash began the night before when the water was drawn. Some advised letting the water settle for several days before use since it was often quite murky although for those with a cistern this may not have been necessary.⁸⁸ For 'harsh Water', readers of *A Present for a Servant-Maid* were advised to put wood ash into a piece of linen rag and throw it in the water, where it would soon become 'soft as Milk, and save Soap.'⁸⁹ The copper or other large vessel used to heat the water was cleaned and made ready for use. Other than tubs, the copper was probably the most important tool for the laundress. Patricia Malcolmsen suggests that these vessels could contain up to 20 gallons of water.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65-66.

⁸⁶ Malcolmsen suggests that dung may also have been utilised but the practice was dying out by the early nineteenth century. An alternative method of soaking in order to remove stains was to use stale urine as a natural source of ammonia, Malcolmsen, *English Laundresses*, 4-5.

⁸⁷ Glasse, *Servant's Directory*, 46.

⁸⁸ Anon., *A Present for a Servant-Maid* (Dublin: Printed by and for George Faulkner, 1744), 72.

⁸⁹ 'Harsh water' or 'hard water' is defined by its high mineral content. It is formed when natural water moves through limestone and chalk deposits made up of calcium and magnesium carbonates. The properties of hard water prevent soap suds from forming and allow a soap scum to develop on the surface of the water. *Present for a Servant-Maid*, 71.

⁹⁰ Malcolmsen, *English Laundresses*, 30.

For convenience, they were usually set in a brickwork surround with a stoke hole and grate towards the bottom of the structure. The thin copper walls of the vessel transmitted heat quickly and efficiently from the fire in the grate. But it still took hours to heat enough to begin the wash. Organised households were advised to sort the linen while the water was heating, separating coarse items from the fine, and the large items from the small. The household of James Gent made similar preparations the evening before the wash. In the morning Gent's maid woke him around five, the washerwoman having slept in the house with her and 'the linen was spread in the house, ready sorted'.⁹¹ Laundresses and washerwomen were known for rising early in order to set the water heating and begin preparation for the wash. In May 1770, Elizabeth Smith, a servant in the Greeves household, deposed that she went to bed at eight o'clock 'because she was to get up at 12 to Wash'.⁹² Elizabeth was to help her mistress, Mrs Greeves and their washerwoman, Mrs Dagg with the great wash. Elizabeth Dagg arrived around 1.00am and was pleased to discover the water was already hot and ready to start the wash.⁹³

Soap was to be carefully chosen; newly made soap was a little too soft and tended to colour the linen after use. A harder, older soap went further thereby reducing costs. An estimate in *Madam Johnson's Present: Or, Every Young Woman's Companion* of the daily cost of soap for one person for 'Family Occasions, and washing all manner of things, both at home and abroad' was 1penny 2 farthings.⁹⁴ Similarly, the daily cost of soap for a 'Family in the middling Station of Life, consisting of a Man, his Wife, Four Children, and One Maid Servant' was 10 pence and 2 farthings.⁹⁵ As a weekly expense this was

⁹¹ *OBP*, 29th June 1785, John Godfrey (t17850629-84).

⁹² Old Bailey Sessions Papers, Justices' Working Papers, Information, 21st May 1770. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, LMOBPS450150222 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1 21st January 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, OB/SP/1770/05/17.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Mary Johnson, *Madam Johnson's Present: Or, Every Young Woman's Companion, in Useful and Universal Knowledge*, 5th ed. (London: W. Nicoll, 1769), 192.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

estimated at 6 shillings, 1 penny and 2 farthings.⁹⁶ This model assumed that washing would be done at home by the serving maid, with the possibility of assistance from the wife. Other costs like, fullers earth, starch, bluing and coals to heat the water were not specified separately. A saddler, an occupation further down the social scale, was estimated to spend one shilling a week on 'soap, blue and starch' for himself and family of three children in 1779 and similarly a journeyman tailor 8 pence a week in 1752.⁹⁷ For families that sent out their washing the costs were offset by the washerwoman or laundress supplying the soap, starch and coal to heat the water. Sometimes however, these arrangements became unsustainable, like the case of Audrey Ward; a laundress employed the governors at Charterhouse, who was unable to absorb the rising costs of soap any longer. After working there for many years, washing the table linen in the three halls twice a week she was eventually forced to petition the Governors. Audrey put her case simply,

your petitioner allowance is Tenn Shillings a week without any allowance for coals and candles being the same as when soap was two pence half penny a pound and that soap now being at five pence half penny a pound she finds by some years experience that the Sd allowance is to small to defray the expence of the work and the charges of a maid servant Your Lordship having many years since when soap was only four pence half penny a pound allowed the Matron five pounds per annum which she still injoys where your petitioner humbly prays yr Lordships to make for some addition there to in consideration of the high price of soap as Your Lordships has bin pleas'd to do by the Scholars Matron of this House for many years.⁹⁸

The governors granted the petition and made arrangements accordingly. This petition underlines the importance of soap in the economics of laundry work. Soap was relatively expensive, in part because it attracted excise duty which was not remitted until 1853. At the same time, domestic soap making was both arduous and comparatively expensive. In

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ George, *London Life*, 169-170.

⁹⁸ LMA: ACC/1876/G05/039/3/2, Charterhouse, Governors' Papers: Appointments, Petitions and Bonds.

London this was particularly difficult as wood ash, an important component of soap, was far less common.⁹⁹

Soap came in varying formats; from soft soap which was supplied to retailers in firkins to hard soaps of varying quality.¹⁰⁰ However, by mid-century soft semi-liquid soaps had waned in popularity to be replaced almost entirely by hard soap, sold by weight and cut into smaller blocks for retail in shops. Some of the cheaper soaps were very caustic and unsuitable for using on the skin yet they were perfect for removing stains on soiled linen. Advertising in the London press emphasised these qualities in respect of laundry, particularly during the first half of the eighteenth century. A typical example appeared in the *Daily Journal* of June 1730, when they ran an advert for the ‘Best Hard white Soap for Washing in general’ which accordingly washed linen ‘whiter and cheaper than any other soap whatever’ and would not ‘chafe the Laundresses hands’.¹⁰¹ This soap was made and sold at the sign of the Castle in Tooley Street and was available at a cost of 56 shillings per 112 lbs or 2 shillings per pound in weight. By the 1790s however, advertising for soap rarely mentioned laundry and focussed on its effects on the skin. An advert in 1791 began, ‘For the Ladies’ and went on ‘Purified Fragrant Almond Soap, whose Balsamic qualities for softening, smoothing, and beautifying the Skin, stand unrivalled, being manufactured from Almonds, is the only pure Soap in the known world’.¹⁰² Likewise, soap specifically aimed at men was often associated with shaving, in the same year 1791, men were told that the Alpine shaving cake made a ‘better and stronger lather than any other Soap, which will not fall on the face, nor cause the least smarting sensation, but render the skin smooth and

⁹⁹ Wood ash was a major component of lye which was either used in soap making or as a washing medium in itself.

¹⁰⁰ firkin, n. A small cask for liquids, fish, butter, etc., originally containing a quarter of a ‘barrel’ or half a ‘kilderkin’. OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/Entry/70579?rskey=HBhtli&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed November 25, 2016).

¹⁰¹ *Daily Journal* (London, England), Thursday, June 18, 1730; Issue 2948 and *Daily Journal* (London, England), Saturday, July 11, 1730; Issue 2968.

¹⁰² *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, February 16, 1791; Issue 5566.

easy to shave.¹⁰³ Soap moved from being largely advertised as an essential aid to laundry to a form of advertising that focussed on the skin, particularly that of the face. This mirrored the shift in focus of cleanliness which moved from linen as the primary site of cleanliness to the body as the century progressed. Much of this nuance however, was lost on the poor since they were unable to buy these costly scented and mottled soaps which became the principal focus of newspaper advertisements. For the poor, common soap remained an important commodity, central to their own cleanliness and that of the garments and linen which they washed.

The laundry began in earnest when everything was rubbed with soap; particular attention was paid to the grimy areas of garments and other items. The heated water was transferred from the copper to a large tub which traditionally stood on a three legged stool. Fine linen was washed first, using warm water; it was given a thorough soaking in the tub followed by modest agitation and gentle rubbing. This was removed from the water and spread out on a clean cloth. Next, coarse items were washed, this time with more vigour and hotter water. Like the fine linen, this was laid aside on a clean cloth and the water in the tub thrown away. Everything was soaped for a second time, and items washed in tubs of hot water. If it was still not clean then a third ‘lather’ was given.¹⁰⁴ For washerwomen taking in laundry from many clients this might become very complex. So some, like Elizabeth Dobbins worked to a system, first laying out the laundry and then putting it through tubs in rotation.¹⁰⁵ This work was very naturally very physical; the acts of kneading, squeezing, rubbing and wringing required considerable strength. Sheets, blankets and other large items required lifting from the washing tubs and back again, all of which added to the immense physical effort expended by the women of the household on

¹⁰³ *World (1787)* (London, England), Friday, March 4, 1791; Issue 1302.

¹⁰⁴ *Present for a Servant-Maid*, 72.

¹⁰⁵ *OBP*, 26th October 1814, Thomas Sharp (t18141026-2).

washing day. The washerwomen of Bridewell were observed by the matron to ensure that ‘the Linen belonging to the patients be Boiled as it ought to be and Washed in proper Suds.’¹⁰⁶ Stubborn stains were beaten with a battledore or beetle, a wooden washing implement that resembled a cricket bat. This would loosen the dirt. The washing bat could also be used for agitating the washing especially in very hot water, or wringing or otherwise smoothing the laundry.¹⁰⁷ Some linen items required boiling. These were soaped slightly and stone blue was mixed with the water to restore the ‘whiteness’ of the item.¹⁰⁸ The garments or other items were boiled and agitated in the copper before being removed to the tub. When it had cooled a little, sufficient for a hand wash to resume, any remains of the soap were washed out. All items were then rinsed in clean water and if they had not been blued before then this was added to the final rinse.

Fine printed cottons and chintzes required an altogether gentler treatment. Glasse suggested soaking them in pump water for an hour and then washing them in ‘strong-clear Suds.’¹⁰⁹ Coloured textiles were a particular problem since many dyes were not colour-fast, blue, green and yellow had a special tendency to fade and run. Soaping them at the beginning of the wash was to be avoided as was washing them in very hot water. Indeed their immersion in warm water was to be kept to a minimum, after washing garments were to be immediately plunged into cold water in order to minimise colours running. It was

¹⁰⁶ Bridewell Royal Hospital: Minutes of the Court of Governors, 19th June 1781. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, BBRMG202080167. (www.londonloves.org, version 1.1, 29th November 2016), London metropolitan Archives, City of London.

¹⁰⁷ battledore, n. 1. A beetle or wooden ‘bat’ used in washing, also (when made cylindrical) for smoothing out or ‘mangling’ linen clothes; hence also applied to similarly shaped instruments, e.g. the paddle of a canoe, a utensil for inserting loaves into an oven, or glass-ware into the kiln, etc. OED Online. June 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.idproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/Entry/16272?rskey=7PueEI&result=1> (accessed June 30, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ ‘Blueing’ the wash helped counteract the tendency of white items to pick up a yellowish tinge from the wash, particularly if soap was used. The laundry blue commonly used in the eighteenth century was either indigo obtained from the plant *indigofera tinctoria* or ultramarine blue from a naturally occurring mineral. The ultramarine was often referred to as ‘stone blue’. Sambrook, *Country House Servant*, 143.

¹⁰⁹ Glass, *The Servant’s Directory*, 48.

also advised not to allow items to touch when wet for fear of the colour bleeding from one garment to another. There were ways of dealing with colours that ran into white areas of the textile. After washing garments were to be soaked in a ‘Pail of soft Water, with half a pint of the best White-wine Vinegar’ and left to ‘lie an hour or two’.¹¹⁰ This would ensure garments were returned to their former state. Hannah Glasse’s *Directory* very vividly described much of this slapping, pressing, pulling, steaming and smoothing of textiles which had the effect of depicting laundresses and washerwomen as very hard-working, for which they gained a very deserved reputation. However, this physical work inevitably took its toll on the washerwoman’s body. Sarah Dwyer of the Crown in Rupert Street, St James was an ‘Old and Weak Woman’ but nevertheless carried out her occupation as a washerwoman.¹¹¹ In October 1774, struggling to carry a pail of water from the Yard to her upstairs room, she slipped on the stairs and in a few minutes died from her injuries. Bernadino Ramazzini noted in his book on work related conditions that laundresses and washerwomen were particularly prone to the cessation of their menstrual cycle. This, he attributed to cold wet legs and feet and their constant presence in a moisture laden atmosphere. He also noted the frequency of respiratory ailments aggravated by inhaling the fumes from boiling lye particularly when lime was added instead of wood ash.¹¹² These conditions were much less likely in London since women rarely used their feet to tread laundry and the lye wash was uncommon. However chapped and sore hands were relatively normal. Glasse sought to acknowledge and ameliorate some of these effects with a series of small recipes. For chapped hands she advocated small-beer and butter heated

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹¹¹ LL, Westminster Coroners: Sarah Dwyer, 15th October 1774 (WACWIC652140456).

¹¹² Bern Ramazini and Frederick Hoffman, *Health Preserved, in Two Treatises. I. On the Diseases of Artificers, Which by Their Particular Callings They Are Most Liable To. With the Methods of Avoiding Them, and Their Cure. II. On the Distempers, Which Arise from Particular Climates, Situations and Methods of Life. With Directions for the Choice of a Healthy Air, Soil and Water*, trans. R. James. 2nd ed. (London: John Whiston and John Woodyer, 1750), 188-190.

together and rubbed into the hands and for tender feet, soaking them in hot water and bran. In addition, the soles of the feet could be rubbed with a little brandy or gin, this provided some ease as well as toughening them up.¹¹³

Increasingly intricate methodologies for washing and cleaning textiles formed an enormous corpus of knowledge which for the better part, resided with laundry maids, laundresses and washerwomen. However, much of this knowledge was appropriated by writers of domestic manuals, unsurprisingly many of whom were women. In turn, these manuals became progressively popular through the eighteenth century. Authors like, Hannah Wooley or Hannah Glasse included lengthy sections on laundering garments and household linens. As the number of households employing a servant rose, then so did the number of inexperienced housekeepers and wives seeking advice on all aspects of household management.¹¹⁴ Advice on domestic cleanliness and laundry however, came in many formats including, in 1730, a treatise on bugs by John Southall. Here, Southall reminded householders ‘If you put out your Linnen to wash, let no Washer-woman’s Basket be brought into your Houses; for they often prove as dangerous to those that have no Buggs’.¹¹⁵ Despite the appearance of household manuals and other printed advice women were able to capitalise on their knowledge of laundry work. This commodification of knowledge by poor working women gave them choices, sometimes it was whether or not to stay out of the workhouse and at other times to provide a small family luxury. During the eighteenth century London’s prodigious population growth from an estimated 630, 000 in 1715 to 1.4 million in 1815 led to a concomitant growth in the need for

¹¹³ Glass, *The Servant’s Directory*, 16.

¹¹⁴ A. H. T. Robb-Smith, “Glasse, Hannah (*bap.* 1708, *d.* 1770).” A. H. T. Robb-Smith In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., edited by David Cannadine. Oxford: OUP, 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/10804> (accessed November 17, 2016).

¹¹⁵ John Southall, *A Treatise of Buggs* (London: J. Roberts, 1730), 35.

laundresses and washerwomen.¹¹⁶ This, together with an aspirational middling sort, rapidly increasing choices in textiles and the continued need to define respectability through self-fashioning led to a continued and continuing need for the ubiquitous washerwoman.

Specialisation: Mangling and ironing

The business of laundry and washing allowed for a certain degree of specialisation within London's vast network of laundresses and washerwomen. One of these areas of specialisation was mangling, which was distinct from wringing and used to flatten linen throughout most of the eighteenth century. Mangling removed the necessity of ironing large items, particularly sheets and tablecloths. It also aided the drying process. Wet or damp linen would be wound around rollers and laid on the bed of the mangle. A flat heavy box filled with stones or rough iron bars was pushed back and forth across the rollers, thereby flattening the linen. Items would be protected by mangle cloths wound around the outside of the roller. These cloths were usually made from 'unbleached Holland cloth' specially woven to size so that thick hems would not catch and wrinkle the underlying textiles.¹¹⁷ The cloths were eventually worn smooth and so aided the action of the box across the rollers. Occasionally a well-established washerwoman might own a box mangle; this represented a considerable investment and was likely to be her single largest capital investment. It was hard work pushing the box back and forth across the rollers even if the box had been adapted for single person use by the addition of an upper roller and strap. A laundress or washerwoman might employ someone else to do her mangling, especially if their labour could be had cheaply. Less commonly this was a man. In 1786 John Cloutt

¹¹⁶ Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "London History - London, 1715-1760," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 5th December 2016).

¹¹⁷ A standard size was 76 inches x 32 inches, the margins were frequently decorated with bright bands of colour. Sambrook, *Country House Servant*, 176.

worked for Elizabeth May as a mangler. He was employed for six months and paid ‘three and half pence an hour which never amounted to more than nine or ten Shillings a Week’ meaning he was acknowledged as ‘very poor’.¹¹⁸ Sometimes a degree of specialisation could forge strong relationships between women in the laundry trade, like that between Mary Boyket and Ann Pearce, who lived near each other in Crown Street, St Giles-in-the-Fields. Ann took care of the wash and Mary did the mangling. When a large amount of laundry went missing they set about finding it, between them tracking most of it to a nearby pawnbroker’s shop in Broad Street.¹¹⁹ Occasionally a mangle was an investment for those employed in alternative occupations, like Roger and Jane Baker, shopkeepers in Westminster. The mangle stood in front of their shop, and during slack times of business they would put items through the mangle.¹²⁰ One of their regular customers was Elizabeth Hodges, a second-hand linen seller who lived in nearby Monmouth Street. Hodges often sent her child with the damp laundry to be put through the mangle. A significant number of box mangles belonged to the large houses of London’s West End. A newspaper feature on Edward Langley, a mangle-maker near Grosvenor Square claimed that an ‘elegant mangle’ made from mahogany would sell for upwards of twenty guineas.¹²¹ This was, of course, the top end of the market and well beyond the budget of most washerwomen. Mangles could be had for a fraction of the cost and there was a good market in second-hand items. In October 1787, the Churchwardens and Overseers of St Botolph Aldgate paid around £10 for a more work-a-day mangle which was intended for their workhouse.¹²² As well as

¹¹⁸ Sessions Papers: Justices’ Working Documents, Mary Kensington and Elizabeth May, 16th October 1786. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, LMOBPS450300331. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.2, 12th January 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, OB/SP.

¹¹⁹ *OBP*, 8th May 1799, Sarah Mehagan (17990508-43).

¹²⁰ *OBP*, 12th September 1798, Richard Shaw and John Harris (t17980912-77).

¹²¹ Mangles were used in silk making and other cloth manufacture, it is therefore possible to confuse ones designed for laundry, and industrial mangles. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Friday, March 11, 1768; Issue 12175. *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty* (London, England), May 13, 1769 - May 16, 1769; Issue 19.

¹²² St Botolph Aldgate Parish: Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor Account Book, October 1787. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, GLBAAC101020056,

their high cost, these large cumbersome objects required considerable space together with a sufficiently flat surface to load the rollers, it was not a purchase undertaken lightly.

Upright mangles were developed in the last two decades of the eighteenth century; they were smaller and reasonably portable. These compact mangles were used more to wring excess water from linen than to flatten or smooth newly washed laundry, although they did not become common until the 1850s.¹²³

Ironing was another area of laundry specialism. A certain amount of coordination was required between the washing, drying and ironing of items. Bone dry linen was difficult to iron and required dampening, particularly on the seams and edges. Garments and other items were sprinkled with water rolled and left for at least half an hour before the ironing commenced. The so called ‘French method’ of ironing required the linen to be ironed wet; this led to a glossier finish. But it required significantly more effort together with heavier irons.¹²⁴ Large cloths and sheets required ‘squaring’ or ‘drawing’ while damp to bring the warp and weft straighter. This pulling into shape made for easier and more importantly tidier ironing.¹²⁵ Washerwoman and ironer often made very close and long friendships, each dependent on the other for the success of their business. Elizabeth Dobbins, washerwoman and Elizabeth Jones, ironer worked together for more than twelve years in her cottage in Kentish Town.¹²⁶ Some friendships worked out less well, like that between Sarah Caldwell, a washwoman in Gardener’s Lane, Petty France and Elizabeth Turpin her ironer. The two women worked very closely together. But after a shift went missing from the wash, a court case ensued resulting in Elizabeth’s husband fetching the shift out of pawn. However, Sarah acknowledged to the court that Elizabeth was a ‘very

<https://www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?div=GLBAAC10102AC101020056&terms=mangle#highlight>
accessed 6 December 2016.

¹²³ Sambrook, *Country House Servant*, 177-178.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹²⁶ *OBP*, 26th October 1814, Thomas Sharp (t18141026-2).

hardworking woman' and had a 'great family' to care for, which perhaps, went some way towards her acquittal.¹²⁷ Elizabeth Burns lodged with her husband at a public house called 'The Bible' located at 12 Great Shire Lane, Temple Bar. Elizabeth took in items to iron and was often found working late into the night. She worked with Clarissa Wigmore, a nearby washerwoman.¹²⁸

Drying the wash

After washing laundry was then set to dry; urban settings required lines or racks rather than the more traditional method of laying of items on hedges or bushes or spreading items on open ground. In Hendon, just outside of the built up metropolitan area, Francis Barlow swore that she saw two men take two table cloths 'from the washerwoman's hedge' in the adjoining field in the summer of 1778. Ample drying grounds were certainly an advantage and in June 1818 an advertisement appeared in *The Morning Post* seeking family laundry. The advertiser emphasised that the laundress had 'a good drying ground, and every convenience'.¹²⁹ This particular laundress was based in Tothillfields, Westminster. Unlike Hendon, Westminster was being subsumed by the creep of urban development, although Tothillfields partly encompassed the remaining open spaces around the new penitentiary at Millbank. Drying laundry in metropolitan London was far more challenging than in its rural hinterland of Middlesex and Surrey. Many of the urban outdoor spaces were the communal yards, alleys and lanes of the metropolis. Some of these semi-private yards and entrance ways contained dwellings in close proximity, where theft was a common occurrence. In October 1750 Ann Bisben, from Wild Street in Steward's Rents lost three shifts that had been hanging in her yard upon a line.¹³⁰ Likewise, in 1762 Ann Purdey, lost

¹²⁷ *OBP*, 18th September 1761, Elizabeth Turpin (t17650918-49).

¹²⁸ *OBP*, 16th May 1804, Harriet Robinson (t18040516-3).

¹²⁹ *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Thursday, June 25, 1818; Issue 15335.

¹³⁰ *OBP*, 17th October 1750, Judith Page (t17501017-17).

items ‘out of the yard as they were hanging to dry’ in Limehouse.¹³¹ Women needed to be vigilant as their laundry dried, as second-hand clothing was easily pawned. Those that washed for others doubly so since they would be held responsible for any of their clients’ losses.

The later eighteenth century saw the introduction of the ‘washing machine’ or as they were sometimes advertised a ‘Washing Mill.’¹³² These machines claimed to ‘wash more in One Hour, than Ten women ... can in the same Time.’¹³³ Or, that a ‘girl of fourteen years can wash with it more linen in ten minutes than the ablest washer-woman can’.¹³⁴ Beetham’s patent washing mill came in a variety of sizes, from one that washed eight shirts at a time to one that washed 24 shirts. A wringer was an optional extra. It was aimed at the small family home, with claims that ‘The whole linen of a moderate family may be washed in one hour by a single person with this portable machine.’¹³⁵ For the most part though, washerwomen and laundresses remained largely un-mechanised relying instead on their physical strength and knowledge. It was well into the nineteenth century and the advent of cheaper upright mangles before any form of mechanisation became common.

Laundry lists and marks

Laundry lists and marks were a way by which householders could keep track of items despatched to the laundress or washerwoman. These marks tended to be permanent or at the very least semi-permanent. Literacy was not necessarily a pre-requisite of recognising the marks. Lists however, depending on how they were used, required literacy in both the

¹³¹ *OBP*, 2nd May 1762, Mary Jones (t17640502-18).

¹³² *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, December 11, 1790; Issue 17608.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (London, England), Tuesday, December 14, 1790; Issue 536.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

writer and recipient of the list. In 1793 Samuel Choice, a butcher in Newport Market, made out a list and a copy at the request of his wife and items were duly despatched with their servant, Elizabeth Lightfoot.¹³⁶ When only two of the three shirts were returned by their washerwoman they were able to trace the missing shirt to the washerwoman's servant, Mary Easter. Like laundry marks, lists were useful when items went missing. Jenkin Jones regularly sent chests containing garments to be washed from his house in Old Street to his country house at Molesey in Surrey.¹³⁷ Each week a list was compiled by Mary Wakefield, a trusted household servant, as a large chest was packed and locked ready to be sent to the house in Molesey. Mary retained the list and the other went with the chest to the laundry maid in Molesey. The trunk had two keys, one of which remained with Elizabeth Mason, at the house in Old Street and the other was in the care of the laundry maid. The chest was then loaded onto a cart and taken to the Thames by way of Blackfriars Bridge to be transported by river to Molesey. Fresh laundry was collected by return. After the chest was stolen on its journey towards Molesey it took some days before items were recovered near to Rag Fair. The resulting case at the Old Bailey hinged not on the laundry list which had carefully noted the number of each type of garment but on identification of specific garments. The items had been marked however, a great deal of the marks had been washed out or were indistinct, on one item a 'J' was still visible but the number '12' had faded.

Large London households used laundry marks within the household to distinguish linen; it not only identified the household, thereby discouraging theft but also allowed them to manage and track the laundry. The master and mistress's linen was identifiable, as was linen assigned to particular beds and often its year of purchase.¹³⁸ Likewise, laundry

¹³⁶ *OBP*, 30th October 1793, Mary Easter (t17931030-40).

¹³⁷ *OBP*, 25th February 1784, John Penny (t17840225-35).

¹³⁸ Sambrook, *Country House Servant*, 115.

that left the home or was dried in communal or semi-public places tended to have some form of permanent or semi-permanent identifier. Sometimes garments and linen were marked with ink but this had a tendency to fade or wear off after a few washes. Other marks included threads or a small piece of textile attached in a particular manner or stitched in place. Or a stitched identifier- usually initials. Since identification was an important element in theft, the prosecution and the judge were always keen to establish ownership of an item. So when a sheet valued at 10 shillings was stolen in December 1794, Sarah Sharp, sometime housekeeper was asked about how the sheet was to be identified with the question ‘Was it a stamped mark with ink, or worked?’ Sarah quickly replied ‘Worked black.’¹³⁹ Likewise, Elizabeth Goodluck, who took in washing at her lodgings in Union Street, Holborn was able to identify two petticoats to the court after they were stolen. She explained to the court that they were ‘marked privately with a bit of worsted, a washerwoman’s mark.’¹⁴⁰ Neither method, inking or stitching, were fool proof. Sarah Sharp had to admit that part of her stitched identifier had been removed by the putative thief who ‘had unpicked the name’ although the number remained.¹⁴¹ Pawnbrokers were always alert to this, George Wigulam, noted that ‘it appeared to me, at first sight, as though a mark had been picked out, and from the fineness of the sheet, I had a very strong suspicion that she had not come honestly by it’.¹⁴² Washerwoman, Rosomon Myers, was questioned over a red ink marking on a handkerchief belonging to Dennis King. In court it was put to her, ‘You know of course that red ink will wash out?’¹⁴³ She readily agreed that it would.

¹³⁹ *OBP*, 8th December 1794, Margaret Paine (t17941208-49).

¹⁴⁰ *OBP*, 15th September 1790, Sarah Slade (t17900915-105).

¹⁴¹ *OBP*, 8th December 1794, Margaret Paine (t17941208-49).

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

¹⁴³ *OBP*, 15th January 1806, Robert King (t18060115-9).

Textiles formed a significant element of property theft tried at the Old Bailey during the eighteenth century. Washerwomen, laundresses and others that took in washing were called by the court to give evidence as to identification and ownership of garments and linens. Elias Veesing, a Dutchman accused of stealing a shirt in 1742, offered to bring his washerwoman to prove that the shirt was his own.¹⁴⁴ These women were thought of as reliable witnesses since they were not only able to identify laundry marks but also to corroborate evidence by giving additional details such as cut and construction of the item in order to confirm ownership. This suggests that very many washerwomen could either read or write or both. Dianne Payne's work on the Marine Society suggests that 58% of her sample could either read or read and write.¹⁴⁵

Washerwomen were generally well-respected in their communities. As well as their work being physically demanding it required a great deal of honesty. They were entrusted with large sums of money embodied in the items they washed, whether this was linen, garments or other items. In May 1745 Eleanor Young was described by her neighbour, Elizabeth Smith, as having 'the character of a washerwoman, and one that takes a great deal of pains for her living.'¹⁴⁶ Mary Maynard, who had known Young 'a great many years', told the court at the Old Bailey that, 'she had an opportunity of taking things of value out of my house, and she never wronged me of any thing that I know of.'¹⁴⁷

The reliability of washerwomen, laundresses and laundry-maids also extended to their discretion; washing linen, items of apparel and intimate garments for others allowed them to be privy to a great many secrets. One of which was the 'concealment of venereal disease' or evidence of their employer's extra-marital sexual behaviour.¹⁴⁸ Sometimes they

¹⁴⁴ *OBP*, 9th September 1742, Elias Veesing (t17420909-6).

¹⁴⁵ Payne, "Children of the Poor," 10.

¹⁴⁶ *OBP*, 30th May 1745, John Jeffs, Richard Horton, Joseph Lucas and Eleanor Young (t17450530-17).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Tim Meldrum, "Domestic Service in London, 1660-1750: Gender, Life-Cycle, Work and Household Relations." (PhD diss. London School of Economics and Political Science, 1996), 66.

were complicit in any deception, finding clean shifts and shirts or concealing the state of the bedlinen until they were able to wash it.

Tim Meldrum has written about the relationships between servants and their masters and mistresses, particularly those that concerned the washing of household and personal linen.¹⁴⁹ Servants and women that washed sheets were in a position of importance when it came to matrimonial disputes heard in the church courts. Their evidence as to the nature of marital and extra-marital arrangements was often pivotal.¹⁵⁰ Sometimes this ‘acquired knowledge’ set up tensions within the household where reputation was everything both for the servant and the master or mistress. Employing an outside laundress or washerwoman avoided these pitfalls and an inconvenient truth might be prevented by simply never employing her again. However, discretion, loyalty and hard-work were well rewarded, with large wealthy households paying particularly well. Indeed the Royal household paid the ‘Body laundress 300 l’ per annum and the ‘Household laundress 150 l’ although this was clearly a unique place of employment and an exceptional salary.¹⁵¹ As well as keeping confidences a washerwoman’s vigilance might also expose criminal actions. In 1749 a washerwoman working in the Seven Dials area alerted a step-mother to the staining on a child’s sheet which transpired to be the aftermath of rape.¹⁵² These intimate revelations showed how washerwomen were enmeshed in the local politics of neighbourhood and sometimes were required to set aside business loyalties.

The financial security of the household in which a washerwoman worked was of particular importance, since it was closely linked to her own. It was therefore accepted that a washerwoman might occasionally pawn clothing and other items on behalf of their

¹⁴⁹ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, 148.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ John Barrow, *The Gentleman, Tradesman and Traveller’s Pocket Library* (London: printed for the author, 1753), 102.

¹⁵² *OBP*, 13th January 1749, John Osborne (t17490113-11).

employer, discretion of course, was mutually agreeable. In moving items to and fro from a household washerwomen and laundresses were conveniently placed to carry out this service without arousing the suspicion of neighbours. John Styles suggests, in his examination of George Fettes's, pawnbroking book that over three quarters of pledges were placed by women and 'Two-thirds of these pledges were clothes.'¹⁵³ Washerwomen would not be out of place in arranging to pawn garments or linen. Others pawning textiles would, on occasion, require the services of a washerwoman, since items that were too dirty would not be accepted by the pawnbroker, like the pair of sheets Jane Robinson and Elizabeth Norbury attempted to pawn in 1774. The women were subsequently obliged to take them to the washerwomen before they could realise any money.¹⁵⁴ By laundering items, washerwomen could add value to them prior to pawning or sale. In the complex networks of pawning, buying or selling textiles the role of the washerwoman has perhaps been neglected.¹⁵⁵ It is however, difficult to find any with explicit relationships. There was nonetheless some form of friction between the two.¹⁵⁶ In September 1757, a new Act of Parliament came into force to ensure pawnbrokers did not accept linen or other items entrusted to laundresses or washerwomen without proper authority.¹⁵⁷ From the 29th September 1757 those who could not give a 'satisfactory Account of himself, herself or themselves' on presenting goods to a pawnbroker were liable to find themselves before a justice of the peace.¹⁵⁸ Section VI of the act stated, 'if any Person or Persons shall knowingly buy or take in as a Pledge, any Linen or Apparel, intrusted to any other Person

¹⁵³ Styles, *Dress of the People*, 163.

¹⁵⁴ *OBP*, 16th February 1774, Jane Robinson, Elizabeth Norbury *et al.* (t17740216-69).

¹⁵⁵ For a discussion of plebeian networks and pawnbrokers in London see Janice Turner, "An Anatomy of a 'Disorderly' Neighbourhood: Rosemary Lane and Rag Fair c. 1690-1765" (PhD diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2014), 164-180.

¹⁵⁶ Alannah Tomkins notes a case in 1752 in which a pawnbroker was taken to court for the value of items pawned because they were pawned by a laundress and not the owner. Alannah Tomkins, "Pawnbroking and the survival strategies of the urban poor in 1770s York," in *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, eds. Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 172.

¹⁵⁷ 30 Geo. II c.24.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, s.VII.

or Persons to wash, scour, iron, mend or make up' then they should also be convicted of a like offence.¹⁵⁹ Alexander Lee, a pawnbroker in Broad Street, St Giles-in-the Fields

offered typical evidence to the Old Bailey of this act in practice. He deposed in May 1799,

about six o'clock last Monday, the prisoner came to my shop, and offered me a pair of sheets; she asked me 8s. on them; I asked her whether they were her own; she said, they were; I asked her if she knew the marks that were on them, she could not tell what marks were on them; I then looked at the hand-bills that had come in that day, and I saw the account of the property being stole.¹⁶⁰

The defendant, Sarah Mehagan, was found guilty; although in her defence she admitted that she was 'very much in liquor'.¹⁶¹ There seemed to be some flexibility over the punishment and Mehagan was sentenced to be confined for one year in the Middlesex House of Correction and fined one shilling. Janice Turner notes that the 'majority of pawnbrokers listed pursued a complex economy of their own'.¹⁶² As the relationship between washerwoman and pawnbroker was regulated by statute, it seems reasonable to assume that there was, at least some, regular and sustained contact between the two.

Conclusion

Like the medieval laundresses of Carole Rawcliffe's essay washerwomen were anything but marginal through the long eighteenth century. Collectively these women formed a significant element of the female workforce. A conservative estimate would indicate some 10% of working women were involved in the laundry trades. For some this represented economic independence, for others it allowed them to contribute to shared household expenses, and for a few it meant avoidance of the workhouse. For most though, laundry work gave them choices which they could exercise at their own discretion, occasionally moderated by circumstance, but nonetheless a knowing choice. This economic or semi-

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, s.VI.

¹⁶⁰ *OBP*, 8th May 1799, Sarah Mehagen (t17990508-43).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Turner, "An Anatomy of a 'Disorderly' Neighbourhood," 169.

economic independence added to a washerwoman's perceived respectability. It was underpinned by her reputation for industriousness and honesty. So much so John Fielding thought laundry work offered young women a method of 'obtaining an honest livelihood by their own hand labour, preserving their own innocence, and becoming useful members to society'.¹⁶³ As Lynn MacKay suggests 'being thought respectable was the key to various kinds of assistance.'¹⁶⁴ For widowed washerwomen and laundresses this wider access to charitable resources gave their children opportunities, such as those afforded by the Marine Society.

A washerwoman might survive by her physical labour alone. However, it was her knowledge and understanding of increasingly complex techniques for dealing with laundry that sustained her advantage in the labour market. Some of this specialist knowledge was applied in order to reduce the use of relatively expensive resources, of which soap and fuel were the most important. The 'tactics' employed by washerwomen were used to bend and stretch strategies set out before them by proactive engagement with the routines of cleanliness.¹⁶⁵ Skills and knowledge perhaps acquired 'in service' or through time in a parochial workhouse were now used to skilfully step between these institutions.

The relatively porous domestic household allowed washerwoman and laundresses to move to and fro across the threshold. Often this began as young women when they worked as laundry maids or other servants. The flexibility of their occupation allowed women to remain employed in the laundry trade as they grew older and their circumstances began to differ. They might take washing into their own dwellings as they left service to marry. Any children would very quickly be incorporated into trade; even

¹⁶³ *London Chronicle* (London, England), February 11, 1758 - February 14, 1758; Issue 176

¹⁶⁴ Lynn MacKay, *Respectability and the London Poor, 1780-1870: The Value of Virtue* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 1.

¹⁶⁵ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. by Steven F. Rendall. 3rd Rev. ed. (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2011), 34-37.

very young children would collect and deliver laundry or assist with other simple tasks. Working practices could also be adapted to different circumstances; women could join large households to assist with the 'great wash' for a few days or join the mistress of a small household to complete a weekly wash.

Clients came from a range of social backgrounds, not merely affluent households with significant resources. Those at the bottom of the social scale, with little money and few facilities were able to find a few shillings to pay for an item or two to be laundered by their local washerwoman. For the poorer sort this was often part of finding a job, particularly in the service industries where clean clothing played an important role in self-presentation. This fluidity of practice dispels the notion that those at the bottom of the social scale did not engage with cleanliness. They did so, both as service providers and as purchasers of services. It also confirms the speculative assertion by van Herk that laundry had great socioeconomic importance, since laundry work was a complex weaving together of financial strategies, families and life-cycle choices. As bodily cleanliness came to be defined through clean linen during most of the eighteenth century, then washerwomen, laundresses and laundry maids played a central role in enabling and sustaining it.¹⁶⁶

By embedding their work in the everyday, washing clothing and linen became accepted as part of a new domestic regime in which it became commonplace to regularly wash. Indeed so commonplace, that by the nineteenth-century middling households most frequently washed on a Monday. Yet washerwomen and laundresses did not hesitate to bend and mould circumstance to fit their own needs and requirements. When payments were insufficient they put their prices up or they petitioned for more money. They found ways to wash at home, to share tasks with others and to supplement their income. Indeed

¹⁶⁶ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 227.

there are some indicators to suggest that washerwomen, if not worked with, worked in parallel with pawnbrokers to their mutual advantage.

These forms of personal agency are balanced by much darker forms which are scattered throughout this chapter. Washerwomen and laundresses both prosecuted and gave evidence against other poor Londoners at the Old Bailey. In order to maintain their own reputations for honesty they were constrained to prosecute those stealing laundry, usually the property of their clients. Sometimes they gave their own 'expert' evidence in identifying laundry marks and specific familiar garments in matters of ownership. This form of 'black agency' enhanced their reputation in a market that often relied on personal recommendation. In a similar manner, laundry work and washerwomen were present in London's 'systems and institutions', these themes will be explored in the following chapters on London's institutions.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 17-20.

Chapter 5

Institutional cleanliness: workhouses

In 1732 the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) assured its readers that workhouses, ‘under a prudent and good Management, will answer all the Ends of Charity to the Poor, in regards to their Souls and Bodies’.¹ Indeed these establishments, it was claimed, provided ‘warm, sweet and cleanly’ dwellings in which the young were inculcated with Christian virtues and drilled in the advantage of an industrious body while the aged and sick were given the care appropriate to their circumstance.² Confinement, they argued was necessary to impart ‘good Order, good Hours and a prudent Discipline’ and was no more severe than that imposed by ‘sober regular Families’.³ In short the ‘good regulation’ of workhouses provided a great advantage to the public and as such was of ‘National Concern’.⁴ In reality, this national concern had only recently been signified when in 1722-3 Sir Edward Knatchbull’s Workhouse Test Act provided a permissive framework for the establishment of parochial workhouses across the country.⁵

This chapter begins with an outline of the development of London’s workhouses and the place of cleanliness within those institutions. The more substantive elements of the chapter consider workhouse laundries and the gendered nature of domestic tasks. It identifies the workhouse as a means by which plebeian men and women were exposed to ‘clean linen regimens’, through examining the treatment of their bodies and access to clean

¹ *An Account of Several Work-Houses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor: Setting Forth Rules by Which They Are Governed, Their Great Usefulness to the Publick, and in Particular to the Parishes Where They Are Erected, as Also of Several Charity Schools for Promoting Work, and Labour*. 2nd Edition. (London: J. Downing, 1732), iii.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. iv.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 9 Geo. I c.7.

clothing. It also locates cleanliness in the everyday routines of the workhouse, particularly through their attitudes to beds, bedbugs and increasingly, the use of soap. It concludes with an examination of the rules and regulations governing the workhouse as a means to both implement and maintain a regimen of cleanliness.

The foundations for further studies of the ‘old poor law’ and the workhouse were laid by Dorothy Marshall, together with Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the mid-1920s.⁶ Their work on the English poor law system remains a starting point in any subsequent history of the workhouse. Not until the advent of the new social history in the 1960s and 1970s did the prospect of academic study of the poor begin to gain traction. Edward Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, first published in 1963, bolstered by his article entitled ‘History from Below’ published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1966 was the most influential work of this period.⁷ But it took until 1985, when Tim Hitchcock completed his DPhil. thesis, for an important and wide ranging analysis of the workhouse movement to emerge.⁸ This thesis remains unpublished, although it continues in the canon of work on poverty and the workhouse, and it is frequently cited. It also acted as a springboard for Hitchcock’s work on the urban poor and the workhouse. This includes important chapters on the SPCK’s role in the parochial workhouse movement and an analysis of how poor women used the urban workhouse.⁹ In Hitchcock’s more

⁶ Dorothy Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Social and Administrative History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1926) and Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government: English Poor Law History: Part I. The Old Poor Law*, Reprinted 2011 (Milton Keynes: Lightning Sources UK Ltd, 1927.)

⁷ Thompson revised the work in 1968. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968) and E.P. Thompson, “History from Below,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966, 279-280.

⁸ T. V Hitchcock, “The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties, 1696-1750” (DPhil., diss. University of Oxford, 1985), 70-82. <http://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:57a30e82-1101-4b09-ab83-8e8e271c77f4> accessed 6th October 2014.

⁹ Tim Hitchcock, “Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement,” in *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750*, ed. L. Davison *et al.* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), 145-166 and “‘Unlawfully Begotten on her Body’: Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke’s Chelsea,” in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharp (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), 70-86.

comprehensive works, *Down and Out* and *London Lives*, which was written collaboratively with Robert Shoemaker, the workhouse and its inmates form substantive elements.¹⁰

Towards the turn of the twenty-first century there was a renewed interest in paupers and the workhouse. In 1999, this was marked by the publication of *The Workhouse*, an architectural history which, to a limited extent examined the wider social context of its setting.¹¹ Anthony Brundage's broad examination of the poor law draws together much of the existing scholarship surrounding the workhouse as he outlined change over two hundred years of social policy, particularly drawing on the difference between urban and rural poverty.¹² This difference is exemplified in Steven King's *Poverty and Welfare in England*, where King draws on pauper experience to elucidate life in the workhouse.¹³ Likewise, other publications took a wider view of the poor and focussed perhaps one or two chapters specifically on the workhouse. Nonetheless, works like Alannah Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty* and Ottaway's *Decline of Life*, an examination of old age and poverty, offer useful insights into the day to day workings of the workhouse.¹⁴

David Green particularly notes this growth in regional studies of poverty, and highlights that 'London is conspicuous by its absence.'¹⁵ Green's own work, *Pauper Capital*, helps fill this lacuna by examining the complex workings of London's workhouses and poor law towards the end of the eighteenth century. In this respect Jeremy Boulton is especially worthy of mention. Boulton's extensive studies of Westminster's

¹⁰ Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004) and Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*.

¹¹ Kathryn Morrison, *The Workhouse: A Study of Poor Law Buildings in England* (Swindon: English Heritage, 1999).

¹² Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002).

¹³ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Alannah Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82: Parish, Charity and Credit* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) and Susannah R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ David R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 16.

poor, some of which is tangential to the workhouse, others parts of which is wholly concerned with it, add immeasurably to our understanding of the complex systems that surrounded the institution and its use.¹⁶ In very recent scholarship Samantha Shave's book, *Pauper Policies*, unpicks the policies surrounding the workhouse in the important critical phase of reform between 1780 and 1834.¹⁷ Although essentially an administrative history, Shave acknowledges that at times poor law histories must 'include the close reading of lived experiences' thereby bridging a hitherto clear divide between administrative histories and history from below.¹⁸

Already mentioned is Tim Hitchcock's *Down and Out*. This work, together with John Styles's *The Dress of the People*, form a small pocket of literature that mention the poor and cleanliness.¹⁹ Together they confirm plebeian Londoner's association with a regimen of clean linen to define their cleanliness. By building on these works this chapter will identify ways in which physical cleanliness was of mutual benefit to both inmate and parochial authorities, it will add to our knowledge of daily life in the urban workhouse, and finally, it will suggest that cleanliness remained an important tenet of the workhouse throughout the eighteenth century.

London's workhouses

¹⁶ Particularly see Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz "'The Comforts of a Private Fireside'? The Workhouse, the Elderly and the Poor Law in Georgian Westminster: St Martin-in-the-Fields, 1725–1824," in *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600–1850*, ed. Joanne McEwen and Pamela Sharp (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 221–245; Boulton and John Black, "Paupers and their Experience of a Georgian Workhouse: St Martin in the Fields, Westminster, 1725–1830," in *Residential Institutions in Britain, 1725–1950: Inmates and Environment* ed. J. Hamlett, L. Hoskins and R. Preston (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 79–91 and Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz, "The Medicalisation of a Parish Workhouse in Georgian Westminster: St Martin in the Fields, 1725–1824," *Family & Community History* 17, no. 2 (26 September 2014): 122–40.

¹⁷ Samantha A. Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ Hitchcock, *Down and Out: Styles, Dress of the People*.

Although particularly associated with the eighteenth century the London workhouse emerged in the mid-seventeenth century as a house for the ‘profitable employment of the poor.’²⁰ The ethos of these early workhouses was to take the able bodied poor of several parishes and set them to work on unskilled tasks. However, of the institutions established in the City of London or Middlesex, none were able to make a profit and most failed or were abandoned after only a few years.²¹ In 1699, using legislation passed nearly forty years previously, a ‘workhouse’ or ‘Corporation of the Poor’ was established in a house off Bishopsgate Street. This ‘house’ took up to 150 pauper children from City parishes prepared to pay a weekly sum for their board. The modest success of this institution did not immediately encourage parishes in either the City or the surrounding areas of urban Middlesex to establish their own ‘workhouses’, although it might be seen as the beginnings of a consistent development of the workhouse ‘system’. Instead, a system of doles and pensions was relied upon to ameliorate the conditions of the needy poor and help support them in their own homes.²² However, the perceived rising cost to the rate payer encouraged the adoption of the parochial workhouse and the Workhouse Test Act, 1723 ‘enshrined in the statute book the idea of the workhouse as deterrent.’²³ This tacit governmental approval of the workhouse encouraged a flurry of activity in the early 1720s. It was supported by the SPCK, which promoted the merits of the parochial workhouse system through a series of polemical publications.²⁴ Several workhouses were established in the metropolis, which, by and large, were to serve the populous parishes of London’s east end and the more affluent but none the less necessitous parishes of Westminster.²⁵

²⁰ Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, 105.

²¹ Hitchcock, “English Workhouse,” 70-82 and Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, 101-116.

²² Boulton, “Going on the Parish”.

²³ Hitchcock, “English Workhouse,” 122.

²⁴ See Hitchcock, “English Workhouse”.

²⁵ For a list of workhouses established in the City of London and Middlesex during the first half of the 18thc. see Hitchcock “English Workhouse,” Appendix 270-275.

These varied from the purpose built house in St Giles Cripplegate which accommodated just thirty men, women and children, to the workhouse at St Mary, Whitechapel which could receive 130 'two in a Bed.'²⁶ By the end of the decade, and in response to the number of paupers that required medical care, parishes began to re-evaluate workhouse provision. Some of the larger institutions provided dedicated infirmaries and others appointed apothecaries or surgeons to visit patients in sick wards.²⁷

The demand for places in London's workhouses rose enormously during the second-half of the century with parish poor law expenditure rising commensurately, particularly during the difficult decades of the 1760s and 1770s.²⁸ By 1776 there were some eighty workhouses in London providing accommodation for 16,100 paupers.²⁹ Some of these institutions, particularly in London's West End, grew to an enormous size. In the later 1780s the Mount Street workhouse in Westminster could accommodate between 700 and 800 inmates. Despite these exceptionally large workhouses, the metropolis also encompassed many smaller institutions, sometimes jointly run by parishes. Others contracted out their paupers, and some existed by a combination of these strategies.³⁰

The last decades of the eighteenth century saw continued public debate over the nature of poverty. Parliamentary reform, however, manifested itself in the Relief of the

²⁶ *An Account of Several Work-Houses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor; Setting Forth the Rules by Which They Are Governed, Their great Usefulness to the Publick, And in Particular To the Parishes where they are Erected, As Also of Several Charity-Schools for Promoting Work, and Labour* (London: Joseph Downing, 1725), 9.

²⁷ Hitchcock and Shoemaker identify this as a paradigm shift in the administration of the London's workhouse organisation 'in favour of something that more fully reflected their [paupers'] needs.' Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 133. Kevin Siena charts the rise of medical provision for the poor including the workhouse infirmary in Siena, *Venerial Disease*.

²⁸ David R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 25-27, 5-11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁰ St Dionis Backchurch was one such parish in the City of London, see Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "St Dionis Backchurch: Poor Relief and Charities", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (<http://www.londonlives.org/static/StDionisBackchurch.jsp> , version, 1.1 Accessed 17th October 2014). Hitchcock & Shoemaker suggest that over half the population of the metropolis was without access to a parochial workhouse by mid-century. Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 141.

Poor Act 1782, the so called Gilbert's Act.³¹ In London this may have alleviated some of the pressure on workhouse places, by permitting specialist institutions for children or the unification of parishes for poor law purposes. However, to a certain extent, it may have codified what was already taking place across the metropolis under existing legislation or private Acts of parliament.³² By the end of the eighteenth century the sheer size and administrative organisation of the metropolis allowed it to support an immense variety of institutions. London workhouses differed greatly in size and complexity but all maintained sufficient common purpose in serving the poor of the parish – and most importantly for this thesis, took full responsibility for the care of the poor, including their linen and clothing.

From the earliest workhouses cleanliness and a concern for personal hygiene were central to the institution. Cleanliness went well beyond the bodies of those that inhabited the workhouse. It encompassed their clothing, the physical spaces of the buildings and even the very beds and sheets in which they slept. It acted both as an indicator of good management by the parish, and for the poor it marked the fulfilment of expectation. Such expectations were not unusual in the early eighteenth century and many paupers felt a strong sense of entitlement to care and support from their community.³³ High amongst these expectations was the provision of clean clothing and access to personal care, that is to say bodily washing or shaving, when they were too frail or ill to do so themselves. Paupers however, were expected to share many of the tasks associated with such care.³⁴ In terms of cleanliness, this fed into a complex system of 'obligations and rights' in which the pauper by turns washed, scrubbed and swept and in return received a clean and wholesome

³¹ 22 Geo. III c. 83.

³² Elaine Murphy, "The Metropolitan Pauper Farms 1722–1834," *The London Journal* 27, no. 1 (1 May 2002): 1–18.

³³ Steve Hindle, "Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550-1750," *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 6–35.

³⁴ King, Steven. "Reclothing the English Poor, 1750–1840," *Textile History* 33, no. 1 (May 1, 2002): 37–47.

place to live, a regular supply of clean clothing and bodily linen together with improved personal cleanliness all of which contributed to a measure of good health for the pauper and their family.³⁵ The parish and vestry by their turn were able to point to a well-run workhouse, in which inmates were not only clean and combed but also industrious. Throughout the eighteenth century ever increasing demands were placed on local government resources. The most pressing of which was provision for the destitute, a workhouse represented a prominent marker of parochial achievement in care and charitable concern for the poor. Here, the parish was able to add to its civic capital, particularly if they were able to demonstrate that they kept an ostensibly ordered workhouse.

Rules in many of these workhouses codified pauper and parochial expectations, thereby enmeshing them in the daily routines of the house. When workhouse regulations were broken, particularly by parish authorities, it inevitably began with the filth and harrowing dirt of a mismanaged workhouse. These scandals, which often concerned the incarceration and starvation of paupers, were likened to conditions in London's prisons, a 'dark Hold, a Place like the condemn'd of Newgate'.³⁶ However, on closer examination at least one of these 'scandals', that of Mary Whistle's death in St Giles-in-the-Fields workhouse, suggests that at least some of the alleged conditions may have been exaggerated.³⁷ Yet the case still hinged on the perceived state and condition of Mary's body and the circumstances in which she had been kept immediately prior to her death.

³⁵ David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Wickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 353 quoted by Jeremy Boulton, "Going on the Parish: The Parish Pension and its Meaning in the London Suburbs, 1640-1724," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840*, edited by Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), 21.

³⁶ *The Workhouse Cruelty, Workhouses turn'd Goals, And Goalers Executioners* (London, 1720).

³⁷ Tim Hitchcock, "The Body in the Workhouse: Death, Burial, and Belonging in Early Eighteenth-Century St Giles in the Fields," in *Suffering and Happiness in England 1550-1850: Narratives and Representations A Collection to Honour Paul Slack*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and Joanna Innes (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 164.

Workhouses were initially built on the cornerstones of a shared set of tenets; ‘Religion, Virtue and Industry’.³⁸ These ideals, predicated on those of an industrious Christian household, proved to be attractive to the vestry with its opportunities to inculcate the poor with a strong work ethic. However, it was undoubtedly the economics of this ‘new’ institution that almost overwhelmingly convinced the parochial authorities of its efficacy. As the complex ties of expectation and obligation loosened during the eighteenth century, standards of cleanliness and of personal hygiene did not remain static or inflexible. Pragmatic circumstance together with the clamour of the poor began to drive change. Cleanliness, however, remained thoroughly embedded in the workhouse system.

Workhouses, laundries and gendered tasks

Although diverse in their appearance, the early workhouse buildings mirrored the physicality of the newly emerging middling house in which there were separate places to sleep, eat and prepare food. This notion of the workhouse as a household or family was pervasive in the SPCK’s published works and was very quickly taken up by and reflected in the records of parish administration. Workhouse rules represented this very clearly in their frequent reference to the workhouse ‘family’. Indeed, the parish of St Giles exhorted readers to assemble the poor ‘into one Family, under the Care of one or more proper Managers’, while the workhouse of the parish of St Andrew, Holborn instructed inmates to ‘preserve a good Unity, and look upon themselves as one Family’.³⁹ The purpose built workhouses of London’s west end were writ large on this pattern of a domestic household. Rooms were large and airy, and the windows would open to allow the free flow of air through the building. Much of London’s vernacular housing and dwellings of the artisanal

³⁸ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), iii.

³⁹ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 22, 20.

classes also contained a place to work, and this too was paralleled in almost all of the London workhouses. A large workroom was often central to the design. In addition, both workhouse and domestic dwelling were beginning to provide a separate wash house or laundry space.⁴⁰ In domestic dwellings this was frequently an adjunct to the main building, with the wash house part of a lean-to at the rear of the building or separated across a small yard. This separate space reflected the growing importance of cleanliness within domestic households and more practically it allowed for a fire so that a wash house copper could heat the water. In the larger workhouses this dedicated space was in daily use providing work for paupers and, more importantly, enabling the workhouse linen and clothing to be laundered on a regular basis.

The integration of the wash house in the fabric of the institution indicated the growing importance of a regime of cleanliness that was predicated on clean linen. The new workhouse in St Mary Whitechapel, as well as a kitchen, four wards for sleeping and somewhere to eat also contained a 'Wash-House'.⁴¹ It was furnished with everything 'necessary for the House' and provisioned accordingly.⁴² Washing, they reported, 'is all done in house'.⁴³ Plans for the new workhouse belonging to the parish of St George Hanover Square, circulated by the SPCK, identified provision for a wash house or laundry under the kitchen.⁴⁴ However, the workhouse of St Giles had both a laundry and a wash house - the wash house dealing with the wet wash and the laundry mangling, ironing and

⁴⁰ Priestley and Corfield's analyses of Norwich inventories between 1580 and 1730 identify a significant rise in the number of rooms identified as a 'wash house' during this period. By 1705-1730 more than 50% of inventories mentioned a wash house, although it is noted that a disproportionate number of households in Norwich were involved in the textile trades and the wash house may have been used commercially for the processing of textiles. Ursula Priestley and Corfield, P. J., "Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16, (1982), 102 & 113-114.

⁴¹ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1725), 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.* 10.

⁴⁴ Morrison, *The Workhouse*, 15, Fig.12.

airing. Both had fires all year round. Cleanliness had been embedded in all aspects of daily life.

The wash house and laundry also marked their worth as sites of industrious involvement for the paupers, particularly the women. The ‘Town-House’ at Ratcliff in Stepney however, was somewhat usual in that it provided accommodation for the poor receiving a pension but it permitted them to get what they could ‘by their own Industry’.⁴⁵ This included allowing the women resident there to ‘go Abroad to wash, scour and sell Fish’ so that the ideal of cleanliness was perpetrated beyond the workhouse in a way that allowed women a certain measure of financial independence.⁴⁶

Although there is a move in current scholarship to suggest that men were more closely involved with household matters than previously assumed, there is little to suggest that London’s workhouses reflected this domestic concern.⁴⁷ Workhouse tasks and responsibilities were generally allocated according to gender, particularly those associated with workhouse cleanliness. In the workhouse of St Giles, Cripplegate the mistress of the workhouse was required to ‘take Care of the Washing, and keeping clean of the Boys and Girls, and that their Heads be comb’d every day’.⁴⁸ The tiny parish house of St Dunstan in the East set the women to work to ‘wash Cloaths for the House and Children’.⁴⁹ While the women of the Quaker Workhouse were to ‘lend their Assistance in mending and getting up the Linen of the House when washed.’⁵⁰ The older girls were ‘instructed in Housewifry and other domestick Employments suitable to their Sex and Station.’⁵¹ Some tasks were described in gender neutral terms, for instance, in St Giles’s workhouse ‘Washers’ were

⁴⁵ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1725), 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, “What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500–1950,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 274–80; Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1725), 7.

⁴⁹ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 26.

⁵⁰ *Quaker School and Work-house*, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

required to ensure that the ‘House-of-office, the Yard and the other side of the House’ were kept clean.⁵² This was to be overseen by the matron. The scrubbing and sweeping of shared areas within the workhouse or its environs was occasionally undertaken by men. But notably those tasks concerned with outdoor working or those concerned with the communal lavatories were more frequently undertaken by men, if sufficient were available.

There is little doubt, that tasks in the workhouse, particularly those concerned with cleanliness, were apportioned according to gender. Women and girls were singled out for domestic tasks with the aim of training the girls up to undertake work of the ‘meanest’ sort which included ‘dressing Victuals, Brewing, Baking, Washing and the like’.⁵³ Workhouses aimed to reproduce the working patterns of a domestic household.

Those who worked hard and acquitted themselves well were sometimes permitted small monetary rewards. The rules of St Giles stated that women who worked in the ‘Kitchen, the Laundry, and the Washhouse, shall be paid one Penny, two Pence, or three Pence per Week, according to the Nature of the Business, and as their Service shall Deserve.’⁵⁴ Likewise, the committee at St James’s workhouse reserved the right to ‘Reward the Extraordinary Industry of any of the Poor as they shall think fit’.⁵⁵ There are hints that perhaps these small financial rewards were necessary for the smooth running of the House.

Men and women refusing to undertake tasks by virtue of their ill-health were required to explain themselves to the apothecary or physician, suggesting that some may have tried to feign illness in order to escape such domestic tasks. However, the gender balance in many workhouses made it necessary for women to undertake most of the

⁵² *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 39.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 42

⁵⁵ WCA: D 1759, 455.

household tasks, since there were few able-bodied men to take up work on an equal basis. Hitchcock and Shoemaker suggest that, of the 10,000 admissions to St Martin in the Fields workhouse during the 1730s and 1740s, less than 13% comprised adult men between the ages of fifteen and fifty-nine.⁵⁶ Lynn MacKay's study of St Martin's workhouse between 1790 and 1819, suggests a higher percentage, with men representing (as a percentage of the adults), from 25.8% in 1790 to a high of 40.0% in 1817 and 1818.⁵⁷

Pauper bodies and clothing

On admission to the workhouse it was usual to physically examine the pauper's body. St Giles insisted on an examination by the surgeon, apothecary or nurse in order to identify those with 'any infectious Distemper'.⁵⁸ Each pauper was stripped of their clothing, which was washed, mended and usually put by for them. The parish of St James, Westminster would 'strip such poor' as came to them 'in miserable filthy rags, and after washing them in hot water, give them clean, tho' old cloathing'.⁵⁹ The filthy rags in which they presented themselves at the workhouse were usually condemned 'as only fit for paper' and in St James they were thrown into a 'rag-hole' to await collection.⁶⁰ Most paupers were washed providing it was 'without prejudice to their Health.'⁶¹ Those with lice or the 'itch' were

⁵⁶ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 139.

⁵⁷ MacKay, *Respectability and the London Poor*, 116.

⁵⁸ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 33. For further discussion on workhouse infirmaries and their policies of segregating paupers according to their illness. See Kevin Siena, "Contagion, Exclusion, and the Unique Medical World of the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse: London Infirmaries in Their Widest Relief," in *Medicine and the Workhouse*, edited by Jonathan Reinarz and Leonard Schwarz, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 19–39.

⁵⁹ Jonas Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor to be appointed by the act of last session of parliament; Also to the Governors and Overseers of the Parish Poor recommending concord, frugality, cleanliness, and industry, with such a pious, humane, resolute, and judicious conduct in the execution of their office, as may effectually answer the good purposes for which they are chosen, and more particularly in the preservation of infants* (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1767), 122.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 33.

assigned to particular wards; where they were required to conform to certain orders ‘till perfectly clean’.⁶²

Both scabies and lice were highly contagious and in an institution where bed-sharing was the norm it made sense to isolate those with verminous infestations until they were clear. This wide-scale inspection and cleansing of plebeian bodies was perhaps only paralleled in the charitable hospitals. Its context was seemingly the containment of contagion. By the end of the century many workhouse buildings had developed to encompass a physical system that required paupers to pass through reception rooms where they could be examined, cleansed and re-clothed before coming into contact with other inmates.⁶³ Undoubtedly, paupers entering an institution were just as keen to be rid of an infestation as the institution was to eradicate it. In the summer of 1765 Sarah Pierce complained to her parish that she was lodged with a ‘Child and a Woman that is Lousey and is Fearful she shall not get a place’.⁶⁴ Sarah’s care had been contracted by her parish to Mr Fincher who kept a house in Hoxton. She entered Fincher’s house in mid-August with the hope of gaining a place in service as quickly as she could, but felt her chances were being hindered by a possible infestation of lice. After carefully listening to her complaint the parish admonished Mr Fincher who promised to remedy the situation as soon as possible. Perhaps Sarah took matters into her own hands because by the 24th of August she had left the house.⁶⁵ No respectable family wanted to take in a servant with lice or bugs

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Rules of St Mary, Islington’s workhouse required the poor should not be admitted until they had been examined and cleansed. John Biggerstaff & Son, *Rules and Orders for the Better Regulation of the Workhouse, Belonging to the Parish of Saint Mary, Islington in the County of Middlesex* (London, 1798), 4.

⁶⁴ St Dionis Backchurch: Workhouse Inquest (Visitation) Minute Book, 1st October 1765. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, GLDBIW302010035. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

⁶⁵ Sarah Pearce was re-admitted to the house on 4th December 1767 and discharged on the 25th December 1767. *LL*, Workhouse Inquest Book, Mary Pearce, 4th December 1767, (GLDBIW3020100510).

and household manuals frequently warned the unwary to be sure to inspect new servants carefully.⁶⁶

In his widely read medical manual, *Domestic Medicine*, William Buchan ascribed the ‘itch, and several other diseases of the skin’ to the ‘want of cleanliness’, most frequently suffered by those that lived in overcrowded circumstances.⁶⁷ In short a disease of poverty. He went on to forewarn his readers that in ‘places where great numbers of sick people are kept, cleanliness ought to be most religiously observed.’⁶⁸ Buchan’s favoured prescription to alleviate and cure the itch was sulphur. It was particularly effective against scabies, ringworm and a number of other skin conditions, and, since it could be taken both internally and externally by means of an ointment, it was reasonably easy to administer. At the same time clothes were to be thoroughly fumigated with the same sulphur and cleaned to prevent re-infection. Some institutions adopted ovens in which they baked infected clothing, which was particularly good at destroying lice.

Nurses of bedridden patients in St James’s workhouse were generally instructed to ‘constantly attend them, keep them Clean fetch their needs and do all necessary things for them’.⁶⁹ Furthermore the wards were to be kept clean and the hall and stairs swept. ‘Frequent washing’ Buchan went on to claim, ‘not only removes filth and sordes which adhere to the skin, but likewise promotes the perspiration, braces the body, and enlivens the spirits.’⁷⁰ This holistic view of health was based on Galenic humoral theory in which four bodily humours, of hot, cold, wet and dry were kept in balance in order to preserve health. The belief endorsed the ideal of cleanliness, since skin free from dirt and filth would promote perspiration and allow the body to expel ill-humours. Even during the

⁶⁶ Southall, *Buggs*, 34.

⁶⁷ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 73.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁹ WCA: D 1759, 446.

⁷⁰ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 76.

second half of the eighteenth century, when the humoural model of the body was in decline, cleanliness retained its importance in the maintenance of good health. The parish of St James reminded its servants,

under whose Care the Children respectively are placed, do cause their Hands and Face to be washed every Morning, their Hair combed, their Shoes and Buckles cleaned and Cloaths mended, and their Persons, particularly their Heads, Hands and Feet, free from Dirt of every Kind, not only for the Benefit of their Health, but that they may early in Life learn a Habit of Cleanliness.⁷¹

The regular daily washing of hands and face was the very minimum that the workhouse required of its inmates. The matron of the St George, Hanover Square workhouse in Westminster was instructed to ‘take care, that the Poor are washed every Day’ in the rules and orders of the house published in 1776.⁷² To facilitate daily washing, St Clement Danes ensured that their new workhouse would have a supply of water on the upper floors by ordering a pump to fill a ‘Cistern on the top of the house and Pipes & Cocks necessary to supply the different floors with Water.’⁷³

Appropriate treatment of the pauper body was an important element in eighteenth-century systems of parochial care. As Tim Hitchcock has recently demonstrated pauper bodies could become points of conflict in contested notions of ‘care giving’ in the workhouse.⁷⁴ The condition of a pauper’s body and the perceived cleanliness of his or her immediate surroundings might easily become a bargaining chip in the turbulent parochial politics of London’s West End. Hitchcock has particularly noted this during the 1720s and 30s. In the same manner, Kevin Siena has successfully shown how the pauper’s ‘sick

⁷¹ Governors and Directors of the Poor of St James, *Rules, Orders, and Regulations*, 5-6.

⁷² Governors and Directors of the Poor of St George, Hanover Square. *Rules, Orders, and Regulations, for the Better Disposition of Such Monies, As Shall Be Raised and Received for the Relief of the Poor of the Parish of St. George, Hanover-Square, and for the Better Maintaining, Governing, Employing and Regulating The Poor of the Said Parish* (London, 1776), 13.

⁷³ St Clement Danes Parish: Minutes of the Parish Vestries, 18th October 1771 WCCDMV362030277 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2018), Westminster City Archives.

⁷⁴ Hitchcock, “The Body in the Workhouse.”

body' influenced the provision of workhouse infirmaries and sick wards.⁷⁵ Likewise, the clean pauper body and its associated regimen of 'clean linen' denoted periods of equilibrium in the workhouse, where rules and systems worked well. This however, was rarely static for any great length of time. The most common reason for its breakdown was overcrowding, that periodic occurrence when the poor overwhelmed the system with their needy bodies.

Children in workhouses presented particular problems since small children were largely unable to manage their own cleanliness. In 1792, the rules of St James Westminster parish school stipulated that children should bathe every other day when the season permitted.⁷⁶ Feet were particular sites of concern, and their washing and general maintenance was much encouraged. John Wesley suggested that a weak person might 'frequently wash their Feet' in order to strengthen their health.⁷⁷ The parish of St James was careful to instruct its servants to ensure that the children's feet were to be 'washed once a Week' and that the matron should 'pay the greatest Attention to the Cleanliness and Warmth of the Children's Hands and Feet at the Beginning of every Winter'.⁷⁸ This precaution was taken in an attempt to prevent chilblains, and although cleanliness did little as a preventative it almost certainly helped check further infection should the skin become cracked and bleed. Children required special attention, in part because many lone infants were either taken into or left in the workhouse, and those that were part of family groups were rarely kept together. Men and women were separated as a matter of course, as were children.

⁷⁵ Kevin Siena, "Contagion, Exclusion, and the Unique Medical World of the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse: London Infirmaries in their Widest Relief," in Jonathan Reinarz and Leonard Schwarz *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press), 20-22.

⁷⁶ Governors and Directors of the Poor of St James, *Rules, Orders, and Regulations*, 15.

⁷⁷ John Wesley, *Primitive Physick: or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*, 2nd enlarged edition. (Bristol: G. Woodfall, 1750), xxi.

⁷⁸ St James, *Westminster, Rules, Orders, and Regulations*, 19.

Slightly older children were supervised by ward nurses, some of whom were paid, others of whom were appointed from the ranks of the poor in the workhouse. These nurses were required to ensure that even the smallest child was dressed, cleaned and combed ready for breakfast each morning. Hair combs were essential items in the workhouse and cost little to purchase. In 1739, the parish of St Dionis Backchurch purchased one for the parish that cost 4 pence,⁷⁹ although a horn comb could be had for as little as a penny.⁸⁰ The workhouse of St Clement Danes, Westminster which accommodated approximately 250 paupers at any one time, bought combs in much larger quantities. In June 1788 they purchased a ‘Doz small tooth Combs, 2 Large tooth combs and 2 comb brushes’.⁸¹ A further two dozen small tooth combs were purchased the following year.

Scraping a comb through the hair of a pauper child had two effects, the first to tidy morning hair and prevent it from becoming matted and second to remove lice. Like washing, this was also a visible marker of the parish’s authority and intervention. For the pauper however, it provided a way of controlling and eradicating infection with lice and their nits.

It is difficult however, to ascertain if immersive bathing was practised or even advocated in London’s workhouses, since there seems to be little or no evidence to support this either way, until the end of the century.⁸² It is possible that tubs in laundries or wash houses were utilised, which had the added convenience of access to warm water. The dedicated workhouse bathing space did not emerge until after the end of the eighteenth

⁷⁹ St Dionis Backchurch: Churchwardens’ Vouchers. 25th December 1739. London Lives, 1690-1800, GLDBPP30700PP307000838. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 6th October 2014) London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

⁸⁰ *OBP*, 14th May 1752, William Baythorne (t17520514-32).

⁸¹ WCA: B1248, 6 June 1788.

⁸² MacKay notes that in 1805, St Martin-in-the Fields workhouse required that their baths were better maintained. MacKay, *Respectability and the Poor*, 117.

century and in some cases not until the third decade of the nineteenth century when wide scale building took place under the auspices of the ‘new’ poor law.

This would seem at odds with the move towards institutional bathing in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, as legislation which required bathing tubs to be available in prisons was enacted in 1774.⁸³ Much of the discussion surrounding these debates was framed around improvements in health and the management of contagion. It did, however, accord with eighteenth century accepted norms whereby bodily cleanliness was achieved by hand-washing various areas of the body or by vigorous dry rubbing rather than full immersion of the body. This was first articulated by Georges Vigarello in his book *Concepts of Cleanliness* where he suggested that it was ‘the linen which was ‘washed’ and the unseen parts of the body perhaps at most were wiped.⁸⁴ Vigarello however, largely relied on elite perceptions and evidence particularly associated with the French aristocracy. But Tim Hitchcock was the first to note that ‘Clean linen, washed once a week, was the absolute marker of decency’ for poor men and women.⁸⁵ John Styles’ more recent work on plebeian clothing, also confirmed that the personal cleanliness of the poor was defined by the state of their bodily linen rather than the body itself.⁸⁶ It stemmed, he claimed, from both the practicalities of washing bodily linen, which was far easier, than the heavier and more difficult outerwear. In addition, contemporary ‘medical wisdom’ required ‘bodily excretions to be removed from the skin’.⁸⁷ This was not an aspirational following of ‘social superiors’, but as Styles carefully demonstrates there is a strong sense of plebeian self-fashioning.⁸⁸

⁸³ 14 Geo. II c.59.

⁸⁴ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 59.

⁸⁵ Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, 98-99.

⁸⁶ Styles, *Dress of the People*, 78.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

This close relationship between the cleanliness of bodily linen and the perceived cleanliness of the body was a prevalent belief through almost all of the eighteenth century, including by those at the bottom of the social scale. It is therefore; entirely plausible that cleanliness was also associated with the same notions of self-fashioning that Styles notes in the choice and character of clothing worn by plebeian men and women. Therefore, in order to maintain bodily cleanliness which, as we have seen, was predicated on access to clean linen, then those who were destitute or simply unable to access clean clothing elsewhere relied on their parish.

The regular grant of clothing to paupers was one of the important functions of parochial poor relief. As the workhouse gradually became the principal conduit through which assistance was granted to the poor, then the provision of clothing came within its purview. In 1782 this was put on a statutory basis by the Relief of the Poor Act.⁸⁹ Section 33 specified that, at the expense of the parish, ‘suitable and necessary Cloathing’ should be supplied to those entering to the workhouse.⁹⁰ By implication this clothing was both clean and free from vermin and as such it formed an important method by which the poor could maintain bodily cleanliness.

Consideration of pauper clothing has been minimal until quite recently when John Styles published, *The Dress of the People*. This, together with work by Steven King and Sam Smiles, highlighted how plebeian dress formed highly visible ways in which the poor were evident in their communities.⁹¹ King specifically considered garments issued through the workhouse and posited, ‘the idea that clothing standards may have been a key to the expression of generosity and humanitarian concern, a symbol of the integrated position of

⁸⁹ 22 Geo. III c. 83. (Gilbert’s Act).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, s.33.

⁹¹ Styles, *Dress of the People*; Steven King, “Reclothing the English Poor, 1750–1840,” *Textile History* 33, no. 1 (May 1, 2002): 37–47; Sam Smiles, “Defying Comprehension: Resistance to Uniform Appearance in Depicting the Poor, 1770s to 1830s,” *Textile History* 33, no. 1 (May 1, 2002): 22–36.

the poor into local society', most of which he suggests has remained largely unexplored.⁹² While he went some way in answering his own musings through the consideration of various aspects of the style, colour, textile and amount of clothing, there is no examination of the role of cleanliness in workhouse clothing. Yet the parish authorities invested significant resources in establishing and maintaining cleanliness in the form of wash houses, laundries and more importantly time – a great deal of which was represented by the paid time of servants and staff of the workhouse. For instance, in 1775 St Giles and St George's workhouse paid their laundress £6 per annum to take care of the inmates' laundry.⁹³

There was however, a variety of practice in workhouses over the treatment of pauper clothing. Some parochial authorities cleaned and stored clothing, subsequently returning items to the pauper when he or she left the workhouse. Others returned their garments immediately after fumigation or washing. This allowed the parish to supplement what was already owned with fewer garments supplied by the parish, others still, merely cleaned items of clothing in order that they could be pressed into communal parish service. Or, as the rules of St Andrew's workhouse in Shoe Lane clearly stated, items of clothing were to be 'made useful for the Service of this House'.⁹⁴ The implications of which were not so clear cut. In St Andrew's other workhouse in Holborn items were recorded in the,

Wearing-Apparel Book, wherein is noted what is brought by each Person into the House, which is immediately clean'd, and whatever they want beside, is furnished out of the House-Wardrobe.⁹⁵

⁹² King, "Reclothing the English Poor," 37.

⁹³ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Committee Appointed to Make Enquiries Relating to The Employment, Relief, and Maintenance, of the Poor; The Apprehending and Passing of Vagrants; and Regulating Houses of Correction, within That Part of Great Britain Called England*, (Great Britain, 1776), 19.

⁹⁴ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

Both workhouses, however, confirmed that clothing was to be washed or otherwise cleaned before being passed on or back to the pauper. Jonas Hanway tells us that in St James's workhouse, Westminster,

the governors generally, if not always, strip such poor as come to them in miserable filthy rags, and after washing them in hot water, give them clean, tho' old cloathing, and condemn the rags as only fit for paper, and not even for this, if they are not dry, so as to prevent rotting in their rag-hole. In another workhouse which I know of, this method is not yet observed; the consequence of which is, that filth and disease keep pace together, and waste and destroy the younger part of the inhabitants.⁹⁶

Clothing issued to paupers usually remained property of the workhouse and in order to prevent the poor from pawning items of apparel many workhouses marked items as belonging to the parish. St Giles-in-the-Fields marked shirts and shifts with the letters S and G together with the pauper's initial and ward number, suggesting that the items remained personal to each individual during their stay in the workhouse.⁹⁷ The regular washing and cleaning of linen together with its marking implies that inmates had at least two sets, one to wear and one in the wash. John Styles particularly noted the limited durability of plebeian clothing which was prolonged by the regular laundering and mending of garments. Outer garments like trousers or perhaps a stout gown might be brushed or rubbed to remove the heaviest staining or dried mud. In the later 1780s St Clement Danes' workhouse made regular purchases of fuller's earth, a substance which was often used in the removal of stubborn stains, particularly in methods of dry cleaning.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ It is probable that old and un-repairable clothing was stored [in the rag-hole] and sold on for paper-making. Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 122.

⁹⁷ *Rules and Orders to Be Observed by the Officers and Servants in St. Giles's Work-house, and by the Poor Therein* (London, 1726), 4.

⁹⁸ WCA: B1248, between 3 June 1788 – 10 June 1789, ½ lb of Fuller's earth was purchased on 13 occasions; Anonymus, *The Complete Man and Maid Servant: Containing, Plain and Easy Instructions for Servants of Both Sexes, To Qualify Themselves for Places in General, in Order to Obtain the Favour of Their Masters and Mistresses in the Discharge of Their Several Stations ; But More Particularly for the Places of Valet de Chambre, Shopman, Apprentice, Gardener, Footman, Farmer's Man, Groom, House-Keeper, Lady's Maid, House Maid, Chamber Maid, Cook Maid, Dairy Maid, Laundry Maid, Nursery Maid, Scullery Maid. Together with Marketing and Other Useful Tables for Casting Up Wages for Any Yearly Sum, and from One Day to One Year. The Whole Containing Great Variety of Curious, Useful, Instructive, and Important Articles, for the Use and Benefit of Servants in General, Never Before Published* (London: J. Cooke, 1764),

Quantities of other products to assist the laundry were also purchased by St Clements, these included starch, pearl ash and vinegar.⁹⁹ Both pearl ash and vinegar might be used in combination with other products to remove spots or staining from textiles. As we have seen in chapter three, clothing received considerable physical manipulation during the cleansing process; garments were not only soaked and steeped in various ways but also pounded and beaten until the textile released its dirt. Unlike other clothing body linen was expected to be white, and at that a brilliant white, although many of the poor owned the ‘cheaper, coarser varieties of flaxen and hempen cloth.’¹⁰⁰ Styles suggested this had a ‘distinctly brownish tinge’ with some of it known, quite literally, as ‘brown linen.’¹⁰¹ This did not prevent large workhouses, like that of St Clement Danes from purchasing products which would give a whitening effect to linen garments. As we have seen, the use of stone blue or powder blue in domestic washing was commonplace. Commercial versions were often advertised in the London press, like this advertisement which appeared in the *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser* in July 1756,

Liquid Blue, at 14d. the Pint Bottle and 6d the smaller Bottle, which is the best Colour that ever was invented for washing and Bleaching of Linens &c, and by far cheaper than the other Sorts is sold at the Castle in Wood Street.¹⁰²

The ‘stone blue’ or ‘powdered blue’ would be added during the washing process usually during the final rinse or soaking, where it would counteract the yellowing quality of some textiles. It is difficult to ascertain however, if the stone and powdered blue, or indeed any cleaning products, were used more widely on the paupers’ clothes or were retained solely for use with the clothing of the staff and servants.

38 and Sarah Harrison *The House-Keeper’s Pocket-Book, And Compleat Family Cook: Containing Above Twelve Hundred Curious and Uncommon Receipts in Cookery, Pastry, Preserving, Pickling, Candyng, Collaring, &c.* 6th edition. (London: R. Ware, 1757), 202- 203.

⁹⁹ Both pearl ash and vinegar also have culinary uses, it is therefore difficult to ascertain their precise usage.

¹⁰⁰ Styles, *Dress of the People*, 79.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, July 14, 1756; Issue 4641.

The cleanliness and orderliness of workhouse paupers became synonymous with conditions there and were a marker of parochial good management. Workhouses commonly issued newly laundered linen once a week, usually on Sundays, so that fresh clothing might be donned for the trip to the parish church. This was of particular relevance since it was mandatory for all paupers, except those in the infirmary, to attend church on Sunday mornings. Here, they would be highly visible to other parishioners and ratepayers. This clean, combed and seemingly orderly pauper now became the acceptable face of parochial charity, offering a tangible return for the considerable investment in the parish workhouse. On Sunday afternoons paupers were often given permission to leave the confines of the workhouse and to visit friends or relatives. Their clean clothing may have made them conspicuous amongst their former neighbours since for the very poorest washing clothes may have been beyond their means. It is more likely, however, that distinctive parochial clothing rather than its cleanliness marked them out from their peers.

By the end of the century some were clearly refusing parish clothing. At the workhouse of St Andrew and St George's Holborn it was noted that 'Many Paupers in the House will not wear Parish clothing; by which the Parishes are enabled to clothe the children at Nurse, and others, without any additional expense.'¹⁰³ For the most part, though, workhouse clothing became an accepted part of the London streetscape. It neither marked out their poverty and filth, nor set them apart as badging had formerly done.¹⁰⁴ The provision of clothing by parochial authorities was a necessity, in that it not only to keep paupers warm and covered their modesty, but clean clothing also assisted in the control of

¹⁰³ *Governors and Directors of the Poor, Rules, Orders and Regulations, for the Government of the Workhouse Belonging to the That Part of the Parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, Which Lies Above the Bars, In the County of Middlesex, and the Parish of St. George the Martyr, In the Said County* (London, 1791), 36.

¹⁰⁴ Jonas Hanway confirms that badging the poor had all but disappeared by 1767, other than some boys in charity schools. Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 121. Steve Hindle notes that Thomas Alcock and later Sidney and Beatrice Webb suggest that badging of the poor had in effect ceased in London by the mid-1750s. Hindle, "Dependency, Shame and Belonging," 19.

lice and scabies. It provided much needed relief from the filth and subsequent itchiness that accompanied these infestations.

Beds and bedbugs

Cleanliness of the pauper's body and clothing was not the only concern, for the bed linen and the bed itself required regular attention. Like other aspects of the workhouse, this was subject to regulation specific to each workhouse; in part because beds and sleeping accommodation varied according to the nature of the workhouse. This was never more so than in the proposed new workhouse of St George, Westminster which, in plans drawn up in 1725-26, designated eight wards on the upper floors to hold six beds each. As paupers were expected to sleep two to a bed, this allowed for twelve persons per room. Bed-sharing in middling households was commonplace during the early eighteenth century and was considered neither unusual nor a form of hardship.¹⁰⁵ The workhouse proved no exception; the wards however, were single-sex, so should a pauper be married it was unlikely that they would share a bed with a spouse.

Workhouses in the City of London were generally much smaller than those of the West End, accommodating some thirty to eighty paupers. That of St Giles in Cripplegate accommodated just thirty men, women and children. Here it seemed, as in the larger workhouses, men slept separately from the women and children. For a few paupers, however, the experience of the beds, sheets and other bedding available in the workhouse might well have been novel. However, for others the parish considered a bed a necessity. In the summer of 1706 the churchwardens and overseers of the poor in the parish of St Botolph Aldgate provided a 'bed and rug for John Cousins', an aged parishioner, at a cost

¹⁰⁵ Priestley and Corfield, "Rooms and room use," footnote 53.

of ten shillings.¹⁰⁶ By 1792 this same parish was still paying for pauper beds, but by this point they were paying Mr Fletcher the local carpenter, who charged £11 18s and 6^d for ‘bed Furniture for the workhouse’.¹⁰⁷

The size of bed varied according to its occupant; those who were ill, infirm, sick or insane were much more likely to occupy a single bed.¹⁰⁸ This probably reflected the simple fact that those in need of significantly more personal care, including those that were more likely to soil the sheets, required a single bed. As the more expensive part of the bed was the bolster or mattress this could be accommodated by using inexpensive straw. Straw had the added advantage of allowing liquid to drain fairly quickly. Perhaps for economic reasons some institutions moved away from beds to cots on slightly raised platforms or placed directly the floor. Some merely consisted of semi-partitioned boxes along either side of the wall. Whatever the design, most were optimised so that the wooden parts of the bed might easily be washed with vinegar or other primitive pesticides to discourage or control infestations. In St James, they thoroughly cleaned their bedsteads once a year and ‘beat their bedding every month’ in an effort to control vermin.¹⁰⁹ Straw might more simply be burned.

Sometime around 1720, Richard Hutton, steward at the Quaker workhouse in Clerkenwell committed an important recipe to his day book – one for ‘destroying bugs’.¹¹⁰ Hutton noted that this was a ‘well experienced recipe for destroying bugs’ and that it had

¹⁰⁶ St Botolph Aldgate: Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor Account Books. 6th July 1706. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, GLBAAC100000332. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017) London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

¹⁰⁷ *LL*, Overseers of the Poor Account Book, 20th March 1792 (GLBAAC100060247).

¹⁰⁸ The rules of the St Andrew and St George’s workhouse in Holborn contained ‘An Account of the Numbers of Beds, with Description of the Persons in the several Wards’ it maintained that ‘191 Beds will accommodate 299 Persons’ Governors and Directors of the Poor, *Rules, Orders and Regulations, for the Government of the Workhouse*, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Hanway, *Letters to Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 123.

¹¹⁰ Hutton and Hitchcock, *Richard Hutton’s Complaints Book*, 88-89.

been passed on to him by a physician.¹¹¹ It is possible that Hutton himself had tried the mixture of spirits, turpentine and camphor on his own beds since he was aware that this ‘curious, neat white mixture’ cost about a shilling per bed to treat.¹¹² Tim Hitchcock observed that a shilling reflected the relative importance to Hutton of ‘keeping his workhouse vermin free’ since it would otherwise have provided food for a day or two.¹¹³ By the early eighteenth century bedbugs had become a recurrent menace with no reliable method of eradication. In the summer of 1728 St Martin-in-the-Fields’ workhouse paid Mr West eleven shillings for ‘Bugg Traps’, again a very significant sum of money.¹¹⁴ Regular regimes of cleaning and inspection helped slow down the bugs’ progress, making them easier to control and with fewer bugs manual removal became a viable option. Keeping the workhouse free of bugs and other infestations was an important element of parochial housekeeping, given the sums spent on it. The nurses at St Giles’ workhouse were required to, ‘search all the Beds for Fleas, Buggs and other Vermin, once a Week, or oftener if occasion’.¹¹⁵

For most, however, this was a losing battle and many resorted to commercial methods of destruction. The early eighteenth century saw a rising number of bedbug exterminators in London, one of whom was, John Southall, who promoted his business through the publication of a treatise on bedbugs.¹¹⁶ Southall claimed to be highly effective in destroying bugs found in beds and furniture, his only admitted stumbling block were the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 88. It is possible that this recipe came via John Southall who had a well-known Bug extermination business and went on to write *A Treatise of Buggs* published in 1730. Southall uses the same phrase in his publication “‘If a live bug is but touched with a drop of this mixture, you will see it die immediately,” and that moreover it is safe to rub on the furniture.’

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, 107.

¹¹⁴ WAC: F 2212, 166, 30 June 1728-14 Jul 1728. Fortnightly and quarterly accounts of workhouse expenditure, and fortnightly abstracts of numbers of persons in the house and employed in various occupations, with the receipts from their work, signed by the justices. 29 July 1725 - 21 April 1728. Reference kindly supplied by Prof Jeremy Boulton, University of Newcastle.

¹¹⁵ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 39.

¹¹⁶ Lisa T. Sarasohn, “‘That Nauseous Venomous Insect:’ Bedbugs in Early Modern England,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 4 (2013): 513–30.

bugs that ensconced themselves behind the wainscot, only to re-appear sometime later and re-infect beds and bedding.¹¹⁷ Sarah Pennell suggests that Southall ‘conflated bedbugs.... with wood-boring beetles’ although both seemed to have been just as unwelcome.¹¹⁸ She also notes the rising number of household manuals which included sections on the eradication of bugs and vermin, including Hannah Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747) which was carried in later editions. These instructions were often highly derivative, sometimes merely repeating Southall’s advice and recipe. From the 1730s onwards, Pennell also notes that newspaper advertising began to emphasise the ‘cleanliness and, freedom from bugs’ of second-hand furniture.¹¹⁹

Some institutions chose to deal with bedbugs in an alternative way, St Thomas’s hospital for instance elected to install iron bedsteads. In August 1767, it was reported to the Governors of St Thomas’s Hospital that,

beds put up in two of the Wards of this Hospital in consequence of a Voluntary Subscription generously set on foot by some of the Governors and of the Beneficial. Effects they had produced. by greatly Alleviateing the terrible Inconvenience.¹²⁰

The inconvenience of recurrent bedbugs was a continued nuisance to the hospital.

However, it was so pleased with the effects on patients that a subscription was opened for further beds to be installed throughout the institution.

Clean sheets were issued as a general rule once a month, unless the pauper was in the infirmary in which case they were issued at the discretion of the matron. St Andrew and St George’s workhouse in Holborn kept ‘a sufficient number for every bed in the

¹¹⁷ Southall, *Buggs*.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Pennell, “Making the Bed in Later Stuart and Georgian England,” in *Selling Textiles in the Long Eighteenth Century: Comparative Perspectives from Western Europe* ed. Jon Stobart and Bruno Blondé (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 40.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²⁰ St Thomas’s Hospital: Minutes of the Court of Governors. 5th August 1767. *London Lives, 1690-1800*, LMTHMG553020311. (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 25th November 2014) London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

House to have a clean pair Monthly, or oftener if necessary'.¹²¹ This, they calculated amounted to '133 Pair for the Double Beds', 104 for single beds and thirteen pair, 'extra for Casualties' for 191 beds.¹²² Care was also taken between washes to keep linen free of infestation and nurses at St Giles in the Fields were instructed to lay wormwood 'in all of the Bed-Sheets.'¹²³ In addition to this, wormwood was also used during the washing process and on occasion to fumigate wards in the workhouse. The thorough drying and airing of sheets was recommended in order to avoid a chill, particularly in the winter months. In St Andrew's workhouse beds were to be made each morning by nine and rooms swept by ten. During the summer months the wards were washed three times a week although the cold weather reduced this to once a week in the winter.¹²⁴ There was little evidence that new technologies of cleanliness were adopted in the workhouse. Whereas Newgate had installed an engine driven by a rooftop windmill to ensure that air was circulated around the building, there is nothing to suggest that any of the London workhouses adopted such mechanisms. Instead, many institutions ordered that the windows were to be opened; in St Giles-in-the-Fields' workhouse this was during dinner every day, in order 'to air the Rooms, except in very rainy Weather.'¹²⁵

Most London workhouses were designed so that each ward had several windows that would allow the free-flow of air through the upper wards, making them attractive as places to dry laundry. This, though, seems to have been universally prohibited, like in St Mary's workhouse, which specifically forbade that 'Linen be washed or hung up to dry in any of the Bed-Rooms.'¹²⁶ Smoking in bed was also generally prohibited, in part because

¹²¹Governors and Directors of the Poor, *Rules, Orders and Regulations, for the Government of the Workhouse*, 39.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Account of Several Work-Houses (1732)*, 34.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹²⁶ Biggerstaff, *Rules and Orders for the Better Regulation of the Workhouse*, 10.

of the fire risk to the workhouse, but in some small part because of the ash and smoke which unsettled the clean orderly wards.

In purpose built workhouses most wards or sleeping rooms were some distance from the privy. Even converted buildings placed the privy in an out-building. This necessitated the use of chamber pots during the night. St Clement Danes' workhouse regularly purchased chamber pots, over a two year period between May 1788 and May 1790 they bought 204 new pots.¹²⁷ With a mean average of 256 persons in the workhouse during this same period this seems like an extraordinary rate of replacement if it is assumed that chamber pots were only replaced due to breakage.¹²⁸ It is possible, however, that the cheaper earthenware chamber pots partly absorbed and retained odour from their contents.¹²⁹ This would perhaps require more regular replacement than the fully glazed chamber pots that they were beginning to purchase towards the end of the period.

Bed pans were also noted as a separate purchase suggesting that some other form of vessel was used for the bed bound. In a report from St Andrew and St George's workhouse in Holborn, a note mentioned that £3.0 per quarter was used to purchase earthenware.¹³⁰ This may have been a way of burying any reference to chamber pots although it may have just as easily have marked the purchase of other coarse wares in the workhouse. Whatever the case, £12 per year spent on relatively cheap items represented a significant sum.

¹²⁷ WCA: B1248, St Clement Danes, Overseers Order Book. The disbursement book records the workhouse purchasing chamber pots as follows: 6 dozen-18 August 1788; 21 Nov 1788 -3 dozen; 2 April 1789 – 2 dozen; 29 July 1789 – 3 dozen; 29 December 1789 – 2 dozen and 6 glazed chamber pots; 3 March 1790 – 1 dozen and 1 dozen glazed chamber pots.

¹²⁸ The highest number of persons in the workhouse during this period was 313 and the lowest 227.

¹²⁹ See Figure 29, Chamber pot, London, ca. 1750. Earthenware. H. 5 1/2". (Noël Hume Collection.) <http://www.chipstone.org/images.php/80/Ceramics-in-America-2003/Through-the-Lookinge-Glasse:-or,-the-Chamber-Pot-as-a-Mirror-of-Its-Time-> accessed 27th November 2014.

¹³⁰ Governors and Directors of the Poor, *Rules, Orders and Regulations, for the Government of the Workhouse*, 41.

The numerous rules that regulated workhouse wards indicated that these communal spaces required careful management. They might easily become disorderly or disruptive spaces; marked-out by dirt and filth and inhabited by unclean bodies tempted to immorality. Cleanliness provided a framework whereby this could be ameliorated, measured and even avoided.

Soap

In 1719 a visitor to England noted that, ‘At *London*, and in all other Parts of the Country where they do not burn Wood, they do not make Lye. All their Linnen, coarse and fine, is wash’d with Soap.’¹³¹ Other than water and coal, soap was the most important commodity associated with cleanliness in the London workhouse. Despite the very high taxation levied on it, which varied between 1^d and 3^d per pound, soap was widely used.¹³² From the very poorest inmate of the workhouse to the very wealthy, soap operated as an aid to cleanliness. In the early eighteenth century, the cheapest and most commonly used form was soft soap. It was sold and stored in small barrels or firkins which held approximately eight and a half gallons of the near liquid soap. Although hard soap was certainly manufactured, it represented, at least initially, the upper end of the market where soaps might be refined, perfumed and sold in small blocks. By 1784, over 90 per cent of all soap sold was the hard form; by this point manufacturers were only permitted to sell it in ‘cakes or bars.’¹³³

¹³¹ Lye was a caustic solution made by passing water through wood ash. It was used to lift stains from various textiles particularly linen. Henri M. Misson, *M. Misson’s Memoirs and Observations in His Travels over England*. Translated by Mr Ozell. (London: Printed for D. Browne et al., 1719), 303.

¹³² Malcolmson, *English Laundresses*, 132.

¹³³ William J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 240.

St Andrew's workhouse in Holborn paid £1 and six shillings per firkin of soap through the 1730s.¹³⁴ However, its exact usage is not recorded, although it was thought important enough to record it along with other essential commodities purchased by the workhouse. This included foodstuffs, beer and candles. In 1730 St Andrew's workhouse accommodated sixty-two persons, of which, four inmates were employed to 'get up the Linnen and wash for the House' and a further two to, 'make Beds, clean, and wash the House.'¹³⁵ So there was certainly scope for significant amounts of soap to be used in the regular business of the workhouse laundry. It is impossible to say whether using soap to cleanse the hands and face was encouraged during this early part of the century. But the expense of soap, and the necessity to buy frugally, suggests that soap purchased by the workhouse, in the early decades of the century, was extremely caustic and probably unsuitable for washing hands and faces, or indeed other sensitive areas of the body. However, as noted in chapter three of this thesis, the changing emphasis in newspaper advertisements for soap, was indicative of the market it sought to influence. In the early decades of the century, the focus was primarily on laundry and the whiteness of the wash. But towards the end of the century these adverts were largely concerned with the skin, of both men and women, and the effects of soap upon it. So although soap remained important in laundry work, it also became an important adjunct in cleansing the skin, suggesting that soap for bodily use was becoming increasingly commonplace. Working men and women were making this choice for themselves. Men like Thomas Cousins, who in 1799, was recalled as having asked his ship mate for a 'bit of soap to wash himself' before bathing in the Thames.¹³⁶ By the 1790s this change was beginning to permeate the workhouse.

¹³⁴ During the eighteenth century the firkin was a vessel which could contain 64lb of soap, barrels contained 256lb. For soap prices see *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 11.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁶ *LL*, City of London Coroners' Inquests, Thomas Cousins, 10th August 1799 (LMCLIC650120650).

In 1791, St Andrew and St George's workhouse in Holborn was differentiating between soap purchased and used for the general wash and that used on wards or for particular members of staff, separate from their washing their clothes. At this point, the workhouse accommodated an average of 280 inmates.¹³⁷ The quarterly bill for soap amounted to £31 14s and 6^d, nearly twice as much as was spent on candles and significantly more than the £6 paid annually to the New River Company for the supply of water.¹³⁸ Twelve persons who washed the linen were paid approximately 2^d per week; making it likely that these were inmates of the workhouse, although this was not made explicit. Laundry work was obviously an important aspect of the daily routine and occupied a significant number of women. However, some, but not all, of the wards were given an additional weekly allowance of soap (see Table 5.1.).

Wards three and four for 'refractory and abandoned women', wards twelve, thirteen and sixteen, for 'decent women housekeepers' and ward twenty two for 'work room men', were omitted from the weekly allowance.¹³⁹ These wards had no nurse attached to them and the able-bodied men and women accommodated there were not provided with soap.

Ward No.	Ward Type	lbs.	oz.
1	Lying-in Ward	1	8
2	Casual Women		8
5	Infirm men and Boys		8
6	Infirm Women		8
7	Infirm Women		8
8	Insane		8
9	Insane		8
10	Infirm Women		8
11	Sick Men		8
14	Sick Women		8

¹³⁷ Governors and Directors of the Poor, *Rules, Orders and Regulations, for the Government of the Workhouse*, 19.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

15	Sick and Foul Men		8
17	Infirm Women		8
18	Infirm Women		8
19	Foul Women		8
20	Foul Women		8
21	Infirm Men		8
	Work Room & Hall (each)		8
	Lodge & Silk Winder (each)		4
	Master, Matron, Kitchen Maid, Master's Maid, Matron's Maid (each).		8
	General Washing	10*	
	Weekly Total	25lb	0

**1lb of hard soap is included in the general washing allowance for the master and matron's clothes.*

Table 5. 1 Weekly Soap usage at St Andrew and St George's Workhouse, Holborn, 1791.¹⁴⁰

By inference ward nurses were required to mediate the use of soap on the other wards which accommodated the sick and infirm. These nurses, like those that worked in the laundry, were inmates of the workhouse and by right of their position were paid 1^d per day. It's probable that most of their patients were incapacitated in some way, many of whom were likely to have been bed bound. Women giving birth and immediate post-partum were allocated significantly more soap than any other group, in acknowledgement of their need to wash more frequently in the days after giving birth. Annual consumption of soap in St Andrew's workhouse was calculated at 11cwt 2 qr and 12lb.¹⁴¹ By comparing it with another workhouse of similar size, consumption of soap across the two workhouses was remarkably alike. In St Clement Danes' workhouse and during a similar period, between June 1788 and May 1790, annual purchases of hard soap were respectively 10cwt

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

2qr and 11cwt.¹⁴² The average number of paupers in St Clement's workhouse, at this time, was 268.

In pauper farms, those private institutions engaged by parishes with no workhouse provision of their own, cleanliness was frequently lacking. Sir John Anstruther noted during an inspection visit, of a property in Hoxton in 1815 that the courts in which the paupers exercised were 'particularly dirty and there were pigs running about'.¹⁴³ Pauper women especially complained about the lack of soap to wash their clothing. The provision of a single pair sheets also provoked criticism, since they were compelled to sleep with only a rug while they were washed and dried. These women relied on a practice called 'slating' in which they would inform the master of the house that they did not require dinner that day. In return they were given two-pence and a half penny. In this way they were able to provide soap and candles for themselves. In an institution in which food was already scarce selling a dinner in order to buy soap was a particular sacrifice, and illustrative of the importance attached to soap by pauper inmates.

Rules and Regulations: St James's Workhouse, Westminster

The workhouse was hedged about with rules and ordinances, many of which concerned sanitary conditions or the personal hygiene of the inmates. This served a variety of purposes. It was partly to re-enforce the sense of community amongst the residents by ensuring everyone conformed to a common set of rules, and in part to provide a set of tasks, again for a common purpose, which would occupy the inmates and ensure their industriousness. Tim Hitchcock suggests that paupers were particularly motivated to conform to these regimes of cleanliness for the simple and pragmatic reason of the

¹⁴² WCA: B1248, St Clement Danes, Overseers Order Book. Disbursements: period 1= 6 June 1788-27 May 1789, period 2 = 9 June 1789 – 14 May 1790. Abbreviations: cwt = hundredweight (112lb), qr = quarter (28lb), lb = 453.6g.

¹⁴³ PP, *Report on the State of Mendicity in the Metropolis* (1815), 81.

‘indignity and discomfort brought by lice and fleas’.¹⁴⁴ The rules also provided a measure by which the workhouse might be judged, since most of the workhouse scandals during the eighteenth century involved the conditions in the workhouse or of the paupers.

In 1764, it became apparent that the aged, sick and children in the workhouse administered by St John at Hackney were not provided with sufficient clean linen and the nursing care fell well below what was deemed acceptable. The workhouse manager explained this omission by claiming that the allowance paid by the parish for maintaining the poor was insufficient to provide clean linen.¹⁴⁵ Rules, however, were slippery things, and it is often difficult to ascertain how far an institution went in order to implement and maintain such regulations. The case of St James’s workhouse is one such problematic establishment.

In October 1727 Matthew Marryott was accepted by the vestry of St James, Westminster as manager of their newly opened workhouse. In the previous year he had successfully negotiated contracts to supply the poor of that parish with clothing and to set up and furnish their workhouse. However, in little over a year he was discharged from the post because he,

hath not kept up the full number of Servants for the managing the said house, according to agreements & from the other Engagements he lies under, hath not Given the attendance necessary for the good governance of the same.¹⁴⁶

To compound this Marryott had also failed to produce accounts showing how he had disposed of various goods belonging to the workhouse. The vestry had little choice but to manage their workhouse directly through a master and mistress, and in an attempt to improve the orderliness of the institution, they approved a short set of workhouse rules in October the following year. These rules covered just over a page and a half of the vestry

¹⁴⁴ Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, 101.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Payne, “Children of the Poor,” 79.

¹⁴⁶ WCA: D 1759, St James, Westminster, Vestry Minutes, Dec 27th 1728.

minute book. Rule two ensured that the poor now ate their meals together in the Hall, not wherever and whenever they chose. Most of the remainder of the rules largely concerned the compiling of an inventory of goods, particularly including clothing and textiles. They also resolved to keep a close account of the provisions brought into the workhouse and infirmary. It was possible that this was done in response to Marryott's mismanagement of the workhouse, although nothing specific was noted. This modest set of rules remained in place for several years. By 1731 there were some 300 in this 'new' workhouse. Men, women and children were housed in eight regular wards but beds were also beginning to appear in the halls in order to accommodate all of the paupers seeking assistance. In addition to this there was a lying-in ward and a ward which was used as an infirmary. The SPCK reported that that the matron supervised the infirmary, kitchen and all of the 'Linnen and Wollen Apparel of the House' under the guidance of the parish overseers of the poor, who were required to inspect her and the workhouse master weekly.¹⁴⁷

Whether there was some deterioration in conditions at the workhouse, it is unclear, but in 1736 the vestry listed a full thirteen pages of workhouse rules in the minute book.¹⁴⁸ These rules offer a detailed view of the daily routines expected in St James's workhouse and of the meticulous attention to cleanliness across the week. Each morning the workhouse family was to be woken, washed and combed and taken to morning prayers. The porter was instructed to 'Take Care that all the men Rise Dress Wash and Clean themselves every Morning'.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, nurses of children between four and six years were required to 'Dress Wash and Comb them every Morning and bring them Clean to Morning Prayers'.¹⁵⁰ After prayers the beds were made and nurses were required to

¹⁴⁷ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1732), 54.

¹⁴⁸ WCA: D 1759, 445-457.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

‘thoroughly Clean their respective wards and Air them’.¹⁵¹ Airing or encouraging the flow of fresh sweet air through the wards was thought to decrease the opportunity for infectious diseases to spread and more practically it dispelled lingering odours after twenty or thirty bodies had spent the night together in a single ward. William Buchan, subsequently physician at one of the regional branches of the Foundling Hospital, reminded his readers that ‘In places where great numbers of people are collected, cleanliness becomes of the utmost importance. It is well known, that infectious diseases are communicated by tainted air.’¹⁵² After breakfast women were chosen to assist with the daily laundry tasks. All paupers were permitted clean linen each Sunday and the workhouse mistress was instructed to ensure that those in the infirmary were also given fresh linen. In addition, she was directed to ensure that the beds received clean sheets each month. Meals were to be orderly and all paupers were to be served together in the great hall. The nurses appointed to each ward were also responsible for cleaning the halls, ‘by turns every Morning’.¹⁵³ They were instructed to ‘Sweep Passages and Stairs Leading from the Floors of their respective wards and every Wednesday and Saturday scour the said passages and stairs and make clean the wainscot and balsters belonging the same.’¹⁵⁴

As well as the personal cleanliness of the paupers and the general cleanliness of the house, rules required that the paupers’ well-being should be regularly monitored. The incumbent of St James was required to appoint someone to minister to souls in the workhouse, while an apothecary and surgeon dealt with their bodies. The Governor was also required to account for goods and services acquired or produced in the house. All this

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 447.

¹⁵² William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; Or, The Family Physician: Being an Attempt to Render the Medical Art More Generally Useful, by Shewing People What Is Their Own Power Both with Respect to the Prevention and Cure of Diseases*. 2nd American Edition (London: Printed by Joseph Cruikshank, for R. Aitken, 1774), 74.

¹⁵³ WCA: D 1759, 447.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

was subject to a regular regimen of inspection by the parish overseers and other vestrymen. In short almost every aspect of the running of the St James's workhouse including its cleanliness and that of its inmates was mentioned in the rules.

While the issue of these detailed rules left the parish administrators in no doubt as to how the workhouse should be run, the vestry moved on to consider other pressing business - the administration of the newly enacted Watch Act. The vestry became consumed with the selection and appointment of watchmen together with a set of procedures to guide them in their new regime of monitoring St James' streets. However, the select vestry of St James' was composed of many wealthy and influential individuals, regular meetings were ordinarily attended by between six and eight men - too few to simultaneously supervise the workhouse as well as to adequately implement the new Watch Act. By April 1738 there were signs that the workhouse was not operating as it should, with the death of infants reaching unacceptable levels.¹⁵⁵ In March 1741 it was reported that the house was 'in a very nasty condition, the stench hardly supportable'.¹⁵⁶ The house was in a filthy condition leaving the paupers wretched and largely unsupported in the workhouse. The mistress was dead and the master uncooperative. In April of 1742, either unwilling or possibly unable to affect any sort of reform, the vestry took the unusual decision to close the workhouse, despite the considerable investment that it represented.

Hitchcock and Shoemaker locate the failure of the St James's workhouse in a wider landscape of growing resentment towards Westminster's select vestries. It culminated in a petition to parliament and the subsequent investigation of 'repeated unfair rating practices.... along with more serious accusations of outright corruption'.¹⁵⁷ Although this investigation failed to bring about any statutory changes, it served to shine a light ever

¹⁵⁵ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 155.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

brightly on the Westminster vestries. In 1742, another failure of local administration occurred when the St Martin's roundhouse became the location of a more serious disaster. Conditions in this local lock-up, like those of the failed workhouse, were marked by filthy squalid surroundings. These played a pivotal role in the death of two women and eventually led to a trial at the Old Bailey.¹⁵⁸ The failure of the St James's workhouse, however, serves to problematize the difficulties in examining the internal management of workhouses through a simple consideration of their rules. As with most institutions, it is difficult to ascertain how thoroughly such regulations were implemented and maintained. Yet, the very existence of these rules denotes the relative importance of cleanliness. They highlight the centrality of sanitary conditions in workhouse management, whether the rules were implemented or not. However, the parish of St James was unusual for the length and detail of its workhouse regulations, although their focus on cleanliness was common.

The two editions of the SPCK's *An Account of Several Work-Houses* give numerous examples of London workhouses which adopted rules on cleanliness or integrated cleanliness into the management and daily routines of their institution. By 1782 the Relief of the Poor Act incorporated, both in the substantive sections of the Act and the model rules, directions as to cleanliness in workhouses.¹⁵⁹ The second of these model regulations began by specifically instructing workhouse governors to ensure that apartments and paupers were 'clean and wholesome'.¹⁶⁰ So from the advisory literature of the SPCK in the 1720s, less than 70 years later, workhouse cleanliness had become statutorily embodied.

¹⁵⁸ Tim Hitchcock, "You Bitches... Die and be Damned: Gender, Authority and the Mob in St Martin's Roundhouse Disaster of 1742," in *The Streets of London from the Great Fire to the Great Stink*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), 69-100.

¹⁵⁹ 22 Geo. III c. 83.

¹⁶⁰ 22 Geo. III cap 83. Schedule, containing the forms of proceedings referred to by the aforesaid act, rules, orders. Bye-laws and regulations.

The 1790s saw an increased concern for cleanliness in St Martin's workhouse in Westminster.¹⁶¹ This was set in a landscape of increased regulation of the workhouse over the next two decades, much of which controlled the liberty and whereabouts of the inmates. In 1796, a new reception place for paupers to be cleaned and inspected upon admission to the workhouse was stipulated by parish overseers, although, as the order was repeated in 1805, there was some doubt as to 'its effective enforcement.'¹⁶² The pauper's own clothing was cleaned and set aside while inmates were issued with items resembling uniforms; these garments were marked with a parish identifier. As we have seen in this chapter, these were not new or indeed innovative practices. Yet the timing of such improvements and concerns for cleanliness mirrored those taking place in a number of other institutions. For instance, Bridewell completed a wholesale revision of staff duties in 1792, much of which included the maintenance of cleanliness from the cells to laundry and shaving.¹⁶³ The prison at Bridewell subsequently completed a number of improvements including 'fitting up the Bath and Wash house' and installing a cistern for water, together with new beds and linen.¹⁶⁴ In a more substantial project, to be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, the Middlesex Bench replaced its Bridewell with Cold Bath Fields prison in the early 1790s, paying particular attention to sanitary conditions in the new building. Rules were slippery things and sometimes it must be accepted that they represented mere intentions rather than achievements. Like cleanliness itself the efficacy of rules rose and fell with workhouse management, occasionally overwhelmed by the pressure of numbers at other times entirely ignored. However, the most notable feature of

¹⁶¹ Lynn MacKay, *Respectability and the London Poor, 1780-1870: The Value of Virtue* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 117.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Bridewell Royal Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 28th June 1792, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, BBBRMG202090508 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

¹⁶⁴ Bridewell Royal Hospital: Minute Books of the General Prison Committee, 25th November 1794, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, GLBRMB201010110 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 21st January 2017), London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

rules over time is their multiplication. Rules became ever longer and complex to deal with new systems and methods of cleanliness.

Conclusion

As Tim Hitchcock suggests, the SPCK's two slim volumes of *An Account of Several Work-Houses* acted as a set of instructions rather than an argument.¹⁶⁵ These volumes gained traction in the 1720s partly because they were grounded in the domestic detail of the wider 'Christian family'. The notion of the 'workhouse family' proved an acceptable trope to the middling sort that dominated the vestries. It allowed them to embrace the parish poor as part of the 'family' and reject the 'Vagabond Poor' as outsiders.¹⁶⁶ By highlighting existing examples in their volumes the SPCK encouraged parochial authorities to implement separate places to eat, sleep, work and more importantly undertake laundry in its workhouses. The regimen and rules adopted by these workhouses, it argued, were 'not stricter than what are common in all regular Families'.¹⁶⁷ It is this extended family of 'diverse dependents, such as servants, apprentices and co-resident relatives' that Naomi Tadmor argues would be more familiar to those of the eighteenth century.¹⁶⁸ In the workhouse, this extended patriarchal family was neatly represented by its internal organisation, in which the workhouse master represented the head of household and a workhouse mistress or matron undertook responsibility for housekeeping. Here, in an increasingly gendered family, tasks associated with cleanliness and sanitary conditions were allocated on a gender basis. Women and girls were offered, 'domestick Employments suitable to their Sex and Station.'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Hitchcock, "English Workhouse," 225

¹⁶⁶ *Account of Several Work-Houses* (1725), v.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Naomi Tadmor, "The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, no. 151 (May 1, 1996), 112.

¹⁶⁹ *Quaker School and Work-house*, 5.

Cleanliness in the workhouse family also proved attractive to the resident paupers. The complex system of ‘obligations and rights’ ensured that the poor were not only able to gain something concrete from the system; clean clothing, a clean bed and more importantly a clean body which helped them to fight infestation and infection. But the poor were also able to contribute and influence the system. Rules were only effective if they were workable by both parties, and over time many of these rules simply became embedded in the system. Sometimes they were enshrined in legislation and at other times they slipped into obscurity. However, in return, the pauper was required to scrub, wash or clean as required. Other than workhouse laundry there were many regular household tasks that required attention, not least the beds and bedding. In order to discourage bedbugs, bedframes and bedding were regularly washed. Floors, wainscots and windows required regular attention. By the end of the century cleanliness was not only highly valued but deeply embedded in the daily routines of most London workhouses. The parish of St Mary, Islington began its workhouse rules by entreating its mater and mistress,

That by their own good Example, and the Authority vested in them from the Trustees, they be careful to promote *Cleanliness, Industry, Frugality, Sobriety, Peace and Piety* in the said House.¹⁷⁰

By mid-century, forty-nine parishes in metropolitan London could be identified as ‘having a workhouse, or contracting out the care of the parish poor’.¹⁷¹ However, as Hitchcock and Shoemaker note many more of London’s residents benefited from ‘broader parochial provision.’¹⁷² In 1776 a parliamentary investigation identified, ‘at least 80’ workhouses in London ‘with space for some 16,000 poor’.¹⁷³ By 1815 this rose to 19,723 indoor poor.¹⁷⁴ Despite London’s growing population these figures represent a significant

¹⁷⁰ Biggerstaff, *Rules and Orders for the Better Regulation of the Workhouse*, 4.

¹⁷¹ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 139-140.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁷³ Green, *Pauper Capital*, 59.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 63. Green is careful to point out the problematic nature of these figures.

number of paupers passing through London's workhouses, given that these populations were not static and constantly 'churned'. Therefore, many of London's poor had been exposed to workhouse regimes of cleanliness which revolved around regular clean linen and non-immersive modes of bodily cleanliness.

The longevity of cleanliness as an important tenet of the workhouse regime is perhaps two-fold. Firstly cleanliness was flexible in its implementation, fitting as easily to small workhouses of perhaps thirty or so to the large workhouses of 700 or 800. Its interpretation was also variable with vestries and parishes able to fix their own standards. However, as deviation from a fairly high set of standards was largely mediated by the press in the exposure of scandals, they tended not to vary significantly. Indeed many of these scandals encouraged safe-guards to be built into the system, with the workhouse master or mistress instructed to monitor or inspect standards of cleanliness. Inmates were also given the opportunity of bringing the infringements of rules or iniquitous treatment to the attention of the overseers of the poor or vestry. This did not however, prevent scandals from occurring.

As mentioned in this chapter, pauper children presented particular problems in terms of their cleanliness. Infants and very small children were unable to undertake this for themselves and found that, if not in the care of their immediate family, then, they may be subject to parochial or charitable concerns that made these decisions on their behalf. As pauper children became older and remained in care, then, regulations concerning their cleanliness remained in place. Towards the end of the century, new charitable concerns placed further requirements on a child's cleanliness particularly those remaining with their families. The next chapter will explore some of the issues concerning cleanliness and children in institutional or charitable care.

Chapter 6

Institutional cleanliness: children and infants

During the eighteenth century institutional care and provision for the children of the metropolitan poor became increasingly diverse. Parochial care and education expanded enormously, as did the endowed charity schools encouraged and managed by the SPCK. Apprenticeships which generally declined through London continued to be utilised by parish authorities, and by the later decades of the eighteenth century the ‘transportation’ of children to the factories and mills of the north through the apprenticeship system rivalled the numbers of felons transported to the colonies. At mid-century, however, children and babies became the focus of many of the newly established associational charities. The Foundling Hospital and the Marine Society were two such institutions, both of which cared for and educated poor children.¹ These charities imposed sets of rigid rules on the children which determined standards of institutional and personal cleanliness. From time to time these regulations were modified to encompass changes in regimes of cleanliness but they continued to act as vectors through which élite ideas could be communicated to the poor.

This chapter builds on the work of existing histories of childhood by examining the practices by which the cleanliness of pauper children was embedded in the welfare systems of the eighteenth century. It traces the ways in which parish nurses cared for infants and children and their subsequent demonization by ‘civic fathers’ seeking to promote their own charitable concerns. This denigration also extended to poor parents, who were depicted as filthy and incapable men and women. While an examination of the Foundling Hospital identifies the considerable internal regulation that gave precedence to the ‘clean linen regimen’ in order to ensure that children, staff and buildings remained clean; by the end of

¹ For an over view of pauper children see Payne, “Children of the Poor in London,” 92-135.

the century this was inverted by the Sunday School movement, which insisted that children could only participate in classes if they appeared cleaned and combed. This transference of responsibility for children's cleanliness from the institution to the domestic environment marked an important change in the management of poor children's cleanliness.

The early historiography of pauper children begins with Dorothy George's *London Life* where she examines 'Parish children and Poor Apprentices.'² It was nearly four decades later that Phillippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* was translated into English.³ This contentious work influenced a generation or more of writers, most of whom focussed on his assertions that the notion of childhood did not exist in the medieval period, missing as they did so, some of his wider assessments of childhood. His notions of medieval children have long since been disproved, but historians continued to measure their work against Ariès. However, as research agendas expanded, the nature of the family and the centrality of children in that family came to the fore in the literature of childhood.⁴ These, together with research on life-cycles and demography began to play a dominant role in studies of children.⁵ Yet, consideration of pauper children was minimal during this period, with the exception of Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt's two volume history entitled, *Children in English Society*.⁶ Volume two is particularly relevant as it focusses on the legislative framework and institutional care of children beginning in the eighteenth century. Hugh Cunningham's 1991 work, *Children of the Poor*, sought to fill this void

² George, *London Life*, 213-261.

³ Phillippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

⁴ Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500- 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Tadmor, *Family and Friends*.

⁵ E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); J. Gillis, *For Better For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Tim Wales, "Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle: some evidence from Seventeenth-Century Norfolk," in *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, ed. Richard M. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 351-404.

⁶ Ivy Pinchbeck, and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, Vol. II: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

with an overview of children from the seventeenth century.⁷ Here, he examined the changing attitudes towards children set against economic necessity and the growth of philanthropic and educational initiatives. Patricia Crawford's book takes these initiatives but examines them within a framework of parental experience.⁸ More importantly, she looks at the men influencing policy that so changed the experiences of paupers and their offspring. Leading on from her study of the Foundling Hospital, Alys Levene has more recently examined pauper childhood in relation to parochial care in London.⁹

The ever changing educational provision for London's poor children was brought together in the early eighteenth century when, in 1704, London's charity schools began an annual assembly. Here, a sermon was preached recommending their charitable work while the children were gathered together in great ranks to be inspected by the great and the good. It was noted in 1706 that 'to see them cloathed with neatness, and set off with good manners' was a 'spectacle far beyond the vanities of the Stage or Music House'.¹⁰ Even at this early stage tidiness and clean clothing were virtues worthy of mention. However, the juxtaposition between the stage and music house suggested that this went much further than mere physical cleanliness and hinted at a far deeper moral or spiritual cleanliness bestowed upon the children.¹¹ Through each of the eighteenth-century institutions for children there ran an increasingly persistent concern over cleanliness. Occasionally this related to bodily cleanliness, but more often than not these concerns were manifest in the close scrutiny of the children's uniforms, clothing or the general neatness of appearance.

⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

⁸ Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*.

⁹ Alys Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

¹⁰ Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; Or, An Address to Ladies; Adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England* (London: J. Johnson and F. and C. Rivington, 1801), 89.

¹¹ Jones notes the connection between children in London and Westminster that were 'afforded opportunity for neither cleanliness nor decency' where the 'moral state of the children was no less disquieting.' Jones, M. G. *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 30.

Particular attention was also paid to the children's surroundings, including the physical condition of the rooms and buildings of their institution or the general cleanliness of furnishings. Precise instructions were issued to institutional servants and officers in order to maintain standards and to set an example to the children. Children had not only become more visible but the condition of those children had become a public concern. The eighteenth century marked a point at which the mothers and children of the poor were beginning to be seen as an important national resource to be maintained and exploited in equal measure. Jonas Hanway noted in 1767 that '*private vices*, in some instances, may be deemed *public benefits*, particularly by increasing the number of the people'.¹² Perry characterises this new conviction as the 'rational manipulation of natural forces for greater productivity', this significantly influenced both policy and practice with regard to families.¹³ In its wake, this new notion legitimised public comment and discussion concerning the health and well-being of the poor. The rising mortality rate added fuel to these public conversations which were largely aimed at ameliorating the conditions of the poor. Cleanliness was now part of the national debate, much of which was subsequently played out on the bodies of the urban poor and their children. By mid-century a slew of metropolitan charitable concerns arose, many of which focussed on improving the conditions of pauper children. Each of these charities employed various criteria concerning cleanliness, orderliness or personal hygiene. Almost without exception these 'new' forms of charitable enterprise embedded cleanliness and orderliness in the fundamental operation of the institution or in the rules governing such establishments. As the century wore on the nature of some of these institutions changed as the focus of cleanliness moved from the

¹² Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 53-54.

¹³ Ruth Perry gives an overview of this phenomenon, she draws on the petition of the Foundling Hospital which argued that 'it was in the national interest to save the lives of abandoned children ... it was more cost-effective to save this native population than hire mercenary soldiers'. Ruth Perry, "Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 2 (1 October 1991): 206-207.

institution to the individual, as a new sense of self-reliance and self-improvement was both sought and encouraged.

In the following decades these institutions were accompanied by a number of conduct books and medical manuals concerning pregnancy, motherhood, or the care of babies and children. Much of this literature was considered by Virginia Smith in her 1985 thesis on cleanliness.¹⁴ Here, she identifies the various therapeutic benefits of cleanliness concerning babies and children. Foremost of which was bathing, which moved from the bracing effects of cold bathing to the more mediated effects of warm bathing at the end of century. However, during the greater part of the century, cleanliness was a mere by-product of a these actions, and bathing was ‘limited to the special problems of infancy – on account of both the soiling, and the bodily fragility.’¹⁵ The ‘clean and wholesome’ life advocated by many of these medical authors acted as a form of preventative. In a daily regimen which consisted of a simple diet, fresh air and exercise, cleanliness was by no means central to this routine. By the last third of the eighteenth century, these manuals were very much focussed on the home and domestic settings. Families were advised on appropriate ventilation in their properties; on how to take care in the laundering of clothing and on making the nursery a separate part of the household. Some of the men writing this medical and domestic literature were also very influential in these ‘new’ charitable institutions. Men like William Cadogan, William Buchan and Jonas Hanway, who were variously medical advisor or governor at the Foundling Hospital or Marine Society. As early as 1758 John Fielding referred to this type of charitable governor as a father of the charity, whom he suggested should be a person of ‘rank and fortune’.¹⁶ After his death Hanway was noted as a ‘friend and father of the Poor’ on his monument in Westminster

¹⁴ Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁶ *London Chronicle* (London, England), February 11, 1758 - February 14, 1758; Issue 176.

Abbey.¹⁷ More recently though Patricia Crawford characterised these men as ‘civic fathers’, men who participated in public charities or took up public office yet distanced themselves from the lives and habits of the poor.¹⁸ Although this was much more than mere distance, the character of the poor was publicly manipulated to ensure that they were proper objects of charity. Parents were portrayed as idle, feckless, dirty and uncouth. Poor women were described as living in sulphur ridden cities, in close apartments, in filthiness and as providing bad-nursing or no nursing at all.¹⁹ In effect they created a ‘dirtier’ version of the poor that suited their own prejudices and emphasised difference.

Parochial care of parish children

Impoverished families and children were the responsibility of their parish of legal settlement, usually the one in which they were born or had spent a significant part of their working lives. Parishes, no matter how small, were obliged to care for the needy poor and did so through the granting of parish pensions, by maintaining paupers in workhouses or in some cases contracting out care to paid keepers.²⁰ Much of this patchwork of care has been discussed in the previous chapter. However, amongst these obligations the parish nurse provided either wet or dry nursing for abandoned infants and otherwise destitute children. These highly developed nursing networks provided both care for the poor and income for women at the bottom of the social scale.²¹ Some of the parish nurses in Jeremy Boulton’s study of St Martin’s parish in Westminster cared for up to 30 infants at a time, usually in their own small establishments in metropolitan London. Boulton suggested that some of

¹⁷ David Hughson, *London; Being an Accurate History and Description of the British Metropolis and its Neighbourhood to Thirty Miles Extent, from a Perambulation*. Vol. IV. (London: W. Stratford, 1807), 300.

¹⁸ Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*, 193-239.

¹⁹ Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 45.

²⁰ Elaine Murphy, “The Metropolitan Pauper Farms 1722–1834,” *The London Journal* 27, no. 1 (1 May 2002): 1–18.

²¹ Boulton, “Welfare Systems”.

these ‘principal-nurses’ specialised in particular types of care including that of children and of lying-in mothers and their new born babies. The cost of this care related to the very physical effort required to maintain the hygiene of highly dependent patients since parish nurses were responsible for the cleaning, washing and toileting of their charges.²² The average charge for the care of babies in St Martin’s, Westminster was two shillings per week and at the other end of the scale lying-in mothers cost the parish an average of seven shillings per week.²³ Women would lie-in for at least a month requiring significant bed and personal linen during both the birth and on subsequent days. There is evidence to suggest that the parish not only paid for the labour in looking after the cleanliness of patients but also shared in the capital costs associated with the laundry needs of such dependent patients. A survey of Nurse Tyrell’s house in Denmark Court, Covent Garden during the November of 1738 listed parish property on an inventory taken by the Churchwardens. In the kitchen, this included, ‘a fixed copper, a pail, washing and water tubs.’²⁴ Elsewhere in the house fourteen pairs of sheets, various blankets and coverlets were also noted. These items were in addition to any owned by Nurse Tyrell and remained the property of the parish. Such large numbers of babies and children would generate enormous amounts of washing, to say nothing of the sheets and linen required for lying-in mothers. In order to cope with this parish nurses employed assistants to take on some of the domestic tasks associated with the care of incapacitated patients and infants.

Unlike those applicable in workhouses, rules for such care were not determined by parochial authorities. As far as it is possible to say, nurses were largely autonomous, caring for infants within set financial limits and setting their own standards of care. Their success was partly judged by the survival rate of the babies and children under their supervision,

²² *Ibid.*, 128.

²³ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 147. A full transcript of this inventory is given *Ibid.*, 149.

although failure was not strictly marked by the death of a child or mother in childbirth. In 1718, Eleanor Gallimore of St Andrew, Holborn, a parish-nurse, was tried at the Old Bailey for the murder of Richard Pugh, a child of ten months. She was accused of not allowing the child ‘sufficient, Meat, Drink and due Attendance’.²⁵ At the heart of this case was the neglect of the infant, and the condition in which it was found, ‘wrapped in a piece of an old Rag’.²⁶ Eleanor had clearly failed to keep the child clean since ‘all of the back Parts of it were in a sad Condition, looking like an Ox liver parboil’d.’²⁷ The jury acquitted Eleanor, as there was no evidence to suggest it was her intention to murder the child, and there were no visible marks of violence on the infant’s body. However, the circumstances were of sufficient concern for the case to be tried as a felony at the Old Bailey. The case highlighted the shared expectations of the standards of cleanliness and of personal care to be received by a child under the supposedly watchful eye of a parish-nurse. The incident clearly fell well-short of those expectations. Nonetheless, the type and nature of personal care stipulated by parochial authorities was often flexible with reasonable provision made for children with exceptional needs. This was never more so than in the 1740s, when the overseers of the parish of Finchley placed Ann Saunders as a servant with Elizabeth Dickens. Ann was doubly incontinent and on this account the parish allowed Dickens an additional six pounds for taking the child.²⁸ Sadly the relationship broke down very quickly and the child was beaten repeatedly over several months. She was also deprived of food and water, possibly in an attempt to reduce the amount of times she soiled herself. Saunders was subsequently tried at the Old Bailey and acquitted of the murder, but the case demonstrated the parish’s recognition of the need for personal cleanliness, which was

²⁵ *OBP*, 27th February 1718, Eleanor Gallimore (t17180227-41).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *OBP*, February 1748, Elizabeth Dickins (t17480224-23).

balanced by an acknowledgement of the additional work required in such circumstances.²⁹

The parish was able to reconcile this with an offer financial recompense. In this case the remuneration was substantial, being more than equivalent of the annual wage of a live in female servant.

The coming of the workhouse very quickly ‘undermined the system of parish nurses’, with the workhouse taking on many of the functions previously undertaken by local nurses.³⁰ Indeed, in some cases it was undertaken by the very same individuals. This move to centralised parochial nursing in the workhouse, Boulton argued, provided a form of continuity in the care of the old, the sick and the young.³¹ Although this may have provided stability, as care moved from the wider community into the workhouse decisions about cleanliness and personal care of patients almost imperceptibly moved from the nurse to those ‘parochial fathers’ charged with administering the poor law. These local men and ratepayers who took up parochial administration now determined policy within the newly established workhouses.

Parish nurses did not disappear altogether, however, and parochial authorities continued to use wet and dry nurses to care for children and infants, particularly those parishes that did not establish a workhouse during the 1720s and 30s.³² Tim Hitchcock *et al.* have, though, noted that the role of the parish nurses and ‘their supposed inadequacies’ were ‘explicitly used to justify the creation of a workhouse’.³³ This was accompanied by a highly critical rhetoric which attacked the standards of care these nurses offered. Jonas Hanway employed this method to some effect in the later 1760s, when he sought to make highly unfavourable comments on the methods that parishes used to care for children. He

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Boulton, “Welfare Systems,” 147.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Murphy, “Metropolitan Pauper Farms”.

³³ Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, “Parish Nurses”, *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 21st January 2017).

particularly utilised the case of Hannah Poole to denigrate the work of most other nurses. This, he hoped, would persuade London parishes to use the Foundling Hospital to care for their orphans and other infants. However, more recent work by Hitchcock suggested that none of the deaths Hanway attributed to Nurse Poole seemed to have been for neglect or the want of care.³⁴ Much of Hanway's writing began by contending that the natural condition of the poor and their children was one of filth, vice and idleness.³⁵ Hanway was keen to assert that 'cleanliness is to the *body*, what virtue is to the *soul*' and that the industrious would be rewarded with a 'cleany' body.³⁶ Indeed those that toiled in the 'most filthy occupations in life' required the most knowledge, gained through proper instruction and habit in order to maintain their bodily cleanliness. Children, Hanway suggested, should be taught self-sufficiency; a boy particularly required the 'skill to keep his person in a decent manner.'³⁷ Thus:

acquiring a habit of cleanliness, and a decent respect for his own person, it will be the best preservative of his comfort, and an antidote against that vice and profligacy which predominates amongst common people, especially when they become dirty or ragged, as experience proves.³⁸

Children aged six or seven, he wrote, should be taught to comb their own hair, and wash not only their hands and faces but also the rest of their bodies. Hanway laid the failure of parish children to learn these simple expedients at the feet of 'common nurses' whom he suggested were ignorant and lazy.

Hanway's pamphlet, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, was written shortly after his legislation, requiring parishes to record details of children under their

³⁴ Ibid., The authors discuss this case in the light of additional evidence brought together for the *London Lives* project.

³⁵ Hanway, *Earnest Appeal for Mercy*, 5.

³⁶ Ibid., 94.

³⁷ Ibid., 88.

³⁸ Ibid.

supervision, had successfully passed through Parliament.³⁹ In it, Hanway remained highly critical of methods employed by many metropolitan parishes in caring for their infant poor. He went on to promote various forms of cleanliness and hygienic practice which in his opinion preserved the lives of infants and children. Hanway began by recommending:

concord, frugality, cleanliness, and industry, with such a pious, humane, resolute, and judicious conduct in the execution of their office, as may effectually answer the good purposes for which they are chosen, and more particularly in the preservation of infants.⁴⁰

He was adamant that good air and good water were the keys to a healthy life, and that it was part of an ‘atrocious negligence’ if human beings should suffer or even perish for the want of ‘wholesome’ air.⁴¹ Hanway believed that no woman with children under the age of seven should occupy any part of the workhouse without sufficient ventilation. Even though seventeen years had passed since the ‘Black Sessions’ at the Old Bailey, Hanway drew on the tragedy to underline his belief that foul institutional air was responsible for the death of children.⁴² He noted that the Old Bailey disaster had been brought about by the ‘effluvia of the prisoners garments’ which had poisoned the atmosphere.⁴³ He stipulated that workhouse rooms should be ‘relieved’ by the liberal use of vinegar or herbs in a tin boiler in order to render them wholesome.⁴⁴ Children, he stated, were to be removed by a suitable nurse as ‘bad air’ was the ‘greatest cause of the death’ of many of them. He went on to describe ‘air-trunks’ which were positioned throughout St James’s workhouse, the Foundling Hospital and the Magdalen House. These tubes were connected to the external air and provided ventilation.⁴⁵ Where numbers of the poor congregated Hanway was

³⁹ Legislation passed in June 1762 required various metropolitan parishes to maintain registers of the infant poor aged less than four years. 2 Geo. III c.22.

⁴⁰ Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, Title page.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴² During the April 1750 Session of Gaol Delivery at the Old Bailey up to 40 members of the court including the Lord Mayor, 3 other judges, counsel and jury members caught and died of what was termed ‘gaol fever’.

⁴³ Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 28.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

concerned that it was almost impossible to preserve pure air.⁴⁶ These notions were commonly repeated and, as we shall see, used in arguments concerning cleanliness of other institutions for the poor, notably hospitals and prisons.⁴⁷ In a similar manner to fresh ‘clean’ air, Hanway promoted the ‘clean linen regimen’ by stipulating that the poor should also have access to regular clean linen, particularly children, who might be taught about washing and drying their own items. Clean clothing was a method by which the poor might gain a place in service, and Hanway suggested that parish prudence in regards to clothing was ‘penny wise and pound foolish.’⁴⁸ Indeed, workhouses could not be kept free of sickness or infectious disease ‘where the garments worn by the inhabitants are filthy.’⁴⁹ The ‘wearing of *rags* as a custom handed down from childhood,’ he went on, ‘is but another name for the *idleness*, or profligacy of the parents’.⁵⁰ Many of Hanway’s complaints emphasised poor practice and played on long held prejudices of the poor as filthy, dirty and idle. As we have seen in the previous chapter, poverty-stricken Londoners were able to access ways and means of ameliorating their conditions. Either through parish grants for small sums of money, or by entering the workhouse, where, by the later eighteenth century, sophisticated methods of ensuring bodily and institutional cleanliness had evolved.

Hanway’s work as a governor of both the Foundling Hospital and the Marine Society, together with his extensive body of published work, marked him out as one of Patricia Crawford’s ‘civic fathers’. Yet Crawford also identified him as a critic of this body of men, and a particularly powerful one, since he came from the same broad social rank.⁵¹ Hanway’s criticism however, was largely reserved for parochial officers. His

⁴⁶ Hanway, *Earnest Appeal for Mercy*, 93.

⁴⁷ Discussed in chapters five and eight.

⁴⁸ Hanway, *Letters to the Guardians of the Infant Poor*, 34.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁵¹ Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*, 230.

polemic publications used cleanliness as a tool to critique the work of very many parishes, frequently exaggerating the filthy conditions in various workhouses as well as the rates of mortality. This was, in part, to support his personal view that abandoned infants should be reared in the country and not in workhouses or by urban parish nurses. It was also, in part, to support the work of the Foundling Hospital which was endorsing a Bill in Parliament that would require parishes to send children and infants, under particular circumstances, to the Foundling Hospital. Almost certainly Hanway would have seen himself apart from metropolitan parish officers, both in social rank and as a policy maker.

Crawford's assertion that Hanway was a supporter of 'the family' was a notion perhaps at odds with much of his writing. As has been noted, he commonly characterised poor parents as wholly inadequate especially where cleanliness, hygiene and general tidiness were concerned. This rhetoric formed part of what Crawford identified as the 'dominant discourse of the period', which equated the inadequacies of poor parents with the need for 'labour discipline.'⁵² By the 1760s Hanway was employing emotive language that was designed to draw the reader to empathise with the plight of paupers infants and to feel moral repugnance at the conditions they were expected to endure. 'Infants in workhouses', he wrote, were entrusted to 'the hands of persons whose very situation in the workhouse, in general, implies their being either careless or indolent, sickly or insane, stupid, abandoned, or superannuated' and when 'mixed with the filthy or diseased, the old or infirm or with any great numbers of adults' in a workhouse, then it was 'shocking to humanity and common policy.'⁵³

Relative levels of cleanliness were becoming an accepted marker of a well-run institution. In the same way that parental care defined in court as 'hearty and clean'

⁵² Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*, 230.

⁵³ Hanway, *Earnest Appeal for Mercy*, 65

marked out children that were well-cared for.⁵⁴ By flagging up filthy institutions Hanway, by implication, was identifying those that were poorly-run. As he linked the loss of an infant to the filthy conditions in which it was raised, in turn, he represented this as a loss to the nation. In his *Earnest Appeal for Mercy* Hanway ‘computed’ the value of a child’s life marking out the national loss to the country over its lifetime.⁵⁵ A child raised by the parish, in his calculations, would ‘cost’ £85 16s. A man’s labour from the age of thirteen to thirty-six would amount to £269 19s 3^d, making a gain of £184 3s 3^d for the nation. Thus, underlining the efficacy of preserving the lives of infants in well run, sanitary conditions as an economic necessity.

The Foundling Hospital

As a notable charitable institution the Foundling Hospital drew many to offer advice and comment on its policies. Like Hanway, several of these men were leading social reformers or medical practitioners of the age. They included William Cadogan, a distinguished physician, who was elected as a governor of the Foundling Hospital in 1747, and was subsequently appointed as physician there in 1753.⁵⁶ In 1748 Cadogan wrote an influential letter, addressed to the governors of the Foundling Hospital, in which he put forward his ‘more reasonable and more natural Method of Nursing.’⁵⁷ Cadogan’s principle concerns were of diet and clothing, insisting that mothers should suckle their own children, certainly for the first three months of their lives. However, by the very nature of the institution, mothers who left their babies in the care of the Foundling Hospital were prohibited from

⁵⁴ *OBP*, 17th December 1766, James Field (t17661217-54) as quoted in Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*, 249.

⁵⁵ Hanway, *Earnest Appeal for Mercy*, 73-74.

⁵⁶ Norman Moore, “Cadogan, William (1711–1797),” Rev. Anne Digby. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004). Online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman, 2004.

⁵⁷ William Cadogan, *An Essay Upon Nursing: And the Management of Children, from Their Birth to Three Years of Age. By William Cadogan ... In a Letter to One of the Governors of the Foundling Hospital* (London: J. Roberts, 1750), 3.

breast feeding their children any further. Instead babies were sent to the countryside, to be cared for by wet or dry nurses, initially in London's Home Counties and subsequently further afield. In acknowledging this Cadogan made recommendations that the wet nurses recruited by the hospital should be 'clean and healthy Women.'⁵⁸ Clean it seems, in this context, to have denoted free from disease, since Cadogan was of the opinion that venereal disease in children might be remedied by 'a regular temperate life.... by good Nursing.'⁵⁹

Confident in his assertions Cadogan suggested:

that which I am recommending, together with the wholesome Milk of a healthy Nurse, is the best, the only means to remedy Evil, and by which alone they may by degrees be made healthy and strong. And thus, in a Generation or two of reasonable, temperate persons, every Taint and Infirmary whatever, the King's Evil, and Madness not excepted, would be totally wore out.⁶⁰

This became difficult to sustain as inspectors reported that nurses became infected with venereal disease contracted from the children at nurse. In November 1760, Mrs E Spense, Foundling Hospital inspector for children in Berkshire, wrote to Mr Collingwood at the Foundling Hospital, about Mary Murrell, one of the wet nurses she supervised, writing:

As to the case of Mary Murrell, she is a very honest, sober woman and as to her family, it consists only of herself and a husband (who is a very honest sober man) and one child, a son. I have made the stricest enquiry concerning her of several persons and they one and all agree she could not of had that gross disorder, the foul disease, by no other means than by suckling the child she had.⁶¹

Women recruited as country nurses were usually known to, or recommended to, one of the inspectors whose job it was to supervise and pay the nurses. Inspectors, some of whom were women, might also occasionally proffer advice but their principal role was to ensure the well-being of the infants and children under their supervision. In 1759, William Earles, a Berkshire inspector, wrote to the Foundling Hospital about one of their nurses, Mary

⁵⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Gillian Clark, ed., *Correspondence of the Foundling Hospital Inspectors in Berkshire 1757-68* (Reading: Berkshire Record Society, 1994), 111.

Gibbs, reporting that ‘The child I removed from her whas not kepp free from verment and in a very nastey condition.’⁶² Alysa Levene notes that the care provided by these country nurses was generally good, although there were occasional cases of neglect, some of which may have been explained by issues of ‘cleanliness or clothing rather than neglect.’⁶³

Cadogan’s methods, although not new, recommended a much wider healthy life style in which children were to be kept clean. Indeed Cadogan saw no reason why children should not be ‘clean every day’ and was dismissive of those that felt clean linen would ‘rob them of their nourishing Juices.’⁶⁴ Children, he pointed out, were naturally supplied with an abundance of such moisture and cleanliness would free them from ‘Stinks and Sourness’ to which they were prone.⁶⁵ Nursing, he suggested should take place at specific times, allowing time for the child to be kept ‘clean and sweet’ and ‘tumbled and toss’d about a great deal’.⁶⁶ This letter was not in effect written about the children in the Foundling Hospital but addressed a much wider audience, one that could regularly afford either wet nurses or nursery maids to care for their children.

In 1757, the rules of the Hospital were updated to incorporate the new buildings and administrative procedures associated with the unrestricted admission of children. Cadogan’s influence can clearly be seen in the rules, prohibiting as they did the children from taking tea or coffee, insisting upon the wearing of specific loose clothing and not permitting children to wear stockings or shoes until they were at least eight months old. His essay on nursing and the management of children was specifically mentioned in the text of the rules and recommended as an essential guide to those caring for infants. Indeed

⁶² Clark, *Correspondence of the Foundling Hospital Inspectors*, 30.

⁶³ This seems an unusual interpretation as neglecting a child’s cleanliness or infestation usually amounts to, well, neglect. Alysa Levene, *Childcare, Health and Mortality at the London Foundling Hospital, 1741-1800: ‘Left to the Mercy of the World’* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 154.

⁶⁴ Cadogan, *Essay Upon Nursing*, 12.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

by the standards of the time the Foundling Hospital was heavily regulated, beginning with the General Court itself, which was to be chaired by the President or one of his deputies to ‘keep Order and Decency’.⁶⁷ The Hospital was administered like a well-ordered household. The matron had authority over the female staff, including the cook, the laundress, housemaids and nurses, all of whom were to be responsible for cleanliness in their own areas of concern. The nurses of the wards were to take care in ensuring that their ward was ‘kept exactly clean’, likewise, the children were to be turned out ‘neat and clean’.⁶⁸ Mistresses of the wards containing the older girls were further instructed to take care of their clothing and the furniture of their wards. This was to be done with the assistance of a maid and the children, who were expected ‘to keep the Ward clean and in order’ - all within an hour of rising.⁶⁹ The rules concerning cleanliness were bolstered with instructions to ensure the girls were, ‘diligent and industrious, and that they behave with Decency and Modesty’, all of which were deemed good Christian virtues. They were firmly linked to ‘Duties of Religion and Morality’ and entrenched in the rules for staff and children.⁷⁰ These internal rules, unlike Hanway’s earlier publications, linked cleanliness to morality and decency, and it was only later that Hanway explicitly made these same connections. The girls were particularly encouraged in the domestic concerns of cleanliness, partly because they were expected to take their place as a household servant or in linen or other manufactories. Unlike parish apprentices a greater proportion of the girls in the Foundling Hospital were apprenticed as domestic servants, particularly after the period of general reception.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Governors of the Foundling Hospital, *Regulations for Managing the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children* (London, 1757), 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Alysa Levene has calculated that of her sample of parish apprentices in London only 4.5% were bound as domestic servants between 1751 and 1833. Alysa Levene, “Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London,” *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 4 (1 November 2010): 927. Whereas at the Foundling Hospital during the reception period 1760-1816, 60.3% (number =2786) of apprentices were bound as

Throughout their time at the Hospital the children were continually reminded of their supposed station in life. Each Sunday a sermon on the ‘Lowness of their Condition’ was preached which was to remind them of the ‘Principles of Humility and Gratitude to their Benefactors’.⁷² This dual aspect of the humble keen servant, who was both personally clean and thoroughly versed in the various facets of household cleanliness, made for a perfect circle of domestic harmony. One in which a middling or upper middling householder might give to charity, thus promoting his virtuous giving, and in return gain a pliant and industrious servant well versed in the arts of cleanliness. Donna Andrew has identified these men as those not so much concerned with religious ‘dogma as with the practise in daily life of what they saw to be the primary duties of Christians.’⁷³

Cadogan was not the only Foundling Hospital physician to publish highly influential tracts and books. William Buchan was the author of *Domestic Medicine*, which according to Charles Rosenberg was the ‘the most widely read – nonreligious - book in English during the half century following its Edinburgh publication in 1769.’⁷⁴ The book was published a handful of years after his appointment as medical officer to the Foundling Hospital in Ackworth, Yorkshire and drew on Buchan’s experience gained during his time at the school. It was the second edition however, which focussed more comprehensively on children. It included extended sections on the nursing and management of children. Here, Buchan self-consciously sought to re-emphasise his advice on the prevention of disease

domestic servants. This equated to 81.3% of the girls. Alysa Levene, *Pauper apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London: feeding the industrial economy?* www.ehs.org.uk/dotAsset/694aa8fa-1ecd-45cf-a87f-87f64f4840cb.doc accessed 24th Sep 2015.

⁷² Governors of the Foundling Hospital, *Regulations for Managing the Hospital*, 50.

⁷³ Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 59.

⁷⁴ Charles E. Rosenberg, “Medical Text and Social Context: Explaining William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*,” in *Explaining Epidemics and other Studies in the History of Medicine* Charles E. Rosenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 32. There were at least 142 separate English Language editions. Lawrence, Christopher. “Buchan, William (1729–1805).” *Christopher Lawrence In Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman, September 2012. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3828> (accessed March 4th 2015).

with his ‘observations on the public and private means of preserving the lives of children’.⁷⁵ Of his particular advice on children Buchan advised that ‘Cleanliness is not only agreeable to the eye, but tends greatly to preserve the health of children.’⁷⁶ His rationale being that dirty clothes rubbed delicate skins, harboured ‘ill-smells’, and encouraged both vermin and skin disorders, while cleanliness promoted perspiration which freed the ‘body from superfluous humours’.⁷⁷ He went on, ‘No mother or nurse can have an excuse for allowing a child to be dirty. Poverty may oblige her to give it coarse clothes; but, if she does not keep them clean, it must be her own fault.’⁷⁸ Buchan advocated the use of cleanliness and wholesome food in place of many ‘drying medicines’.⁷⁹ He recounted an occasion in the Foundling Hospital at Ackworth when the children were afflicted with ‘scabbed heads’ and various skin disorders. He advised that attention should be paid to the cleanliness of the children and the ‘soundness of their provisions’.⁸⁰ However, his advice was generally ignored since it was ‘too troublesome to the servants, superintendants, &c.’⁸¹ This proved to be almost fatal to the ‘whole house’ when ‘putrid dysentery’ swept through the Foundling Hospital.⁸² Buchan was very particular about his advice on cleanliness especially for those with one of many skin diseases or infections, telling his readers that ‘Cutaneous disorders are often occasioned by nastiness alone, and are always, increased by it.’⁸³ He suggested that a patient’s linen should be changed every day, since it would ‘greatly refresh him.’⁸⁴ In addition, care

⁷⁵ Buchan, William. *Domestic Medicine; Or, The Family Physician: Being an Attempt to Render the Medical Art More Generally Useful, by Shewing People What Is Their Own Power Both with Respect to the Prevention and Cure of Diseases*. 2nd American Edition. (London: Printed by Joseph Cruikshank for R. Aitken, 1774), vi.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

should be taken to ensure that linen was thoroughly dry and perhaps even warmed before the patient put it on when he was at his most cool. Indeed, Buchan was a great advocate of a regimen of cleanliness in the treatment of contagious diseases and infections. All excrements were to be removed immediately, and a constant stream of fresh air allowed into the room, which was to be sprinkled with vinegar or lemon juice. Buchan wasn't alone in attributing the lack of cleanliness to various skin complaints. Stephen Freeman linked the lack of cleanliness and improper foods to skin disorders in children in the 1780s. He advocated changing an infant's linen frequently and washing 'parts with cold water.'⁸⁵ He went on to note that, 'A filthy manner of raising children not only causes eruptions upon their skin, but is likewise the cause of many internal complaints.'⁸⁶

Buchan stipulated that children were to be exposed to fresh air and that schools should be located with wholesome air and never be 'too much crowded.'⁸⁷ He warned against nurses who relied on medicines, particularly those who assumed 'a dose of medicine will make up for all defects in food, air, exercise, cleanliness, &c.'⁸⁸ In Buchan's supplementary chapter on cold bathing added in 1786, he counselled against the general use of cold water bathing, suggesting that women, those of a delicate constitution and children should work up to full immersion in cold water through the use of tepid bathing.⁸⁹ Likewise in Michael Underwood's popular book on the care of babies, he advised against the 'old fashioned mode of cold bathing'.⁹⁰ Babies, according to Underwood, should be washed around the 'groin, scrotum and anus; the arm-pits, folds of the neck, and parts

⁸⁵ S. Freeman, *The New Good Samaritan: Or, Domestic Practical Physician; Extracted from the Medical Essays of the Learned Academies in Europe. ... The Practical Midwife, by Question and Answer* (London: S. Freeman, n.d.), 289.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 293-294.

⁸⁷ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁹ William Buchan, *Cautions Concerning Cold Bathing and Drinking the Mineral Waters* (London: A. Strahan, T. Cadell, J. Balfour, and W Creech, 1786).

⁹⁰ Michael Underwood, *A Treatise on the Diseases of Children, with Directions for the Management of Infants from the Birth; Especially such as Are Brought up by Hand* (London: J. Mathews, 1784), 224.

behind the ears' and perhaps 'sprinkled with a little hair-powder'.⁹¹ However, Underwood's book on the care of children and babies spoke little of the actual care and much more to the illnesses, infections and problems associated with infants. Unlike Buchan there was little on the prevention of illness, his focus was clearly the treatment and identification of problems. However, he did devote a significant section to the nursing and early nutrition of babies but households in which hair-powder was readily available were unlikely to be those that cared for the children of the Foundling Hospital where he was a governor. There is little to suggest that the Foundling Hospital or any of its branches were equipped so that the children were able to take fully immersive baths during the eighteenth century. Cleanliness instead, was focused on the visible, clean hands and faces and combed hair, together with neat and clean uniforms.

Conditions in the Foundling Hospital did not remain static. The ebb and flow of children and the lead time for commissioning new buildings led to some periods of over-crowding at the London Hospital and its regional premises. The infirmary, in particular, was subject to criticism. In 1759, a building in St Pancras used as an infirmary was described as 'old and Decayed', and in February 1780 the building at Powis Wells, where children with scabies were sent was identified as 'partially tumbled down and was ordered to be demolished'.⁹² Again, in 1790, the infirmary and its management were considered insufficient.⁹³ These occasions were identified by their lack of cleanliness, exacerbated by over-crowding. Alys Levine suggests the diseases treated at the various Foundling Hospital infirmaries 'points to the significance of environmental conditions and cleanliness'.⁹⁴ So despite significant regulation, the Foundling Hospital infirmaries, in particular, were, on occasion, subject to poor records of cleanliness. Levine also suggests

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁹² Levine, *Childcare, Health and Mortality*, 163.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

that the hospitals' separation policies for children with 'diseased heads' or other 'infectious condition' put them in the 'vanguard of new medical ideas and practise'.⁹⁵ But as we have already seen, workhouses were identifying conditions like 'the itch' and other infestations as soon as paupers were admitted. These were dealt with through treatment and separation to prevent the spread to or re-infection of other inmates.

Men like Hanway, Buchan and Cadogan were undoubtedly influential and their views on the care and cleanliness of children, spread well beyond the Foundling Hospital. Yet most of these notions were not aimed at pauper families in need of assistance, but at a constituency largely composed of the rising middling sort, men and women very much in their own mould. Indeed, Hanway went to great lengths to denigrate first, poor parents and parochial nurses for their lack of cleanliness, then workhouse conditions, particularly their inadequate ventilation.

Sunday Schools

By the closing decades of the eighteenth century educational establishments for children of the poor were joined by another institution – the Sunday School. Whether and to what extent these religiously based 'schools' were established and run by working people has long been the subject of debate, as has the nature of their religious teachings.⁹⁶ Perhaps what are not in dispute are the secular teachings which frequently dwelt on cleanliness, sobriety, orderliness and punctuality.⁹⁷ In 1785 a London Sunday School Society pamphlet celebrated the improved manners and behaviour of children attending Sunday Schools.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 157

⁹⁶ Snell outlines some of these debates particularly the one between Thomas Laqueur and Patrick Joyce in K. D. M. Snell, "The Sunday School-Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working-Class Culture," *Past & Present* 164, no. 1 (8 January 1999): 122–68.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁸ *Plan of a Society Established in London, Anno Domini 1785, For the Support and Encouragement of Sunday-Schools In the different Counties of England* (London, 1788), 5.

The Society's rules instructed the teachers to ensure that the 'Scholars come clean to their respective Schools' on pain of exclusion from the school.⁹⁹ Indeed this seemed to have been a common thread in Sunday School rules disseminated during the 1780s and beyond.¹⁰⁰ In a letter of 1787 concerning Sunday School rules, written by Robert Raikes to Mrs Harris of Chelsea, Raikes states that 'I endeavour to assemble the children as early as is consistent with their perfect cleanliness – an indispensable rule.'¹⁰¹ Raikes was widely credited as having established the Sunday School movement, firstly in his native Gloucestershire, before subsequently recommending the efficacy of such schools and promoting their continued growth through his newspaper and other publishing interests. It is, though, certain that Sunday Schools, in varying forms, existed well before the 1780s and operated throughout London.

Like many charitable schools Raikes's Sunday Schools were aimed at the children of the poor. He encouraged children to attend by suggesting that 'if they were clad in garb fit for the street I should not think it improper for a school calculated to admit the poorest and most neglected'.¹⁰² His rule of 'clean faces, clean hands and combed hair' by his own account was paramount and was supported by small rewards which included 'combs, shoes or some article of apparel'.¹⁰³ Like the London Sunday School Society, Raikes's school reported in the local newspaper that 'The Committee are happy to find a great Reformation of Manners among the Scholars in General'.¹⁰⁴ Philip Cliff suggests that Raikes's rules became self-sustaining in that the simple formula was flexible, allowing committees to

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ For a sample of early rules see Philip B. Cliff, "The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780 -1980" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1982), Appendix C, 466-490.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 478.

¹⁰² Raikes as quoted in *ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Aris Gazette*, 10th October 1785 as quoted in *ibid.*, 59

adapt it to local conditions. The huge demand for places was met, in turn, by using the same formulaic rules.

In a similar manner, Sarah Trimmer, prolific children's writer and educationalist, established a notable Sunday School in Old Brentford at the western extremity of Middlesex during the 1780s.¹⁰⁵ Trimmer was a great advocate of cleanliness and much of her writing on Sunday Schools included references to the personal hygiene of children attending them. Trimmer's book, *The Oeconomy of Charity; Or, An Address to Ladies; Adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England* was first published in 1787 and again in 1801. It was specifically aimed at encouraging women to engage with newly formed Sunday Schools and other educational initiatives including parochial day schools and schools of industry. Trimmer was keen to acknowledge that women were a valuable asset to the Sunday School movement. Their active role in a variety of charitable undertakings, and continued requests for their assistance, proved, she suggested, 'the importance of the Female Sex in Society'.¹⁰⁶ The book focussed on the practicable and contained many hints on setting up Sunday Schools together with various examples. In it, Trimmer was careful to stress that she had confined herself to subjects which 'properly belong to the province of my sex'.¹⁰⁷ Much, although certainly not all of her writing was an extension of the domestic, with particular focus on the female scholars, the school room and parents' houses.

Trimmer was particularly keen to ensure that children attended the new Sunday Schools as neatly as they were able. However she went on to note that:

such a set of deplorable dirty ragged creatures presented themselves amongst them as it is shocking to recollect. But when it was considered that some parents scarcely

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, "Trimmer, Sarah (1741–1810)." Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/27740> (accessed June 3, 2015).

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; Or, An Address to Ladies; Adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England* (London: J. Johnson, F. and C. Rivington, 1801), xii.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, xi.

know what cleanliness is, and many are destitute of the means of cleanliness, it was thought prudent to avoid discouraging any, by sending back their children, unless a wilful inattention to this article was visible; instead of doing this, praises were bestowed on the cleanest children; and gentle messages sent by others, desiring their parents to clean them better in future; a present of combs and brushes was also made to those who had not any before.¹⁰⁸

However, the Sunday School rules stipulated that the children should attend in a neat and tidy manner, although Trimmer was aware that not all parents had the means to achieve the expected standard. These families she thought needed gentle encouragement rather than public chastisement. Trimmer's later edition of *The Oeconomy of Charity* reiterated much of her earlier work in *The Sunday-school Catechist*.¹⁰⁹ This consisted of a series of lectures together with set questions for the Sunday School 'Visitor' and teachers to use as examples. Here, Trimer emphasised Raikes views on cleanliness. In lecture XVIII, 'On honouring God's name by keeping the Sabbath-Day', Trimmer wrote,

Others there are who stay away from church because they think their clothes are not good enough to appear therein. *Cleanliness* is all that God requires^a, and where this is not possibly to be had He is so good that He will excuse a person for going with *dirty clothes*; but every one should go to church as neat as their circumstances will admit of.

^aExod. xix.10.¹¹⁰

She drew on biblical verse to underpin these ideas and teachings on cleanliness, quoting from Exodus, 'And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes'.¹¹¹ Clean clothing and cleanliness, she believed, was a way of marking out the Sabbath. It provided a simple method by which children were able to understand that Sunday was different and by implication its relative importance. Her lesson on public worship, however, suggested that although dirty clothing

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 302.

¹⁰⁹ Sarah Trimmer, *The Sunday-School Catechist; Consisting of Familiar Lectures, with Questions, for the Use of Visitors [sic] and Teachers* (London: T. Longman; G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1788).

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 75-76.

¹¹¹ King James Bible "Authorized Version", Cambridge Edition. Exodus 19:10. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Exodus-19-10/> accessed 21 June 2015.

may be excusable, skins should be washed and heads combed. She assured her readers that ‘every body takes notice of it’ and that the ‘great improvement in cleanliness since Sunday-schools began’ had not gone unremarked.¹¹² Like the workhouse inmates paraded at Sunday service early in the century, clean and combed Sunday School children brought to evening service were an outward marker of ‘success’ in bringing children to God. Since Trimmer drew heavily on the SPCK’s account of charity schools, the thread between early workhouses and the schools of late century hardly seems coincidental, as the society actively promoted both institutions.

Trimmer went on to warn the young of becoming too fond of dress and of desiring things unsuitable to their station in life.¹¹³ She was all too aware of class and place within her locality, and it was something she repeatedly returned to in her writing. Deborah Wills has suggested that *The Oeconomy of Charity* was ‘informed by a highly politicized subtext’ in which Trimmer endorsed Sunday Schools as a method of ‘instituting social control and intensifying hierarchy.’¹¹⁴ Elements of this text certainly endorse the view that it was a ‘middle-class manifesto’.¹¹⁵ Within this, however, there were moments when Trimmer chose to advocate on behalf of the poor, chastising charitable ladies who refused to sit down in a room ‘surrounded by dirty children.’¹¹⁶ However, she did go on to admit that this might be a ‘very disgusting circumstance’, but she also reassured her readers that ‘there is no such *contagion in dirt* as some people are apt to imagine’.¹¹⁷ Further than this she entreated them to ‘furnish them [the poor] with cleanliness, and point out to them the comforts of it, and they will soon improve their appearance to an astonishing degree’.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Trimmer, *Sunday-School Catechist*, 76.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Deborah Wills, “Sarah Trimmer’s *Oeconomy of Charity*: Politics and Morality in the Sunday School State,” *Lumen: Selected Proceedings From the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 12 (1993): 158.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Trimmer, *Oeconomy of Charity*, 71.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

Throughout the text Trimmer frequently returned to the notion that the poor were of and an 'abject class', only too eager to be 'noticed by their superiors'.¹¹⁹ She emphasised this class difference, by characterising the poor as almost uniformly dirty, unkempt and lacking the facility or wit to improve their situation.

Like Raikes, Trimmer provided small gifts for children regularly attending Sunday School, which included combs and brushes. This not only ensured regular attendance but it also gave the children no reason to appear with unkempt hair. Some of the very needy children were supplied with fresh clothing provided by the Sunday School, although parents were told that these were '*private benefactions*'.¹²⁰ In this way the Sunday School hoped to ensure that parents did not gain 'too great expectation' of the Sunday School committee, thereby restraining their own 'exertions'.¹²¹ It also accorded with her views on self-reliance, and removed an expectation and reliance on the parish, that she believed had become common in many of the poor. She bolstered her dress code and requirements for cleanliness in the *Sunday-School Catechist* by quoting scripture. These verses were reinforced by adding questions concerning the texts. Such questions were to be used by the teacher or visitor in delivering the lesson to the Sunday School children. She also entreated older girls to look after their younger siblings by suggesting that they make it 'a rule to wash them very clean, comb their heads, put on their clothes neatly, and make them comfortable and tidy.'¹²² In this way Trimmer advocated taking the tenets of cleanliness and neatness into the home.

However, responsibility for enforcing the rules lay with the teaching staff and visitors, although the impetus was put on the children and their parents to present themselves appropriately. To this end she advocated a set of rules be pasted into a book

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 73-74.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 302.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Trimmer, *Sunday-School Catechist*, 125.

sent home with the child. A section of these rules were aimed at the parents, rule three read, 'If they go to school dirty and untidy, they will disgrace their parents, as well as be unfit to go into the house of God.'¹²³ This was in contrast to other forms of institutional cleanliness where it was the institution itself that took responsibility for the physical cleanliness of the bodies and buildings within their purview.

Other moral campaigners offering comment on Sunday Schools included Jonas Hanway. The moral rectitude of the poor was ever a concern of Hanway's and it did not diminish over his life time. Like Trimmer, he was highly influenced by the work of the SPCK, becoming a subscribing member in November 1766. In 1786 he published one of his final pamphlets, *A Comprehensive View of Sunday Schools*, in which cleanliness of the poor remained a concern.¹²⁴ He wrote:

The Better condition the labourer's children are put in, with regard to moral and religious instruction, the less they will turn their thoughts to pilfering and beggary. They will become more industrious, be tighter and cleaner in their garments, and be better nourished.¹²⁵

Hanway felt that the moral economy of the nation would become 'deranged' if insufficient attention was paid to the religious instruction and employment of the poor. His polemic book, railed against Sabbath breakers, and those that eschewed their duty in regards to instilling moral habits amongst the poor. The book to a certain extent was similar to that of Trimmer, in that it provided a practical section on lessons and advice on running a Sunday School. However, his increasingly evangelical stance dominated the volume. There was no doubt that cleanliness played a role in the Sunday Schools imagined by Hanway. His particular concern, similar to that of Trimmer, was the children's clothing. He was

¹²³ Trimmer, *Oeconomy of Charity*, 316.

¹²⁴ Jonas Hanway, *A Comprehensive View of Sunday Schools, For the Use of the More Indigent Inhabitants of Cities, Towns, and Villages, through England and Wales, with Reflections On the Causes of the Decay of Our Morals and National Piety, and the Means of Removing Them: Also A Copious School Book, For the Use of Sunday School Scholars, under the Good Care of Parents, Masters, and Mistresses*. (London: Sold by Dodsley, in Pall Mall, and Sewel, in Cornhill, 1786).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, ii-iii.

convinced that the children might be turned out with clean bodies and faces, but ragged garments were more difficult to replace. Parish officers and wealthier members of the local community were called upon to contribute to their replacement. The children themselves were encouraged to make efforts by ‘spinning, knitting and other means’ to acquire new clothing.¹²⁶ Hanway was of the opinion that ‘clean and wholesome garments’ would allow the children to develop a sense of self-esteem not possible while in a ‘ragged and filthy condition.’¹²⁷

Cleanliness was reinforced in Hanway’s guidance for Sunday School visitors whose duty it was to supervise the work of the masters and mistresses employed in the school. These rules required the visitors to ensure that the children presented themselves with clean hands and faces, again acknowledging that their attire was as clean as possible, given the circumstances of many of the families. Children with the ‘itch’ proved a particular problem since it passed easily from one to another, in part because there was more physical contact between children. Committees were instructed to be vigilant and seek a ‘proper person’ to examine potential scholars in order to prevent it spreading to other students.¹²⁸

Although Trimmer and Hanway’s volumes on Sunday Schools largely focussed on the moral and religious teachings in these institutions, there was a significant overlap in the secular elements of Sunday School provision. Like Raikes, or perhaps because of Raikes, they both valued cleanliness and sought to place it alongside their religious teaching. Both believed that cleanliness was linked to the moral values of decency, industry and more importantly to good order. Whereas their default position characterised the poor as dirty, unkempt and inherently disordered. The Sunday Schools they advocated professed to offer

¹²⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 34-35.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 143.

an antidote to this, with a moral and spiritual cleansing of the poor. A great deal of their rhetoric was remarkably similar to that employed by the SPCK on the establishment of parochial workhouses at the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, since both Hanway and Trimmer had well documented links to the SPCK it is less surprising that there was strong connection between their work and the literary strategies they employed in promoting it.

Although the doctrinal emphasis may have differed in the early Sunday Schools, common ground was found in the requirement for cleanliness. Both the Sunday School Society and later the Sunday School Union were established on interdenominational lines. Very quickly, however, various factions broke away and retreated to form either institutional or denominational associations. In March 1798 the New Chapel in City Road resolved that it was expedient to establish a Sunday School, and subsequently the Methodist Sunday School Society was formed. Within weeks two schools were established, the first in Golden Lane and the second in Hoxton at Friars Mount.¹²⁹ The society spent some time deliberating over the rules which they gradually expanded in the light of experience. In the first tranche of rules it was stipulated that, ‘The children are required to come clean washed and combed upon pain of expulsion’.¹³⁰ Like Trimmer’s rules clothing was largely excluded from comment, acknowledging the limited means of many of the families sending children to the new Sunday School. The power of expulsion was reserved for the Visitor although parents were permitted to appeal to the committee. In July of the same year, 1798, the committee added further rules. This time they were

¹²⁹ Other schools were established at Litchfield Street and Bedfordbury in 1799; Raven Row in Spitalfields in 1803; High Street Lambeth in 1804; Snow Fields in Southwark; Slater’s Court in Rosemary Lane; Saffron Hill and Poplar in 1805. Malcolm Mckinnon Dick, “English Conservatives and Schools for the Poor c.1780-1833 : A Study of the Sunday School, School of Industry and the Philanthropic Society’s School for Vagrant and Criminal Children” (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 1979), 80.

¹³⁰ LMA: N/M/041/054, City Road Methodist Circuit, New Chapel City Road, Sunday School General Meeting Minutes 1798-1810, 19th March 1798.

specifically aimed at the Sunday School teachers, who were required to keep their class papers ‘as clean and neat as possible’.¹³¹ Rules on scholars were also extended to add further behavioural infringements. Rule thirty-two read:

If any scholar does not come clean, or shall be guilty of lying, swearing, pilfering, talking in an indecent manner or otherwise misbehaving themselves, the Teacher or Visitor shall point out the evil of such conduct and if after repeated reproof such scholar shall not be reformed, he or she shall be excluded the school.¹³²

Descriptions of rules by Cliff suggest that these rules were closely modelled on those used elsewhere in the country, reinforcing regulations concerning ‘cleanliness’.¹³³ Parents were also expected to agree to abide by the rules of the Sunday School, setting an example by attending church on a regular basis and agreeing to support children by ensuring they were clean and tidy. Both Trimmer and Raikes advocated a home visit before children started school to explain what was expected at the Sunday School.

There was little in John Wesley’s much read *Primitive Physic* that the Methodist Sunday School could draw upon to support their view on cleanliness. First published in 1747 it presented medical advice in a form accessible to the poor layman. Unlike Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*, which included significant sections advocating cleanliness as part of a healthy regimen, Wesley chose the simple method of presenting information as a matter of ‘common sense and religion.’¹³⁴ He did however include advice on modest living, drinking water and particularly recommended cold bathing. Of children, he wrote, ‘Wise Parents should dip their Children in Cold Water every Morning, ‘till they are three Quarters old: and afterward, their Hands and their Feet.’¹³⁵ To this he added that children should wash their head every morning as as a general prevantative. Neither instruction was ostensibly

¹³¹ Ibid, July 1798.

¹³² LMA: N/M/41/55, Golden Lane, July 1798.

¹³³ Cliff, “Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement,” 80.

¹³⁴ Deborah Madden, “Experience and the Common Interest of Mankind: The Enlightened Empiricism of John Wesley’s Primitive Physick,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26, no. 1 (1 March 2003): 42.

¹³⁵ Wesley, John. *Primitive Physick: Or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*. 2nd enlarged edition (Bristol: G. Woodfall, 1750), 135.

about keeping clean but regarded as a therapeutic treatment to prevent or treat a wide range of conditions. One of Wesley's few direct references to cleanliness was a quote from Dr Cheyne's *Plain Rules for Living* 'Everyone that wou'd preserve Health, shou'd be as clean and sweet as possible in their Houses, Cloaths and furniture.'¹³⁶ This simple encouragement to improve domestic conditions was particularly appealing to women, many of whom, as Deborah Madden has suggested, 'sought to practise domestic physic.'¹³⁷

In Wesley's religious teachings however, he made significant and repeated mention of cleanliness, both of personal cleanliness and of household neatness. From 1760, and probably well before that Wesley directed Methodists in their dress. He advised them on their 'neatness and cleanliness', telling them that 'It is certain the poor cannot be as clean as they would, as having little change of raiment.'¹³⁸ In 1769 he wrote, more explicitly, to a correspondent in Armagh about his preaching. He advised that during visits he should not lose the opportunity to ask Methodists to 'Be cleanly' and to 'avoid nastiness, dirt, slovenliness, both in your person, clothes, house and all about you.'¹³⁹ Further than this he advised that they should rid themselves of lice and clean their hair and keep it clean. The itch should likewise be treated. At the end of 1786 John Wesley again preached a sermon *On Dress* in which he repeated his advice on slovenliness and neatness.¹⁴⁰ This time he used the oft repeated 'Cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness' which made an explicit link between his teachings on cleanliness, neatness and religion. The sermon went on to warn against wearing 'gay and costly apparel' which might 'beget anger' or 'create and

¹³⁶ Ibid., xviii.

¹³⁷ Madden, "Experience and Common Interest," 51.

¹³⁸ As quoted in Styles, *Dress of the People*, 205. John Wesley and John Emory, ed., *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* Vol. VI, (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, J. Collard, printer, 1831), 546.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 746.

¹⁴⁰ Wesley Center Online, The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 88, *On Dress*, 30th Dec 1786. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-88-on-dress/> accessed 3rd August 2015.

inflammation.¹⁴¹ The sermon was an invective against personal vanity and the vulgar display of wealth. At the same time, however, Wesley was advocating personal cleanliness and a tidy appearance. He also warned parents against hindering children when they wanted to heed his advice on dress. During the spring of the same year, 1786, Wesley referred to the same quote, 'Cleanliness is next to godliness' in Sermon 98 '*On Visiting the Sick*'. Here, he implored those visiting the sick poor to teach them two things 'industry and cleanliness.'¹⁴² He went on, the want of it was a 'scandal to all religion'.¹⁴³

Linking cleanliness and industry was specific to the poor. This was particularly so when referring to children of the poor, who most commentators agreed, might be more easily trained up in such matters. Wesley's later sermons on dress and cleanliness were contemporary with both Hanway and Trimmer's books on Sunday School and had much in common. The notion that cleanliness was linked to self-improvement through hard work was now a unifying thread. The rhetoric of the 1750s and 1760s which was dominated by the patriotic need to increase the number of the poor by improving conditions was now superseded by a rhetoric which advocated cleanliness through personal industriousness.

Conclusion

At mid-century rising rates of mortality amongst the poor led to a rhetoric in which the preservation of life became a patriotic duty and even, it was argued, an economic necessity. In turn, this legitimised public discussion of cleanliness as an indispensable improvement in the condition of the infant poor. By the 1760s cleanliness had become

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Wesley Center Online, The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 98, *On Visiting the Sick*, 1786. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-98-on-visiting-the-sick/> accessed 3rd August 2015.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

absorbed in this national rhetoric and was inevitably linked with increased national economic benefit. At the same time poor parents and parish nurses were publicly denigrated over their inability or unwillingness to remain clean; and although parochial facilities for children varied enormously, some good, some poor, their supposed failure to maintain standards of cleanliness was used to justify intervention by some of the newly established associational charities.

Some of these very large charitable institutions provided residential accommodation and care for children and infants. In order to underline their concerns over standards of cleanliness and personal hygiene, they imposed rules not only on the children but also on their staff. Matrons, nurses and teachers were all tasked with ensuring their charges presented themselves in a clean and neat manner. Cleanliness and the 'clean linen regimen' was embedded in the daily routines of the children, thereby ensuring its institutionalisation. These routines were also gendered so that girls were taught household skills which included assisting with the institution's washing and ironing, the cleaning and tidying of wards and ensuring that younger children were washed and dressed. Appropriate clothing was instituted by many of these schools with most adopting uniforms. Orderliness was often represented by a clean and neat uniform as ranks of children were exhibited on public occasions.

Both public discourse on cleanliness and the rules that enforced cleanliness in many of these institutions were often dominated by the same men. Yet the men who took on civic duties often sought to distance themselves from the poor and the reality of their lives. Patricia Crawford has characterised these men as 'civic fathers'. These are the men that took on 'public fatherhood as superior to that of their social inferiors in making better and more useful citizens of the English'.¹⁴⁴ For girls of the Foundling Hospital this was a

¹⁴⁴ Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*, 193.

life in service, where personal cleanliness was judged as part of their suitability for employment.

By 1800 the changing forms of institutional care and education for children of the poor led to marked differences in attitudes towards cleanliness. This was manifest in Sunday Schools which provided a very different form of education - in which the poor might participate without payment. However, cleanliness and self-presentation formed an important element of the rules of almost all Sunday Schools, regardless of denominational affiliation. The industrious child was particularly singled out as the clean and neat child, unlike their feckless parents who, according to some proponents of Sunday Schools, remained filthy.

Unlike workhouses, residential schools and other charitable concerns, the tenets of cleanliness were encouraged at home. Both children and parents were given instructions in which personal cleanliness were a requirement of their own, or their child's attendance. Indeed, it was argued that cleanliness encouraged self-reliance and consequently more self-confidence. It was also acknowledged that poor parents may not have the resources to regularly provide clean or alternative clothing for Sunday School attendance in the manner of the 'clean linen regimen' specified by many institutions. Cleanliness, both bodily cleanliness and more particularly clean and neat clothing, were linked to religiosity, marking out the Sabbath as different and tentatively suggesting a link with a moral and spiritual cleanliness.

Chapter 7

Institutional Cleanliness: Hospitals

Part of being a hospital patient at the beginning of the eighteenth century was to participate in your own care and diagnosis. This was equally true for a patient's personal cleanliness and that of his or her immediate environment. Patients, their families or parish of settlement were all expected to contribute by providing clean linen, a chamber pot, cleaning the wards or by providing funds to do so. Although these actions were necessary they were not an explicit part of a patient's treatment regime - partly because clear links between cleanliness and the prevention or spread of infection were almost entirely lacking during the first half of the eighteenth century. Regardless of this, cleanliness was thoroughly embedded in the daily routines and systems of most London hospitals. Like other institutions discussed in this thesis, most hospitals used cleanliness as a marker of institutional efficiency. How much and to what extent varied according to the type of hospital and the nature of its patients. Of those hospitals failing to meet those standards of cleanliness some were much more sensitive to public criticism than others, particularly those that were more reliant on charitable giving. As the century wore on, patients' involvement with their personal cleanliness and that of the ward waned. Hospital architecture began to play a more important role in perceptions of cleanliness, and responsibility for institutional and patient cleanliness became almost entirely embodied in the matron and an increasing number of nurses, laundresses and other hospital servants. In many ways this mirrored the changing role of medical practitioners, who began to marginalise the patient with the medicalisation of ill-health. This chapter will examine St Thomas's Hospital, a general hospital with medieval origins, and two of the specialist hospitals: the City of London Lying-in Hospital and St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics, both of which were built in the second half of the eighteenth century, together with Bethlem

Hospital for the insane poor. It will contrast the concerns around cleanliness according to the nature and type of patient and the category of hospital.

There are significant studies on London's health practitioners, but there are far fewer on the institutions serving London's sick poor.¹ Dorothy George's *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* provides the most comprehensive survey of London's medical institutions but merely touches on the 'improving' nature of each, offering little in the way of analysis.² However, Mary Fissell's examination of medical provision for the poor in Bristol allows useful insights into the complexity of the urban landscape for the treatment of illness and disease in the eighteenth century.³ She identifies ways in which poor patients 'structured and shaped medical practise'.⁴ Likewise Kevin Siena's study of London's fowl wards notes that poor men and women, during the early eighteenth century, 'actively participated in negotiating their own diagnoses'.⁵ However, the system was already stacked against the poor; particularly those that had no parish of settlement in London, who were largely excluded from hospital treatment; although Kevin Siena ably demonstrates how some institutions were able to provide a service for those more marginalised patients. Patients on the whole used a wide network of connections, be it family, friends,

¹ William F Bynum and Roy Porter, eds. *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Margaret Pelling, "Medical Practice in Early Modern England: Trade or Profession?" in *The Professions in Early Modern England* ed. Wilfrid R. Prest (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 90-128; Irvine Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner, 1750-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989). Irvine Loudon, "Medical Practitioners 1750-1850 and the Period of Medical Reform in Britain," in *Medicine in Society* (1992), ed. Andrew Wear, 219-42; Susan C. Lawrence, *Charitable Knowledge: Hospital Pupils and Practitioners in Eighteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Anne Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

² George, *London Life*, 58-63. For a discussion on George and institutional improvement see Adrian Wilson, "The Politics of Medical Improvement in Early Hanoverian London," in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5-9.

³ Mary E. Fissell, *Patients, Power, and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴ Fissell, *Patients, Power, and the Poor*, 1.

⁵ Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals and the Urban*, 256.

occupational connections or parish of settlement in order to gain access to medical treatment.

London's wealthy rarely, if ever, entered a hospital. For them, treatment by a physician, apothecary or other practitioner was invariably given at home. Hospital provision, therefore, was largely for London's poor and lower middling sort. For centuries this had been provided by the medieval royal hospitals, which included St Thomas's, St Bartholomew's, Bethlem and Bridewell Hospitals. By the 1720s and 1730s, however, these institutions were supplemented by workhouse infirmaries in response to 'constant demands for medical treatment' by the poor.⁶ Contemporaneously, a number of newly established voluntary hospitals, run as associational charities, added further medical provision for the poor.⁷ These charitable institutions catered not only for general medical complaints but for specific areas of care, including lying-in, lunacy, smallpox and venereal disease. Other charitable establishments, however, although carrying the title 'hospital' did not provide medical care at all, but made provision for the needy, young or infirm, often in the form of education or 'moral and spiritual guidance'.⁸ So, for instance, Bridewell Hospital was both a prison and hospital, providing 'punishment for the disorderly poor' and housing for homeless children.⁹ Chelsea and Greenwich Hospitals respectively cared for aged or infirm soldiers and seamen. Similarly, the Foundling Hospital provided care and education for babies and children.

St Thomas's Hospital

⁶ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 135.

⁷ Westminster Hospital 1719, Guy's Hospital 1723, St George's Hospital 1734, London Hospital 1740, Middlesex 1745, the Lock Hospital 1746, two Smallpox hospitals 1746 and St Luke's Hospital for lunatics 1751. George, *London Life*, 61.

⁸ Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "Hospitals", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 1st April 2017).

⁹ Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "Bridewell Prison and Hospital", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 10th May 2017).

In the late seventeenth century St Thomas's Hospital began a building programme that eventually saw the hospital almost entirely rebuilt. As well as rebuilding the hospital the governors took the opportunity to review and strengthen existing rules. These required that, 'all the able men and women patient's by the appointment of the Steward shall help the Sisters to cleanse the ward's without money or reward upon pain of Forfoiture [of] Twelve pence'.¹⁰ If a patient was truly incapacitated then it was ruled that the 'Sister Shall wash or cause to be washed, all weak people's clout's without takeing any money or reward for the same'.¹¹ In addition, patients were required to 'furnish themselves with Earthen ware' and ensure that they paid for each washing.¹² Sufficient clean linen was also a prerequisite for a hospital stay, although the very poor had to rely on their parish of settlement to supply relevant items. For almost half a century these rules governed a regime in which patients and their families negotiated the personal and local cleanliness of the hospital. This meant sometimes paying the nursing staff for additional laundry services, and at others supplying their own necessities. This section examines St Thomas's nurses' role in cleanliness, followed by that of the patients. Washerwomen and their relationship with the hospital and patients is considered together with soap and the use of immersive bathing.

Governors at St Thomas's Hospital set general policy, but were less concerned with everyday matters. Daily domestic and nursing concerns were left to the matron, who supervised sisters, nurses and other institutional staff within the broad rules laid down by the governing body. Despite the hospital charging an admittance fee and a small daily fee during a patient's stay, a system of taking fees and small gratuities gradually grew up

¹⁰ *LL*, St Thomas's Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 8th November 1699 (LMTHMG553010134).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The earthenware concerned was probably a chamber pot. *LL*, St Thomas's Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 26th May 1691 (LMTHMG553010054).

amongst the sisters and nurses. Much of this concerned cleanliness and the personal comfort of the patient. A hospital committee decreed in July 1731 that all such payments should cease, and that ward sisters salaries would be adjusted appropriately, beginning with the sisters on the two ‘foul Fluxing Wards’.¹³ These women would be paid £40 per annum, partly in recognition of the small personal risk to themselves, but largely because of the additional labour created by patients undergoing treatment for venereal diseases.¹⁴ The so called ‘fluxing’ in these wards involved managing the flow of fluid or liquid matter from the body which was a side effect of their treatment. At best this was saliva and at worst diarrhoea. Treatment necessitated significant additional use of towels, sheets and other linen. Sisters on the clean fluxing wards, which sometimes included the occasional venereal patient, were to be paid £32 per annum, and those on other wards £25 per annum. In addition, these relatively high salaries reflected the provision of materials, as each ward sister was required to provide, at her own expense, ‘all crockery ware Soap fullers Earth & Scouring sand for the use of the Respective Wards, and the first pair of Sheets for Each Patient’.¹⁵ The nurses on these wards were paid on a similar sliding scale, respectively £20, £18 and £16. The night watchers were paid 4 shillings per week together with their lodgings and small beer.

In July 1752, a sub-committee appointed to examine and amend the rules of St Thomas’s reported back to the court of governors. It reiterated many existing rules and codified others that had been operating for some years. First it agreed a set of more general regulations for the administration of the hospital and subsequently a set of job specific rules for the sisters, nurses and watchers together with the patients. Many specifically concerned cleanliness. The ward sister’s duties began by underlining her duty to ‘keep

¹³ *LL*, St Thomas’s Hospital, Minute Books of Court and Committees, 7th July 1731 (LMTHMC552040128).

¹⁴ Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals and the Urban Poor*, 102-103.

¹⁵ *LL*, St Thomas’s Hospital, Minute Books of Court and Committees, 7th July 1731 (LMTHMC552040129).

their Ward constantly neat and clean'.¹⁶ Chamber pots were to be removed from the ward by 6 o'clock in the morning during the summer months, and 7 o'clock in the winter. They were required to wash 'all weak Peoples Clouts, without taking money' and were specifically reminded that 'no washing of any kind whatever be done in the Ward, but in the Common Wash-House'.¹⁷ The wash house was part of the St Thomas's Hospital estate, newly rebuilt in the 1690s.¹⁸ Shortly after, posts for fastening clothes lines for drying were set up in the old burying ground.¹⁹ By 1800 this was replaced by a drying yard towards the rear of the hospital, integral to its design. Finally, the 1752 rules required ward sisters to deliver worn out linen to the matron, having ensured that it was laundered before doing so. If the ward sister did not undertake these tasks herself then it was her duty to ensure that they were completed, usually by the nurse. In addition, the nurse had her own set of responsibilities governed by these rules. These included attending the surgeons while they were dressing patients' wounds, when she was required to take away 'all foul Rowlers, Bolsters, Rags &c. and furnish clean'.²⁰ Later she was required to wash the same, for which she was 'Monthly to receive from the Cook, the Quantity of Soap allotted'.²¹ She was also required to 'clean the Patients and their Bedding, that foul themselves through Weakness or Infirmary'.²² In addition, she was to 'scour and make clean the beds and Floors of the whole Ward, with the Tables and Forms, the Passage and stairs, and

¹⁶ LMA: H01/ST/A25/001, St Thomas's Hospital, printed duties for sisters, nurses, watchers and patients, 1752.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* In this instance a 'clout' was probably a rag or piece of linen used to cover wounds or sores. It might also refer to menstrual rags or to soak up incontinence. 'A piece of cloth (*esp.* a small or worthless piece, a 'rag'); a cloth (*esp.* one put to mean uses, *e.g.* a dish-clout). *arch.* and *dial.* 'clout, *n.1*'. *OED Online*. March 2017. *Oxford University Press*.

<http://www.oed.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/Entry/34715?rskey=6OuBbn&result=1> (accessed June 8th 2017).

¹⁸ *LL*, St Thomas's Hospital, Minute Books of Courts and Committees, 9th October 1693 (LMTHMC552010025).

¹⁹ *LL*, St Thomas's Hospital, Minute Books of Courts and Committees, 29th July 1695 (LMTHMC552010044).

²⁰ LMA: H01/ST/A25/001, St Thomas's Hospital, printed duties for sisters, nurses, watchers and patients, 1752.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Garrets',²³ as well as the cans for beer and broth, and the dishes used at meal times. For these she could use patients to assist her. The night watch's principal duty, after looking over the patients, was to set a clean chamber pot down for every patient and to empty and clean the vessels each morning.

Patients were required to assist in cleaning of the wards when asked to do so. This had not changed since the beginning of the seventeenth century, although there were fewer requirements to provide their own linens or chamber pots. Patients were, however, required to don clean linen each Sunday morning 'which they pay the Nurses for Washing'.²⁴ They also had a pair of clean sheets every month, unless accident or their illness required that they were changed earlier. The timings of clean linens and sheets were similar to those adopted in London's workhouses. Attendance at the hospital's chapel, particularly on the Sabbath, was obligatory for those who were able, although attendance at other times was also encouraged. This not only emphasised the clean orderly patient but also the moral and spiritual cleansing available through the hospital chapel, particularly for 'foul' patients.

The hospital wash house employed several washerwomen, all of whom were required to give sureties. These bonds were to indemnify the hospital should the washerwoman 'waste, embezzle or make away with any of the Sheets, Table-cloths, & Towels, or any other matter or thing intrusted to her to wash for the said Hospital'.²⁵ In March 1762 George Bond, a wire worker of Bandy Leg Walk, stood surety for Frances Little. He also vouched for her 'Honesty and good Behaviour'.²⁶ The items entrusted to the washerwoman, including bed sheets, could be pawned for modest sums and therefore taken together; represented a considerable investment on behalf of the hospital. Towards

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ LMA: H01/ST/A103, St Thomas's Hospital, surety for Frances Little, 1762.

²⁶ Ibid.

the end of the century, a series of laundry lists followed by 'linen books' denoted regular accounting for sheets, blankets, bolsters, rugs and bed furniture. These were organised by ward and indicated the number of each, possibly a method of keeping track of the linen by the matron as one ward identified a pair of sheets with the washerwoman. It is difficult to identify the division of labour between washerwomen working in the hospital laundry and nurses who washed linen for the patients. It seems likely, however, that the 'great wash', that is sheets, table-cloths and other bed linen, was undertaken by the hospital washerwomen, particularly as these items were outlined in their bonds, and that items of personal laundry, including shifts and shirts, were washed by nursing staff for a small fee.

This division of labour had implications for how each of these sets of women were viewed by the hospital. The relatively respectable nurses were permitted a certain amount of entrepreneurial freedom to wash personal items, while washerwomen were required to indemnify the hospital against loss, as they handled large quantities of linen that would yield sizeable sums when pawned. These bonds amounted to a form of institutionalised authority to wash on behalf of the hospital.

It is difficult to ascertain any specific instructions regarding bodily washing; the focus remained, as we have seen with other institutions, on the washing of personal linen. However, this left a significant problem for those patients that were destitute, as any additional payments for laundry were clearly beyond their means. In this instance the parish would cover these costs. In August 1779, the parish of St Dionis Backchurch ordered, on behalf of John Isard, '2 Caps 2 hankerchifs and to pay for his Washing in the Hospital'.²⁷ Paul Patrick Kearney, latterly also a pauper in the parish of St Dionis Backchurch, illustrated how those not averse to making a fuss were able to push these

²⁷ St Dionis Backchurch, Minute Books of Parish Vestry Sub-committees, 27th August 1779, *London Lives, 1690-1800*, GLDBMO303000069 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 27th January 2017), LMA, City of London.

expectations to their limits. In August 1766, Kearney was admitted to Guy's hospital at parish expense. By November, Kearney had persuaded William Robinson, Guy's steward, to write to his parish asking for 'some allowance towards washing his body linen'.²⁸ In December Robinson again wrote to the parish, noting that Kearney had been discharged, 'much dissatisfied with the sister of the ward about washing money for his body linen, which he had wanted her to pay him'.²⁹ It transpired that the parish had supplied two shillings for laundry, which it assumed would be used to pay a local washerwoman. Kearney, disgruntled about this, 'would not let her put his linen out to wash. . .but would have the money himself'.³⁰ Kearney was admitted to Guy's Hospital, although conditions were similar to those of St Thomas's. Certainly the parish thought it appropriate to pay for parishioners' laundry during a period in hospital. However, it calls into question who actually undertook this labour. It was the sister's responsibility to ensure it was undertaken, but it is likely that she sub-contracted the work to a local woman.

Cleanliness at the hospital seems to have remained on the agenda late into the century, although specifics are elusive. It is possible however, that there were moves towards a personal allowance of soap by the end of the eighteenth century. In 1785, Dr Gilbert Blane, physician to St Thomas's Hospital, published *Observations on the Diseases incident to Seamen*. Blane highlighted that seamen on the sick list, but remaining on board ship, were supplied with half a pound of soap each week. He wrote that 'The supply of soap was a thing entirely new in the service; but the good effect of all the other articles would most probably have been defeated, unless the men had been furnished with the

²⁸ Quoted in Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, 128.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

means of cleanliness.³¹ The navy already allowed sailors ‘one day in the week for washing, when the weather and other circumstances will admit of it’.³² Blane went on:

[I]t would be a farther improvement in the rules of the service to supply soap in the same manner as tobacco and slops are supplied, that is, to let men have what quantity they want from the purser, who is allowed to charge it against their wages.³³

Soon after he was appointed Blane implemented changes, these included regular clean clothes for patients, haircuts and the destruction of infested clothing.³⁴ After Blane resigned as physician to St Thomas’s Hospital in 1795, he remained a governor and took up a position as a Commissioner on the Sick and Wounded Board. Here, he continued to advocate for the issue of soap, improvements in cleanliness and the proper ventilation in ships. It seems reasonable to suggest that he also paid attention to these concerns during his decade or more at St Thomas’s Hospital.

An innovation adopted at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the installation of a bagnio. The governors recorded in the minutes,

Wee being informed by the physicians and Surgeons of this Hospitall that a Sweating House or Bagino would be of great use and benefitt to the Patients of this House and contribute much to their Cure in many Cases have therefore caused a Sweating House or Bagino with Two Bathing Cisterns to be made in the lower Floore of the New wards.³⁵

The installation of a sweating house or bagnio met contemporary therapeutic needs and continued to be used throughout the century. By 1800, plans show that there was both a hot and cold bath at St Thomas’s. Elizabeth Graham’s recent examination of John Pringle’s medical correspondence identifies the continued therapeutic use of hot and cold

³¹ Gilbert Blane, *Observations on the Diseases Incident to Seamen* (London: Joseph Cooper, 1785), 145.

³² *Ibid.*, 247.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Peter Mathias, “Swords and Ploughshares: the Armed Forces, Medicine and Public Health in the Late Eighteenth Century,” in *War and Economic Development: Essays in Memory of David Joslin*, ed. J.M. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 83.

³⁵ *LL*, St Thomas’s Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 9th October 1702 (LMTHMG553010168).

immersive bathing, particularly during the 1760s and 1770s.³⁶ His letters show that much of the prescribed bathing was part of a wider medical regimen which might also involve a restricted diet, purges and sweating. Some bathing involved explicit washing and cleansing of the skin with soap. Freeing the skin from dirt allowed, in contemporary opinion, unrestricted perspiration which restored the corporeal balance of the humours. Pringle's network of correspondents, although wide, focussed on middling and elite patients with the means to pay. However, the continued existence of baths in St Thomas's Hospital suggest that at least some poorer patients were able to access this form of cleanliness, which was believed to restore good health, as we saw in chapter three.

Like other hospitals, particularly those that cared for women during childbirth and lying-in, St Thomas's Hospital was plagued by bedbugs. In the summer of 1764 a group of governors provided the hospital with the finance to equip the cutting ward with iron bedsteads.³⁷ The ward was subsequently free of infestation. Again in 1767, it was reported to St Thomas's Court of Governors that an experiment to install iron bedsteads in two further wards had produced 'Beneficial Effects'.³⁸ It was noted that the beds had contributed to 'greatly Alleviateing the terrible Inconvenience the Patients suffered from the Bugs'.³⁹ The iron bedsteads were much easier to clean and fumigate, thereby considerably reducing the incidence of bedbugs; so much so that St Thomas's immediately resolved to open a subscription book in order to fund iron bedsteads for the rest of the hospital. John Howard noted in his hospital survey of 1788 that the removal of the old tester beds at St Thomas's, and investment in iron bedsteads with semi-circular irons to hold curtains in the winter, assisted in keeping the wards 'fresh and clean'.⁴⁰ Howard

³⁶ Graham, "Pleasure and Utility," 125-130.

³⁷ *LL*, St Thomas's Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 25th July 1764 (LMTHMG553020283).

³⁸ *LL*, St Thomas's Hospital, Minutes of the Court of Governors, 5 August 1767 (LMTHMG553020311).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Howard, *Lazarettos*, 134.

frequently criticised hospital beds. Those in St Bartholomew's Hospital, he wrote, 'are wood, and their testers, though lofty, are a harbour for dust and lumber'.⁴¹ The testers were canopies that hung over the bed which often supported draperies. They were difficult to clean and beds of this type made it difficult to keep bed bugs at bay. The old wards at Guy's were furnished thus and were notably infested with bedbugs. Howard was of the firm opinion that 'very much depends on patients lying on fresh and clean beds'.⁴² He went on, 'if the annual sum paid in several hospitals for the destruction of bugs, were expended in airing, beating, and brushing the beds, the end, perhaps would be much better answered'.⁴³ At the very least he hoped that, 'the bedding were more frequently washed and aired'.⁴⁴

Having invested heavily in new buildings at the beginning of the century, St Thomas's Hospital was slow to adopt new and innovative practices in later decades. Much of this newer thinking on cleanliness concerned the free flow of air, which, by its constant circulation, provided a cleansing atmosphere.⁴⁵ This was achieved through long open wards and large windows that could be opened as needed. As we have already seen, any insufficiency could be supplemented by tubes supplying fresh air from external vents.⁴⁶ Other innovations included access to running water, especially on upper floors; these were neither discussed by the governors nor implemented. In 1771, John Aikin pointed out that, 'In the laying out of the building, and the internal conduct of the house that we look for the source of those errors which may prove fatal'.⁴⁷ He went on to suggest that, St Thomas's quadrangle proved to be that fatal error, a design fault which prevented 'effectual thorough

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 136.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Smith, "Cleanliness: Idea and Practice," 119-132.

⁴⁶ See chapter six on children

⁴⁷ John Aikin, *Thoughts on Hospitals* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1771), 14.

ventilation'.⁴⁸ This caused a 'collection of stagnating air, tainted by a variety of noxious effluvia'.⁴⁹ When mixed with wards, of between twenty and fifty persons, it aggravated various medical conditions. According to Aikin it also allowed the bed clothes to 'acquire a strong impregnation from the perspired vapours of the night'.⁵⁰ Aikin further suggested that those patients that were able to sit up 'should remain the day in large airy halls, and that their wards and bedding should be in the meantime as much as possible exposed to ventilation'.⁵¹ After Howard's inspection in September 1788, he reported that most of St Thomas's wards were 'fresh and clean, except the three foul wards' which accommodated patients with venereal disease.⁵² These he thought were, 'very offensive and had not a window open.'⁵³ There were still no water closets and the night watchers were required to empty chamber pots each morning. For a brief period around mid-century fees were respited, but this was an anomaly since both before and after patients were obliged to pay the 'nurses for washing their linen'.⁵⁴ The regimen at St Thomas's did not change substantially through the course of the eighteenth century and retained throughout a system of cleanliness that clearly focussed on washing linen rather than washing bodies. Nevertheless, by almost all accounts, and despite Howard's disparaging remarks, the hospital remained largely 'clean'.

Lying-in Hospitals

Around the mid-eighteenth century a number of lying-in charities were established in London. Some offered assistance to poor and needy women delivering their babies at

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Howard, *Lazarettos*, 134.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

home, while other charities founded lying-in hospitals. These hospitals were dedicated to delivering babies and the immediate post-natal care of both babies and their mothers. They also helped to fill a gap in medical care, since St Thomas's and the other royal hospitals did not admit pregnant women nor offer assistance during childbirth - although, this could be acquired in some workhouses, workhouse infirmaries, or through a pauper's parish of settlement. In addition, the funding of these 'new' hospitals was almost entirely reliant upon charitable giving, unlike that of St Thomas's, which was largely derived from its substantial holdings of endowed lands and properties. Lying-in hospitals put Georgian notions of cleanliness to the test. The particular susceptibility of their patients to puerperal fever challenged these institutions to impose the highest standards of cleanliness. As a result, they form a clear exemplar of what eighteenth-century Londoners thought made for a 'clean' and healthy institutional environment.

A substantial part of the work on lying-in hospitals and charities has focussed on the role of male midwives and the medicalisation of birth.⁵⁵ Much less has been written about the experience of poor women. In more recent scholarship however, Lisa Forman Cody has done much to rectify this lacunae.⁵⁶ Her re-examination of death rates in the eighteenth century suggests that, 'Georgian disease theory, compared to that of the Victorians, promoted more hygienic practices that reduced some bacterial transmission'.⁵⁷ This partly refers to the eighteenth-century practice of separate maternity hospitals, or wards in the case of the Middlesex Hospital, which to a certain extent reduced the

⁵⁵ Margaret Connor Versluysen, "Midwives, Medical Men and "Poor Women Labouring of Child": Lying-in Hospitals in Eighteenth-Century London," in *Women, Health and Reproduction*, ed. Helen Roberts (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 18-49; Pam Lieske, "William Smellie's Use of Obstetrical Machines and the Poor," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 29 (2000): 65-86; Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 188-99. Adrian Wilson, "Midwifery in the 'Medical Marketplace,'" in *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850*, ed. Mark S. R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

⁵⁶ Lisa Forman Cody, "Living and Dying in Georgian London's Lying-In Hospitals," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78, no. 2 (15 June 2004): 309-48.

⁵⁷ Cody Forman, "Living and Dying in Georgian London's Lying-In Hospitals," 312.

possibility of cross-contamination. In part it also referred to medical notions surrounding the nature of contagion and infection.⁵⁸ One element of Cody's re-examination of death rates draws on original work by Margaret DeLacy concerning the prevalence of puerperal fever. DeLacy's unpicking of puerperal fever delineates a number of infections and diseases that were often mistaken for puerperal fever, many of which were widespread during the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ It was only towards the end of the century that, she notes, John Leake, in 1772 and, Joseph Clarke, in 1790, began to differentiate between various diseases suffered by women during lying-in.⁶⁰ Investigation of post-partum infection, however, was on-going well into the mid twentieth century, when contemporary research on transmission mechanisms suggested that infection was caused by strains of the streptococci bacteria. Infections caused by these bacteria could be spread by the droplets from inside the throat by indirect contact or through direct contact with a carrier's skin. This led DeLacy to suggest that eighteenth-century institutional cleanliness would have had little effect on the cause of infection, as carriers might easily re-infect themselves after handwashing.⁶¹ Furthermore, almost any close contact was difficult to control in these institutions since female visitors, medical practitioners, or the women themselves would often touch each other, either in affectionate embrace or for therapeutic reasons.⁶² However, some lying-in hospitals restricted women from 'visiting fellow patients'.⁶³ Most hospitals struggled to find a common cause for puerperal fever. DeLacy went on to suggest that 'something other than the practises of a particular physician or the cleanliness of a particular hospital' was involved as a number of simultaneous epidemics which took place

⁵⁸ For a full discussion of these see Margaret DeLacy, "Puerperal Fever in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 63 (1989): 549-555.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 523-4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 525.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Cody Forman, "Living and Dying in Georgian London's Lying-In Hospitals," 325.

in very disparate places.⁶⁴ Irvine Loudon outlines how some of the early debates on the transmission of disease, between those that advocated contagionist and anticontagionist theories, played out over the early years of the nineteenth century, most of which lies beyond the scope of this thesis.⁶⁵ Yet much of what each faction promoted was entirely compatible and had implications for institutional cleanliness. Many of these practical elements were adopted by London lying-in hospitals through the eighteenth century, either immediately or as they gradually relocated into new premises. Invariably these new buildings incorporated large airy wards with a flow of fresh air, from either high sash windows or ventilation tubes. Attached or integral laundries provided regular clean clothing and linens, and hospitals paid appropriate attention to the drainage.

Securing entry to a lying-in hospital was not straight forward; in the first instance a woman was required to obtain a recommendation by a governor of the hospital. She was also obliged to produce an affidavit confirming her marital status and the legal settlement of her husband. Only a minority of hospitals admitted unmarried women or adopted a system of ballots to allocate places. In order to weed out ‘those petitioners with visible venereal diseases’, the itch, lice or contagious disease, the putative mother would be subject to a physical examination by the hospital’s matron.⁶⁶ In addition, the ‘very dirty ragged and others of bad behaviour’ were also prohibited from admittance.⁶⁷ Such examinations were common on entry to the workhouse or workhouse infirmary, although perhaps less common and more invasive for the ‘respectable’ poor woman, who had hitherto managed to avoid such institutions. To a certain extent women admitted to a lying-in hospital were already selected from a sub-group of ‘cleaner’ women, as the requirement to hold a recommendation from a governor meant that there had to be some tentative

⁶⁴ DeLacy, “Puerperal Fever in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” 536.

⁶⁵ Irvine Loudon, *The Tragedy of Childbed Fever* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76-77.

⁶⁶ Cody Forman, “Living and Dying in Georgian London’s Lying-In Hospitals,” 339.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

connection; perhaps a former servant or relative of a tradesman or woman - probably not one of the destitute. On admission to the lying-in hospital a woman had to present herself in 'clean clothes'.⁶⁸ A requirement for personal cleanliness was two-fold; it provided an additional marker of her respectability and, more importantly, it confirmed her place in the ranks of the industrious poor. Unlike patients at St Thomas's Hospital, patients at the Middlesex Hospital were not expected to assist in washing and cleaning the ward. Neither were they required to bring their own sheets, nor to pay for them to be washed.

Institutional cleanliness at the Middlesex Hospital, like other lying-in hospitals, was in the hands of the matron. She was responsible for ensuring all hospital linen was washed, although the work was delegated to the laundry maids who worked in the hospital laundry. As well as the patients, some of the staff were entitled to have their linen washed in the hospital laundry. In 1770, the Middlesex Hospital's rules explicitly stated that the 'Apothecary, House Surgeon, Secretary, Matron, assistant Matron, and all other servants, shall, besides their wages, be provided with lodging, washing, and board.'⁶⁹ However, women pupils who were permitted 'Lodging, Board and Washing in the Hospital' were required to pay ten shillings per week for such privileges.⁷⁰ This accorded with their status as 'apprentice' or trainee.⁷¹ As well as personal cleanliness, the matron supervised the nurses who were responsible for cleaning their wards. This was to happen before seven in

⁶⁸ Tanya Evans, *'Unfortunate Objects' Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 151.

⁶⁹ Anon. *The Laws, Orders, and Regulations, of the Middlesex Hospital, for the Reception of Sick and Lame Patients, and Lying-in Married Women; Revised, and Digested under Proper Heads, By a Committee for That Purpose Appointed at a Quarterly General Court, Held the 3rd May 1770, Read Approved, and Confirmed, At a Special General Court, Appointed for That Purpose* (London, 1770), 17.

⁷⁰ Anon. *The Laws, Orders, and Regulations, of the Middlesex Hospital, for the Reception of Sick and Lame Patients, and Lying-in Married Women; Revised, Enlarged, and Digested under Proper Heads, By a Committee for That Purpose Appointed at a Weekly Board Held the 29th March 1763; Read Approved, and Confirmed, At a Special General Court, Appointed for That Purpose* (London, 1763), 30.

⁷¹ Women pupils were admitted to the Middlesex Hospital Lying-in wards and the City of London Lying-in Hospital from 1758, likewise the students at the British Lying-in Hospital were required to pay additionally for 'Tea, Sugar & washing'. LMA: H14/BLI/A1/1, British Lying-in Hospital, 27 Aug 1752. Quoted by Cody Foreman, "Living and Dying in Georgian London's Lying-In Hospitals," 316-7 n. 22.

the summer and nine in the winter months. The only two specifics were that the nurses should particularly ensure that bread crumbs and larger discarded fragments of bread were to be collected each morning, and cinders should be sifted in their own wards. The collection of larger pieces of bread prevented patients from sending them out of the hospital, perhaps to their children. But as most patients ate in bed, then crumbs would be unsightly and create an additional hazard by attracting vermin if not removed. More prosaically, cinders were often hot and liable to reignite especially if transported around the hospital, creating a fire risk.

Initially the City of London Lying-in Hospital was located in Shaftesbury House in Aldersgate Street. Like other lying-in hospitals of the period its principal duty was the safe delivery of babies and the post-natal care of both mother and baby. Pregnant women were admitted around a week before they expected to give birth and remained there for at least three weeks after their child was born. During this time visiting was restricted to female relatives, at specific hours in the afternoon, and only in the entrance halls to the hospital. As well as the staff, mothers and babies were also provided with clean linen. Mothers at the British Lying-in Hospital were given petticoats and gowns to wear during their stay and babies ‘two clean dresses per week’.⁷² In the three weeks after its birth, a child would wear clothing and nappies, or clouts as they were known in the eighteenth century, supplied by the hospital. Only on the mother’s discharge would the child be permitted to wear its own clothing. Therefore, the hospital laundry was fundamental to the provision of this service. Any interruption to the regular supply of freshly laundered items, particularly nappies and bed linen, proved difficult for the women. So in November 1769, when the roof of the City of London Lying-in Hospital’s wash house fell in, extensive repairs were required as soon as they were able. The hospital laundry necessarily consumed

⁷² Cody Foreman, “Living and Dying in Georgian London’s Lying-In Hospitals,” 323.

considerable resources; this was reflected in the amount of soap bought on their behalf and recorded in the governors' minutes. In September 1769, the matron ordered 'Four Hundred weight of soap to be provided for the use of the Hospital'.⁷³ This order for four hundred weight of soap seems anomalous given that orders for soap around the same period were no more than two hundred weight on each occasion. Indeed, the hospital's regular order of two hundred weight of soap was delivered for use in the hospital, as usual, in January 1770.⁷⁴ Nathaniel Hulme, the City of London Lying-in Hospital's physician, noted in his publication *Treatise on the Puerperal Fever*, some two years later, that the 'clothes of puerperal women should be frequently changed for clean, dry, warm ones'.⁷⁵ It is noteworthy however, that from the late autumn of 1769 there was an outbreak of puerperal fever which lasted until 1771. From the minute book, it is impossible to detect any evidence of adjustment to hygienic routines during this period. Nonetheless, there is little else to account for the seeming rise in consumption of soap by the hospital.

Keeping the hospital clean sometimes required expert assistance from outside the hospital. Peter Braniff was one such contractor; he was retained annually for the sum of two guineas for the eradication of bed bugs and fleas in the hospital.⁷⁶ Other than insisting that patients should be free from disease and present themselves looking neat and clean, it was almost impossible to prevent these infestations. The City of London Lying-in Hospital was not the only hospital that this contractor serviced; his advertising suggested that the British Lying-in Hospital in Brownlow Street also relied on his services.⁷⁷ After his untimely death in 1767 the business was run by his wife Eleanor who continued to

⁷³ LMA: H10/CLM/A1/002, City of London Maternity Hospital, Minute Book, 28th September 1769.

⁷⁴ LMA: H10/CLM/A1/002, City of London Maternity Hospital, Minute Book, 18th January 1770. A hundred weight is equivalent to 112lbs or 50.8kg.

⁷⁵ Nathaniel Hulme, *A Treatise on the Puerperal Fever: Wherein the Nature and Cause of the Disease, so Fatal to Lying-in Women, Are Represented in a New Point of View Illustrated by Dissections, and a Rational Method of Cure Proposed, Confirmed by Experience* (London: T. Cadell, G. Robinson and J. Almond, 1772), 64.

⁷⁶ LMA: H10/CLM/A1/002, City of London Maternity Hospital, Minute Book, 8th September 1768.

⁷⁷ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, March 21, 1767; Issue 10092.

maintain the hospital contracts. By June 1769 she was advertising both her connection with the lying-in hospital in Aldersgate Street as well as the one in Brownlow Street, although by 1775 the business seems to have passed to Andrew Cooke, who operated from the same premises⁷⁸.

The City of London Lying-in Hospital made concerted efforts to improve their facilities. In July 1769 the hospital's governors agreed that Dr Hulme, the Secretary and the Matron should visit the Westminster Lying-in Hospital that was 'lately built'.⁷⁹ They had already decided to build a new lying-in hospital on land purchased from St Bartholomew's Hospital at the corner of City Road and Old Street. Now the governors were seeking information on best practice, including the physical arrangements to be implemented in the new building. They first agreed upon long spacious wards with a range of beds moving on castors, and further agreed that each ward was to include a fireplace and tall sash windows. This meant that 'the Rooms will be easily kept clean and pure. The Patients if necessity so requires it may be wheeled in their Beds without any inconvenience from place to place into any part of the room'.⁸⁰ The fireplace and sashes which opened at the top allowed for 'thorough and perpetual ventilation'.⁸¹ The minutes recorded that this flow of air would,

from each end of the room to the middle thereof which like a Broom will sweep before it all Impurity and Infection and their meeting will rarify air about the fireplace. It will form a little whirlwind or Vortex of foul air which will rush into the chimney and will be carried away with the smoak.⁸²

⁷⁸ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Saturday, June 17, 1769; Issue 12 571.

⁷⁹ LMA: H10/CLM/A1/002, City of London Lying-in Hospital, Governors' Minutes, 6th July 1769.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

By 1772 Charles White was emphasising the free movement of air in the labour room.⁸³ He complained that a woman in labour in a small room with her friends and a large fire would render the air ‘foul’, noting that this was so in all confined spaces such as ‘hospitals, jails and small houses’.⁸⁴ The cleansing and therapeutic properties of air, together with those of water and food in a ‘cooling’ regimen were widely understood and propagated through most of the eighteenth century.⁸⁵ Nathaniel Hulme, physician at the City of London Lying-in Hospital, was a great proponent, stipulating in his publication on puerperal fever that, ‘The room should be very large, and kept very cool. Fresh air, in warm, or even temperate weather, should be let into it, by an opening at the windows, or door, every day’.⁸⁶ As previously discussed in this chapter, John Aiken vigorously put forward his case for the thorough ventilation of hospitals, noting that he did not ‘lay down an architectural plan for one of these buildings’.⁸⁷ He did, however, propose that the ‘danger of corrupted air in crowded close apartments will suggest the necessity of having them, lofty, well ventilated, and thinly peopled’.⁸⁸ When John Howard inspected the hospital in its new premises in City Road during September 1788, he noted the eight wards were wide and airy, being ‘seventeen feet wide’ and the passages as ‘six feet wide’.⁸⁹ The ‘wards and beds were clean’ and ‘over the door of each ward was a circular aperture of about a foot diameter’.⁹⁰ This hole in the wall was to assist the free flow of air through the

⁸³ Charles White, surgeon and man-midwife. Butler, Stella. “White, Charles (1728–1813).” Stella Butler In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., edited by David Cannadine. Oxford: OUP, 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.idproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/29238> (accessed June 6, 2017).

⁸⁴ Charles White, *A Treatise on the Management of Pregnant and Lying-in Women, and the Means of Curing, But More Especially of Preventing the Principal Disorders to Which They Are Liable. Together with Some New Directions Concerning the Delivery of the Child and Placenta in Natural Births. Illustrated with Cases* (London, 1772), 4-5.

⁸⁵ For a fuller discussion of the ‘non naturals’ used in cooling regimen see Smith, “Cleanliness: Idea and Practice,” 76-132.

⁸⁶ Hulme, *Treatise on the Puerperal*, 66.

⁸⁷ Aitkin, *Thoughts on Hospitals*, 20.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Howard, *Lazarettos* (1791), 137.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

wards, allowing fresh air to be drawn in through the windows and swept through the building. By embracing this notion of contagion, and by adopting its associated prophylactic actions, cleanliness was embedded in the daily routines of the hospital.

In its quest for improved cleanliness the City of London Lying-in Hospital sought out other hospitals in order to discover new methods and solutions. On visiting the Westminster Lying-in Hospital representatives from the City of London Lying-in Hospital were impressed with small side rooms specifically set aside for the delivery. The beds with castors allowed women to be moved back to the main ward without disturbing the women that were already there. They noted in the minutes that:

As soon as the woman is delivered she would have everything neat and clean put about her and then be wheeled into the Great ward on the bed upon which she was delivered and be put into a clean warm bed where she will be greatly refreshed and comforted by having everything clean and fresh and dry about her.⁹¹

These beds on castors also facilitated cleaning in and around the delivery space as they could be moved to allow the floors to be washed and mopped. The hospital regularly purchased mops and brooms in order to maintain the cleanliness of the wards. In September 1768, the minutes recorded ‘six pound mops be provided for the use of this Hospital’.⁹² Again, in January 1770, mops and ‘hair brooms’ were ordered.⁹³ As the move into the new building grew closer the nature of patients’ beds continued to be an issue. In May 1772, Messrs Yerbury and Tatnal reported that they had,

been to St Thomas’s Hospital to view the Iron Bedsteads there and enquired into expens and advantages thereof That they were informed that these Bedsteads had not only answered inpoint of cleanliness and freedom from vermin But inpoint of durableness so that not withstanding the Excess of the prime cost they were likely to turn out upon the whole much cheaper than wooden besteads.⁹⁴

⁹¹ LMA: H10/CLM/A1/002, Governors’ Minutes, 6th July 1769. 137.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 15th September 1768.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 31st May 1770.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28th May 1772.

As previously discussed, St Thomas's Hospital initially purchased iron bedsteads for two wards which they extended to the remaining wards after finding them effective deterrents against bedbugs. Forty new beds together with bolsters, pillows, rugs and blankets were eventually ordered for the new lying-in hospital building at the end of July 1772.⁹⁵

Cleanliness in London's lying-in hospitals was not necessarily linked to improvement in the incidence of disease. The hospital itself was driven by other concerns, particularly in the years that were not marred by a higher death rate amongst the women and babies. This included a woman's experience in the hospital, especially the cleanliness of the beds together with the physical environment. As has been already noted, after delivery a woman was put into a clean warm bed where she would be 'greatly refreshed and comforted by having everything clean and fresh and dry about her'.⁹⁶ This notion of physical comfort, and by implication cleanliness, was a reoccurring theme. A handbill soliciting support for the work of the General Lying-in Hospital noted the condition of the 'Wives of Soldiers, Sailors, Servants and Labourers' during their lying-in as being 'destitute of all Conveniences, and every Kind of Comfort'.⁹⁷ John Crowley's work, *The Invention of Comfort*, principally focusses on the built environment and material cultures of comfort, but he readily acknowledges, that 'Physical amenity had a close association with cleanliness'.⁹⁸ This was especially so in lying-in hospitals, where physical comfort and ease were intimately related to a patient's well-being. Even before admission patients at the Brownlow Street Lying-in Hospital were reminded that:

It is thought expedient, both for the Reputation of the Charity, and the Ease and Comfort of the more decent Sort of Patients, that no Women, who do not come

⁹⁵ Ibid., 30th July 1772.

⁹⁶ LMA: H10/CLM/A1/002, Governors' Minutes, 6th July 1769. 137

⁹⁷ General Lying-In Hospital (Grosvenor Square, London, England), *We, the Presidents, Governors and Trustees to the General Lying-in Hospital, in Duke's-Street, Grosvenor-Square, ... Beg Leave to Recommend the Encouragement and Support Thereof to the Humane and Compassionate Part of Mankind. ...* (London, c. 1765).

⁹⁸ John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 71.

clean in their Cloaths, and free from Vermin, or any contagious Distemper, be admitted into this Hospital'.⁹⁹

The governors made close connections between cleanliness, respectability and the comfort of patients. Chapter five of this thesis examined workhouses and their relationship with cleanliness, particularly their use of clean clothing, as an outward indicator of administrative orderliness. Workhouse inmates were required to appear in church each Sunday in freshly laundered linen, thereby allowing local parishioners and ratepayers to view the transformative effect of their workhouse. Conversely, lying-in hospitals required putative patients to display this badge of their outward respectability in order to gain admission, thereby extending cleanliness outwards from lying-in hospitals.

In 1794, the City of London Lying-in Hospital urged its supporters to 'communicate the fruits of their own industry to the relief and comfort of the industrious poor'.¹⁰⁰ Although Crowley is careful to point out that comfort had 'primarily meant moral, emotional, spiritual and political support in difficult circumstances' in the seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century he demonstrated how this came to refer to physical comforts.¹⁰¹ The lying-in hospitals suggest that comforts legitimately acquired through a patron's own industriousness, might also be shared with those men and women aspiring to improve themselves through their own hard work.¹⁰² This encouragement towards self-help and improvement began to epitomise charitable rhetoric during the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹⁰³ The relationship between cleanliness and comfort went beyond lying-in hospitals. Publications which related to general hospitals also noted the

⁹⁹ *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Lying-in Hospital for Married Women, in Brownlow Street, Long-Acre From its First Institution in November 1749 to July 25, 1751* (London, 1751), The form of the recommendatory letter, 22.

¹⁰⁰ City of London Lying-In Hospital, for Married Women Only, City Road. *The Peculiar Utility of This Humane Institution Was Never More Evidently Proved than in the Progress of the Past Year, ...*(London, 1794), 1.

¹⁰¹ John E. Crowley, "The Sensibility of Comfort," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999), 751.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 781-782.

¹⁰³ See chapter 6.

close association between poverty, cleanliness and comfort. In John Aikin's *Thoughts on Hospitals*, published in 1772, he stated:

Whoever has frequented the miserable habitations of the lowest class of poor, and has seen disease aggravated by a total want of every comfort arising from suitable diet, cleanliness and medicine, must be struck with pleasure at the change on their admission into a Hospital where these wants are abundantly supplied.¹⁰⁴

As previously discussed, Aikin's real concern was for the purity of hospital air but this was not far from his list of comforts. He went on to affirm, 'As far as diet, nursing, and medical assistance are concerned, they are of eminent use and comfort to the poor; but the grand necessary of life, air, is never to be had in a salutary degree of purity'.¹⁰⁵

The lying-in hospitals were a new institution during the second-half of the eighteenth century. By 1800 most were accommodated in purpose built premises. This enabled the adoption of newer ideas on cleanliness and clean air. Despite not fully understanding the mechanism for preventing contagious disease the hospitals and their governors were proactive in searching out solutions to hygienic problems, which included iron bedsteads, wider wards and systems for circulating air. In addition, the needs of pregnant and postpartum women, particularly poor women, were considered in a rhetoric which emphasised the physical comforts and thus cleanliness of the patient. Lying-in hospitals were particularly influential in new modes of cleanliness during the eighteenth century. They developed high standards of cleanliness, driven by the need to decrease mortality rates and offer comfort and succour to women and children in their care. This of course added to their reputation, which in turn allowed them to maintain charitable giving to the institution.

London and the insane poor: Bethlem and St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics

¹⁰⁴ Aikin, *Thoughts on Hospitals*, 8.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

During the eighteenth century provision for the London's insane poor was at best patchy. Responsibility for those without funds and unable to cope at home fell on the parish. Some large parishes were able to provide space in the workhouse, or others were able to provide a local nurse, but on the whole patients were boarded out at private madhouses.¹⁰⁶ Bethlem Hospital provided an alternative for a few of these patients. Those who were deemed 'curable' were offered time limited care; although during the 1730s a ward for incurables was also established.¹⁰⁷ This, however, was contingent on the parish paying relevant fees on their behalf. Conditions were notoriously bad. Patients were regularly put in restraints and subject to seasonal cold bathing, bleeding and purging. They were also exhibited to any of the general public willing to pay a penny or two for the privilege. During one of these visits Ned Ward referred to Bethlem as 'this Piss-burn'd Prison' where patients flung food and bowls of piss at those stopping to gawp or listen to their tales.¹⁰⁸ At mid-century a new hospital for lunatics was established, St Luke's. This, in part, reduced the burden on Bethlem Hospital, but its primary aim was to provide an antidote to the outmoded methods used there.¹⁰⁹ St Luke's provided specialist care and accommodation for patients otherwise unable to afford it. The governors also took pains to point out that, unlike Bethlem Hospital, St Luke's Hospital was only open to inspection by its patrons and governors.

Despite the harsh treatment of patients and apparent lack of effective medical supervision at Bethlem, Andrews *et al.* note in their history of the hospital that in the fifty

¹⁰⁶ William Ll. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: The Athlone Press, 1987); Roy Porter ed. *The Faber Book of Madness* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991); Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁷ Guy's Hospital and the French Protestant Hospital also had some limited provision for 'incurable lunatics'. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 130.

¹⁰⁸ Ward, *London-Spy*, 13.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 130-131.

years before 1815 the ‘Awareness of the need for cleanliness intensified’.¹¹⁰ The resulting changes, however, were made against the background of a decaying building, which was all but condemned by surveyor, Henry Holland in his 1790 report on the state of the hospital.¹¹¹ By the time of his report Bethlem Hospital at Moorgate was over 100 years old. It was a late seventeenth-century building composed of small cells and side rooms together with long galleries. Peep holes in each cell allowed the staff and visitor to view the confined patients as well as take in a lung-full of ‘chamber-lye’ which smelled, according to Ward, as strong a dose of *Sal Armoniac*.¹¹² Patients at Bethlem differed greatly from those in St Thomas’s Hospital and the lying-in hospitals. Many of them were not in a condition to present themselves, tidily or otherwise, in chapel or to profess gratitude in public displays of thankfulness. Indeed, most were largely unable to meet the usual markers of the respectable poor. Few were able to work, be industrious or able to maintain their personal cleanliness. Some, in addition to their unstable mental health, were incontinent. Difficult, violent or recalcitrant patients were confined to a hospital cell; some also eschewed common comforts by tearing, soiling or shredding their clothing and bedding. Manic and incontinent patients were confined without clothes and given a ‘blanket gown’ to cover their nakedness.¹¹³ Fresh clothing for patients in Bethlem had been a constant concern – some parishes had at various times refused to clothe their parishioners. But by the mid-eighteenth century patients were clothed through a combination of charitable benefaction and gifts from friends and family, together with some parochial provision.

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker, and Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem*. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1997), 207.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 398.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1. *Sal Ammoniac* or ammonium chloride was used in soldering of stained glass windows or occasionally as a bakery ingredient.

¹¹³ Andrews *et al.*, *History of Bethlem*, 203.

Gradually things improved. By the mid to late 1760s changing sensibilities, and a recognition of cleanliness as an aid to health, began to manifest itself in concrete policies at Bethlem. A rat catcher and bed bug eradicator were employed in the 1770s and 1780s.¹¹⁴ Regular shaving was instituted, as were inspections as to general cleanliness.¹¹⁵ A review of the rules in 1776, however, barely mentioned the patients – going only so far as to prohibit them from going out of ‘their respective Galleries, without leave’.¹¹⁶ The governors were keener on presenting clean and orderly staff. Some of the very junior servants were provided with a uniform, and despite prohibiting virtually all perquisites, the new rules permitted most servants to have their clothes laundered in the hospital. A few, like the Matron, were also permitted ‘One Pound of Soap a Week’.¹¹⁷ These provisions, however, were usual amongst many in domestic service and not specific to hospital servants. In 1792 the joint standing rules of Bridewell and Bethlem were reissued by the governors. These regulations set down specifics relating to the care of patients. On entering the hospital all patients were to be ‘stripped and examined in the presence of their Friends, and if necessary of the Surgeon’.¹¹⁸ This was unlikely to have been for any hygienic reason but to ensure that no dangerous items remained in the patient’s possession, though infectious disease or infestations would be treated. Difficult patients were kept in chains and the Apothecary was required to approve each case, or certainly to have knowledge of the patient. The feet of these patients necessitated particular scrutiny, and they were to be ‘well rubbed, and covered with flannel every night and morning during the winter months’.¹¹⁹ More generally, the bodily cleanliness of patients was considered rather

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 204.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 207.

¹¹⁶ *Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals*, London. 29th May 1776, 11.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ John Woodhouse, and Richard Woodhouse. *Standing Rules and Orders for the Government of the Royal Hospitals, of Bridewell and Bethlem with the Duty of the Governors, and of the Several Officers and Servants* (London: Printed by Thomas Parker, 1792), 22.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

than that of clean bodily linen, although linen was not neglected. In particular, there was a clear articulation of the requirement for clean bodies which set it apart from other institutions.¹²⁰ The rules set out that, patients should be ‘washed on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday’.¹²¹ This coincided with the restricted visiting at Bethlem instituted during the 1770s. Public visiting took place, by ticket, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10.00 a.m. until noon, presumably after patients had been washed and, if male, shaved. Mondays and Wednesdays were also the days that the hospital physician attended in order to ‘examine and prescribe for the patients’.¹²² The male patients were shaved every Monday when a barber visited the hospital. He was required to shave both servants and patients, and was occasionally required on additional days stipulated by the hospital Steward. As part of his shaving duties he was required to ensure that there was ‘a sufficiency of clean and proper shaving cloths and towels in the room’ before he began.¹²³ The barber was assisted by the third assistant keeper or basket man; keepers were required to attend with their patients and removed them as soon as they were shaved. Finally, on their discharge patients were stripped and examined, and ‘sent away clean and decent’.¹²⁴

The Steward and Matron at Bethlem were responsible for housekeeping matters and for ensuring that daily routines were followed by the staff and patients. The Steward was to,

go around the galleries, and up into the chequers, both on the men’s and women’s side, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, in the forenoon to see that the galleries and cells are kept as clean and as neat as the condition of the patients will admit; and see that their linen and sheets be duly changed, and that the men and

¹²⁰ Although workhouses and associated schools for pauper children mention washing hands, faces and occasionally feet in their rules they did not advocate bodily washing. It seems likely that this was left to the discretion of each pauper. Towards the end of the century water and soap became more readily available in workhouse wards. See chapter five.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 30.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24. Andrews *et al.* suggest this dated from 1771 when patients were to be stripped and examined to ensure they were ‘free from Vermin’. Andrews *et al.*, *History of Bethlem*, 204 fn 41.

maids do open doors and windows, that the circulation of air may not be impeded.¹²⁵

In a similar way the Matron was to, 'go round the House every day on the women's side before Ten o'Clock, but on Tuesday before Nine; and see that the linen and the sheets of the patients are regularly changed as they ought to be'.¹²⁶ In addition, she was to see that the 'patients in general are taken care of, and kept as clean as their complaints will allow of, and to take care that the straw, on which the patients are laid, is changed when damp or dirty'.¹²⁷ Patients admitted to the hospital were required to bring their own linen and other 'necessaries'. These were given up to the Gallery-maids or male keepers and an account was made so that they could be returned on their discharge. From the 1760s dirty linen and sheets were washed in the hospital by two washer-women. This was a change from the 1730s when much of the laundry was undertaken by 'the poor patients friends' themselves, who attend 'to bring clean, or take away foul Linnen from in Bethlehem'.¹²⁸ The washerwomen's jobs required them to 'assist in washing, ironing, and mending the sheets and linen of patients and servants'.¹²⁹ The matron was required to observe them on Wednesdays 'to see whether the linen belonging to the patients be properly boiled and washed'.¹³⁰ By the 1790s the laundry had some form of mechanism to assist with the washing, as the first keeper or cook was required to 'turn a machine in the laundry every other Wednesday'.¹³¹ On the alternative Wednesday the 'Cutter' or second assistant keeper was required to do this job. On Thursdays and Fridays the fourth assistant keeper was expected to 'mangle linen'.¹³² The first and second keepers or basket men were also 'to

¹²⁵ Ibid., 44.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 45.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Andrews *et al.*, *History of Bethlem*, 206.

¹²⁹ Woodhouse and Woodhouse, *Standing Rules and Orders for the Government of the Royal Hospitals, of Bridewell and Bethlem*, 52.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹³¹ Ibid., 47.

¹³² Ibid., 51.

carry and ‘fetch back the linen to and from the laundry’.¹³³ Laundry was an enormous task and probably required the assistance of almost all the staff at some point in the washing and drying process. By the end of the century approximately 250 patients and staff required probably a monthly change of sheets. Gallery maids were tasked with keeping the cells and galleries clean. Old straw was removed and dirty cells washed, they were instructed to pay due attention to the patients.¹³⁴

Andrews *et al.* suggest that the ‘enhanced concern for hygiene’ in the later eighteenth century ‘could be seen as an aspect of medicalization’.¹³⁵ Cleanliness was certainly associated with health in the last third of the eighteenth century, and was frequently advocated as part of a healthy regimen, although largely as a prophylactic measure.¹³⁶ Cold water bathing was of course, [in]famously used at Bethlem Hospital during the summer months and only then for the hardiest of patients. Cleanliness, however, was merely a by-product of this therapeutic treatment and not the primary reason for its use. Nonetheless, ‘hygienic concern’ as a therapeutic remedy, fits well in a narrative of increasing medicalisation of patient treatment. But by viewing cleanliness as purely part of a narrative of medicalisation it denies other interpretations, one of which is of cleanliness as a form of orderliness, particularly when accompanied by rules as a method of implementing or measuring the resulting order. Making cleanliness the norm, and embedding systems and regulations in the daily routine of the hospital, institutionalised the concept of cleanliness. This was especially so in London’s establishments for the poor, including Bethlem, where the minds and bodies of its patients were far from the ‘norm’. However, by entrenching cleanliness within the hospital and establishing it as the

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Andrews *et al.*, *History of Bethlem*, 204.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Graham notes, ‘By the end of the eighteenth century, physicians had come close to a consensus about the value of bathing for health’. Graham, “Pleasure and Utility,” 97.

everyday, it encouraged a form of orderliness in the hospital. This was especially so in the 1790s, when a highly critical report on the state of the hospital highlighted the filthy conditions in which some patients were maintained. Hospital rules at this period were not a likely route for implementing medical change, as physicians and surgeons followed their own therapeutic and treatment regimens, largely outside the scope of administrative regulation.¹³⁷ Rules, however, created standards of cleanliness within an administrative framework. These routines brought order to the hospital and its patients in a very visible manner; patients appeared cleaner, tidier and smelled less of urine and sweat. The hospital environment also improved with whitewashed walls, cleaner cells and fewer vermin. The hospital's detailed rules were re-issued in 1792 when the hospital was in crisis. As well as a decaying building, which was quantified in the surveyor's report of 1791, an inquiry in 1792 found the hospital's financial management lacking and its administration in need of reform. The governors took these findings on board and in an effort to improve the hospital's reputation re-issued detailed rules. The following year, in 1793, a new set of rules were issued, and in 1802 a further set of rules running to forty-seven pages was again issued.¹³⁸

The first two-thirds of the century saw increasingly poor conditions at Bethlem, in which the inmates were able to exert little choice or agency in ameliorating their situation. Friends and family were able to improve conditions by supplying clean linen and other small comforts, but this option was, of course, limited to those patients with friends or money, who, like those in prison, were able to buy themselves accommodation that was more spacious, comfortable and above all clean. The general public, however, were encouraged to collude in maintaining these squalid conditions through a system of public

¹³⁷ Andrews *et al.*, *History of Bethlem*, 390.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 384. Andrews *et al.* suggest that the 1793 rules were not 'all being observed' necessitating a further revision issued in 1802.

visiting in which patients and their conditions were openly displayed to anyone wishing to visit. Gradually the governors withdrew public visiting opportunities and began increasing administrative regulation that particularly benefitted the patients.¹³⁹ Much of this was predicated on the cleanliness and hygiene within the hospital. The authors of *The History of Bethlem* are keen to emphasise that, although the hospital appeared to be in poor condition, international visitors were able to praise its cleanliness.¹⁴⁰ This, however, is more telling about the state of European asylums than of English institutions. John Howard's visit and subsequent report in 1788 was not entirely damning, although he found little to praise. Of the 270 rooms all were found to be 'quite clean and not offensive' although he went on, 'the house is old and wants whitewashing'.¹⁴¹ The hospital also lacked a cistern or running water at the top of the house and the single vault was 'very offensive'.¹⁴² Concerted criticism of the hospital did not come about until the parliamentary select committee on the better regulation of madhouses in 1815. At this point the new hospital in Lambeth had been almost completed although not occupied. Many of the questions regarding the hospital's cleanliness were leading, for instance, 'Whether you do not conceive that a pump of fresh water in every area at a Madhouse must conduce to cleanliness, health and comfort of the patients?'¹⁴³ Or, 'Whether you would not strongly recommend that all beds used by male patients should be, when made, thrown open, and so kept till they are used?'¹⁴⁴ Both of which elicited the answer 'Yes'. Although poor hygienic conditions were discovered at Bethlem, by 1815 patients had their own beds and bedding which were changed each fortnight or more often if required. About one-third of the 124

¹³⁹ Andrews *et al.*, *History of Bethlem*, 152.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁴¹ Howard, *Lazarettos*, 139.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ PP, *Select Committee on Provisions for Better Regulation of Madhouses in England Report, Minutes of Evidence*, Appendix. House of Commons Papers. Reports of Committees, 11 July 1815. 40.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

patients were classed as ‘dirty’, many of whom were incontinent – these patients slept on straw. The Infirmary smelled so much it was thought to be ‘very offensive, particularly when crowded’.¹⁴⁵ As was common in other institutions, immersive warm bathing was not used, but patients hands and faces were washed daily on rising. The enquiry, however, largely focussed on the methods of confinement and of restraint used in the hospital, some of which prohibited the patient attending to their own personal cleanliness. Throughout the report, questioning regarding the cleanliness of patients, hospitals and other madhouses was entirely rhetorical, thereby laying out standards that were now expected in public and private institutions. Some of this was met in the Bethlem’s new hospital building, but much still remained in the implementation of hospital policy and its rules.

St Luke’s Asylum for Lunatics

From its inception St Luke’s set out to provide an alternative form of medical care to that offered at Bethlem. Patients were drawn from the same constituency of London’s insane poor and funding was provided by public subscription. Initially the hospital was based in a converted foundry in Windmill Street, Upper Moorfields with space for twenty-five patients. From the beginning the governors laid down rules for the hospital including the servants. These were brief, particularly those directed towards female servants, and were almost entirely concerned with the cleanliness of the hospital and its patients. The female keeper was to have ‘care of the Household Linnen, and overlook the Washing, and see that the Maid Servts perform their Duty’.¹⁴⁶ The maid servants were required to ‘clean the House every day before ten of the clock, dress the Victuals, Wash and assist in the Care of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 36.

¹⁴⁶ LMA: H64/A08/001, St Luke’s Hospital, Considerations upon the Usefulness and Necessity of Establishing an Hospital: Proceedings, Reasons, Rules and Orders Including Instructions to Persons Admitting Patients and Other Proformas, 1751, 23. <http://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b22000586> accessed 21st January 2017.

the Patients'.¹⁴⁷ Employees were warned that they were not to take any form of remuneration for any service what so ever performed for the patients, on pain of immediate dismissal. Patients were attended by a physician and apothecary although nursing care was given by servants. They were expected to wear their own clothing, but by 1757, three were discharged 'for want of necessary clothing'.¹⁴⁸

The new hospital, located at the eastern end of Old Street, was opened in 1787. John Howard's inspection, in the following September, reported a spacious building with its three floors, long galleries and wings. At the time of his visit there were only 162 patients whereas Bethlem held some 272 men and women. Howard went on to comment that the individual cells were 'very clean and not offensive'.¹⁴⁹ Each had a ventilation aperture above the door and a small window, although most lacked glass and were barred. This, to a certain extent, allowed cool air to circulate around the small patient cells. Beds were set on an inclined box which usually consisted of straw. Some patients though were allowed hair beds, largely because water ran through them. Each of the galleries had a toilet and four enormous pumps which supplied water to cisterns on the roof. This in turn allowed running water to be available on the upper floors. There was also a new bath, probably installed for therapeutic reasons since Howard notes that hot or cold bathing was 'scarcely ever used'. He ends the report with the faintly damning, 'Though this noble hospital was neat and clean, yet I prefer one at Constantinople'.¹⁵⁰

The 1814-1815 parliamentary enquiry into private and public madhouses was much less critical of both Bethlem and St Luke's sanitary conditions than those of London's private madhouses. The buildings were subject to some general critical assessment which was relatively minor. Inspections by Edward Wakefield noted that St Luke's privies were

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. July 1757.

¹⁴⁹ Howard, *Lazarettos*, 139-141.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 140.

located in the interior of the hospital and were very offensive.¹⁵¹ James Bevan, an experienced London architect, also gave evidence as to conditions in London's madhouses and hospitals. He also commented on the privies at St Luke's, which opened directly into the gallery. By the end of his evidence Bevan was of the opinion that it was impossible to adapt a domestic building for use as a 'madhouse', and that St Luke's offered 'much better care'.¹⁵² In March 1816 evidence was taken from William Ricketts, a surgeon from Droitwich and keeper of a private asylum. Ricketts was an acquaintance of Mr Woodhouse, the steward at Bethlem, and was only too happy to confirm that 'in point of cleanliness' Bethlem was very different and presumably much improved since his previous visit some five years previously.¹⁵³ It may be that Ricketts was well disposed towards Bethlem because of his association with Woodhouse and chose to give an optimistic opinion of conditions at Bethlem. His opinion of St Luke's Hospital however was more critical. The servants, he thought were 'remarkably clean' but the 'walls were excessively filthy'.¹⁵⁴ The keeper at St Luke's confirmed to him that the walls had not been whitewashed for at the very least five years. Hygienic conditions at both hospitals were reasonable by the standards of the day. The rebuilding of Bethlem did not pass without scrutiny and although there was some criticism, conditions considerably improved for the patients.

By the early nineteenth century the rules reiterated the steward's role in ensuring patients were clean. He was to see that the 'Galleries and Sleeping Apartments are kept as clean and neat as the condition of the Patients will admit that their Linen and Sheets be

¹⁵¹ PP, *Select Committee on Provisions for Better Regulation of Madhouses in England Report, Minutes of Evidence*, Appendix, 16. House of Commons Papers, Reports of Committees, 11 July 1815.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁵³ Rose, George, *Select Committee on Provisions for Better Regulation of Madhouses in England: First Report, Minutes of Evidence*, 53. House of Commons Papers, Reports of Committees, 26 April 1816.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 53

duly changed and that the Hospital be properly ventilated'.¹⁵⁵ In a similar manner the female patients were attended by the matron. This was perhaps a tacit acknowledgement that patients were not always compliant and it was often difficult to maintain their personal cleanliness. The keepers were required to 'remove dirty patients and wash them and their sleeping apartments'.¹⁵⁶ In addition they were to shave patients twice a week and ensure all were washed and combed every morning and had their feet washed once a week.¹⁵⁷ Unusually it seems that male patients occasionally assisted with the hospital wash however, a rule forbade them to assist if female patients were present. Throughout the rules there was a general understanding that some patients were unable to assist in the daily tasks of the hospital. As well as male and female keepers, there was a housekeeper, a cook, two housemaids, two laundry maids, a bread cutter, a porter and two extra men to see to the domestic needs of the hospital. The domestic duties once undertaken by patients or their relatives were gradually diminishing and although not altogether gone they were reduced in importance. While the treatment of 'dirty' patients, which was highly criticised in the parliamentary enquiry of 1814-1815, was specifically addressed in new regulations.

Conclusion

In *Venereal Disease, Hospitals and the Urban Poor*, Kevin Siena reminds us of the transformative relationship between doctors and patients during the eighteenth century. A relationship where patients had 'formerly been active participants in a negotiated medical exchange' was becoming, by the end of the eighteenth century, one in which 'bodies were read by their doctor'.¹⁵⁸ In similar manner cleanliness and its physical implementation was

¹⁵⁵ LMA: H64/A08/005/01, St Luke's Hospital, Rules and orders to be observed by the resident officers and servants, early 19thC, 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals and the Urban Poor*, 127.

also transformed in London's hospitals, from the participatory cleaning of hospital wards and negotiations with staff over laundry, to new regimes in which hospitals managed institutional cleanliness. By the end of the century new hygienic regimes were adopted and specialist staff employed or additionally required to undertake cleaning tasks that may have formerly been undertaken by patients or their families.

Yet these changes varied according to the nature of the hospital. The evolving structures and financial circumstances of eighteenth-century hospitals, determined the cleanliness regimes they adopted and the nature of their response to a changing set of assumptions about what made for 'cleanliness'. Lying-in hospitals, and to a lesser extent voluntary hospitals like St Luke's were necessarily motivated to adopt new regimes more quickly and thoroughly, driven by their dependence on public opinion. In contrast, royal hospitals were under less pressure, and perhaps understandably were slower to adopt change as a result. Between them, however, these hospitals exemplify a range of approaches and directions of change. For the lunatic, body cleanliness retained its importance throughout the century, with the bodies of the insane being treated with more or less humanity depending on how individual asylums were funded. In contrast hospitals for the sick, and for lying-in women, continued to emphasise the significance of linen and by extension the circulation of good air. But again, the extent to which these regimes were implemented and adapted, depended largely on the nature of the institutions involved.

At one extreme one could find a regime such as that suffered by the inmates of Bethlem where filth and cold, limited linen, and cold bodies were the norm. While at the other, could be found the well-designed systems associated with the lying in hospitals – all wheeled beds, clean linen and warm, if airy, rooms.

Overall, these institutions provided a range of models of cleanliness, which the wider public would necessarily have been exposed to, and form a series of models for society as a whole to adopt or reject.

Chapter 8

Institutional Cleanliness: Middlesex Prisons

On the morning of July 21st 1756 Jacob Ilive woke up in the Middlesex House of Correction his nose inches away from the wooden piss-bowl which held anything up to a gallon of stale urine.¹ His head throbbing from the smell, he was forced to stand by the hole in the door of his cell in order to breathe some fresh air. However, this was the least of Jacob's problems, for the thin mattress on his bed, which he had paid the locker one shilling to occupy the previous night, was alive with lice, fleas and bugs and the money which he used to secure this 'privilege' was all but gone.

Jacob's experience of a mid-eighteenth-century prison was fairly typical of those without money. The grime and stench of the prison was ubiquitous and the chance of contracting a disease or at the very least becoming infested with vermin was high. The dirt and filth of London's prisons was an integral part of their history, often used as shorthand for a disorderly environment and frequently commented upon by visitors. The historiographic focus of work on London's eighteenth-century prisons has largely fixed on these poor conditions at either end of the century. Scandals concerning circumstances in the King's Bench and Marshalsea prisons together with the plight of London's debtors have all featured heavily in this historiography.² Until very recently it was only the

¹ Jacob Ilive, *Reasons Offered for the Reformation of the House of Correction in Clerkenwell: Shewing, I. The Present State of This Goal the Debauchery of the Prisoners, and the miserable Condition they are in from the Want of a Sufficiency of Food, &c. II. Proposals in What Manner These Evils May Be Prevented for the Future; Humbly Submitted to the Consideration of the Magistrates and Inhabitants of the County of Middlesex*. (London: printed for J. Scott, 1757), 12.

² John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Ltd., 2008); Albert Crew, *London Prisons of Today and Yesterday: Plain Facts and Coloured Impressions* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1933); Stephen Halliday, *Newgate: London's Prototype of Hell*. (Stroud: Sutton, 2006); U. R. Q. Henriques, "The Rise and decline of the separate system of prison discipline," *Past and Present* 54, no. 1 (1972): 61–93; Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*. 2nd ed.

emergence of the penitentiary and reforms towards the end of the century that distracted the reader from the grime and dirt of the eighteenth-century prison system.³ However, in focussing on either end of the century, an important transitional period, the decades after mid-century have gone largely unexamined as a period of change in the relative cleanliness of prisons and of prisoners.

This chapter traces the transformation in prison administration affecting the cleanliness of both prisons and of prisoners, beginning with conditions in London's prisons during the first half of the eighteenth century. It will particularly focus on the events immediately after the 'Black Sessions' of 1750 and the subsequent changes implemented by the Middlesex Bench over the following decades. It concludes with an examination of two further places of confinement; the hulks, prison ships moored in the Thames, and the 'house' used by the Middlesex contractor to detain men and women convicted under the Vagrancy Act. Both of which were important, in their different ways, to the developing ideas of cleanliness and sanitary conditions for prisoners in London.

Amongst the literature of prison filth there are however notable exceptions, a volume of essays on the health of prisoners edited by Richard Creese *et al.* touches on the importance of cleanliness in the development of prisons.⁴ Together with Michael

(Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989); Seán McConville, *A History of English Prison Administration, Volume 1: 1750 - 1877* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Alex Pitofsky, "The Warden's Court Martial: James Oglethorpe and the Politics of Eighteenth-Century Prison Reform," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24, no. 1 (2000): 88–102; Laurie Throness, *A Protestant Purgatory: Theological Origins of the Penitentiary Act, 1779* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Prisons under Local Government* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922).

³ Joanna Innes, "The King's Bench prison in the later eighteenth-century: law, authority, and order in a London debtors' prison," in *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Joanna Innes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 227–278, although first published in 1980 and 1983 in paperback in John Brewer and John Styles eds. *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1983), 250–298; Jerry White, "Pain and Degradation in Georgian London: Life in the Marshalsea Prison," *History Workshop Journal* 68, no. 1 (September 21, 2009): 69–98.

⁴ Richard Creese, William F. Bynum, and J. Bearn, *The Health of Prisoners: Historical Essays* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995).

Ignatieff's chapter on the ideological origins of the penitentiary which flags up concerns over prison hygiene in the later eighteenth-century dialogue on prison reform.⁵

Set aside from the mainstream social histories of London and the prison system are several architectural histories. These, on the whole, examine the extensive re-building of London's prisons during the second half of the eighteenth century. They document various iterations of the buildings which gradually came to incorporate aspects of hygiene and hygienic practice. Few though have linked it to wider cultural change.⁶ It is in these small pragmatic changes, I argue, that a coherent policy towards cleanliness and personal hygiene emerges at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, the ever sprawling capital came to encompass several administrative and judicial jurisdictions. As a result there were numerous prisons and lock-ups scattered across the metropolis.⁷ Most of these jurisdictions were geographically based, permitting only those committing offences within its confines to be admitted to its gaol. These included the City of London, the counties of Middlesex and Surrey, together with the cities of Southwark and Westminster. Thus, those awaiting trial for felonies and other serious crimes committed in the City of London were imprisoned in Newgate. In addition Newgate, like almost all criminal prisons, also accommodated local debtors as well as those awaiting trial for felonies committed in Middlesex and Westminster. Middlesex criminal prisoners were transferred to the prison a few days before the commencement of sessions at the Old Bailey. Prison populations therefore rose just prior to the commencement of a session of gaol delivery and fell back again as prisoners left to

⁵ Ignatieff, *Just Measure of Pain*, "Cords of Lover, Fetters of Iron: The Ideological Origins of the Penitentiary," 44-79.

⁶ Brodie, Allan, Jane Croom, and James O. Davies. *English Prisons : An Architectural History* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2002). Chalklin, Christopher. *English Counties and Public Building, 1650-1830* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1998). Chalklin, C. W., "The Reconstruction of London's Prisons, 1770-1799: An Aspect of the Growth of Georgian London," *The London Journal* 9, no. 1 (May 1983): 21-34.

⁷ For a fuller outline of London's prisons see Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "Prisons and Lockups", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 21st January 2017).

be transported, hanged or discharged. John Howard noted, that between 1775 and 1776, Newgate contained some 33 to 46 debtors and between 152 to 212 felons.⁸ The City of London also administered the Poultry and Wood Street Compters.⁹ Both of which were sheriff's prisons, principally used for debtors, although they also accommodated those arrested by the night watch or who were awaiting trial. They were replaced by Giltspur Street Compter in the 1790s. Surrey Gaol held prisoners committing offences, in Surrey south of the river, likewise the Borough Compter, a small prison for local offenders and debtors in Southwark. The New Prison in Clerkenwell held those awaiting trial for offences in Middlesex including those later transferred to Newgate.¹⁰ The Gatehouse prison held prisoners from Westminster, which was later replaced by Tothillfields Bridewell.¹¹ A further group of prisons namely, the King's Bench prison, the Marshalsea and the Fleet were principally debtors' prisons, taking prisoners from across the metropolis and beyond.¹² These prisons did not come under the jurisdictions of the City or counties but were nominally within the oversight of the Lord Chief Justices, the Chief Baron and other justices, although administration had been largely devolved to the relevant Marshal, Deputy Marshal or Warden. Outside of the City each parish had a lock-up which held those arrested overnight. Bridewells or Houses of Correction were first established in the late sixteenth century. They sought to both punish and reform those convicted of minor

⁸ Howard, *State of Prisons* (1777), 151.

⁹ During John Howard's visit to Wood Street Compter in 1777 there were 39 male debtors, seven of whom had wives and children with them and two female debtors. In the preceding two years there were between 69 to 91 debtors and 3 to 36 felons. *Ibid.*, 174-175. In Poultry Compter, during the same period, there were between 53 to 90 debtors and 0 to 11 felons. *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁰ John Howard identified that between April 1774 and January 1777, the prison held between 87 and 136 prisoners. *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹ John Howard noted that the Gatehouse prison in Westminster could accommodate 100 prisoners. *Ibid.*, 195. It was pulled down in 1776 and prisoners transferred to Tothillfields Bridewell.

¹² In 1758 the King's Bench prison moved to newly premises in St George's Fields, Southwark. In May 1776 the prison held 395 prisoners. In addition, there were 279 wives and 725 children making 1004 dependents, two thirds of which were in the prison. *Ibid.*, 198. In addition to debtors, the Marshalsea also held those accused of sedition or crimes at sea. During the eighteenth century the Marshalsea prison was located in Southwark on Borough High Street. Between March 1774 and May 1777 it held between 167 and 234 prisoners. *Ibid.*, 205. In April 1776 the Fleet prison held 243 prisoners and 475 wives and children. *Ibid.*, 160.

offences. The original was the Bridewell administered by the City of London, subsequent Middlesex, Westminster and Surrey established their own Houses of Correction.¹³

City and Middlesex prisons: the early eighteenth century

Conditions in the Middlesex and City prisons changed little during the fifty years that preceded Jacob Ilive's incarceration in the Middlesex House of Correction.¹⁴ The prison environment remained lamentably poor and the prisoners squeezed for every last ha'penny they had. In 1699, an anonymous gentleman writing about Newgate commented on the 'good business' to be had managing the prisoners under close confinement.¹⁵ This included the sale of necessities from food to bedding to 'buying off their Fetters'.¹⁶ It created an anomalous position whereby those who were able to pay the exorbitant fees of the keeper or his lockers were able to buy themselves out of the misery and filth of the gaol. While those who could not were reliant on their friends and family to provide whatever small comfort they were able. Like most prisons of the early eighteenth century Newgate was divided in order to accommodate the varying degrees of comfort available to prisoners. The common-side was 'where the Rogues and Thieves, whores and Pick-Pockets, together with some Miserable Debtors' resided.¹⁷ These poorer prisoners drank, swore and blasphemed in their 'wretched conditions', some 'almost naked, others almost starv'd'

¹³ For a fuller outline of London's Houses of Correction and Bridewell see Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "Houses of Correction" and "Bridewell", *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1, 21st January 2017).

¹⁴ The terms Middlesex House of Correction and Middlesex or Clerkenwell Bridewell were used interchangeably.

¹⁵ E. S., *A companion for debtors and prisoners, and advice to creditors in ten letters from a gentleman in prison, to a member of Parliament : wherein, first, the villianies [sic] and insolencies of bayliffs, secondly, the evil practices of jaylers and pretended solicitors, and thirdly, the irregularities of prisons in general, are briefly detected and exposed : together with a particular description of Newgate, the Marshallsea, the two compters, Ludgate, the Fleet, and Kings Bench, with reflections upon prisons in general, and proposals for regulating the whole* (London: A. Baldwin, 1699), 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

most bemoaning the ‘contagious smell’ that pervaded their wards.¹⁸ The master’s side along with the short lived Press Yard, were areas for those with money to buy luxury lodgings, food and entertainment. It was the prerogative of the prison keeper or warden to retain the income from many of these activities and as a result the post was ‘sold’ or gifted as a sinecure.

The City compters or lesser prisons were organised in a similar manner resulting in the same oppressive environment particularly for those at the bottom of the social heap.

Ned Ward, commenting on conditions in the Poultry compter in 1703, identified:

the mixtures of Scents that arose from *Mundungus-Tobacco*, foul *Sweaty Toes*, *Dirty Shirts*, the *Sh-t-Tub*, stinking *Breaths*, and uncleanly *Carcasses*, Poison’d our Nostrils far worse than a *Southwark Ditch*, *A Tanners Yard*, or a *Tallow-chandlers Melting-Room*. The Ill-looking *Vermin*, with long *Rusty Beards* swaddled up in *Rags*, and their heads some cover’d with *Thrum Caps*, and others thrust into the tops of old *Stockings*.¹⁹

This mixture of filth and noisome odour was often used to denote a form of plebeian disorderliness, the implications of which went well beyond poverty. Ned Ward, in his contemporary London guides, was master of this form of thick description which he frequently deployed when commenting on ‘Vice and Villany’ in the metropolis.²⁰ More often than not it would involve those at the bottom of the social scale.

However described, the prisoners in Newgate were not without orderliness, although there were few formal regulations. Throughout the eighteenth century the prison was largely self-governing.²¹ A system of monthly meetings operated, whereby the punishment of transgressors and the arbitration of grievances were administered by the prisoners. Food and charity money was distributed in the same manner as well as the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹ Ward, *London-Spy*, 80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, “To the Reader.”

²¹ W.J. Sheehan, “Finding Solace in Eighteenth-Century Newgate,” in *Crime in England, 1550-1800* ed. J. S. Cockburn (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), 229-245.

collection of ‘garnish’ money from new prisoners. This ‘garnish’ money was used to buy common necessities like candles, coal, salt and brooms for sweeping the wards and if a prisoner was without money then clothes or other personal possessions were taken and sold or pawned. In this self-appointed system ‘swabbers’ were assigned to administer the daily housekeeping tasks in Newgate. This usually fell to the most recent prisoner to join the ward. However, in the master’s side cleanliness might be bought. ‘Tables and Benches were washed and cleaned, the Wards swept clean’, for those who preferred not to do it themselves a prisoner could buy him or herself out of the chore at a the cost of two-pence per day.²² Provision for personal hygiene consisted of a cistern of ‘very good fresh Water’ which was available in a small room off Hall ward together with a ‘Receptacle for the Easement of the Prisoners’.²³ Indeed, debtors were advised that ‘for the Benefit of Air and Cleanliness, there is no Comparison: for everything is kept cleanly by the Care of the Steward’ whereas the sponging houses were full of the stink of the close stool and the ‘ill-smell of the Bed’.²⁴ Middlesex prisons were administered in a similar manner. In this case, the deputy turnkeys were responsible for ensuring that the ‘Prisoners do keep their several Wards clean and free from Vermin.’²⁵ But in the same way, prisoners were allowed a certain amount of latitude in accomplishing these tasks.

It is clear that cleanliness and sanitary conditions in the City and Middlesex’s principle prisons, during the early eighteenth century, were chiefly regulated by its inmates. Plebeian notions of orderliness and forms of self-regulation were used to ensure that areas of the prison remained clean. The precise nature of this form of plebeian style cleanliness is impossible to ascertain and to a certain extent remains largely unknown. Of

²² Batty Langley, *An accurate description of Newgate. With the rights, privileges, allowances, fees, dues, and customs thereof. Together with a parallel between the master debtors side of the said prison, and the several sponging-houses in the county of Middlesex* (London: T. Warner, 1724), 6.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁵ Ilive, *Reformation of the House of Correction*, 36.

course cleanliness was relative and achievable only as far as resources would permit. However, since much of the infra-structure available elsewhere in the capital was either absent or only recently available in London's prisons, conditions were substantially different to those accepted in wider society. This included the provision of piped water and sufficient arrangement for the disposal of sewage. In some parts of the prison, however, even these systems could not be maintained. Either prisoners churned too quickly, like those in Middlesex House of Correction, or prisoners, bereft of food and clothing, were unable to participate in the hierarchies that maintained prison housekeeping. Unlike workhouses, prisons lacked a regimen which measured out the daily routine of the institution and allowed regular tasks to be undertaken at specific times. There was certainly no 'clean linen regimen' instituted by any of the Middlesex or City prisons. Indeed, these institutions lacked laundry facilities, although it is entirely possible that one or two individuals were able to rinse a few items of clothing from time to time. It was not until 1816 that a set of ordinances was issued by the City and adopted in Newgate.²⁶ In Middlesex, it was not until Cold Bath Fields prison began operating at the turn of the nineteenth century did a daily regimen become part of the prison routine. Rules running to 46 points were issued by the new governor shortly after he took up office in 1794. The management and unsanitary conditions in London's early eighteenth-century prisons however, did not go unchallenged, and it is helpful to briefly examine the principal events.

The 'farming' of English prisoners drew a small but consistent trail of critical pamphlet literature. It culminated in 1728 when a parliamentary committee was appointed to enquire into the state of the nation's gaols, initially the Fleet and Marshalsea, and latterly the King's Bench prison.²⁷ The terms of reference were widely drawn but in many

²⁶ Ibid., 234.

²⁷ Pitofsky, "The Warden's Court Martial."

ways narrowly focussed on debtors. Alex Pitofsky, in his article on the politics of early eighteenth-century prison reform, suggested that James Oglethorpe, chairman of the committee, was bent on criticism of corrupt officials and not their ‘misguided policies’.²⁸ The parliamentary committee produced four reports, although there was little substantive change in the condition of London’s prisons, partly because there was a general sense that prisoners perhaps ‘deserved’ their punishment – no matter how harsh. More importantly however, there was no impetus to reform the penal system as a whole. Nevertheless, the conditions and treatment of prisoners formed an important element of the reports. Indeed much of it was horrifying with rampant abuse, torture and neglect, including the regular starvation of prisoners. In this environment there was little incentive to maintain any semblance of order or cleanliness in the prison. In his examination of the Marshalsea prison Jerry White commented on the sheer lack of humanity engendered there, even the mere idea of politeness being a ‘sinister mockery of civility’.²⁹ Oglethorpe, author of the parliamentary reports, was reluctant to criticise the penal system, there were the beginnings of a move to implicate the minor judiciary for their lack of oversight. However, the majority of the burden for the abuses and intolerable conditions at the Fleet and Marshalsea prisons fell squarely on the shoulders of the various wardens and their staff. A subsequent prosecution of Thomas Bambridge, warden of the Fleet prison, saw him acquitted of murder at the Old Bailey. Further repercussions were limited in nature and the old regimes continued largely unabated until the rebuilding of the prisons in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The filthy conditions of the City compters and the various debtors’ prisons across the Thames were matched in equal measure by the local lock-ups scattered throughout

²⁸ Ibid., 93.

²⁹ White, “Pain and Degradation,” 69.

Middlesex. St Martin's round-house in Westminster was one such establishment. Run and maintained by the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields, it supported conditions every bit as squalid as those found in Wood Street. There were two holding cells or 'holes' as they were known, one for men, the other for women. Each was barely larger than six feet by six feet and located directly over an open sewer. In 1742, St Martin's round-house and the conditions there were at the centre of a scandal in which four women died after suffocating in the 'hole'.³⁰ This case, in particular, marks out a set of conditions which the public found intolerable.³¹ However, it was too late to do anything about the loss of life on the evening of 15th July 1742, the local community was forced to confront the issue of 'the policies and circumstances of the people who formulated and implemented local government decisions'.³² As well as the county magistrates, a relatively new set of minor public officials were beginning to find themselves responsible for the health and well-being of those in their care, which now included conditions in local lock-ups and holding cells. These minor officials were not the faceless wardens and keepers of the debtors' prisons, largely detached from the community they served, but were embedded in the local community and probably knew many of the women arrested on that hot July night. This nascent stirring of public opinion concerning conditions in London's carceral institutions gave voice to those incarcerated there and was a foretaste of the public concern over what was later known as the 'Black Sessions'.

The pivotal event concerning cleanliness and conditions in London's prisons happened during the Old Bailey Sessions held in late April and May 1750, when some

³⁰ For a discussion of this case see Hitchcock, Tim. "'You bitches... die and be damned' Gender, Authority and the Mob in St Martin's Roundhouse Disaster of 1742" in *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Exhibition*, eds. Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2002), 69-81.

³¹ In 1729 scandals concerning conditions in the Fleet and Marshalsea prisons were sufficient to ensure parliamentary scrutiny. Pitofsky, "The Warden's Court Martial." and White, "Pain and Degradation."

³² *Ibid.*, 74.

twenty people were taken ill and subsequently died.³³ These deaths were attributed to gaol fever, widely agreed to have been contracted in the filthy conditions of Newgate Prison and brought into court by one, or more, of the inmates. However, the individuals concerned were not the usual nameless prisoners but included the Lord Mayor, Sir Samuel Pennant, two judges, an Alderman, an undersheriff and eight members of the Middlesex jury.³⁴ On advice from the Lord Chief Justice it was thought necessary to thoroughly cleanse Newgate and so it was ordered that all the prison 'filth' was to be carried off into the Fields and that the interior of the prison was to be 'wash'd throughout with Vinegar, and the prisoners... ..also to be wash'd with Vinegar, before they are brought to the Sessions House, to take their Trials'.³⁵ The Sessions House itself was cleansed from 'Top to Bottom with Water', likewise the Bail Dock and the places where the prisoners sheltered before their trial.³⁶ John Pringle, physician to the Duke of Cumberland and former military surgeon, was quick to publish a response to the outbreak of 'Jayl-Fevers'.³⁷ Much of the tract considered the medical diagnosis and treatment of gaol fever although he did take into account precautions necessary to prevent it. These provisions included the installation of ventilators and the burning of prisoners clothing to prevent contagion. Indeed, Pringle insisted 'above all, that before prisoners are brought into the court, they should be cleaned, and put in cloaths to be kept for that purpose, and washed from time to

³³ *LL*, Middlesex Justices' Working Papers, April 1765 (LMSMPS505470031).

³⁴ Allyson N. May, *The Bar and the Old Bailey, 1750-1850*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).19. *The Whitehall Evening Post* reported the following deaths: Sir Samuel Pennant, Sir Daniel Lambert, Baron Clarke, Sir Thomas Abney, Mr Beardsmore, Deputy Marshall to Lord Chief Justice Lee, Mr Cox the Under Sheriff, Mr Sharpless, the Clerk of the Papers, Counsellor Baird, Counsellor Otway, Deputy Hunt, Mr Mallett, the Linnen-Draper, Mr Taddy the Apothecary, Mr Ware one of the Jury and Mr Chandler, the Attorney. *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* (London, England), May 19, 1750 - May 22, 1750; Issue 667. Further individuals of the Middlesex Jury were named as: Mr Richard Wetherby, Mr Simon Pain, Mr Peters of Turnham Green. *Old England* (London, England), Saturday, May 26, 1750; Issue 322.

³⁵ *General Advertiser* (1744) (London, England), Tuesday, May 29, 1750; Issue 4878.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ John Pringle, *Observations on the Nature and Cure of Hospital and Jayl-Fevers. In a Letter to Doctor Mead, Physician to his Majesty, &c.* (London, Millar. 1750).

time.³⁸ Pringle went on to suggest that prison keepers were to blame for neglecting their duty of ‘removing the filth of those places’.³⁹ However, he was careful not directly to criticise Richard Akerman, keeper of Newgate, by pointing out that a keeper ‘cannot oblige the prisoners to be cleanly in their persons, much less is he able to preserve the air pure, when crowds of people are pent up in a close place.’⁴⁰ Other than the initial cleansing of the prison a ventilator was one of the few tangible responses to conditions in Newgate. It was installed some two years after the catastrophic outbreak of gaol fever, and used to circulate ‘fresh’ air through the prison by means of tubes and pipes driven by a windmill on the roof. This device was thought to drive out the ‘putrid’ air and increase the general health of prisoners.⁴¹ The sanitisation of Newgate was seen less as a move towards cleanliness and more of an attempt towards containing the contagion. In many ways it marked the beginnings of a public dialogue in which health, cleanliness and responsibility in London prisons became increasingly linked.⁴² Vigarello recognised this move towards ‘collective sanitation’ in the last third of the eighteenth century, which gained traction in the prisons, hospitals and institutional charities of urban France.⁴³ Apprehension, he noted, initially arose in these ‘spaces of the poor’ concerning the stench and largely unmitigated odour produced by such institutions.⁴⁴ This focus on miasmatic notions of contagion informed much of the subsequent provision in French institutions and has some parallels in

³⁸ Ibid., 50.

³⁹ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁴¹ John Pringle, “An Account of Several Persons Seized with the Goal-Fever, Working in Newgate; And of the Manner, in Which the Infection Was Communicated to One Intire Family,” *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)* 48 (January 1, 1753): 42–45.

⁴² Michael Ignatieff identifies this event as marking a point at which hygiene becomes the focus of attention in institutional life. Ignatieff, *Just Measure of Pain*, 45.

⁴³ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 143.

⁴⁴ Ibid. For the notion that odour and disease were linked see David Howes and Marc Lalonde, “The History of Sensibilities: Of the Standard of Taste in Mid-Eighteenth Century England and the Circulation of Smells in Post-Revolutionary France,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (1991): 125–35 and Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* trans. Aubier Montaigne (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986).

the institutional responses of mid-eighteenth-century London. However, the Middlesex Bench did not specifically dwell on a singular response posed by the threat of disease in their prisons and change in the New Prison and the Middlesex House of Correction had a somewhat different chronology. A close examination of these institutions and their administration will highlight some of these responses and relevant timelines.

Middlesex New Prison and the House of Correction

The spread of gaol fever from London prisons to the wider court sent a burst of anxiety through a judicial system that was already hard-pressed.⁴⁵ In the December of the same year, it triggered a presentment by the Middlesex Grand Jury condemning the conditions at the New Prison in Clerkenwell, forcing the Middlesex Bench to take action by putting in train a series of repairs at county expense.⁴⁶ Inspections were instituted by the magistrates and a new keeper appointed with specific instructions regarding his responsibility for ‘Scowring’ and ‘cleansing’ the prison.⁴⁷ The following year piped water from the New River Company was made available at the prison.⁴⁸ Subsequently two ‘necessary houses’, one for each sex, were installed at the Middlesex Bridewell. The drains were cleaned and the flow rectified so that the water could run ‘with a good Current’.⁴⁹ In 1754 the Justices were again despatched to the New Prison to,

see the State and Condition thereof and if any and what Repairs are wanting and if the same Prison can be Altered or Enlarged So as to make the same more wholesome and if a Ventilator or any other Machine is wanted for that Purpose.⁵⁰

These actions and others like them marked the beginnings of a new concern over the state of Middlesex prisons.

⁴⁵ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 194-267.

⁴⁶ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 6th December 1750 (LMSMGO556020434).

⁴⁷ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 6th December 1750 (LMSMGO556020436).

⁴⁸ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 5th December 1751 (LMSMGO556020499).

⁴⁹ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 25th June 1752 (LMSMGO556020531).

⁵⁰ *LL*, Middlesex Justices’ Working Documents, April 1754 (LMSMPS504270130).

Amongst this series of small reforms sat a more fundamental change, in 1753 the Middlesex Bench altered the method of remuneration of the keeper of the House of Correction. It was changed from a system wholly predicated on fees to an annual salary of £50 beginning in the spring of 1753.⁵¹ In the same year William Pentlow, keeper of the New Prison, petitioned to be paid in the same manner.⁵² The number of poor prisoners unable to afford fees of any kind had risen enormously during the preceding years thus curtailing Pentlow's fees. In addition, Pentlow hoped to be released from a number of obligations accumulated through more than a century of customary practice in the Middlesex prison.⁵³ The Middlesex Bench met him part way, they allowed him a salary of £30 p.a. and discharged him from the obligation to pay towards the upkeep of the prison, although he still kept many perquisites of the position including some fee taking. This reapportionment of responsibilities in both the New Prison and the Middlesex Bridewell brought with it the beginnings of a new accountability.

Jacob Ilive's exposé of the conditions in the Middlesex House of Correction, that began this chapter, was in part, a response to the on-going disquiet surrounding the death of those attending the 'Black Sessions'. Ilive's carefully documented journey through the London prison system marked out much of the remaining fee taking at the House of Correction and identified many of its pernicious effects. His report particularly dwelt on the conditions in the Middlesex House of Correction and his recommendations for improvement drew heavily on existing practice at the City House of Correction.⁵⁴ However, if not at the centre of his proposals, then cleanliness and elements of hygienic

⁵¹ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 22 Feb 1753 (LMSMGO556020558). However, this reverted to a system of fees charged against discharged prisoners and funded by the county rate in 1775.

⁵² William Pentlow was an early thief-taker based at Bow Street, later known as a Bow Street Runner. Pentlow was recommended to the Middlesex Bench by Henry Fielding. See Beattie, *First English Detectives*, 32.

⁵³ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 6th September 1753 (LMSMGO556030034).

⁵⁴ City Bridewell.

improvement certainly formed a part of Ilive's physical recommendations for change. Amongst his suggestions were that small cells were to be amalgamated to form larger wards for sleeping where fresh straw would be supplied by the county. These wards 'were to be kept clean by the Prisoners.'⁵⁵ Indeed, it was to be the keeper's duty to ensure that the whole prison was to be kept 'clean and wholesome.'⁵⁶ The men's vault was to be relocated and a sink positioned nearby so that the continual running water would prevent the vault from stinking. In the same way, the women's vault would be removed from its current position in close proximity to the women's wards where it 'stinks the whole prison' to a new location currently used as a dunghill.⁵⁷ The matron's duty was to include 'Care of the Beds, and the Cleaning of the Wards' and as far as the prisoners' personal hygiene went the matron was to be charged with ensuring 'that the Women Prisoners do mend their Cloaths, wash their Linen, and keep themselves clean.'⁵⁸ In like manner she was to be charged with supervising the women prisoners, once a week, washing 'a Shirt, Stock or Neckcloth, Handkerchief, and a pair of Stockings, for each Man Prisoner.'⁵⁹ Soap, Ilive suggested should be provided at the county's expense as an invaluable aid to health. His general thrust was to maintain prisoner involvement with all aspects of cleanliness but within parameters and with resources provided by the county.

The Middlesex Bench was forced to respond to Ilive's accusations regarding the filth and dirt which was seemingly pervasive in the Middlesex House of Correction. The Justices instituted an inspection at their next county day in July 1757, at which they instructed Justices to,

go and view if they please New Prison and Bridewell at Clerkenwell in this County and to consider of the State of the said Prisons and of the usage and

⁵⁵ Ilive, *Reformation of the House of Correction*, 41.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

management..... in Order to remedy all Inconveniences that may attend all such Prisoners.⁶⁰

Over the next several years a committee of Justices regularly inspected and authorised repairs at the New Prison and the Middlesex House of Correction rather than wait for the annual presentments by the Grand Jury. In May 1760, the Justices concerned themselves more directly with the health and cleanliness of the prisoners when they investigated an infestation of vermin in the House of Correction beds and subsequently made a note to examine the nature of the bedding during their next visit.⁶¹ The Middlesex Bench made no bones about the reason behind such visits and their new-found interest in the prisoners' welfare stating 'that they[the prisoners] be properly kept from hard usage to prevent Reflection either to the Magistracy or Keepers of the said Prisons'.⁶² There is no doubt that there was a very gradual shift in the balance of responsibility regarding the welfare of Middlesex prisoners. In 1763, the Middlesex Justices re-examined the table of fees and salaries for both prisons and the keepers were summoned in order to identify 'any oppressions or ill Conduct hath been used by them or either of them towards the prisoners'.⁶³ The Middlesex Bench sought to allay anxieties surrounding the legal authority by which they took up these 'new' responsibilities. At a county day held in Hicks Hall the clerk was instructed to draw up a report identifying the relevant legislation.⁶⁴ This established their formal legal position regarding liability for the various Middlesex prisons. When in December 1763 they were trying to secure an allowance of bread for the inmates of the New Prison this again was resolved by recourse to an examination of statute law and associated legal precedence.⁶⁵ The eschewing of natural law and the foregoing of any

⁶⁰ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 14th July 1757 (LMSMGO556030210).

⁶¹ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 1st May 1760 (LMSMGO556040109).

⁶² *Ibid*.

⁶³ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 19th May 1763 (LMSMGO556050016).

⁶⁴ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, October 1763 (LMSMPS505270158).

⁶⁵ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, Dec 1763 (LMSMGO556050027).

moral argument concerning the consequences of not providing sustenance to the very poorest of prisoners is perhaps surprising since throughout the eighteenth century prisoners had regularly died through the lack of sufficient food.⁶⁶ Yet in the years following the publication of Ilive's report on the conditions at the Middlesex House of Correction much of what he suggested was implemented. By early 1764, the men and women were finally separated in both prisons; water pipes were installed in the women's side both internally and out in the women's yard, and bread was made regularly available for those not able to afford to feed themselves.⁶⁷

The Middlesex Bench slowly began to draw away from a system whereby the county's prison administration was conducted at arm's length by farming out the position of keeper to the highest bidder. This 'older' method of warehousing prisoners left much to be desired, fostering as it did fee taking of the most wretched kind which ignored the most basic needs of food, clothing, warmth and cleanliness.⁶⁸ This nascent accountability formed part of a growing realisation that the Justices needed to assume responsibility for the health and well-being of prisoners. Ilive's report that 'Cleanliness is the greatest Preservative of Health' was among the first to make the connection between health and well-being in prisons.⁶⁹ Its premise that hygiene was part of a regimen that promoted good health seemed not to be questioned and indeed many of their 'newer' approaches reflected this, particularly the provision of piped or pumped water. However, while acknowledging

⁶⁶ Ilive, *Reformation of the House of Correction*, 4.

⁶⁷ LL, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 26th Feb 1761 (LMSMGO556040151) and LL, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 23rd Feb 1764 (LMSMGO556050028).

⁶⁸ For similar conditions in an early eighteenth-century London Gaol see Jerry White, "Pain and Degradation in Georgian London: Life in the Marshalsea Prison." *History Workshop Journal* 68, no. 1 (September 21, 2009): 69–98.

⁶⁹ Ilive, *Reformation of the House of Correction*, 49. A 1753 Report on the state of the Marshalsea by the Office of Works, see White, "Pain and Degradation." The first edition of James Lind's book on the health of seamen appeared in 1757. James Lind, *An Essay on the Most Effectual Means of Preserving the Health of Seamen in the Royal Navy, Containing, Cautions Necessary for those who Reside in or Visit, Unhealthy Situations, with Directions, Proper for the Security of all Such as Attend Sick Persons in Fevers. And an Appendix of Observations, on the Treatment of Diseases in Hot Climates* (London: A. Millar, A. Kincaid and A. Donaldson, 1757).

the limitations of the archival sources, there is nothing to suggest that this was anything other than a series of pragmatic decisions largely undertaken to avoid public criticism by the likes of Jacob Ilive. This seeming lack of discernible ideological policy through the 1750s by the Middlesex Justices did not however indicate a concomitant lack of progress on part of the Middlesex Bench, as they were able to establish the notion that the magistrates could and should involve themselves in the oversight of the Middlesex prison system. This paradigm change in the management of Middlesex prisons pre-dated the Health of Prisoners Act 1774, which McConville suggested:

empowered the justices to intervene in the running of the gaols in order to secure certain health standards, an innovation in management much more significant than the actual health provisions involved... giving the justices almost unlimited discretion'.⁷⁰

Other than the security of the prison, a majority of the modifications effected by the mid-1760s concerned the health and well-being of prisoners and with the exception of access to sufficient food, much of it revolved around cleanliness and personal hygiene.

The 1774 Parliamentary legislation was enacted for 'the Prevention of Calamities attending what is commonly called the Gaol Disorder' underlining lingering anxieties surrounding the transmission of gaol fever to the court.⁷¹ The February 1774 iteration of the Bill focussed on both the release of destitute prisoners unable to pay gaolers' fees and the personal hygiene of prisoners. It authorised Justices to provide 'commodious Bathing Tubs' and provide 'Cloaths for Prisoners to take their Trials in, at the Expence of the County'.⁷² Instructions made it clear that prisoners were to be washed and re-clothed before they were brought into court for trial thus reducing opportunities for the spread of

⁷⁰ 14 Geo. III c. 59. McConville, *A History of English Prison Administration, Volume 1: 1750 - 1877* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 87.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, *A Bill For The Relief of Prisoners charged with Felony or other Crimes, who shall be acquitted, or discharged by Proclamation, respecting the Payment of Fees to Gaolers, and giving a Recompence for such Fees out of the County Rates; and for more effectually securing the Health of Prisoners in Gaol, during their Confinement*, 1774, 3.

disease. On a further reading of the Bill it was agreed to split it into two parts, with the Health of Prisoners now forming an independent Bill. As well hearing an account of the methods practised at Haslar naval hospital for the prevention of contagious diseases, Parliament also called John Howard to give an account of his work visiting prisons. As a consequence further clauses were added to the Bill including the scraping and whitewashing of internal walls which were to be washed and kept clean on a regular basis. The English vernacular publication, *Domestic Medicine* by William Buchan was keen to inform its readers that, ‘In places where great numbers of people are collected cleanliness becomes of the utmost importance. It is well known that, infectious diseases are communicated by tainted air’.⁷³ This popular belief ensured that ventilation was identified as a method necessary for supplying fresh air to the wards and an enabling clause was added to the Bill. Indeed the Bill’s preamble now attributed gaol fever to the ‘want of cleanliness and fresh air in the several gaols in England’.⁷⁴ As has been noted, this concern over fresh air and ‘proper’ ventilation in institutions for the poor was particularly prevalent in the construction of hospitals and workhouses in the second half of the eighteenth century. As far as prisons were concerned, Justices were given the authority ‘to make such orders, from time to time, for restoring or preserving the health of prisoners, as they think necessary’ including those issues relating to cleanliness.⁷⁵ The Middlesex Justices took the Act to heart and specifically considered improvements to both prisons in respect of the legislation. A report, which was presented to the Bench at their first meeting in the January of 1775, noted that the ‘New Prison and Clerkenwell Bridewell are and have been carefully Scraped Washed and Cleaned and the prisons [is] in a healthy State.’⁷⁶ Even the direction to provide warm or cold baths or commodious bathing tubs was duly acted upon

⁷³ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 74.

⁷⁴ 59 Geo. III cap 59.

⁷⁵ 59 Geo. III cap 59 s.II.

⁷⁶ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, January 1775 (LMSMGO556070042).

by the Bench, who agreed to buy two 'Commodious Bathing Tubs' one for each prison.⁷⁷

However, a supply of new clothing for prisoners was thought a step too far by the Middlesex Justices at this point.

In March 1776 Dr William Smith was dispatched by the Westminster Charity to various London prisons in order to provide medical assistance to sick prisoners.⁷⁸ As Smith recounted he was 'exposed to the danger of infection from putrid air, occasioned by the stench of their [the prisoners] dirty garments and diseased bodies, full of sores, and crammed upon one another in abominable filthy prisons'.⁷⁹ Clearly the Middlesex Bench's confidence had been somewhat misplaced in its belief that conditions were greatly improved. Smith picked his way through 'those dreary and loathsome mansions' sometimes twice a week to attend his patients.⁸⁰ Like Ilive, Smith was keen to link the lack of cleanliness to disease and poor health. Many of his observations concerned the conditions that he found in the prisons he visited. He reported that the:

Want of cleanliness is almost an universal evil in gaols, and is the source of much sickness. Many of the diseases arise from nastiness; therefore the strictest attention ought to be paid to cleanliness, particularly in gaols.⁸¹

Smith reserved some of his harshest criticisms for the magistrates, whom he believed to have abdicated all responsibility for prisoners once they had been tried and sent on to punishment.⁸² However, in their defence, he did point out that the City magistrates were transitory, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs sitting largely only during their year in office, whereas, once appointed to the Bench, Middlesex magistrates acted as long as they chose.

⁷⁷ LL, Middlesex General Orders of Court, January 1775 (LMSMGO556070043).

⁷⁸ William Smith, *State of the Gaols in London, Westminster, and Borough of Southwark. To which is added, An Account of the Present State of the Convicts sentenced to Hard Labour on Board the Justitia upon the River Thames* (London: J. Bew, 1776), 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 15.

Other than treating patients Smith gave an account of the conditions at each London prison he visited using the legislation passed in 1774 as the basis of his reporting.⁸³ The New Prison was part way through re-building and as such was described as ‘light and airy’ although no bathing tubs had been installed by the time of his visit.⁸⁴ It is possible however, that Smith’s inspection happened before the magistrates’ orders had been put into practice. The House of Correction came under greater scrutiny and the lack of facilities to improve the personal hygiene of new prisoners was particularly noted. Smith’s criticisms were only taken seriously by the Middlesex Bench in January 1780 when they sought to enquire into the veracity of his assertions.⁸⁵

By the late 1770s the Committee of Justices with responsibility for overseeing the prison was well established in Middlesex. Sizeable repairs had been realised in both prisons and a number of schemes for increased security had been put in place. In July 1778 the Committee reported that the women’s gallery in the House of Correction required additional ‘Air hole Lights or Windows’ in order to allow fresh air to dispel the fetid atmosphere that hung around the women’s wards.⁸⁶ In addition, the walls needed to be washed with quicklime, a caustic solution used to sanitise both the interior and exterior of buildings. This task, it was suggested, would be well suited to the prisoners. More significantly they began to address issues concerning the personal hygiene of prisoners by putting forward a scheme for smoking prisoners’ clothing. Heating items of apparel in large ovens would have the effect of destroying lice and other vermin.⁸⁷ Clothing was to be washed and put aside for the prisoners until they left custody and a uniform of a ‘Clean White Woollen Jacket and Trowsers’ substituted for the men while the women were to be

⁸³ 14 Geo. II cap. 59.

⁸⁴ Smith, *State of the Gaols*, 34.

⁸⁵ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, January 1780 (LMSMGO556070299).

⁸⁶ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, July 1778 (LMSMGO556070215).

⁸⁷ Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, 106-109.

given a white petticoat.⁸⁸ However, not at all practical for prison life, the white uniform marked the prisoner out should they choose to escape.⁸⁹ The prison committee suggested that initially, sufficient cloth for making 25 sets of clothing should be purchased. When the order was renewed in 1781 the prison committee settled on blue as a more appropriate colour for clothing to be issued to poor prisoners. William Smith noted that,

To attempt to wash and keep clean the ragged miserable crew that are sent to the two prisons of Clerkenwell, would be fruitless, except that they are first stript of their nasty gages, and cloathed in some uniform dress.⁹⁰

Thomas Rogers, the prison surveyor, was instructed to establish a room that might be used as a wash-house. Clothes could not only be smoked there but a copper and cistern could supply warm water both for washing clothes and warm bathing. To facilitate this, the Committee also ‘Ordered a Bathing Tub to [be] procured for the Use of the women in Clerkenwell Bridewell’.⁹¹

These timely suggestions by the Middlesex Bench came shortly after John Howard’s critical *The State of Prisons in England and Wales* and to a certain extent might be seen as part of an extended response to his general critique of English prisons.⁹² Howard made little direct criticism of the New Prison since it was barely finished. The Middlesex Bridewell however, was ‘out of repair’ and still badly over-crowded with small cramped ‘unwholesome night-rooms’.⁹³ In Roy Porter’s introductory essay in *The Health of*

⁸⁸ LL, Middlesex General Orders of Court, July 1778 (LMSMGO556070216).

⁸⁹ White was the colour of redemption signifying purity and still occasionally worn by penitents seeking absolution in the parish church for moral transgressions. ‘Purge me with hyssope, and I shalbe cleane: wash me, and I shall be whiter then snow.’ Psalms 51:7 (The King James Bible, 1611).

⁹⁰ Smith, *State of the Gaols in London*, 33.

⁹¹ LL, Middlesex General Orders of Court, July 1778 (LMSMGO556070215). These requirements were not set in motion because of the expense. In January 1781 Mr Rogers was instructed to draw up plans for a joint smoking room. This was to be shared between the New Prison and the House of Correction in order to fumigate and wash clothing from both prisons. It was initially refused by the Prison Committee. LL, Middlesex Justices’ Working Documents, January 1781 (LMSMPS507490010).

⁹² John Howard, *The state of the prisons in England and Wales, with preliminary observations, and an account of some foreign prisons*. (Warrington: William Eyres, 1777).

⁹³ Howard, *State of Prisons* (1777), 186.

Prisoners Porter notes Howard's belief in a miasmatic theory of transmissions of gaol fever. But this did not prevent Howard from focussing on forms of differentiated transmission particularly for smallpox and plague in the prisons he visited.⁹⁴ Almost certainly alternative remedies were pursued by the Middlesex Bench long before Howard published his findings on prison conditions in Britain. Unlike the City authorities however, who administered Newgate, the Middlesex justices dealt with miasmatic spread through the addition of windows to increase the flow of 'pure' air through the prison, albeit after negotiation as to who would pay the increased taxation on the additional windows.⁹⁵ Many of Howard's other recommendations had also been implemented, including free access to water. There had also been a separation of bodies, male from female and the sick from the well. Aside from a visit by the appointed doctor or apothecary there was also evidence to suggest that the ill and infirm were marked out for special care, with particular attention paid to their personal hygiene. Men were shaved and washed, and the sick ward cleaned on several occasions. During 1784 the county also paid sixpence for 'the Cleaning of a sick Man'.⁹⁶ Howard's report did not precipitate these changes in Middlesex prisons but did highlight some of the remaining unsanitary conditions across the metropolis and served to maintain the pressure for continued improvement and as Porter suggests pragmatic change was a great reformer.⁹⁷ Driven by the threat of typhus or gaol fever, many of the hygienic reforms advocated by Howard had already been implemented in Middlesex. Some of them had been instigated in response to public criticisms by the likes of Jacob Ilive, a former inmate. Other changes were propelled by the dogged determination of those on the newly

⁹⁴ Porter, Roy. "Howard's Beginning: Prison, Disease, Hygiene." In Creese, Richard, William F. Bynum, and J. Bearn (eds.). *The Health of Prisoners: Historical Essays*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995). 14.

⁹⁵ There is some evidence to suggest that windows had been removed or bricked up during the first half of the eighteenth century in order to avoid higher rates of taxation paid by the prison keeper. An Act for granting to His Majesty severall Rates or Duties upon Houses for making good the Deficiency of the clipped Money. 1695.

⁹⁶ *LL*, Middlesex Justices' Working Papers, 16th February 1784 (LMSMPS507780125).

⁹⁷ Porter, "Howard's Beginning," 16.

established prison committee, like John Barnfather, who might be described as one of the Middlesex ‘trading justices’.⁹⁸ However, his record of service suggests that he was an active member of the Bench, investigating complaints from prisoners and commended for his supervisory work during the reconstruction of the New Prison.⁹⁹ A further survey by John Howard in 1788 noted the changes in hygienic conditions at the Middlesex House of Correction. He reported that the prison was ‘quite clean’ and that the rooms were ‘washed every day’, although the prisoners were still ‘very dirty; some almost naked’.¹⁰⁰ His report on the New Prison was less positive, however, the ‘prison-rooms’ were ‘clean’ with the ‘wardman having, very properly, a double allowance of bread’, to undertake or oversee the cleaning.¹⁰¹ Disappointingly the bath was ‘never used’ and there had been no water in the ‘pump for two years.’¹⁰² Despite this there had been considerable change over the decades since the outbreak of gaol fever at mid-century.

The first indications of a proactive lead concerning prisoners’ health and hygiene came when the Middlesex Bench began to discuss designs for a new House of Correction in 1784. The designs submitted by Jacob Leroux clearly articulated an informed knowledge of the prison regimen for Leroux was not only a builder but also an active magistrate, prominent in Middlesex county administration. As well as light airy rooms, spaces for drying and a laundry, the prison was to supply warm water baths for each class of prisoner. Water had previously been available in both prisons. However, water supplied by the New River Company was costly, so to offset this rainwater captured from the roof

⁹⁸ Ruth Paley suggests that Barnfather was unlikely to have been in receipt of a Government salary see Paley, R. “The Middlesex Justices Act of 1792: Its Origins and Effects,” (PhD diss., University of Reading, 1983), 209.

⁹⁹ For examples of Barnfather’s work as a JP see *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, April 1774(LMSMGO556070012), committee for conveying vagrants out of the county; *Ibid.*, July 1774(LMSMGO556070016), committee to enquire into the implementation of the London Building Acts or district surveyors; *Ibid.*, Feb 1782 (LMSMGO556070354), enquiry into the ill-usage of two prisoners.

¹⁰⁰ Howard, *Lazarettos*, 128.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

was stored in special cisterns. This water was to be pumped into passages in order to cleanse the prison, and foul water conveyed away in dedicated channels. Special attention was paid to the placement and design of the privies, which were to be ‘detached in each story and to communicate with the open Air.’¹⁰³ This set of plans, and several other designs which were submitted to the Justices were referred back to the committee with instructions to review the building in light of John Howard’s observations.¹⁰⁴

Anxieties over gaol fever were still high and in July 1784 the keepers of London’s principal prisons were ordered to clean their bail docks at the Sessions House every night during the whole period of the Session.¹⁰⁵ These anxieties were reflected in subsequent prison designs, with facilities to ameliorate the filthy conditions remaining a priority. In December 1784 more than 20 sets of plans were examined by the Middlesex Bench, their titles perhaps indicative of the architects’ aspirations for the building. Names such as ‘Industry’, ‘Air Security and Convenience’, ‘Reformation’ and ‘Solitude with discipline’ marked out new thinking in prison architecture.¹⁰⁶ The following week John Howard recommended a site in Cold Bath Fields to the Middlesex Bench as suitable for the new prison building. It was conveniently close to the existing House of Correction and Middlesex Sessions House. Finding this plot more conducive to the building it was agreed to open negotiations in order to purchase the land. Jacob Leroux immediately submitted revised plans for the alternative site. However, a committee of the Middlesex Bench chose a set of plans from the twenty submitted as a basis for the new House of Correction. Particular attention was given to matters concerning the health of prisoners. The committee stipulated that the free circulation of air together with ‘ample supplies of Fresh Water’

¹⁰³ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, May 1784 (LMSMGO556090045).

¹⁰⁴ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 8th July 1784 (LMSMGO556090056).

¹⁰⁵ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 12th July 1784 (LMSMGO556090059).

¹⁰⁶ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 16th December 1785 (LMSMGO556090085-6).

were essential to the maintenance and good management of the prison.¹⁰⁷ Gradually a plan emerged from the committee with suggestions from several of the magistrates incorporated into the chosen plan by Jacob Leroux. After the purchase was agreed work began in earnest.

In October 1789 the Bench circulated a précis of the acts relevant to the administration of Middlesex prisons, much of which concerned the cleanliness or health and well-being of both prisoner and prison. This included the instruction that ‘the Cells shall be kept Clean and washed every day’ and that ‘Warm and Cold Bath or Bathing Tubs shall be provided.’¹⁰⁸ John Harwood, now termed ‘Governor of the House of Correction’, was required to swear on oath, giving an affirmative answer to each requirement. The change in title was now coupled with ‘Gent’, a subtle change in perception of the social status of the former keeper but a significant change in how the position was regarded in wider circles. Last minute alterations were made to the new House of Correction, the stone galleries were omitted and an engine house planned to ‘convey Water into Reservoirs in the lower Roofs from thence to be conveyed by Hand Pumps into the Apartments’.¹⁰⁹ The significant attention paid to the plumbing, with the addition of cesspools, soil pipes and cisterns looked beyond the ad hoc arrangements at the old House of Correction. The supply of fresh water and disposal of the dirty was an important addition to hygiene in the prison.

At the end of June 1793 the prison in Cold Bath Fields was almost complete; furniture and fixtures were chosen including those for the prisoners. Oaken bedsteads with straw mattresses and a ‘Poo Tub’ were provided for each cell.¹¹⁰ Two butts of water were placed in the courtyard so that prisoners might have free access to them as they did in the

¹⁰⁷ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 17th January 1786 (LMSMGO556090212).

¹⁰⁸ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 28th October 1789 (LMSMGO556100014).

¹⁰⁹ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 10th June 1791 (LMSMGO556100152).

¹¹⁰ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 27th June 1793 (LMSMGO556100309).

existing building. John Woodward and Harper were despatched to the new building ready to receive the first prisoner.

As the first prisoners settled into the new system at Cold Bath Fields Mr Harwood the Governor died, in the election that followed Thomas Aris, former baker to the prison was inexplicably elected as Governor. The prison was not fully occupied until the following year when for the first time a set of formal rules were approved by the Middlesex Bench. By 1800 a parliamentary enquiry into the running and management of the Cold Bath Fields prison had reported on conditions. Inspectors described how piped water was available in each Yard, 'for the Use of the prisoners, either to drink or to wash themselves, for which latter Purpose Towels are also provided.'¹¹¹ Daily life in Cold Bath Fields was now ordered, and measured by a routine which was unvaried. In terms of it cleanliness and the personal hygiene of prisoners it was infinitely different from the systems that had previously prevailed.

The flurry of activity after the 'Black Sessions' marked the beginning of a gradual move towards cleaner more sanitary conditions in the Middlesex's prison system. This was punctuated by highly critical interventions, which did not necessarily instigate activity but merely intensified actions that were already in progress. There were also two important changes that made the implementation of these modifications significantly easier. The first was the employment of the prison keeper. By establishing a direct relationship with him, the magistrates were able to direct and implement change. The second was the magistrates, first establishing their legal responsibilities for administering their prisons and subsequently taking up these responsibilities which flowed from this new found accountability.

¹¹¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Papers Presented to the House of Commons, Relating To His Majesty's Prison in Cold Bath Fields*, 18th December 1800, 461.

By contrast in 1785, Josiah Dornford wrote a pamphlet addressed to the Lord Mayor and Alderman of the City concerning the conduct of the Common Council and its various officers.¹¹² Dornford's criticism was based on their failure sufficiently to account for monies expended together with and associated neglect of the City prisons. Dornford did not hold back, writing 'I am shocked at the poor mean wretched provision made for prisoners' going on 'I beg you will enquire whether the gaols are kept clean, and white washed twice a year, according to Act of Parliament'.¹¹³ In answer to his own request Dornford noted that this was not the case nor were baths available for prisoners to bathe. Criticism of Mr Akerman, keeper of Newgate was minimal, even though Dornford suggested that Newgate was not as clean as it ought to be. Dornford frequently referred to the opinions of John Howard in order to bolster his arguments over prison conditions. However, the surroundings in Newgate had much improved since the first half of the eighteenth century but they were still falling short of conditions prescribed in the 1774 Health of Prisoners Act. The impetus for change in Newgate was lacking, Richard Akerman had been keeper at Newgate for the better part of forty years. His income was significant and he stood in a class apart from the keepers of the Middlesex prisons. He had little to gain from wholesale changes in Newgate and the City. Each year a new Lord Mayor took office and undertook the magisterial responsibilities that went with the position. At the end of the year he moved on, requiring little urgency to implement change. It took the best part of thirty years to build a new prison and another three to rebuild it after

¹¹² Dornford, Josiah. *An Answer to the Report from the Committee Appointed by the Court of Common Council, "To Enquire Into the Assertions Lately Circulated Respecting the Affairs of the Corporation, &c." proving the same to be partial, unjust, and untrue: with Answers to the Several Defences of the City Officers from John Wilkes, Esq. Chamberlain, down to the Keepers of the Poultry and wood Street Compters. An Appeal to the Justices and Humanity of the Court. And a further Appeal to the Citizens of London; with some Strictures on our Police. By Josiah Dornford, Esq. To Which Is Added, an Interesting Letter Written by the Secretary to the "Society for the Relief and Discharge of Persons Imprisoned for Small Debts."* (London: J. Andrews; J. Bew, Mr. Richardson and W. Hales, 1785).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

the Gordon riots led to its burning. Innovation was stifled by the inertia of office, leading to only minor changes at Newgate.

The Hulks

Over-crowding in London's prisons came to breaking point after 1776 when transportation to the Americas was suspended. The regular ebb and flow of prisoners confined in Newgate and Clerkenwell's prisons diminished, as prisons remained full beyond capacity. Confinement on hulks moored in the Thames and other ports was quickly instituted as a temporary expedient during 1776.¹¹⁴ It was reserved for 'the most daring and dangerous Offenders' who would have otherwise remained in county prisons.¹¹⁵ However, contrary to initial provision, the hulks also became a repository for the young, old and those with bodily infirmities none of whom were able to contribute to the 'hard labour' undertaken by the able-bodied men. In early 1778 complaints began to surface in parliament about the state of the hulks. Evidence given by Duncan Campbell, the Woolwich hulk contractor, to a Committee of the House of Commons, outlined some of the issues including high mortality rates on board some of the vessels.¹¹⁶ Chronic over-crowding together with neglect of the prisoners' conditions contributed to these high rates of death. Dodo Ecken, the surgeon attending the convicts aboard ship, reported that 132 had died in the previous year, 90 of whom had been struck down with what was described as 'nervous putrid fever'

¹¹⁴ The Hulk Act, 1776, was initially enacted for the space of two years; it permitted the use of moored ships for the confinement of prisoners. In London, this codified a practice begun in 1775 of using ships moored at Woolwich to house convicts engaged in dredging the Thames and building a wet dock at Greenwich.

¹¹⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Report From The Committee Who Were Appointed To Consider The Several Returns, Which Have Been Made To The Order of the House of Commons, Of The 16th Day of December 1778, 'That there be laid before this House, an Account of Persons convicted of Felonies or Misdemeanours, and now under Sentence of Imprisonment, in the Gaols and Houses of Correction in the City of London, and the Counties of Middlesex, Essex, Kent, Herts, Surrey, and Sussex; specifying their respective Crimes, the Time when, the Term for which, and by what Court, each Person has been imprisoned; together with an Account of the Allowance made for the Maintenance of such Persons, and in what Manner they are employed.*, 16th December 1778, 25.

¹¹⁶ Charles Campbell, *The Intolerable Hulks: British Shipboard Confinement 1776-1857*, 3rd ed. (Tucson: Fenestra Books, 2001), 34.

or gaol fever brought with them from their originating prisons. The spread of this illness was attributed to the lack of fresh air circulating through the ships and the closeness of the beds allowing contagion to go unchecked. It was also widely acknowledged that a 'Want of Cleanliness' contributed to the poor conditions.¹¹⁷ However, the surgeon was careful to point out that the vessels were more airy than the previous year and the general cleanliness was much improved. Charles Campbell, author of *The Intolerable Hulks*, suggests that there was perhaps some form of self-interest here since Ekens and others had given the contractor advice on ameliorating on board conditions.¹¹⁸

When John Howard first inspected the hulk, *Justitia*, in the October of 1776, he reported that, 'many had no Shirts, some no Waistcoats, some no Stockings, and some no Shoes'.¹¹⁹ When disease was at its height a change in sleeping arrangements was ordered, from straw pallets on the floor to hammocks, which could be aired on deck. This did little to ameliorate conditions. Campbell, the hulk contractor, reported that, men became sicker when using the hammocks since their chains prevented them from using the hammock as intended. But perhaps a trial of one month in the hospital was insufficient to assess the efficacy of such a move. Those aboard the *Censor* were returned to sleeping on straw pallets nailed to wooden platforms.¹²⁰ Boys too young to make an effective contribution to the hard labour on shore were employed as cabin or swabbing boys.¹²¹ These young men were set to work keeping the ship in an orderly manner, by washing and scrubbing decks, supervised by an infirm and almost blind older prisoner. Of those taken aboard the hulks some were reluctant to keep themselves clean even though a freshly laundered shirt was

¹¹⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *Report From The Committee Who Were Appointed To Consider The Several Returns, Which Have Been Made To The Order of the House of Commons, Of The 16th Day of December 1778*, 25.

¹¹⁸ Campbell, *Intolerable Hulks*, 36.

¹¹⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *Journals of the House of Commons* (From October the 31st, 1776, in the Seventeenth Year of the Reign of King George the Third, to October the 1st, 1778, in the Eighteenth Year of the Reign of King George the Third), Vol. 36, 15th April 1778, 928.

¹²⁰ Campbell, *Intolerable Hulks*, 33.

¹²¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol. 36, 15th April 1778, 931.

provided each Sunday.¹²² Others preferred to wash each day, fresh clothes from friends and relatives were permitted aboard ship otherwise a limited amount of clothing was provided for their use including stockings and jackets. Howard's four visits to the hulks led him to believe that conditions were indeed improving; the odour had diminished between his first and second visits. The men, however, remained without regulation or daily regimen to order their days and conduct.

By way of contrast the commissioners for taking care of sick and hurt seamen issued a set of regulations which were tabled in parliament in January 1778. These rules were to be observed by prisoners of war in their care. The regulations stipulated that 'water and tubs for washing their linen and cloaths will be allowed,' and that 'prisoners are advised to keep their persons as clean as possible, it being very conducive to good health.'¹²³ Likewise, further regulation ordered prisoners to take it in turns to sweep and clean the prison and prison-yard. Brooms and scrapers were to be provided and those refusing such a task would be put on half-rations. John Howard, in the second edition of his commentary on prisons, made a specific point of enquiring after prisoners of war. He compiled lists to 'refute a prevailing opinion of our severity and inattention to such prisoners.'¹²⁴ Clearly cleanliness was considered an important issue but frequently, according to Howard, local conditions did not meet these expectations. However, unlike county gaol regulations the rules concerning prisoners of war were detailed and

¹²² Parliamentary Papers, *Report From The Committee Who Were Appointed To Consider The Several Returns, Which Have Been Made To The Order of the House of Commons, Of The 16th Day of December 1778*, 11.

¹²³ Parliamentary Papers, *Parliamentary Registers (1774-1780)*, Debates, Vol.10, 20 January 1778, 129, "By the Commissioners for taking Care of Sick and Hurt Seamen, Regulations which are to be observed by the Prisoners."

¹²⁴ Howard, *State of Prisons* (1784), 191.

prescriptive, largely due to the influence of Dr James Lind, physician at the Royal Navy Hospital Haslar.¹²⁵

In 1774 his essay on preserving the health of seamen was re-issued in a third edition.¹²⁶ Central to the volume was his insistence on strict cleanliness on board ship and the particular attention that should be paid to the personal hygiene of sailors. Lind began by identifying newly impressed men as a source of ‘infection to the whole fleet’ with the ‘produce of filth, rags, poverty, and polluted air which subsists always in a greater or less degree in crowded prisons.’¹²⁷ The first edition published in 1757, was sufficiently close to the episode of gaol fever at Newgate that killed several members of the Old Bailey court, for it still to resonate. Lind believed that in a like manner ‘polluted cloaths of prisoners, brought from Newgate, and other unclean places’ would prove infectious to those aboard ship.¹²⁸ He was insistent that it would ‘be absolutely necessary to destroy all filthy rags and all such clothes as are brought from Newgate or other prisons.’¹²⁹ In effect he had articulated a clear link between the poor inhabiting the streets and prisons and infection brought into the heart of the navy. Detailed instructions for the regular sanitisation of naval vessels were given, if necessary with smoke and steam infused from a variety of sources including tobacco, tar or pitch. Lind also favoured washing with vinegar as method of supressing contagion. In addition, he advocated the use of cold bathing either in tubs or in the sea in order to maintain health. Nursing, he reminded readers, was to take place in the most hygienic conditions possible. Clothes and bedding were to be washed or disposed of immediately, emphasising that ‘These observations may serve to enforce to the

¹²⁵ Bartholomew, Michael. “Lind, James (1716–1794).” Michael Bartholomew In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.idproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/16669> Accessed July 4, 2014.

¹²⁶ James Lind, *An Essay on the Most Effectual Means of Preserving the Health of Seamen in the Royal Navy, and a Dissertation on Fevers and Infection, Together with Observations on the Jail Distemper*, 3rd ed. (London: D. Wilson and G. Nicol, 1774).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

sick, and their attendants, the necessity of an exact neatness, and a constant cleanliness about both.¹³⁰ This dual approach to cleanliness both as a means of managing contagion and of promoting a healthy body was clearly aimed at more than its purported naval constituency. Naval terms were frequently explained by means of footnotes and in the later editions an essay giving general advice on fevers and infections was added to the original text. Indeed the volumes were widely advertised in London newspapers.

In December 1773 Lind added a chapter on ‘Jail Distemper’ to the essay on fevers and infections. Again he reiterated that transference of infection frequently occurred through gaols although his recent experience suggested that small parochial workhouses also acted as reservoirs of disease.¹³¹ He was adamant that those who seemingly looked healthy could still transfer infection although he was keen to underline that the danger of infection was lessened if the prisoner was kept clean. Ventilation as a preventative against infection also received scornful mention, citing several years of experience that had little or no effect on the prevalence of disease in gaols. This did not however, prevent him from detailing specific ways in which ventilation might be regulated in a well-run prison. Lind’s principal requirement however was the presence of water, in the first instance to carry away ‘all the filth and nuisances’ and more importantly to encourage cleanliness in both the prison and of the prisoners.¹³² Cleanliness, he suggested ‘should also be regarded in every article, and nothing retained in a jail which can harbour *infection*.’¹³³ To this end prison furnishings should be kept to a minimum, with no curtains and little or no furniture. Bedsteads should be iron and if beds were not provided then straw ‘should be daily shifted’.¹³⁴ New prisoners should be bathed and their clothes removed and baked in

¹³⁰ Ibid., 222.

¹³¹ Ibid., 307.

¹³² Ibid., 335.

¹³³ Ibid., 336.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

specially erected ovens to destroy vermin as well as possible vectors of infection. The separation of the sick from the well should be complete and ‘washing dresses’ or uniforms provided, some solely for the use of the sick and others for prisoners to wear while being interrogated or to attend court.¹³⁵ Lind’s ethos for wearing uniforms was to stem the spread of disease amongst the prisoners and the wider court by removing filthy vermin infested clothing as a vector of infection. In contrast Middlesex prisoners were offered uniforms as a matter of expedient to cover naked or partially clothed bodies.

Lind’s chapter on ‘Jail Distemper’ had the distinct feel of a handbook for prison-keepers, outlining the processes required to both manage and avoid contagion in prison. His very prescriptive style was in sharp contrast to that of John Howard whose work chiefly reported prison conditions. Howard’s *The State of Prisons* did, however, include a preliminary chapter on proposed improvements, in which he noted that cleanliness ‘in the whole oeconomy of a Gaol is of more importance’ - although it largely echoed the provisions set out in the 1774 Health of Prisoners Act.¹³⁶ While Lind offered practical advice for ameliorating conditions and managing prison cleanliness. Most of Lind’s suggestions took the form of a pragmatic response to a set of specific conditions, similar to the action taken by the Middlesex magistrates. However, Lind’s advice was based on extensive experience gained largely at Haslar naval hospital. His focus on cleanliness did little to suggest that it was to be used as a means of social control but it was implicit that cleanliness brought order to both the prison and prisoners. In this sense cleanliness was being used as a synonym for orderliness. The increased emphasis of cleanliness in the management of prisoners of war is one of the ways in which orderliness is both marked out and maintained in this specific group of men. The practical regimens of sanitary measures

¹³⁵ Ibid., 347.

¹³⁶ Howard, *State of Prisons*, 58.

both improved the general prison environment and led to a general increase in the health of the prison population as a whole. Both Lind and Howard gave evidence to parliament in March 1774 while a new act was being formulated to alleviate conditions for prisoners. It is Lind's work however, that seemingly had a substantive effect on the outcome with an act that specifically focussed on the health of prisoners emerging from deliberations.

Vagrants

Towards the end of the century, in addition to the oversight of the prisoners held in their gaols, Middlesex magistrates found that they were also responsible for the well-being of vagrants as they were conducted across the county towards their place of legal settlement. This was somewhat of a departure for the Middlesex justices, but nonetheless they were constrained to examine the conditions in which they had placed vagrants for whom they were technically responsible. In December 1790 the Middlesex Justices, now confident of their authority to intervene in matters concerning the welfare of men and women in their custody, turned their attention to the vagrants held by the county contractor, Mr Henry Adams. However, as with many of the problems concerning the neglect and poor conditions of prisoners, Adams's treatment of Middlesex and City vagrants was brought to the Justices' attention by the reporting of a specific case, that of William Wilson, who was apprehended in the parish of St Lawrence, Old Jewry in the City of London while asking for relief because of his ill-health and extreme distress.¹³⁷ William was removed via St Clement Danes and thence to Adams's House in Islington where, unable to climb the ladder, he was 'put into a Cellar paved with Bricks and upon damp straw where he lay until he was removed'.¹³⁸ After the cart that came to take him across the county broke

¹³⁷ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 14th December 1790 (LMSMGO556100105).

¹³⁸ *LL*, Middlesex General Orders of Court, 14th December 1790 (LMSMGO556100106).

down in Kensington, William was taken to the Kensington workhouse where he died a short time later. A Committee of Justices was quickly despatched to The Angel in Islington in order to inspect the accommodation provided by Adams. Their Report was less than flattering, confirming that the Committee was 'struck with the miserable Accommodation provided'.¹³⁹ The shelter consisted of a room partly over a stable which was no more than 12 feet by 9, the plastering was damp and decayed and the room quite filthy. It was approached from a 'Dirty Yard, through a stable and up a slender ladder the bottom of which is placed in a Manger'.¹⁴⁰ Adams was instructed to supply more 'wholesome and comfortable Apartments' for the vagrants that was to include bedding and mattresses.¹⁴¹ The matter was referred to the Middlesex Committee of Accounts in order for them to consider regulating the conditions of vagrants. Criticism of Adams was twofold, in part it was on account of his neglect of Williams's ailing health and partly because of the filthy conditions which the vagrants were subjected to. However, cleanliness is not directly mentioned although its lack is implied. The report's mention of 'wholesome' is the closest the Justices venture.

Conclusion

Up to the last quarter of the eighteenth century there was a sense that prisons were a 'receptacle of the sick, unhealthy, and helpless' crowded together with 'the infirm, weak, feeble, filthy and naked.'¹⁴² Thus, it was only the virtuous and industrious that were signalled by their 'cleanliness and health', yet much changed during the course of the eighteenth century.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ *LL*, Middlesex Sessions: General orders of Court, January 1791 (LMSMGO556100109).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Directions to Prevent the Contagion of the [J]ail-Distemper, Commonly Called the Jail-Fever* (London: James Robson, 1772), 5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6.

During the first half of the century prison inmates, particularly those in Newgate and the King's prisons could buy cleanliness for a few pounds. This might include a regular supply of clean linen, access to a vermin free bed or someone to undertake various housekeeping tasks on their behalf. However, the majority of prisoners were unable to afford these comforts and were subject to the 'wretched conditions' and 'uncleanly carcasses' that comprised the capital's carceral system.¹⁴⁴ The prisons were not entirely filthy though, as conditions were regulated by a form of self-governing plebeian orderliness, whereby inmates would undertake and apportion housekeeping tasks in order to maintain cleanliness in the prison.

In 1750, the death of several members of the court at the Old Bailey, known as the 'Black Sessions', caused ripples that spread well beyond Newgate. Michael Ignatieff raised the notion that this crisis 'helped to focus medical attention upon the problems of hygiene'.¹⁴⁵ In part this was true, but this emphasis meant little without the attendant reforms in carceral institutions themselves. In metropolitan London, much of the immediate change resulting from this crisis focussed on Newgate, the New Prison in Clerkenwell and the Middlesex Bridewell. In Newgate, these changes were largely short term expedients, and consisted of little more than washing the court, parts of the prison, and prisoners. This initial response was aimed at managing the contagion and threat of disease that hung over the Old Bailey and Newgate. A longer lasting and innovative measure was the erection of a windmill on the roof at Newgate. This mechanism was used to expel the noisome air of the prison and draw in cleaner fresher air which would be circulated around Newgate. However, much of the fundamental change that was required in Newgate was caught up in protracted negotiations over who would fund such a huge

¹⁴⁴ E. S., *Companion for debtors and prisoners*, 16; Ward, *London-Spy*, 80.

¹⁴⁵ Ignatieff, *Just Measure of Pain*, 45.

undertaking. The hygienic changes in the Middlesex prisons were, by and large, lasting and most were gradually incorporated in the routines at the relevant prisons. These, sometimes modest differences, were substantially assisted by two important changes in the Middlesex prison administration. The first, and perhaps more important, was the Middlesex Justices acknowledging their legal responsibilities in regards to the well-being of prisoners in their care. The Health of Prisoners Act, 1774, codified this hitherto, grey area of responsibility, although by this time substantial improvements had already been made by the Middlesex's Bench. The New Prison was almost entirely rebuilt by this time. The other important change was the relationship between the prison keeper and the justices. By directly employing the keeper and removing his ability to buy this sinecure and its associated privileges, his ability to raise fees was greatly curtailed, although not removed entirely. The keeper was now required to implement policies at the behest of the Middlesex Bench, rather than his own whim. The small incremental changes made in the four decades from the crisis precipitated by the 'Black Sessions' resulted in a cleaner prison environment. The culmination of these concerns over cleanliness was exemplified by the newly built House of Correction at Cold Bath Fields. New systems were incorporated in the bricks and mortar of the prison. This included a laundry that provided a clean towel every week so prisoners could wash, and, like workhouses inmates, receive clean linen once a week. Some 80 years had elapsed between the first workhouses and Middlesex prisons attaining the same level of cleanliness for its inmates. In this new building attention was also given to the drains and location of the privies. Most prisoners had their own beds and bedding, and cells were cleaned daily. It was noted, by the governor, Mr Aris, that prisoners brought in from Newgate were 'in a shocking state, from

Filth &c.¹⁴⁶ Conditions in Newgate had improved little, even after its rebuilding in the 1780s.

Improvement in sanitary conditions and the well-being of prisoners was frequently revisited by the Middlesex Bench. Their hygienic reforms largely reflected contemporary medical understanding and treatment; particularly those proffered by military physicians, John Pringle and James Lind. Both of whom published essays that offered practical advice on the origins, transmission and treatment of jail fever and, in turn, both influenced the work of John Howard.

Those who published highly critical accounts of the conditions in prisons held particular sway with both the City authorities and the Middlesex Bench. Men like Jacob Ilive, a former inmate who published an exposé of prison conditions, William Smith, a London physician, and Joseph Dornford, who questioned the City on its poor practice were notable. Howard of course, was highly influential both in parliament and particularly after the publication of the *State of Prisons*.

During the 1770s, while concerns for prison conditions were at their height, another carceral institution was investigated – the prison hulk. The subsequent parliamentary enquiry ensured a number of improvements to on board cleanliness. These drew heavily on work by James Lind's, and his naval experience. On this occasion changes to the sanitary conditions of prisoners were put into effect in a very short space of time, certainly much quicker than those implemented in London's prisons. By the 1790s the Middlesex Bench, had gained significant collective experience in the improvement of sanitary conditions. Unusually they reacted immediately, investigating conditions provided by a county contractor that were only indirectly under their control, those. While the wider

¹⁴⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the State of His Majesty's Prison in Cold Bath Fields, Clerkenwell*, Appendix, No.1, Minutes taken before the Committee, 12th March 1799, 13.

landscape of penal reform lies outside the scope of this thesis it is clear that reforms and improvement in cleanliness of Middlesex's prisons, played an important role in those initial changes.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

This study has sought to identify the ways in which the urban poor both experienced and engaged with cleanliness during the long eighteenth century. It has argued that the poor not only participated in acts of cleanliness, but they did so in multiple ways, sometimes as a client, at others as a service provider, but more often than not as strategists engaging in actions that enabled them to acquire clean clothing, bodies or surroundings. This thesis has examined a variety of these methods and strategies in order to demonstrate that the poor were not universally dirty, and that they often employed considerable agency in order to appear clean. It has also illuminated aspects of everyday plebeian life that have hitherto remained uncharted, and in the process added to our knowledge of eighteenth-century London. It has suggested that some aspects of cleanliness formed distinctive elements of plebeian culture.

In the 1980s, in a paradigm shift in the cultural history of cleanliness, Georges Vigarello identified a regimen of ‘white linen’ as a signifier of bodily cleanliness. This transferred the notion of cleanliness away from the body and fixed it to the linen closest to the skin.¹ However, while this regimen was widespread, including amongst plebeian men and women, this thesis has argued that it was not the only mode of personal cleanliness. Throughout the eighteenth century, for instance, plebeian men and boys bathed in London’s rivers and waterways, seeking a kind of cleanliness that was far removed from Vigarello’s ideal of cleanliness as a fragment of the history of manners or indeed as a part of eighteenth-century male politeness.² River bathing was a matter of necessity and comfort for working men. Chapter two argued that this form of cleanliness was very

¹ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 3, 228.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

particular to plebeian men and boys, and can be found at a time when the urban *élite* became increasingly private about their personal cleanliness as they began to retreat to the newly developing interior bathroom. However, this very visible form of bathing was not without conflict as notions of personal privacy between the *élite* and working men diverged during the latter half of the eighteenth century. As we saw in chapter two, this came to a head in the 1770s and 1780s as plebeian men continued to push the boundaries of expected plebeian behaviour, creating a conflict that went well beyond Leslie Tomory's analysis of these disputes, as primarily focused on issues of water purity.³ Chapter two argued that disputes concerned a new moral imperative for cleanliness of the poor and the beginning of a debate about public baths. This chapter also revealed a story of the evolving legal regulation of the public sphere as authorities struggled to find ways to prohibit the poor from publicly bathing in the nude in London's waterways.

Public immersive bathing was also undertaken in another form from the late seventeenth century – at the public bagnio. Chapter three examined this largely under-researched institution by charting how the bagnio evolved from an *élite* bathing establishment offering therapeutic treatment and fashionable conviviality to an institution that served a much wider clientele. The hitherto prevailing narrative that all bagnios operated as brothels is dispelled in favour of a more complex explanation in which many bagnios offered bathing facilities in respectable establishments. Chapter three identified the 'high period' of the London bagnio between the 1680s and the 1720s where both *élite* men and women attended these Turkish-style establishments, although on separate days and with separate staff. These establishments were often run or owned by cuppers with royal connections. However, somewhere between the 1720s and 1740s bagnios came to be thought of as generally less respectable; as some bagnio owners began to turn a blind-eye

³ Tomory, "The Question of Water Quality".

towards sexual liaisons in their accommodation, while others acted as serviced brothels. Despite many bagnios remaining entirely respectable, the declining reputation of some bagnios, together with more private forms of cleanliness developing in the home, led to the elite turning away from the public bagnio. At the same time plebeian men and women began to find ways to enter the bagnio, initially as clients sent by their parish of settlement for treatment. By mid-century, many began to gain admission through charitable concerns, particularly at less popular times in the mornings. The declining price of a bath also encouraged plebeian men and women to take up bathing, so for as little as a shilling they could bathe. By 1785 a London bagnio was noted as stating that new baths were to be constructed for the 'lower and middle classes of people'.⁴ Chapter three demonstrated that the provision of public bagnios or bathing houses for the poor was now becoming part of a wider public debate; a part of the same concerns over the morality of river bathing explored in chapter two.

As these debates over immersive bathing were playing out over the eighteenth century, the 'white linen regimen' continued to dominate notions of personal cleanliness. This was underpinned by a continuous supply of clean white linen which was enabled and maintained by London's washerwomen, laundresses and laundry-maids. Chapter four explored this world of professional cleaning, building on work by John Styles, to extend and define the work and role of the eighteenth-century laundress and washerwomen in respect to cleanliness. It identified a significant element of the female workforce; some 10% as laundry-workers. Physical labour was undoubtedly paramount to a washerwoman, but her knowledge and understanding of the increasingly complex techniques used in laundry-work gave her an advantage in the labour market. For some this work permitted a measure of economic independence or at the least, the ability to avoid the workhouse. It

⁴ Smythson, *The Compleat Family Physician*, 640.

also allowed working women a degree of flexibility. Women could take laundry into their own homes, offer their services at large domestic houses or assist in the neighbourhood in modest dwellings. Urban washerwomen were also able to specialise, some mangled, ironed or starched items rather than attend to the physically hard business of the wash. Children were often incorporated in the laundry business, particularly in the collection and delivery of laundry to local clients. Clients also benefited from washerwomen's ability to accommodate various forms of washing, the poor particularly were able to have one or two garments washed for a shilling or two.

Chapter four argued that this flexibility of practice could also be understood as 'tactics' employed by women in order to negotiate or subvert the 'strategies' of everyday cleanliness set out before them.⁵ This can be depicted as 'agency' or considered in the more formal framework of De Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*. Both of which allow for an interpretation of these women as actively engaged in the business of cleanliness.

Laundresses and washerwomen's well-earned reputation as hard-working women engendered a level of respect in their communities, and in turn laundry-work was perceived as a respectable occupation. This perceived respectability, as Lynn MacKay suggests 'was the key to various kinds of assistance' since it allowed widowed washerwomen, in particular wider access to charitable resources.⁶ Clearly many of these women could both read and write and 'cast accounts' since much of their work as independent laundresses and washerwomen relied upon their ability to produce laundry lists and provide bills and receipts for their work. What emerged from chapters two, three and four, was both a challenge to the notion of the 'clean linen regime', and a degree of measured support for its importance. River bathing and the history of the bagnios

⁵ De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 34-37.

⁶ MacKay, *Respectability and the London Poor*, 1.

suggested that there were important and contested alternatives to a ‘clean linen regime’, while chapter four illustrated the extent to which that same regime was central to a huge body of laundry work. The rest of the thesis explored the workings of these competing regimens via case studies of a series of institutions charged with delivering cleanliness to eighteenth-century Londoners.

Not only was most of London society predicated on the ‘clean linen regimen’ but almost all of London’s institutions for the poor were too, notably workhouses, hospitals and associational charities. The constant churning of inmates, patients and recipients of charity through these institutions suggests that a large proportion of poor Londoners had personal experience of one or more of them. Each of these institutions implemented various systems, rules and procedures that incorporated aspects of cleanliness. Whether this concerned bodily cleanliness, that of clothing and other linen or the institution itself, all considered cleanliness an important part of the institutional regime, except one. Prisons and the Houses of Correction were the exception to this.

The workhouses examined in chapter five were established on the tenets of a good ‘Christian family’. Here, the poor could be inculcated with a strong work ethic predicated on this industrious Christian household. Many of these early workhouses were influenced by the SPCK and their volumes entitled *An Account of Several Work-Houses*. As Tim Hitchcock suggests, these acted as a set of instructions rather than an argument. The numerous examples of cleanliness given in these slim volumes identified methods of implementing and maintaining a ‘clean linen regimen’ in the workhouse by using inmates to undertake laundry work. This had the added advantage of providing work for women and maintaining the notion of industriousness amongst the ‘workhouse family’. At the same time it also sustained the patriarchal and gendered version of the workhouse by

ensuring women and girls more frequently dealt with the laundry, and indeed other aspects of institutional cleanliness.

Inmates however, were not without agency in the workhouse. By being admitted they were able to access clean clothing, a clean bed and particularly a clean body and in return, they were expected to scrub clean and wash as the master and mistress of the workhouse required. Much of this was embedded in the workhouse rules, and later merely incorporated into the workhouse systems. Occasionally, it became incorporated into legislation, as did the provision of clothing in the workhouse under the terms of the Relief of the Poor Act, 1782.⁷ Workhouse rules could only be effective if there was some common ground and workable by both parties, their constant evolution and redefinition suggests that this was in perpetual flux—often changing after a period of overcrowding. Rules concerning cleanliness also operated as markers of a well-run institution, visibly clean paupers attested to the efficacy of the workhouse. Particularly as they were displayed in cleaned and combed ranks in the parish church on Sundays. Chapter five suggested that over time the workhouse accommodated changes in regimes of cleanliness, some large institutions made provision for water on upper floors and the dormitory wards. Others, like Islington introduced hard soap for bodily use. There is little evidence however, that before the end of the eighteenth century workhouses made regular use of immersive bathing. They stuck firmly to the ‘clean linen regimen’ throughout the century with most providing clean linen once a week.

Children’s institutional cleanliness was problematic since many were without a parent and those with one were usually separated from them. Care for these children was determined by their parish or possibly one of the new associational charities. Chapter six examined how, by mid-century, a national rhetoric had grown up in which the preservation

⁷ 22 Geo. III c. 83. (Gilbert’s Act).

of children's lives was both an economic necessity and a patriotic duty. It considered how this was very quickly linked to notions of plebeian cleanliness in a rhetoric of national economic benefit. This discourse was often dominated by men of the sort Patricia Crawford has described as 'civic fathers', many of these men also took on influential positions in high profile charities.⁸ Chapter six examined this phenomenon in relation to the Foundling Hospital and subsequently Sunday Schools.

Men like Jonas Hanway, William Buchan and William Cadogan were undoubtedly influential and their views on childcare went well beyond the Foundling Hospital. However, many of their views were not relevant to poor families in need of assistance. Hanway went to great lengths to denigrate these parents and parish nurses in order to further his own charitable ambitions. He sought to define them as filthy, dirty and unable to care for children and infants. In the same way and for the same reasons, he also marked out workhouses by criticising poor conditions and inadequate ventilation. By contrast, rules at the Foundling Hospital sought to not only regulate the cleanliness of children but the staff too and, although not always successful, conditions were generally thought to be good. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a new institution for the education of poor children appeared – the Sunday School. Chapter six argued that this marked an important transition in attitudes towards institutional cleanliness. In almost all early Sunday Schools, regardless of denominational affiliation, cleanliness and self- presentation formed an important element. Unlike workhouses, residential schools and other charitable institutions cleanliness was encouraged in a child's home. Both parents and children were notified that personal cleanliness and neatness was a requirement of their attendance at the school. Cleanliness, it was argued encouraged self-reliance and consequently more self-confidence. The 'white linen regimen' was not mandatory or even specifically mentioned

⁸ Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*, 193-239.

in relation to Sunday Schools although general neatness of appearance was encouraged for their attendance at school.

Chapter seven continued the broad survey of the poor in London's institutions by considering the hospital. Provision across London was extremely varied. This chapter suggested that this diversity in hospital provision was reflected in the relative levels of cleanliness both anticipated and provided at each type of institution. The lying-in hospitals were particularly susceptible to public opinion since this influenced their financial circumstances. Their status as a voluntary hospital meant they were almost entirely dependent on charitable giving. This encouraged them to adopt new regimes more quickly and to consider innovative schemes, particularly newer forms of architecture that enabled clean air to circulate through the wards. Part of this ability to maintain 'high' standards of cleanliness was achieved by ensuring that they only admitted patients that met their standards of bodily cleanliness. Chapter seven also explored the notion of comfort and cleanliness in lying-in hospitals, which were frequently linked, and as suggested by the analysis of the Brownlow Street Lying-in Hospital influenced their reputation.⁹ To a lesser extent St Luke's Hospital followed this model.

Personal cleanliness of the lunatic body remained important throughout the century as their insanity or associated illnesses often prevented them from following a straight forward 'clean linen regimen'. At times the regime at Bethlem Hospital either neglected or subjected its patients to unnecessarily poor conditions that were nothing short of filthy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century however, a new building was able to greatly improve conditions.

⁹ *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Lying-in Hospital for Married Women, in Brownlow Street, Long-Acre From its First Institution in November 1749 to July 25, 1751* (London, 1751), The form of the commendatory letter, 22.

The final institution examined in this thesis is unique amongst those servicing London's poor, in that it did not subscribe to the model of regular 'clean linen' in the way that almost all other institutions did. Chapter eight considered prisons and Houses of Correction in their journey towards reforming prison cleanliness. It focussed on the fifty years after the 'Black Sessions' of 1750 at which member of the judiciary, legal profession and jurors caught goal fever and perished. The chapter contends that this event was the impetus for far reaching and continuing change in Middlesex's prisons, a great deal of which concerned the cleanliness of both the prisons and prisoners. It juxtaposed the short term changes employed in Newgate against those wider reaching changes undertaken in the Middlesex New Prison and House of Correction. The two most important of which were the Middlesex Justices acknowledging their responsibilities for the well-being of prisoners in their care together with the direct employment of Prison Keepers. This later change ensured that the magistrates were able to directly instruct keepers to implement policy changes.

Chapter eight went on to suggest that the Middlesex Bench were particularly susceptible to public criticism. Notably from Jacob Ilive in 1757 which brought on a flurry of administrative activity as did that generated by John Howard's *State of Prisons* in 1777.¹⁰ Towards the end of the century however, the chapter argued, the Middlesex Bench had developed enough sophistication to react quickly and effectively to criticism regarding the London hulks.

This chapter outlined the very distinctive evolution of cleanliness in Middlesex's prisons. Beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century, during which no regimen of cleanliness was enforced by the Middlesex Bench, to the end of the century when a new form of prison cleanliness was embodied in Cold Bath Fields Prison. In the early

¹⁰ Ilive, *Reformation of the House of Correction*; Howard, *State of Prisons* (1777).

eighteenth-century cleanliness was either bought by wealthy prisoners or provided by forms of self-regulation by poorer inmates. In many ways this forms a pre-history of cleanliness in which prisoners did the best they were able given their resources. Forms of personal cleanliness for anyone other than wealthy prisoners during this period have been impossible to recover and so remain outside of the scope of this thesis. By the end of the century however, a 'clean linen regimen' is certainly embraced in the new prison at Cold Bath Fields as evidenced by laundries and a regimen that specified clean linen.

This thesis has argued that no single cleanliness regime – neither based on full-body immersion, nor 'clean linen', existed in eighteenth-century London. Instead, it has argued that at least two regimes were present, and that, if anything, working men were most likely to pursue bodily cleanliness through river bathing. It has also argued that even among the institutions of the capital, there were real disagreements about cleanliness, with most institutions adopting a clean linen regime, while prisons and lock-ups preserved an older regime. Overall, this thesis has sought to demonstrate that eighteenth-century cleanliness cannot be understood, without locating it in the specific circumstances of class, community and gender.

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