Introduction

In 1668, Frances Angell, an apprentice seamstress, lost her temper with her mistress Apollonia Maddox. She stormed out of the house and refused to return, saying 'she could maintain herself well enough' without her. She meant, as a witness explained, 'she had attained to so good skill and instrucon in hir arte of a sempstress as she was able thereby to gett hir living'. Frances Angell and her father sued Maddox and her husband to get back the premium that had been paid for Frances's training. The Maddoxes resisted, claiming Frances was idle, stubborn and wasteful; disobedient to both her mistress and her father; and 'a slattern in her clothes'.[1]

Frances was one of a generation of young women who, in their mid-teens, were bound as apprentices to learn to make a living. The path of trained apprenticeship for young women featured almost nowhere in printed literature, in advice to girls, in ballads or in plays. But it was a well-established route to independent work, practised in parishes and towns around the country as well as in guilds like those of the City of London and drawing in girls from the poorest to the gentry, as well as the women who ran successful businesses and those who laboured sewing for them, making lace or buttons, washing and starching, making cakes and selling fruit. This book uncovers their stories, and the networks of labour, credit and skill that gave working women their place in the early modern city.

Girls and women who maintained themselves, we will see, were ordinary, familiar figures in early modern cities. Domestic service through the later teenage years was characteristic of the life cycle of women in Northwestern Europe, where marriage was typically delayed till the mid-twenties. But other aspects of women's occupational training and artisanal life cycle are under-recorded both in formal archives and in the historiography. The guilds in London and elsewhere through which

[1] LMA, CLA/024/05/249 (1669).

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many girls were apprenticed adopted ambivalent attitudes to their labour, and the formulaic records of apprenticeship minimise women's roles. Court cases like Frances Angell's; wills, tax lists and other administrative records; and record digitisation make it possible to find women in guilds and fill out the picture of their lives.[2] The chapters that follow examine how girls and women in late seventeenth-century London trained to earn a living and incorporated themselves into the institutions of apprenticeship and guilds, and the foundations this laid for the community of working women.

The 'ingenious trade' of the title described the work of one of London's seamstresses, Margaret Reeves. A friend looking to place an apprentice with her in 1694 described her as 'the best & most Ingenious of her tread makes & draws all her own patterns works only to people of the greatest quality'.[3] London's fashion market was teeming with ready-made goods, from shifts and aprons to coifs and gowns. Seamstresses acquired patterns to cut out garments with economy and style, and specialised needlewomen used patterns for embroidery or drew their own. The phrase also stands for the necessary ingenuity of making a career in a City regulated by London's livery companies, the guilds, and pressed by the forces of commerce and patriarchal regulation. 'Ingenious' connoted mastery of a craft, talent matched with technique, but also a kind of cunning in outwitting limits, or contriving an elegant effect with hidden means.[4] It suggested, often, an accomplished male virtuoso; to find it used of a woman's trade illuminates the skills and techniques that went with the seventeenth-century needle and shop.

The ubiquity of seamstress work in early modern cities makes it a fertile ground for tracing gendered conflicts over occupational identity and revealing female agency in the face of the obstacles to women's economic autonomy.[5] London's special place in those conflicts was shaped by the resources and strategies of the women who came to work

[2] Critical here is the searchable guild data on ROLLCO, www.londonroll.org. The London Apprenticeship Abstracts by Cliff Webb and the Freedoms of the City of London are available commercially on www.findmypast.co.uk and www.ancestry.co.uk, respectively.

[3] Bristol University Special Collections, Pinney Papers, Red Box 2 folder VII, Mary Pinney to Hester Pinney, 7 February 1695. This encounter is discussed further in Chapter 3. "Tread" = trade - or possibly, thread.

[4] Alexander Marr et al., *Logodaedalus: Word Histories of Ingenuity in Early Modern Europe* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), introduction.

[5] See, for example, Clare Haru Crowston, 'Engendering the Guilds: Seamstresses, Tailors, and the Clash of Corporate Identities in Old Regime France', *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 2 (2000): 339–71; Mary Prior, 'Women in the Urban Economy', in *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 147–72; Deborah Simonton, '"Sister to the Tailor": Guilds, Gender and the Needle Trades in Eighteenth-Century Europe', in *Early Professional Women in Northern Europe,*

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there, and also by the peculiarities of City custom. By the seventeenth century, the livery companies that functioned as guilds were losing their power to regulate their own trades so that seamstresses, like other artisans, could join most companies, could train apprentices and could gain the benefits of City freedom through their husbands, through the patrimonial right of their fathers and through their own apprenticeships.[6] Women's careers were often short or interrupted but laid the grounds for a future working life in which both sewing and trading were likely to be useful resources. Some worked for much longer, setting up shops and businesses that ran for years and taking on a series of apprentices who did the same.

Women's work in the textile trades of early modern London was critical to the expansion of those trades in the service of new patterns of consumption, which included quicker, cheaper fashion, often bought off the peg, with numerous ready-made accessories, alongside more disposable household goods. Shopping, so often portrayed as leisure, was also unpaid work, and learning to distinguish the increasingly varied goods of the seventeenth-century marketplace and shopfront involved expertise and touch. The households of urban tradespeople were the leaders in purchasing mirrors, curtains and goods for entertainment; they probably also led in displaying the clothes they sold.[7] Apprentices learned to make and sell clothes and also to want more or better for themselves. The women of this book lived in this world of shops as consumers, but also as workers and as businesswomen. Learning and teaching sewing put women behind the counter in the consumer revolution, alongside the asset management and economic decision-making that were typical of women's roles in business and merchant households.[8] They learned to make, trim, appraise and sell, and established a place in the world of new shops and shopping galleries like the Royal Exchange. The labour of

c. 1650–1850, ed. Johanna Ilmakunnas, Marjatta Rahikainen and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2017).

[6] Amy Louise Erickson, 'Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies 1700–1750', *History Workshop Journal* 71 (2011): 147–72 illuminates the significance of female apprenticeship in early modern London.

[7] Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (Brighton: Psychology Press, 1996).

[8] Alexandra Shepard. 'Crediting Women in the Early Modern English Economy', *History Workshop Journal* 78 (2015): 1–24; Lorna Weatherill, 'A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behavior in England, 1660–1740', *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 2 (1986): 131–56; Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

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apprentice girls and their mistresses helped shape the new world of consumption.

Their work was an integral part of an expanding urban economy, sustained by a trade boom and a transatlantic trading empire which made luxury textiles and foods cheaper and more readily available. As in cities across Europe, women migrants came in such numbers, often as servants, that they outnumbered men in the population by 3:2. Textile work – the largest sector of women's employment – was increasingly specialised, involving women of all ages and marital statuses in different roles. Evidence from legal records shows married women working widely independently from their husbands, largely in sewing, provisioning and the service sector.[9] Single women, too, were establishing more opportunities to hold shops and trade in their own name and the number of never-married women reached a peak in the mid-seventeenth century. Tax lists in 1693 show around 16 per cent of London's households headed by women and 26 per cent in the dockside hamlet of Ratcliff, London's Sailortown.[10] While Jan de Vries saw in the long eighteenth century an 'industrious revolution' which expanded women's orientation towards the market, Alexandra Shepard has suggested that what women were doing may simply have become more visible in these specialised urban contexts.[11] While sewing, making clothes and accessories and textile manufacture were the most prominent trades in London female apprenticeship, it extended to pastry-making, pin-making and numerous other trades.

In the bigger picture of women's work, continuity of inequality underpins significant economic and social shifts. Over a century ago, the first extensive study of early modern women's work, Alice Clark's *Working Women in Seventeenth-Century England* organised an exhaustive archival investigation around a transition from domestic and family industry to capitalist production, which effectively marginalised women's productive participation in the economy.[12] Both the chronology and the terms of her

[9] Amy Louise Erickson, 'Married Women's Occupations in Eighteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change* 23, no. 2 (2008): 267–307; Peter Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review* 42, no. 3 (1989): 328–53.

[10] Craig Spence, *London in the 1690s: A Social Atlas* (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2000), 75.

[11] De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*; Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 30.

[12] Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Amy Louise Erickson (London: Routledge, 1992); Clark's material includes substantial references to women in urban crafts guilds, though it is often not clear what trade they were actually practising.

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argument have been substantially modified. The earlier period was no golden age: a relatively free labour market after the population loss of the Black Death was followed by a reduction in the scope of and reward for women's work in the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the growing wage economy and the move of production outside households still involved significant, rewarding participation from both married and single women.[13] A continuing profile of low reward and poor esteem kept the 'patriarchal equilibrium' in place.[14] Recent large-scale archival projects have pioneered the analysis of legal records, with their extensive details about daily life, to create a time-use analysis of gendered work, noting who was doing what, for how long, and when, and reaching a fuller range of gendered labour by including all work that could be paid for.[15] One of the revealing findings of Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood's investigation of women's work using this method is that women's work is systematically under-reported in witness statements, which were more often than not made by men.[16] The depositions used in this study, similarly, often reflect different stresses on the part of young women, male apprentices, interested neighbours and families. The stories of apprentices, mistresses and freewomen testify to the place of work in women's lives and to the structural system that underpinned their training. They reveal work at the centre of adolescent life, training for work as part of the plans by and for a wide spectrum of young women, and the role of a mistress as a particular and unique aspect of urban women's married and single lives.

The stories that record these roles are contested ones. At the common-law jurisdiction of the Mayor's Court, dissatisfied apprentices 'sued out' their indentures, dissolving their contracts. In the flexible system of apprenticeship, interrupted contracts were more common than completed ones and were mostly managed outside the courts, but the litigation guaranteed a closure of the obligation on both sides.[17] A small

[13] Jan de Vries, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution', *Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 2 (1994): 249–70; Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*.

[14] Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), chapter 4.

[15] Sheilagh Ogilvie, 'How Does Social Capital Affect Women? Guilds and Communities in Early Modern Germany', *American Historical Review* 109, no. 2 (2004): 325–59; Maria Ågren, ed., *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[16] Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood, 'The Gender Division of Labour in Early Modern England', *Economic History Review* 73, no. 1 (2020): 11. Both sexes were less likely to report work done by the opposite sex.

[17] Patrick Wallis, 'Labor, Law, and Training in Early Modern London: Apprenticeship and the City's Institutions', *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 4 (2012): 791–819.

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number of families went on to use the equity side of the Mayor's Court to try to recoup the premium they had paid for training, litigation which could involve substantial costs and which was mostly concluded with the repayment of a proportion of the premium which reflected the court's judgement on how badly each side had failed to perform their duty. Accounts were often wildly divergent, though not irreconcilable. Apprentices and their parents brought witnesses to drudgery, poor food, bad training and violence. Mistresses, hoping to have to pay back as little as possible, complained of poor work, unauthorised absences, idleness, theft and rudeness but reiterated their willingness to continue the contract. While both sides, guided by attorneys, structured their complaints around predictable grounds based on the apprenticeship contract, their narratives and the gaps between them provide a view into a world that has been largely invisible. Moreover, the use that women made of the Mayor's Court system reveals the integration of a set of expectations around women's work into an extensive wider system for managing training through customary norms and institutional mediation.

Over the last thirty years, historians have worked out methods of reading court records as sources for social history. Their narratives are constructed around memories, mediations, truths and fictions; the whole idea of truth in law is historically specific. Fictions woven for court cases tend to reveal fantasies that had real power over people's minds, and the power of the plausible means that fictionalised, exaggerated versions can be as useful to historians as strict truths. Alongside the key contested events, most testimonies include significant extraneous detail that reveals who was doing what, where and when. From the answers witnesses gave to leading questions, a landscape of daily life can be reconstituted alongside an attention to the fantasies and fictions people wove around their daily lives. The Mayor's Court cases come late in the bloom of legal activity that characterised the early modern period. They were pursued by gentry families, City traders and artisans and witnessed by their servants, apprentices, family and neighbours, with the aim of reaching a financial resolution based on the principles of equity. Many of these people had substantial social capital and literacy and were experienced in using the law. Other equity jurisdictions have been shown to be particularly open to women, but at the Mayor's Court, held at the Guildhall with a fixed team of attorneys, fathers or male guardians rather than mothers typically represented their daughters, perhaps reflecting the culture of the City and the guilds. Mayor's Court litigants and many of their witnesses were knowledgeable navigators of their generally privileged world, and they testified accordingly. The degree to which apprentices could or should partake of that privilege was one of the points of

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stress in their households. These testimonies were given in private and written up by a clerk; cases that were contested involved attorney advice as well. Witnesses responded to explicit and often fulsome libels framed by litigants. All this makes them feel quite practised. London's shopkeepers were interested in manners, politeness and civility, and so it is not surprising that the cases attend particularly to the ways of the body and to the performances of work and respect. Sixteenth and early seventeenth-century church court depositions – fodder for much rich social history of sex and marriage in the period – often echo popular stories, jokes and play plots, especially in London. The stories from the Mayor's Court of the late seventeenth century, with less raw human drama to them and pursuing a financial judgement, tend to have a different psychological dimension. They try to read character, to judge laziness or hard work alongside its appearance; their argumentative working women and men, preoccupied with status, appearance and worldly goods, are characters from an age of epistolary novels with an interest in personality development.

The fullest evidence survives for litigation over expensive apprenticeships. The premiums paid by the women who sued at the Mayor's Court ranged up to £50, representative of three or five times a labourer's average annual income, and a significant outlay for citizens or gentry. This kind of investment has important implications for women's work but represented a tiny minority of female apprentices. Most guild apprentices paid nothing like this, nor did the vast number of arrangements made outside the remit of the City of London and its companies, by families and intermediaries, by institutions like Christ's Hospital and by parishes making plans for their orphans and pauper children. Those apprenticeships went wrong too but were unlikely to reach public attention unless violence or significant debt was involved. Eve Salmon's case was one such problem. Apprenticed to housewifery in Hackney in 1686, she petitioned to be released after four years. Her master and mistress accused her of deserting, purloining goods, frequenting 'debauch't houses' and contracting venereal disease; Eve said she was driven to it by a want of food and clothes. Like Frances Angell, but in very different circumstances, Eve claimed she could provide for herself 'without being a charge to any person'.[18] Glimpses of apprentices' lives come from a variety of records, most of which leave only basic details, but there are enough to put together a rich profile of the households who trained young women of all statuses in the early modern city. Guild records

[18] LMA, MJ/SP 1691/02/11 and MJ/SP 1691/02/012.

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and tax listings make it possible to reconstruct the quantitative contours of that world, showing up patterns within different companies, differences of marital and social status and sometimes the long life cycles of women's shop and craft work. Wills and indentures reveal the family and kin structures behind apprenticeship, showing us the informal networks that sustained women's work in the metropolis and reaching out into the provinces.

Apprenticeship for girls was a potentially radical business. The paperwork of apprenticeship reflects the impulse, apparent across London's livery companies as in guilds elsewhere, to celebrate male artisanship and repress the place of women. The records of guilds, unlike those of the courts, used conventions that concealed women's' and girls' roles, speaking of masters rather than mistresses and boys rather than girls, until they were forced to write them in. Keeping women's part in apprenticeship under cover tacitly enhanced the masculine ideal of corporate and civic life and the ideal life cycle of male artisans. Apprenticing girls subverted the apparently overwhelming masculinisation of artisanal labour in towns and cities and their guilds. In the late seventeenth century, London's seamstresses often lived in dyads of single mistresses and apprentices, a quite different model of work to that of the artisanal household. Even without the outright conflicts between women seamstresses and male tailors that characterised places like Oxford and York, or Rouen and Paris, women in London's guilds were changing the system to which they were attached.

Histories of women's work customarily frame it as under-recognised, informal, flexible and unregulated. Apprenticeship was different: it contracted women to each other with binding, legally significant expectations. The profiles of apprentices and mistresses in the chapters that follow reveal a system of formal training, based on reciprocal contracts, that was a familiar part of women's work lives in early modern England. The path of apprenticeship was an increasingly familiar choice for the gentry and middling sort and for artisanal families across the social spectrum. It extended down to the very poorest: the contract of training was not strikingly different from that given, with much less choice, to those bound by parish officers as a result of the provisions of the Poor Laws. Arranged, often, without paperwork that survives, frequently unrecorded by guilds, the apprenticeship of young women nevertheless represents a formal recognition of skills and an articulation of the costs and benefits of training that reshapes the idea of women's work as outside the realms of skill, training and measurable reward. The constraints and assets of a contract between an apprentice and her employer, often in the context of a guild, provided both disciplinary structure and a

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recognised place in the business world of the early modern city. More widely, the system of apprenticeship for girls created a capillary network of girls, women and skills across the country.

To take apprenticeship and mistresshood seriously means rethinking the place of work in women's minds and manners. Being trained, earning money, and doing work that could be rewarded or substituted with pay was a normal experience for seventeenth-century women, and for many it helped shape their sense of who they were and who they might become. The social history of later seventeenth-century women is still under-developed. By the 1660s, the verbal, spiritual and popular political authority that women had claimed in the Civil Wars and the English Revolution functioned as much as a reminder of the dangers of the world turned upside down, as an example of what women could do; the return of a court in which women's roles were highly sexualised reinvented patriarchal order in a different vein. A nominally universalising political language came to signify the practical exclusion of women and the identification of political agency as masculine.[19] In the realm of political theory, social contract shifted the marital relationship and women's role out of politics and into the world of nature. The naturalisation of the politically resonant patriarchal household made marriage, paradoxically, less public and perhaps less open to debate.[20]

At the same time, a new model of politeness structured behavioural norms for women around inward modesty: the outward performance was meant to demonstrate the inner virtue. A rhetorical bifurcation of male and female worlds functioned as an insistent backdrop to women's agency in economic, political and print worlds. In the context of metropolitan life before and after the Fire, as trade, housing, social life, work and manners underwent rapid change, young women who came to the City made identities as workers and consumers, seamstresses and shopkeepers, single women and wives. In the closely written legal records, a new language of sensibility traces what they learned and the challenges of their social, domestic and labour relations. The seamstress's life had its own power dynamics: conflicts of words and violence between apprentices and their mistresses, the pressure to fit women's work into family economies and the trade-offs between exploitation and autonomy that characterised learning to sew in the metropolitan market. The chapters

[19] Hilda L. Smith, *All Men and Both Sexes: Gender, Politics, and the False Universal in England, 1640–1832* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

[20] The classic statement of this development is Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford University Press, 1988); see also Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family, and Political Argument in England, 1680–1714* (Manchester University Press, 1999).

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that follow trace the possibilities and the limits this brought for individual women and the networks of work, interest and credit that connected them. In the stories of apprenticeships that worked out and those that did not, from those of paupers to those of gentry daughters, we will see pragmatism, determination, calculation, childish fantasy and rebellion.

The course of the book follows the careers of girls and women in and around London's guilds, the places they worked, the skills and manners they learned and their place in the changing city. It begins in the shops where they worked and moves through their careers as apprentices, mistresses and freewomen. Each chapter begins with a case study from the legal archive. Chapter 1 starts the story in the shops of the Royal Exchange, reconstructing its particular, feminised shopping space and the working lives of its shopkeepers. Chapter 2 goes back to apprentice training, using guild and court records to uncover the extent and nature of female apprenticeship in London and reconstructing a moment of transformation in the 1650s when girls started to join London's companies. Chapter 3 turns to mistresses and shows how skills were transmitted through networks of women, how marital status shaped work life and how guilds and contracts constrained and enabled women's work. Chapter 4 explores how, and what, girls learnt in apprenticeship, using legal records to recover in new detail the occupations, mostly textile-related, in which women trained and the skills and teaching that established girls in the sewing trade. Chapter 5 looks at the other side of apprenticeship: the behaviour that made girls into appropriate workwomen and the battles that marked their adolescence. Here, the language of legal records, attentive to subtle shades of gesture and character, presents apprenticeship as a mode of manners and a window into the social dynamics of shops and working households. The final chapter looks at the longer relationships women made with City Companies over their lifetimes: claiming the freedom, using their fathers' patrimonies, and petitioning for the right to trade, making themselves, to some degree, citizens. Petitions and the diverse documentation of freedoms reveal the paths by which women negotiated a formalized place in the civic community. As in many contexts of women's public lives, they trod a tautly balanced line between exclusion and acceptance, initiative and compromise.

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4 What Girls Learned

Mary Jones and Frances Carey

'Do you know,' demanded the libel that initiated a Mayor's Court case in 1666, 'how long the defendant Frances Carey before the said Mary was bound to her as her Apprentice had kept shop as a sempster, and whether she was not very desirous to have her bound to her and for what reasons?'[1] Mary Jones had been apprenticed to Carey to learn her trade 'as a sempstresse & to wash and starch Linnen & to sell wares in ye shop'. In retrospect, Frances Carey's importunate desire to have Mary Jones as her apprentice was a bad sign. It suggested, Mary's guardian alleged, that she was not sufficiently well established to train her properly, but rather that she needed the premium she brought.

Mary's case was presented by Robert Blaney, the clerk of the Haberdashers' Company, later to establish himself as a leading Nonconformist lawyer. He must have had experience of the apprenticeship of girls into city shops. In the event, as the family told it, his misgivings were justified. Carey did not have enough trade to keep her shop going; she and her husband used Mary Jones's premium as the investment the business needed, and because there was not enough trade, or enough money, to expand the shop, Mary spent her time doing household labour instead of learning the skills of trading that were meant to help her establish herself in life. She left her apprenticeship and got married, and her family sued for the return of her original premium. In the family's eyes, apprenticeship was an education for work, inculcating a hierarchy of skills that gave women a lifelong access to flexible, marketable and sometimes prestigious labour. This artisanal education for girls, notably absent from the contemporary and historical literature on apprenticeship, is the subject of this chapter. Despite the minimal historical and contemporary discussion of female apprenticeship, legal testimonies and apprenticeship documentation reveal an established set of

[1] LMA, CLA/024/05/198B.

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specialised skills and shared understandings of what, and how, young women learned. Beginning with Mary Jones, the chapter goes on to reconstruct the range of trades to which girls were apprenticed across differences of background and status. The most common occupation, seamstress, involved a hierarchy of competences, from wielding the needle to giving out change. Those skills both enabled economic autonomy and reflected codes of gendered work and behaviour.

Mary Jones's case exemplifies one route to becoming a seamstress, and it illuminates the skills, investment and networks that apprenticeship involved. The dominant trade of girls in apprenticeships in late seventeenth-century London, seamstry encompassed both shop work and manual craft. Mary had been apprenticed to Frances and Richard Carey, based in Whitechapel, in the early 1660s. Frances Carey was running a shop in partnership with Ann Washington, which she rented from Mary Baker for £10 a year, until she left and moved her stock elsewhere. Although Richard Carey is mentioned in the case, all the references to the shop present it as run by Frances with other women. In keeping with this female world, Mary's widowed mother was keen on her apprenticeship, but her uncle and her guardian had made enquiries about the Careys and 'could not understand them to be in such a condicon as they alleged themselves to be'. Rather, they were 'but new Beginners in the world and had not any considerable stock & trade whereby the said Mary might be instructed'. It turned out Frances had only had the shop for six weeks before taking Mary on. Robert Blaney told Mary's mother that he feared the money he was going to give with Mary's apprenticeship would be 'but cast away'. His misgivings clarify the financial implications of kinship. Whether Blaney was kin to Mary Jones or a friend, in the fullest early modern sense, he was bound to support her by investing in her future. The apprenticeship would give her somewhere to live and the skills to support herself, or to bring both skill and business opportunity into a marriage. Such arrangements worked as service did for other young women, as a means of transition from natal family to adult life, and perhaps they were particularly useful when, as in Mary Jones's case, widowed mothers had remarried. Like service, apprenticeship was a life-cycle experience, and more explicitly than service, it trained young women in marketable, non-domestic skills.

Robert Blaney also helped Mary and her mother manage the risks of apprenticeship, drawing up a contract in which the Careys received £10 in hand and the promise of £15 more in three years' time, but only if Frances Carey offered the correct training. This was summarised: 'Provided that she the said Frances kept open shopp & continued in

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th'art of a sempstresse and to wash and starch Linnen and to sell wares in ye shop.' This is one of the few phrases that outlines a seamstress's actual work, but it still leaves the 'art of a sempstresse' a little obscure. What Mary Jones and her peers were meant to learn was a trade which included sewing; washing and starching; and selling goods from a flourishing, well-stocked shop. It was a combination of skills that meant they could work independently, in their own shops, or for others.

After a year, the arrangement was proving unsatisfactory to Mary's family. Her uncle, William Roberts, himself a merchant tailor, testified that Frances and Mary were both 'but as servants' to another woman who had been established in trade by Ann Washington, Frances's original partner. Frances's trade was 'in a declining condition', and Mary 'could not in all likelyhood be taught her trade'. William Roberts demanded part of the £10 premium back, and the bond for the further £15, but Frances refused, saying that if she did not get the full amount, Mary could go and learn her trade where she liked. Mary left, and her mother hired an attorney to sue out her indentures. Ann Washington was described as bankrupt, and Frances lost her business and 'never again kept open shop', working instead from a private room. Frances Carey had moved from sole trader to partnership to serving another woman, and with every step away from autonomy her capacity to be an effective mistress was undermined.

Mary Jones's mother, Elizabeth Wolfe, gave more detail about these confrontations. Elizabeth, who signed her deposition only with a 'W', described herself, not her brother, as the active party in challenging the failed apprenticeship. Frances, Elizabeth said, had told her that they needed the premium money to open a new house and shop. Frances had explicitly told her that she would keep her daughter out of the shop itself (and its trade) until she got the extra £15, saying 'that the said Mary should not do a stitch of work in her trade and that she would make her a drudge to do the work about the house and that she should not come in the shop till such time the 3 years were expired'. Shop work, in this story, is a mark of esteem, and Mary was not granted enough of it: her mother said that when she left, she was 'little the better for her trade'. Mary was a London girl from birth, with family connections in the Inns of Court and companies. Literate and numerate, her move into the sewing trade must have seemed like a sensible plan to increase the value she took with her into the world. Instead, her uncle said he feared she would be 'distroyed', because of the 'ill examples given in the said house by men of a wanton life'. No one expanded upon this suggestion, but it resonated with the literary association of millinery with ill repute, a trope which throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries laid a malicious undercurrent to women's work in fashion shops.

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Witnesses for the mistress in this case, Frances Carey, naturally had a different version, as they defended her to help her keep the premium that Mary Jones's family had paid. Reflecting Frances's defence of her capacity to train Mary, they revealed a little more of what was expected of apprentices and their mistresses. All of them had worked with Frances. Elizabeth Brackley, wife of a leather seller, and Susan Streeter, whose husband's status of esquire denoted a higher rank, employed Frances to do sewing work for them. Mary Baker, a seamstress herself, leased part of her shop to Frances for £10 a year. Ann Washington, Frances's original business partner, described herself as a gentleman's wife living in Whitechapel. She had lived and worked with Frances for a year, observing her to be 'well skilled in the art of a Sempstress whereby the said Mary the Apprentice might have bine well skilled in her art'. Mary had 'attained to some skill in that time', enough to be 'serviceable to her'. Even here, the exact process of transmitting skill from mistress to apprentice remains opaque, as artisanship always was: apprenticeship was demonstration.[2] Within a year of working side by side, the student had sufficient art to add value to the mistress's trade. The loss of Mary's last few years of skilled labour to her mistress was estimated by Ann Washington at £30; similar sums in other cases suggests this was not an unreasonable price for two years' work from a newly minted seamstress. These careful calculations record both the economic value of apprenticeship, readily imperilled by apprentices who left early or mistresses whose trades were unstable, and the expertise of women of business, practised in careful observation of shop work and girls' value.

The connections between the working women of Mary Jones's world evidently sustained both apprenticeship and trade. Frances Carey's witnesses had used her to do work for them and their friends. Susan Streeter trusted Frances's seamstry skills and the extent of her business, because she had bought several white bands and shirts and other linen from her. She had recommended Frances to others: 'she hath helped her the said Frances to severall Customers which have bought Linnen of her.' Finally, she also bound an apprentice to Frances herself for seven years, who 'doth live very well with the said Defendant Frances & she this deponent questioneth not but that she [Frances] will make her a good workwoman & that she will be well instructed in her trade'. The Jones/Carey case, like others, is rooted in a female world of work and decision-making.

[2] LMA, CLA/04/198 (1666); on artisanal apprenticeship, Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 2004) and Bert de Munck, Steven L. Kaplan and Hugo Soly (eds.), *Learning on the Shop Floor: Historical Perspectives on Apprenticeship* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).

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The passing mention of this other apprentice also reveals something of the larger market of apprenticeships in early modern communities. Several court cases suggest the role women played in helping each other to apprentices: it is a system somewhat reminiscent of the 'brokering in maidens' that roused complaints in the sixteenth century, when women acted as agents in putting girls into service, but suggesting a functional, rather than exploitative, network for girls' training.[3] Frances, despite the reduction of her trade, was apparently still able to take an apprentice. The apprenticeship market for girls was much larger than the companies, and essentially diverse and informal, but that wider market also abode by some constant rules.

Mary Jones left her service sometime in 1665, leaving no evidence whether or not she carried on her trade. By the time the lawsuit began, she had married Richard Fudge, and she came back to see Mary Baker, the shop owner, and tell her that she had married and had a child. She had at least five more children in the next thirteen years but died in 1681; her widower remarried the next year. Frances Carey lost or sold most of her stock and reduced her trade. Their connections demonstrate a business network in which the acquisition of skills went hand in hand with an open shop and a proliferation of personal recommendations and obligations.

The scraps of evidence for young women's training in trade range across the spectrum of apprenticeship, from Mary Jones, apprenticed to learn to run a seamstress's shop for an substantial premium of £25, down to Bell Clement, a 'poor foundling' of St Clement Danes apprenticed to learn houswifery in 1694, costing the parish 40 shillings. Their domestic and labour arrangements differed enormously, as did the scope of their futures, but all belonged to a national system which included both boys and girls, though the terms of that inclusion varied widely by status, place and trade, as well as by gender. Its operating assumption was that girls, like boys, were subject to and protected by the discipline of the apprentice system, its responsibilities and its benefits, and that if this worked, they would emerge independent, capable of earning a living and having recompensed their masters and mistresses with labour and, often, some money. We have already seen how flexible women's sewing careers could be; apprenticeship provided, at best, a portfolio of shop and craft skills to which they could return after marriage if they did not continue as single workers or shopkeepers. Our most detailed evidence comes from the seamstresses and milliners at the higher end of the trade who went to

[3] Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 26–7.

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court over their premiums. But the model of residential apprenticeships had a much wider social and occupational range, encompassing the poor citizens' daughters apprenticed from Christ's Hospital, the orphans and indigent girls placed out by their parishes and the daughters of artisanal and middling families who made private apprenticeship arrangements. The training of girls was part of the fabric of city life and of families, and it provides another dimension to how girls learned to be women and to how women's labour fitted into the urban economy.

The Range of Trades

Across Europe, the late seventeenth century has been identified as a 'watershed for the creation of new projects to train and employ girls', often outside guilds and typically involving sewing. Sometimes this involved state support, as in France where Jean-Baptiste Colbert, as Controller-General of Finance, encouraged girls into the lace industry and embroidery.[4] Learning to sew fitted girls into a wider market of women's work as well as a narrower concept of appropriate female occupations. Most girls learned to sew; middling girls in the eighteenth century were expected to sew for the family as well as making fancy work. Outside the home, those skills were taught at a higher level both at school and in formal and informal apprenticeships. An education in sewing was part of the provision families with resources gave to their daughters. In 1668, a lawsuit about unequal inheritance compared the various advancements three children had received. The son was apprenticed to a silversmith. His sister Elizabeth was sent to a boarding school 'to learne needleworke & starching': both 'education and provisions' were a 'great advancement' to both children. The last daughter, Frances, was left 'unadvanced' at her father's death: she had been 'a dutifull & obedient child to [her father] & did all his houshold worke in place of a maide servant'. Her father frequently proclaimed his good affection for her for her 'obedience and doing of his business about the house', but he died intestate and left her unprovided for.[5] Frances, no doubt, would have done the plain domestic sewing; her sister Elizabeth had received the investment of learning decorative needlework and starching, skills which could be used both in and out of the household.

[4] Clare Haru Crowston, 'Engendering the Guilds: Seamstresses, Tailors, and the Clash of Corporate Identities in Old Regime France', *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 2 (2000): 339–71.

[5] LMA, CLA/024/05/223 (1668).

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The emphasis placed on the needle trades across the social spectrum meant, of course, that women who could sew were soon far too plentiful to make it a source of decent pay.[6] While some seamstresses, like those training the girls who sued out their premiums at the Mayor's Court, had shops or access to them, many more provided increasingly cheap labour for ready-made clothes shops. Although sewing was the foundation of the 'genteel' trades that eighteenth-century trades manuals recommended to middling daughters, to make money from it required running a shop, more than plying the needle. The Mayor's Court evidence tells us most about the early years of an apprenticeship, and in these years, girls were learning to sew the goods their mistresses sold; other evidence suggests shop work and managing the trade came later. The inventories of shops in the Royal Exchange and elsewhere provide further evidence for what women were doing in the sewing trades. Alongside 'suits' for both men and women, shops were selling ready-made shirts and sleeves, shifts, aprons, gloves, hoods, cuffs, linen bands and every kind of lace. Larger shopkeepers were buying linen, holland cloth and other textiles in quantity to put out to seamstresses to make up garments; in other shops, women both sold and made garments and accessories. Apprentices paying higher premiums were set to learn fancy sewing, make lace, cut patterns and sell in shops. Court cases also describe them starching, hemming and mending garments such as petticoats, part of the perpetual work of finishing and maintaining clothes. At the lower end, apprentices were mending stockings, making buttons, and cutting fur. All this testifies to the importance of accessories, trimming and remaking in the world of fashion, which allowed seamstresses to take an important part in the innovations and specialisation that London's wealthy consumers encouraged.[7]

Sewing was by far the main category of trade girls learned in apprenticeship, although there are risks in generalising across the gaps in indentures and apprenticeship registers, and the difference between company trades and what mistresses were doing.[8] Finding women's trades is complicated further by the uncertain extent to which married women worked independently from their husbands, and in indentures which

[6] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[7] John Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London', *Past & Present* 168 (2000): 124–69.

[8] Michael Scott, ed., *Apprenticeship Disputes in the Lord Mayor's Court of London, 1573–1723* (London: British Record Society, 2016) finds one in three masters practising trades that differ from their company; in the same sample, amongst mistresses of girls, only the Fruiterers are practising the same trade as their company.

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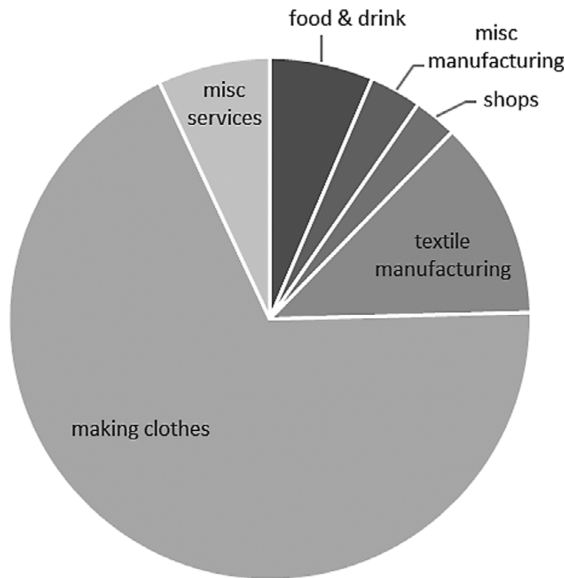

Figure 4.1 Named occupations in girls' apprenticeships
Source: 187 records which name occupations separate from company from Scott, *Apprenticeship Disputes*; ROLLCO, Clothworkers; Merchant Taylors' Company, GL, MS 3438/16-17

apprenticed girls to men rather than to the wives they were actually working with. However, enough reference to separate trades survives to list the range to which girls were apprenticed, without a guarantee that that was what they were actually learning.

Figure 4.1 shows the occupational sectors to which girls were apprenticed. It draws on the few records that give separate occupation details for women in guilds: the Clothworkers' and Merchant Taylors' apprenticeship registers and the Mayor's Court apprenticeship disputes. In all of them, making clothes was dominant. In the Clothworkers, apprentices were more likely to be bound to masters and mistresses with the trades of gloving, buttonmaking and subsidiary occupations like flax-dressing and silver-spinning; in the Merchant Taylors, seamstresses and milliners dominated, with bodice-makers, periwig-makers and coat-makers. Coats, and particularly children's coats, were well established as women's sewing work, on the understanding that they required less tailored cutting. There is also at least some evidence of non-textile work. The printers, leather-guilders and writing master in the Merchant Taylors may not have been teaching their trades to the girls apprenticed

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to them, but there are enough herbwomen to suggest this was a recognisable trade for women and girls. Fruiterers seem to have regularly apprenticed girls, and confectionery was another possibility. An unusual surviving indenture early in the eighteenth century records Isabella Dixon, an orphaned tailor's daughter, being bound 'of her own free will & the good liking of her friends' to Christopher Cobson of Aldersgate Street, a needlemaker, and to Alice, his wife, 'To Learn the Art & Mistery of a Pastry Cook, which the said Alice nowe Exercises and follows'.[9] Unusually, too, they guaranteed to give her a set of clothes fit for Sundays.

The more precise list of occupations to which apprentices were bound provides further details of the textile trades. The mistresses whose apprentices sued to dissolve their contracts at the Mayor's Court included a fringe-maker in the Shipwrights, button-makers and a wood-shavings hat maker in the Clothworkers, a coney-wool cutter in the Feltmakers, and a Clockmaker 'spinning silver and gold thread and flatting the same'. The clothes market was a specialised one, and the delineation of particular crafts suggests that the gendered distinction between tailors and seamstresses was not the only or perhaps even the main one at work. By the mid-eighteenth century, guidebooks like Joseph Collyer's *Parent's and Guardian's Directory* offered a compendium of apprenticeship possibilities, noting gendered skills in passing. Making bodices, buttons, fringes, fans, caps and quilting for petticoats and bed quilts were all identified as women's work; hat-making had become a women's trade, while tire-makers to dress women's hair had fallen out of fashion.[10] Cutting rabbit fur to trim hats or clothes demanded girls with great dexterity 'first to pluck off the long straggling hairs, and then to cut off the fine wool that grows underneath' without damaging the fur's integrity. The delineation of trades here invokes gender differentiation based in part on the nature of the object – women's and children's goods, and ornamentation like fringes, were suited to female manufacture – but also on the type of skill: dexterity, or the 'good eyes and a dry hand' and 'fancy and genius' required for gold and silver buttons. Gold and silver thread-spinning, another trade frequently offered to the apprentices of the late seventeenth century, likewise demanded a dry hand. Many of these trades involved working in workshops, on machines such as the wheel that flattened gold and silver wire. Pinmaking, still done by hand, involved predominantly female apprentices and many other women

[9] LMA, COL/CHD/FR/02/184/35.
[10] Joseph Collyer, *The Parent's and Guardian's Directory, and the Youth's Guide, in the Choice of a Profession or Trade* (1761), 114.

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outside the guild: they would have been cutting wire and coiling the head using a pinner's bone and sharpening the pins. A tradesmen's guide of 1747 noted 'no hard Labour, some Nicety, yet dirtyish'.[11] The range of apprenticeship trades in the later seventeenth-century evidence provides a valuable reference point between the better-recorded occupations of the later eighteenth century and the specialised dress-related occupations of the earlier seventeenth. Female apprenticeship was expanding, and it was being integrated both into potentially genteel and lucrative millinery and seamstress shops and into the lower, poorer paid work manufacturing the raw materials of fashion.

Table 4.1 uses legal and company records to track the gendered crafts taught to female apprentices in the London companies in the later seventeenth century. The sample includes registers from two companies particularly associated with textiles, but the more representative records from the Mayor's Court reflect a similar balance of clothing and non-clothing work for women. The table includes only occupations that are listed separately from guild membership, with the exception of fruiterers who were consistently practising that trade, and the second column indicates occupations ascribed to single mistresses, which provide the most reliable guide as to whether a woman was actually practising and teaching them. It can be seen from these figures that only a few trades were identifiably practised by women on their own: seamstresses, coat-makers and children's coat-makers predominate. The tire-women (all married) would have been making headgear, part of women's sewing work that spread from the theatrical world of the sixteenth century into private households and shops.[12] Exchangewomen and men trained girls to both work in shops and sew for them. Women's labour also included heavier manual tasks. Flax-dressers, who broke down the fibres for weaving, can be found in the Merchant Taylors' Company and others, and while most girls apprenticed to it were from artisanal families, one had a father identified as a gentleman. Flax- and hemp-dressing had domestic origins, like silk-spinning and weaving. Through the medieval period, while women were excluded from the wool trade, weaving and other textile work were symbolic of the virtuous wife. The apprenticeship of girls into flax-dressing was suggestive rather of routine work with minimal technology and low reward. Strikingly, none of this textile work risked the ill repute that was associated with brewing, as it became a male

[11] *A General Description of All Trades, Digested in Alphabetical Order*, 166.

[12] Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 34.

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Table 4.1. *Gendered occupations*

Occupations given (different to company title except where noted)	Total girls apprenticed	Girls apprenticed to single mistresses (widows and spinsters)
Button-maker	21	2
Bodice-maker	2	2
Child's coat-maker	6	2
Coat-maker	11	0
Coney-wool cutter	3	0
Exchange	8	5
Flax-/hemp-dresser	8	2
Gloves	4	0
Gold and silver wire/lace	10	1
Linen draper/seller	3	2
Mercer	2	0
Milliner	21	1
Periwig-maker	6	1
Seamstress	27	11
Tailor	29	1
Tire-woman	2	2
Other clothing	11	2
Total clothing	*143*	*23*
Gardener	3	
Herbman/woman	4	3
Fruiterer (in company)	11	3
Bookbinder	3	
Victualler	3	
Other non-clothing	20	1
Total non-clothing	*44*	*4*

Source: As Figure 4.1

trade.[13] Ruth Karras points out the significance of marital status in the reputation of medieval textile crafts: single women weaving were attacked, married women encouraged.[14] The distinction between married women's labour, which could be seen as contributory to a domestic economy, and single women's independent work continued

[13] Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

[14] Ruth Mazo Karras, '"This Skill in a Woman Is By No Means to Be Despised": Weaving and the Gender Division of Labor in the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 89–104.

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in the intermittent challenges to women 'working at their own hand' in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Marriage, as much as gender, had an influence on occupational options: while clothing work dominated for all women, single women were most associated with sewing and particularly with the occupation of seamstress. The more ambitious range of trades detected amongst female apprentices by the pioneering London research of Dorothy George and Alice Clark in the early twentieth century, which included carpentry, butchering and weaving, seem to have reflected company names rather than trades in practice.[15] Lois Schwoerer's more recent research into gunmaking, though, does indicate that the twenty-five women practising the trade were taking both girls and boys as apprentices.[16]

Parish apprenticeship drew on some of the same trades, with a heavy reliance on seamstresses and less appearance of choice. Across England, parishes followed the guidance of the Elizabethan poor law in apprenticing orphans and children of poor parents to masters and mistresses, generally with low or no premiums, and with limited if any choice. Until 1692, they could force children onto unwilling masters, and after 1692 the connection between apprenticeship and legal settlement gave churchwardens and overseers a motivation to find masters outside their own parish. In the first half of the seventeenth century, pauper families could be dismantled by poor law authorities removing their children into apprenticeships and reducing pensions for those parents who did not comply; in the 1620s, some of London's poor children were shipped to Virginia.[17] By the late seventeenth century, hundreds of young women and men a year were being indentured, pressed or 'spirited' into Atlantic servitude, using forms that drew on the same formulae as those of apprenticeship, including the consent of the servant. Around a quarter were women, making up 524 between 1683 and 1686 alone.[18] As Sonia Tycko argues, their initialled but uninformed consent on indentures marked them out as servants, not slaves, whose period of contracted work without pay had poor conditions and abuses but a closure. In

[15] M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the 18th Century* (London: Capricorn Books, 1965); Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Amy Louise Erickson (London: Routledge, 1992).

[16] Lois G. Schwoerer, 'Women and Guns in Early Modern England', in *Challenging Orthodoxies: The Social and Cultural Worlds of Early Modern Women: Essays Presented to Hilda L. Smith*, ed. Sigrun Haude and Melinda S. Zook (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 33–52.

[17] Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580–1800* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

[18] John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618–1718* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 263.

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Virginia, this 'contributed to a specious logic' that privileged indentured servants over enslaved Africans and Native Americans.[19]

In late seventeenth-century London, the high levels of parental mortality continued to leave children at the mercy of parish provision, and apprenticeship was also used to provide for illegitimate children. A typical order against the alleged father of an illegitimate child ordered him to pay 2 shillings weekly from birth to the age of twelve and then to pay £10 to put the child forth as an apprentice. The parish acted as mediator in the apprenticeship and had the father and his guarantors bound to protect them from its costs.[20] Overseers had the responsibility of putting out orphans, illegitimate children and paupers, though some indentures described young people as 'putting themselves' as apprentices in just the same way as private and company apprentices did, and some apprentices at least signed their agreement. The consent that was incorporated in the standard parish indenture was, in practice, very variable.[21]

Housewifery always featured heavily on parish apprenticeship indentures for girls, making up over half the trades described, and in some parishes much more.[22] The other main occupations were agricultural labour and making clothes. In seventeenth-century Bristol, as Ilana Ben-Amos has shown, girls were increasingly bound into both housewifery and craft: the two categories, for girls, were becoming blurred.[23] In London, housewifery was also the main single occupation for parish girls; while elite apprentices' families did all they could to protect their daughters from the more menial end of domestic labour, housewifery was a valuable range of skills. Several indentures amplify it by adding 'reading', 'sempstry' or, in one case, 'doing and performing all manner of household work and business'.[24] Martha Edwards promised to teach her apprentice to knit and sew 'at times when she had no other household work to do'.[25] Some overseers sent London girls out to rural households, like Jane Jennings, apprenticed in 1698 from All Hallows Lombard Street to George Goose, a husbandman in Hook, Surrey, to learn 'reading

[19] Sonia Tycko, 'Bound and Filed: A Seventeenth-Century Service Indenture from a Scattered Archive', *Early American Studies* 19, no. 1 (2021):186.
[20] LMA, MJ/SP/1691/01/009, Petition of Christopher Harrison (1691).
[21] James Fisher, 'Inventing a New Form of Labour: Early Indentures for Parish Apprentices, 1598–1630', *University of Exeter History of Economy Research Blog* (January 2021).
[22] Steve Hindle, '"Waste" Children? Pauper Apprenticeship under the Elizabethan Poor Laws, c. 1598–1697', in *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600–1850*, ed. Penelope Lane, K. D. M. Snell and Neil Raven (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 15–46.
[23] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Women Apprentices in the Trade and Crafts of Early Modern Bristol', *Continuity and Change* 6, no. 2 (1991): 227–52.
[24] LMA, P69/GIS/B/049/MS08476/001(1696). [25] TNA, C6/386/47 (1679).

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knitting sewing and other works of huswifery'.[26]. In Hanwell, Middlesex, Rebecka Roane and her three sisters and brother were apprenticed into housewifery by a local charity, using large and elegant indentures that described 'brewing washing carding spinning and such like'.[27] While high-premiumed apprentices complained about being made to do housework, housewifery had an established value.

Across the country, occupational gender distinctions were marked by status: Keith Snell identified a sharp gap between the wider range of less clearly gendered trades, including shoemaking and carpentry, to which parish apprentices were put, and the more female-specific millinery and mantua-making that appeared on family or guild apprenticeships. Similarly, Joan Lane found poor girls being apprenticed to heavy manual labour.[28] In Edinburgh, a form of apprenticeship for paying orphaned girls' debts focused specifically on perling lace.[29] In London, the distinction between parish and family or company apprenticeships was less pointed, with less housewifery and a universal engagement with manufacturing and finishing textiles or making clothes, reflecting the dominance of textile trades in urban women's work.[30] Provincial pauper apprenticeships would follow the same pattern in the eighteenth century.[31] Behind this textile dominance was a hierarchy of skills, but very few trades were specific to parish apprenticeships.

The surviving indentures for a few London parishes in the 1680s and 1690s demonstrate the range of apprentice girls' occupations.[32] London parish apprentices were set up fairly well, with premiums, ranging from 14s to £3, and a standard term of seven or eight years, similar for both girls and boys, with some longer contracts to compensate for a low premium.[33] Their masters and mistresses were expected to provide

[26] LMA, P69/ALH4/B/045/MS18976. [27] LMA, ACC/0933/031/015-019.

[28] K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660–1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1987); Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England 1600–1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 34.

[29] Cathryn R. Spence, 'A Perl for Your Debts?: Young Women and Apprenticeships in Early Modern Edinburgh', in *Children and Youth in Premodern Scotland*, ed. Janay Nugent and Elizabeth Ewen (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), 31–46.

[30] Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 219. On local differences, see Penelope Lane, Neil Raven and K. D. M. Snell, *Women, Work, and Wages in England, 1600–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), introduction.

[31] Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, 286.

[32] The following discussion is based on 115 indentures from the parishes of St Botolph's Aldgate, St Clement Danes, St Giles-without-Cripplegate, St Dionis Backchurch, St Mary Bothaw, All Hallows Lombard Street, St Martin Outwich and St Katherine Coleman in the late seventeenth century. Slightly over half were girls.

[33] In contrast to the more variable terms of girls in rural apprenticeships: see Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, 287.

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clothes, defined as 'double apparel' 'suitable for her station'. Many were bound with pre-printed indentures like those of guild apprentices, prescribing training and occasionally even offering the potential of the freedom: the metropolitan apprenticeship market extended to parish officers as well as the companies.

The London parish records are particularly illuminating about girls' training. Their paperwork echoes that of companies, often using printed indentures, similar to those of companies but without company arms, and adding some precision about whose craft was being taught. Sarah Shackbolt's indenture, unusually, records that she was apprenticed to Simon and Elizabeth Crouch to learn the trade of a weaver and fringemaker 'which the master now useth', while Mary Ellis was bound to John and Mary Phibbs to learn 'the trade of sempstresse which she now useth'.[34] Elizabeth Emerton was bound to Thomas Helpe in Whitechapel to learn 'the arte mistery or occupation of buying and selling all sorts of things that his wife now useth'.[35] These extra details were a bulwark against parish girls being taken up by drudgery and also suggest that the company clerks who drew up the less precise company indentures were obscuring women's role out of administrative habit, as much as a wider social practice of subsuming women's work in that of their husbands. The overall picture supports the trend of recent research on the extent and independence of married women's urban work. Precisely what girls were learning, paid for by parishes, mattered.

Amongst the many girls indentured by their parishes to make clothes and care for them, the commonest description was 'seamstress' or 'learning all sorts of plain work'. Plain work was structural sewing, which had both domestic and trade uses, as opposed to embroidery or specialised stitching. It was a uniquely female trade. Children's coat-making was another standby for parish apprentices, as well as others. Described in 1761 as a very suitable skill for those 'a little above the vulgar', in the late seventeenth century it was one of the trades which crossed the boundary of parish, family and company apprenticeships.[36]

The descriptions of work given for other parish girls reflect the multitude of tasks that went into trimming Londoners' clothes and dressing their feet, hands and heads. Stocking work appeared several times:

[34] St Botolph's Aldgate Apprenticeship Indentures, *London Lives* GLBAIA107000071 (6 August 1691); St Clement Danes Apprenticeship Indentures, *London Lives* WCCDPA364000005 (2 August 1688).

[35] St Botolph's Aldgate Apprenticeship Indentures, *London Lives* GLBAIA107000077 (16 May 1698).

[36] Joseph Collyer, *The Parents' and Guardians' Directory* (1761), 101, quoted in Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, 293.

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making them out of flat knitted worsted, mending them and 'sizeing and seaming' silk stockings. One of the stocking-making apprentices in St Mary Bothaw, a foundling naturally named Mary Bothaw, was indentured with the proviso that, at the end, she be made free of the Company of Framework Knitters. Unusual for a parish apprenticeship, this indicates the degree to which, in London, such contracts had a potential overlap with guild apprenticeships.[37] Apprentices put forth from Christ's Hospital sometimes received the same opportunity, being placed with freemen's wives. Button-making was another common option: Mary Ackelom in St Giles Cripplegate, an impoverished gentleman's orphan, was apprenticed to a labourer to learn 'his wife's art of button-making'. Buttons were made of such a range of materials that their creation ranged from the fancier objects made with silk and gold to those made in mass by girls getting 'a poor living' paid by the dozen.[38] The large proportion of girls from ordinary backgrounds in the Glovers' Company was reflected in gloving work outside the company: several parish apprentices were bound to masters in other companies to learn to trim gloves with metallic embroidery or lace. Johana Luke was apprenticed to learn from her master the trade of a periwig-maker, a trade also practised by several women in the Merchant Taylors' Company.[39] There were limits to the work women were given: making shoes was a particularly male preserve, though, by the early eighteenth century, girls were learning to make 'children's pumps' and pattens. As with coats, shoes for children were perceived as appropriate work for women.

Better represented in the parish apprenticeships, as in some companies, were the specialised arts of manufacturing textiles and trimmings for clothes. Mary Long's father had been a painter. Orphaned and poor at thirteen, she was apprenticed by the parish of St Giles Cripplegate to a member of the Coopers' Company to learn 'winding and doubling cone and wrought silk'.[40] Abigail Bothaw and Elizabeth Coleman, their names marking them out as foundlings from St Mary Bothaw and St Katherine Coleman, were set to the notoriously dextrous task of cutting fur for hats: 'Pulling and Cutting of Beavor and Conney Wooll and Such Like'.[41] Millinery, coat and mantua-making, bodice-making and button-making set girls up for working for the sewing trade and, in some cases, for independent businesses: foundling apprenticeships were not distinctive

[37] LMA, P69/SWI/B/019/MS03369 (1683).
[38] LMA, P69/GIS/B/049/MS08476; *A General Description of All Trades, Digested in Alphabetical Order* (1747), 47–8.
[39] *LL*, WCCDPA364000030 (20 September 1688).
[40] LMA, P69/GIS/B/049/MS08476/001/117.
[41] LMA, P69/SWI/B/019/MS03369 (1693); P69/KAT1/B/032/MS07740 (1705).

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but part of a wide range of textile trades. Christ's Hospital, just by St Paul's, offered a similar range of trades to the daughters of poor citizens, apprenticing them out around the age of fourteen after teaching them to read and write. The later seventeenth century saw its girls apprenticed to more precise occupations in sewing and retail, often to the wives of freemen across the City who were practising their own trade, or of artisans in the suburbs: their products included bone lace, quilting, black-work embroidery, caps, knitting, mantuas and coats. Their terms were usually shorter than seven years, often four, and they were not generally offered the chance to become free.

At the top of the apprenticeship spectrum were the high-premiumed seamstresses and milliners' apprentices, bound with premiums from £15 to £50 and destined for elite shops and marriage. At the lowest level, pin-makers who would graduate into wage labour. Between them, girls across the range of institutional, parish, family and company apprentices learned skills from a common set: dressing flax and winding silk; washing and starching; making bone lace, buttons, fringes, periwigs and silk stockings; making pastry; selling fruit and herbs; and keeping shop. Spinning gold and silver thread and making bone lace are rare examples of trades that appear only in company and Christ's Hospital apprenticeships, but even mending stockings was not exclusive to paupers. The changing world of sewing and fashion opened up 'interstices' in the textile crafts, in many of which women were heavily involved.[42] Non-textile trades had sharper distinctions. In one boy's apprenticeship case, a different aspect of gendered skilled labour is revealed, taking us into the workshop. A silversmith's apprentice was set to do the laborious side of the work, scouring and nailing – all except the burnishing, which 'they usually were wont to have women' doing.[43] Polishing by hand remained women's work well into the nineteenth century.[44] Apprenticeship's gender divisions offer only a partial view of gendered labour; particularly after marriage, what women did was likely to be widely variable, and most women were not apprenticed. It offers, though, a useful view of the interaction between craft rules and artisanal practice.

How Girls Learned

The marginalisation of women in guilds involved both ideological exclusion from many areas of artisanal training and a structural impact on how

[42] Mary Prior, 'Women in the Urban Economy', in *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985).
[43] LMA, CLA/024/05/276 (1671).
[44] Philippa Glanville and Jennifer Faulds Goldsborough, *Women Silversmiths 1685–1845* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

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skills were passed on. The freer controls of London had their own impact, impeding the development of a collective occupational identity amongst the seamstresses who were seeded across companies. As we have seen, girls in guilds were only sometimes learning from women who had been taught as apprentices themselves, so the sense of apprenticeship as generational and the idea of skills transmission through continuous replication had little purchase for women. Yet if company membership did not offer seventeenth-century women the same world of associations it did men, it did build connections between trading families and single women. The expertise apparent in Mary Jones's case offers a glimpse of the female initiatives and patronage that accompanied the transmission of skills in London's retail world.

For boys, apprenticeship was a long-established part of the civic life cycle. It was flexible, and often broke down by intent or design, but for 40 per cent of them, it led on to an established independent trade and becoming a master in their own right.[45] For girls, that life-cycle model is hard to trace. It was not rehearsed in prescriptive sources or descriptive print literature, which almost never mentioned apprenticing of girls; when authors did discuss female apprenticeship, they saw it as another form of service. Yet life-cycle apprenticeship for girls clearly existed in practice, and girls' apprenticeship and freedom continued to be referred to in guides to London custom, before the apprenticeship of girls was more fully discussed in the eighteenth-century trades directories. Despite the comparatively small number of female apprentices through the seventeenth century, girls' training had a recognisable pattern, focusing on specific trades. Most were making clothes or the materials for them; many were learning skills they could use as journeywomen or outworkers, or in shops outside the City; a minority would become free and establish their own City businesses as seamstresses and milliners. To become a seamstress meant cutting and sewing clothes and accessories, selling to customers, getting and keeping contacts and, for the most successful, looking and acting the part. Marriage to a man who was not free of the City of London, as we will see, might imperil women's capacity to use that training in business, but learning to sew for the market provided a degree of both short- and long-term labour autonomy for many women.

Learning a trade did not, of course, exclude book learning, which for most girls probably preceded their trade training. The high proportion of girls signing their indentures suggest they were often already literate at

[45] Patrick Wallis, 'Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England', *Journal of Economic History* 68, no. 3 (2008): 839.

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fourteen; even pauper apprentices sometimes signed their names, though not all their mistresses did. If they could not, they may have learned in service, but there is no evidence of mistresses actually teaching it. When Mary Bignell was apprenticed as a framework knitter to John and Sarah Spencer in 1696, her manuscript indenture included being taught the trade, provided with clothing and given an hour a day to learn to write, but the writing was clearly a separate cost.[46] In contrast, the better-provided Hester Hudson, apprenticed as a seamstress in 1650, was described by court witnesses as 'as well educated as any mans daughter in London'.[47]

Numeracy must have been an essential, but there are few clues as to where, when and how it was learned. Mathematical skills were being taught and learned not just ad hoc but in formal schools. Bathsua Makin's school prospectus, in 1672, planned to offer mathematics as well as geography and astronomy; she had tutored a princess and aspired to teach the middling sort of London.[48] Other women advertised schools of writing and arithmetic.[49] In the same decade, the anonymous female author of *Advice to Women and Maidens* urged women and girls to learn to calculate, with a specific eye to trade, and the examples it gives help flesh out the mathematical life of consumers as well as shopkeepers. This work imagined first a woman keeping her domestic accounts, recording sums of 18s for a hood, apron and gloves; £1 13s for a petticoat; and £1 for the maid's quarter wages. The next stage of the booklet outlines the potential accounts of a shopkeeper or exchangewoman. Their detail offers a precise picture of the transactions required to start a shop: buying silk to make hoods and linen to make handkerchiefs, cravats and cuffs; putting out the making to seamstresses. She makes 4 pence profit on each hood, paying the seamstress 6 pence each to make them up. At the end of a week, she is imagined to be £6 in profit. The accounts includes the house as well as the shop, and demand balancing every farthing, but only once a year. Perhaps an apprentice who made off with a handkerchief or kept the change for ribbons was not unreasonable in hoping to get away with it.

The author of the *Advice* recalls her parents teaching her writing and arithmetic to enable her to practice trade and bookkeeping: 'though *Arithmetic* set my brains at work, Yet there was much delight in seeing the end, and how each question produced a fair answer and informed me of things I knew not.' This is an explicit reflection, akin to those of

[46] LMA, COL/CHD/FR/02/111/8. [47] LMA, CLA 024/05/72 (1654).
[48] Bathsua Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673).
[49] Amy Froide, 'Learning to Invest: Women's Education in Arithmetic and Accounting in Early Modern England', *Early Modern Women* 10, no. 1 (2015): 3–26.

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Bathsua Makin and Mary Astell, on the psychology of learning and its impact on the sense of self. Once the writer was older, her father engaged her to keep the housekeeping books, to call all the family to account every night for what they had spent, reimburse them and note it down. It presents bookkeeping as a potential career: 'This is the way to make one a Cashier, as they are termed.' Not only is this an excellent record of how a girl learned to keep accounts but its publication from the Exchange in 1678 demonstrates the appeal a lesson for women in bookkeeping was expected to have. Notional or actual objections were forestalled in the text:

> Methinks now the objection may be that this art is too high and mysterious for the weaker sex, it will make them proud: Women had better keep to their Needlework, point laces, &c and if they come to poverty, those small Crafts may give them some mean releif.
>
> To which I answer, That having in some measure practiced both Needle-work and Accounts I can averr, that I never found this Masculine Art harder or more difficult than the effeminate achievements of Lace-making, gum-work or the like.[50]

Bookkeeping would enable a seamstress to run her own shop, leaving someone else to keep to the 'small Crafts'. *Advice* reminds the advocates of feminine crafts that making money from them requires the 'masculine' arts of bookkeeping, too: gendering skills can only go so far.

Hannah Woolley's *Guide to Ladies* (1668) makes intriguing reference to another connection between apprenticeship and education: girls being apprenticed into schools. This is the rarest of Woolley's works, with only one copy surviving. Her advice to girls offers several pages directed, uniquely, at 'young Maidens, who are desirous to go to be apprentices, either in Schools or to any Trade'. It is almost the only surviving work of the period to make any reference to skilled female apprenticeship, and the connection between apprenticeship in schools and in skilled trades is also novel. Little information about girls' work in schools survives. Woolley herself may have been a school apprentice: she describes herself elsewhere as being put in charge of a school before the age of fifteen, around 1637, and she worked in schools for much of her life. Writing with the experience of running a school in Essex with her first husband until his death, Woolley saw apprenticeship in a small girls' school as a sensible route to adulthood and independence, alongside being a

[50] *Advice to the Women and Maidens of London Shewing, That Instead of Their Usual Pastime, and Education in Needlework … It Were Far More Necessary and Profitable to Apply Themselves to the Right Understanding and Practice of the Method of Keeping Books of Account* (Benjamin Billingsley, 1678).

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chambermaid, a housemaid in a great house or a scullery maid. 'Maidens,' she advised, 'if it be your lot to be in a School your parents or friends have provided well for you.' There is one household in the 1695 tax listings that looks like it might fit this model. Margaret Rutter, a widow, was a householder in the parish of St Edmund, Lombard Street; she lived with two children, four or five young female boarders, a lodger, a servant and an apprentice, Anne Trigg.[51]

The readers of Woolley's *Guide to Ladies* were advised to be diligent to please their mistresses, presumably the head, or only, teacher. As apprentices, they were also set in opposition to the pupils: should 'any of the boarders rail against her, or combine anything, you are bound to tell her of it, that she may by her discretion help it'. Much of the direction concerned manners at table and around the house, and suggest the subtleties of an apprentice teacher's position. She should help to clear the table, but might have liberty to walk in the garden after meals; she might have liberty to sing a song or tell a story; she should help dress the gentlewomen pupils and go well dressed herself. Woolley urged young women to miss no chance to learn from the teachers; the pupils might have estates and so could afford to waste their learning, but the apprentice, 'if you neglect your time, you undo your self, for it must be your portion'. Apprenticeship, she pointed out, offered a girl the chance to teach the children of nobles or work in their household, or to be a teacher or run a school herself. Without educating herself, her best preferment would be 'but a common Chambermaid'.[52] Model letters in the same volume offered more details of the imaginary school apprentice: 'Since it pleased God to take my Father away,' she writes to her mother, 'you could not have shewed a greater care for me, than in providing me so good a place for my education as I find this to be.' Her mistress is kind and allows her time to learn as the rest do, and she wishes that her sister could also find a place there, to avoid being made a drudge. A second letter asks an aunt to send a little money to buy some silk to do her own work, reiterating the centrality of sewing to both leisure and labour.[53]

For Woolley, writing in 1668 and perhaps looking back to her own youth in the late 1630s, the relationship between education and apprenticeship evidently made sense, but it appeared in no later editions or revisions of her work. The advice to apprentices was amongst the material that disappeared when her publisher, Dorman Newman, allowed someone else to edit the work for republication as *The Gentlewomans*

[51] LMA, COL/CHD/LA/04/030.
[52] Hannah Woolley, *A Guide to Ladies, Gentlewomen and Maids* (1668), 39–42.
[53] Woolley, *Guide to Ladies*, 87–8.

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Companion.[54] Woolley's complaint about this in her last book returns to the seam of self-representation as a woman turning her work experience to advice for youth, noting in particular that she had important advice for young women who risked falling into bawdry or poverty. 'There are very many at this present time who want service, both Gentlewomen and others.'[55] Amongst much else, this useful advice on apprenticeship as a viable path for young women was removed from her book, though it certainly continued to be an option.

Historians of the guild system in England and Europe have described a practice by which artisanal labour skills were transmitted by imitation, but studies of women in guilds have mostly focused on exclusion from a more general social capital of work rather than on the mechanics of skill acquisition. The records of skills transmission are scarce for all crafts. Craft was understood to be learned by hand, not by word or print, and apprentices swore to keep their masters' secrets.

Girls learning to sew were moving into the changing, but still gendered, world of fashion. Across Europe, tailoring was established as largely a masculine prerogative, and women worked on its margins. Margins were, of course, critical to the innovations of seventeenth-century fashion. Immigrant women were employed extensively in making for the London stage, working with buttons, feathers and sequins and bringing in new knowledge and techniques.[56] The making and remaking of ruffs, which had to be done every time they were worn, was dependent on the skill of starching, brought to Elizabeth I's court by Dutch women and soon practised by London women as a trade. A woman in 1624, her husband claiming the rank of gentleman, told a court clerk that she 'getteth her lyving by starchinge of bands to shopps'.[57] Commentators described the gender division of Dutch labour as peculiarly egalitarian, with women managing business, travelling as merchants and keeping accounts. French and Dutch immigrant women were also reputed for making and selling periwigs, tires and bone lace. Satires on fashion in the early seventeenth century mocked the specialised accessories worked by tire-women, including French bodices, farthingales, ruffs, curled periwigs and shoe linings. By the later seventeenth century, these objects and the craft of making them were part of fashion's mainstream. The trade in technical hair accoutrements provided independent work for women like

[54] Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion* (1673).
[55] Hannah Woolley, *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet, or, a Little of Everything Presented to All Ingenious Ladies, and Gentlewomen* (1674), 94.
[56] Korda, *Labors Lost*.
[57] Alexandra Shepard, 'Crediting Women in the Early Modern English Economy', *History Workshop Journal* 78 (2015): 13.

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Bridget Park, a tire-woman in Bartholomew Lane who took an apprentice in 1686, and Anne Loveday, a tire-woman living with her husband, a refiner, near Goldsmiths' Hall, who took an apprentice to learn to make periwigs.[58]

The skills to make such objects underpinned the clothes market of the later seventeenth century, with fine starching becoming the work of specialised servants or seamstresses, and girls apprenticed specifically to learn to work lace and needlework. Sewing itself was already in the seventeenth century a trade which extended far beyond the skills and structure of the domestic sewing that was conceived of as suitable, virtuous and pragmatic.[59] While the expansion of women's sewing work to making loose gowns and mantuas from the 1680s was certainly significant in the London market, much of what seamstresses were making and selling in the late seventeenth century seems to have been their long-established realm of linen undergarments and an increasing range of ready-made accessories. In 1688, Randall Holme's compendium of occupations delineated the line between tailors and seamstresses: tailors dealt with the body and seamsters with the hands, head and feet. He did not, interestingly, align the distinction with gender. Seamsters made shifts and smocks, the basic garments of men and women, whose white folds showed beneath their outer garments.[60] 'Shapes for mantuas' were just one element in a long list of production. They sewed the extensive range of linen that was worn throughout society: shirts and separate half sleeves, kerchiefs, aprons, childbed linen and baby and children's clothes, bibs and biggins (caps). For the middling and elites, they made bands, ruffs and cuffs; gorget and cravats for the neck; and the newly fashionable whisks. Most of these could be made from squares, rectangles or triangles of linen; the trick was in the cutting and seaming.

Seamstresses, as Randall Holme noted, also made 'Womens Head Dresses', a category which includes fillet and snood, ruffled coifs and hoods. Women covered their heads outdoors, and one of the tasks of shopkeeping and sewing women was to furnish the hoods of gauze, alamode, lutestring, sarsnet, India silk and so on, as well as coifs and the forehead cloths that went beneath them. Holme's list includes 'head rolls' to shape the hair, so tire-makers were closely connected to seamstresses. Here, the seamstress's craft involved knowledge of fabrics and fashion and the use of trimmings.

[58] Scott, *Apprenticeship Disputes*.
[59] Judith G. Coffin, 'Gender and the Guild Order: The Garment Trades in Eighteenth-Century Paris', *Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 4 (1994): 783.
[60] Randall Holme, *The Academy of Armory* (1688), 97.

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Holme is a good deal less precise on seamstresses' than tailors' skills. His account of the construction of men's and women's clothes allows the reader to effectively follow the tailor's needle. The 'Petticoat Breeches', for example, are 'short and wide Coats with Waist bands, having no petition, or sowing up between the Legs; but all open like a short Peticoat, from whence they are named'; a Jacket has sleeves 'which reach to the Wrist having the turn-up sometime round, then with Hounds Ears, and an other time square'.[61] The seamstress's art in making multiple kinds of headgear, lace or cuffs and ruffs is left vague: the tailor is the one endowed with technical mastery.[62] A more utilitarian guide of 1696, *The Plain Dealing Linnen-Draper*, gave forty pages' alphabetical catalogue of types of linen to assist drapers and details to seamstresses on how to cut out shifts, whilst castigating pedlars and hawkers who sold bad cloth.[63] Susan North's magisterial reconstruction of the seamstress's labour, and the evidence of pattern books, fills out the picture of what seamstresses had to learn. Seamstresses' work combined cutting and a relatively small range of stitching. Shifts had to be flat and smooth when worn under clothes, which meant an extremely narrow seam allowance, often less than an eighth of an inch. To keep this accurate meant measuring stitches against the warp or weft threads of the linen itself, which had to be cut 'on the thread'. Sometimes seamstresses hemmed the sleeves separately first so they could be removed for laundering – a classic example of attending to what showed rather than what did not.[64] Seamstresses also learned to vary their stitches to the range of linen weights they used for different garments, and to reinforce wearing linen at the points of stress, shoulders and necklines. 'The seamstress's art,' writes North, 'was perfectly crafted to accommodate the properties of her raw materials, to cut the pieces required for body linens as sparingly as practicable and to stitch them together securely, ensuring that they withstood, as long as possible, the friction of wear under early modern clothing, and the strains of their use and care.'[65] Other tasks finished garments, either when they were made or after laundering or for repairs. Frances Angel, at work for her mistress,

[61] Holme, *Academy of Armory*, 96.
[62] For a full discussion of sewing work in London, see Sophie Pitman, 'The Making of Clothing and the Making of London, 1560–1660' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017).
[63] Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapman and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: A & C Black, 1984); J. F., *The Merchant's Ware-House Laid Open: Or, the Plain Dealing Linnen-Draper* (1696).
[64] Susan North, *Sweet and Clean?: Bodies and Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 192.
[65] North, *Sweet and Clean?*, 207.

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was given a petticoat 'to bind around the top', sewing filleting along the edge to keep the pleats in.[66]

Another set of marketable artisanal skills characterised fine needlework, distinct from domestic sewing. While the parish of St Giles Cripplegate apprenticed Sarah Cole, an impoverished Joiner's daughter, to a widow who would instruct her in 'making all sorts of plain work', other young women learned more elaborate sewing.[67] Tailors had an extensive range of stitches, such as 'fine drawing', sewing two pieces of cloth together invisibly, and 'Raveling', loosening threads from a piece of silk or cloth. Randall Holme listed thirty-six different 'terms of art' for sewing work, from backstitch and Irish stitch to Virgins Device and Bread work, as well as finger work with silk, pearls and wires.[68] In 1622, Katherine Dickinson, a gentleman's daughter, was apprenticed to learn seamstry from Katherine Farnaby, a Joiner's wife, for four years for £10. The manuscript indenture described what Farnaby would teach her, a compendium of early seventeenth-century embroidery techniques: 'white work and black work, all sorts of net work, purse work, tent stitch, Barbary work, frost work, silk flowers, bugle work and hair tires'.[69] These elaborately differentiated stitches, beads and plaits would fit her for creating garments and accessories of fashion and the head dressings that Philip Stubbes had castigated at such length forty years earlier; it might also lead her into work on theatrical costumes.[70] In apprenticeship disputes, girls complained of failing to learn marketable skills that would differentiate their work from ordinary sewing. In 1674, Elizabeth Mason testified, supporting another apprentice's complaint, that the result of her apprenticeship was that she was 'rather made worse than better in her skill in sempstry work' in her apprenticeship. They were barely instructed, she said, but spent their time 'employed upon stitching of stomachers and making coarse shirts': plain, domestic sewing on coarse linen which did not require the tiny stitches of finer goods, or stitching stomachers which was hard but not, apparently, skilful.[71] Plain work, that domestic mainstay, could actively deskill a seamstress. In a similar vein, one of Frances Bickley's witnesses deposed 'she could never have learned her trade of a milliner because she was for the most parte employed in making of poynt which doth not relate to [her] trade'. Other seamstress apprentices expected to learn making point lace, but for

[66] LMA CLA/024/05/509B, 509A (1689).
[67] LMA, P69/GIS/B/049/MS08476/001/10; Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes: 1600–1930* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
[68] Holme, *Academy of Armory*, 99.
[69] William Salt Library, M1024/2/1, courtesy of Mark Jenner.
[70] Korda, *Labors Lost*, 30–2.
[71] LMA, CLA/024/05/318 (1686).

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Frances it was not germane to sewing garments she could sell or running a business.[72]

With sewing came cutting. Christiana Hutchins was indentured to learn, according to witnesses, 'the trade of a seamstress and to cut out and to buy and to sell'.[73] Seamstresses and tailors depended on patterns, which were available in reduced form in print, passed between seamstresses, or the most skilled developed their own. Shifts and shirts were cut to the fixed width of bolts of cloth, but a good pattern enabled a seamstress to get more out of her linen.[74] Hester Hudson, apprenticed in 1650, vowed to strike out on her own when she had had enough of her mistress, telling a friend 'she was able to manage the same trade her selfe if she were free & had but some paternes'.[75] Margaret Reeves, the 'ingenious' seamstress who took on Henrietta Wallop in the 1690s, 'makes and draws all her own patterns'. After their training, her apprentices became journeywomen earning 12s a week, doing markedly better than those working for the Exchange.[76]

The linen seamstresses provided was integral to cleanliness and health. A clean and wholesome body, in the seventeenth century, was one clothed in 'sweet and clean' linen, well made from fine and hard-wearing fabric that was laundered, bleached white and ironed. Frances Carey's training involved 'the art of a sempstress and to wash and starch linen'.[77] While laundering was an occupation for many women outside apprenticeship, and part of maids' labour as well as wives' work, specialised washing and starching was closely tied to the world of sewing. The untailored gowns and under-petticoats sewn by seamstresses, without boning or lining, pleated or bound with tape, were made to be washed. Sometimes this involved taking garments apart by unpicking the single seam that bound sleeve to body, so sewing and laundry skills were intimately linked.[78] Hester Pinney's work as a lace trader included, according to her brother, working 'dayly hard Early and late at her needle for her living which she gets by that, and putting out lynnen and laces to wash': she was at once managing a trade, working with the needle and acting as the middlewoman for the specialist washing of linen and lace.[79]

Randall Holme's compendium of useful information describes laundering, like other trades' arts and mysteries, in 'terms of art'. They

[72] LMA, CLA/024/05/509A (1689). [73] LMA, CLA/024/05/318 (1686).
[74] North, *Sweet and Clean?*, 186. [75] LMA, CLA/024/05/72 (1654).
[76] Bristol University Special Collections, Pinney Papers, Red Box 2 folder VII, Mary Pinney to Hester Pinney, 7 February 1694/5.
[77] LMA, CLA/024/05/198B (1666). [78] North, *Sweet and Clean?*, 212.
[79] Geoffrey Nuttall, ed., *Letters of John Pinney, 1679–1699* (Oxford University Press, 1939), 67.

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included sorting and soaping; scalding; wrenching or bouking; 'beating the Cloths to get the Bucking Stuff out'; starching and wringing.[80] Hannah Woolley noted that girls aspiring to be chambermaids to gentlewomen should learn to wash and starch tiffanies, lawns, points and laces, as well as mending them; laundrymaids needed to learn to take care of linen, points and laces and to wash the finest linen swiftly to prevent it from stinking and going yellow.[81] The struggle to keep linen white was particularly challenging in the city, where access to the sun was limited. While starching was no longer such a prominent part of the urban economy, and such a consumer of wheat, as it had been in the earlier heyday of starched ruffs, it remained a trade of prestige for women as well as domestic labour, and it featured in apprenticeships.[82] A few of the freemen's daughters leaving Christ's Hospital were apprenticed to starchers, such as Jane Glover, bound in 1694 to Elizabeth Ames, starcher, the wife of a draper, for five years.[83] Complaints to the Middlesex sessions from apprentices' parents include girls apprenticed to washing point lace and gauze, and apprentices at the Mayor's Court had been bound to trades such as 'sempster and starcher' and 'starcher and cutter out of linen'.[84] Sewing, washing and starching were overlapping skills whose connections put the seamstress and her apprentices at the centre of bodily propriety as well as elegant frippery.

Learning to sew and cut, like most crafts, was imitative: an apprentice needed to work alongside a woman who was practising frequently and whose work was accounted reputable. Direct instruction was also important. Mary Baker's description of Mary Jones being 'instructed and advised in the art of a seamstress' indicates the verbal side of teaching: mistresses explained and demonstrated. Susan Streeter assessed the value that Frances Carey had imparted to another apprentice in her training. After three years, she said, the girl was 'for her time very well instructed in the art of a sempstress and to wash and starch linen'. Time was of the essence in measuring the acquisition of skills; over and over, witnesses referred to the amount of time spent and the value of labour accrued in the process of training.

Running a shop, seamstresses used their sewing experience to judge the goods they bought and had made up. By the time linen reached a

[80] Holme, *Academy of Armory*, 98. [81] Woolley, *Guide to Ladies*, 37.
[82] On starch shops earlier in the period, see Natasha Korda, 'Sex, Starch-Houses, and Poking Sticks: Alien Women's Work and the Technologies of Material Culture', *Early Modern Women* 5 (2010): 201–8; for later, Erickson, 'Married Women's Occupations'.
[83] LMA, CLC/210/F/003/MS 12818/006 (August 1694).
[84] For example, LMA, MJ/SB/B 493, p. 49. Scott, *Apprenticeship Disputes*, nos. 13120, 8535.

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shopkeeper, cut into lengths, it might have lost the identifying marks of packaging, binding and coloured ribbons of its manufacturer. Retailers needed to be able to judge and attest to its quality themselves.[85] The exhaustive range of weights of linen, and their origins, listed in *The Plain Dealing Linen Merchant* gives a sense of the knowledge involved, as well as the importance of brand. The author lists the (allegedly) best makers of holland and their marks; the types of calico in use for shirts; the sizes of diaper from which tablecloths and napkins could be made; silks, Indian muslins and calicos are analysed for value and good wearing. In *Advice to Women and Maidens*, the shopkeeper's key role is purchasing and selling fabric and commissioning goods like gloves to be made by the seamstress. This was the work at which apprentices training to keep shops would be aiming. The expertise they needed drew on their artisanal knowledge of how to cut and sew garments and accessories from different weights and types of textile, but also required an expert understanding of what, and how, to buy from dealers.

Managing customers was a higher-order skill, likely to be withheld until the end of apprenticeships; apprentices were not expected to cope alone in shops early on. Learning to run a shop where prices were negotiable, goods were easily moveable, and credit was expected required proper supervision. Mary Jones's agreement included being instructed in 'the selling of wares in the shop', but she told her family that they had little trading and that her mistress neglected her business, leaving Mary alone in the shop for a week at a time so that she 'feared she should not learn her trade because the said Frances her mistress did soe neglect to teach and instruct her'.[86] Mary Baker, however, who rented part of her shop to them, countered that Frances had a sufficient trade and deliberately encouraged Mary's independence, giving 'her liberty to sell in the shopp sometimes by her selfe for the better encouraging & entrusting her in her art'. Dorothy Stable's mistress described a rather tighter supervision. Frances Kent said she did her 'best endeavour' to instruct her in the trade and to 'further her therein all she could', putting her connections and knowledge behind her. She set her to buy and sell goods in her shop 'and gave her full directions touching the same'. At her hands, Dorothy was 'as well taught as any of the trade' and 'by the instruccons & skill she had attained in the said service was well able by hir work to gett 18 d. or 2 s. a day'. Two shillings a day, the estimate of what Dorothy could make on her own, was about two-thirds of the day wages set for the masons and carpenters rebuilding St Paul's

[85] North, *Sweet and Clean?*, 168. [86] LMA, CLA/024/05/198 (1666).

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Cathedral.[87] In another case, a young male apprentice's testimony reveals the kinds of tasks that were expected of shopkeepers. At question was whether Katherine Venner had taken up her own shop with Hester Wright; she was alleged to be acting, without the right to do so, as Wright's partner in business. The apprentice deposed

> he hath seene her about buying of goodes for accomodacon & supply of the said shopp wher she now is & once going himselfe to receive some money that she owed him she the said Katherine went freely to the mony box in the said shopp (the said Hester Wright being presente) without asking leave or saying any thing to her & took out of the said box soe much money as to pay him, and the said shopp goeth more in the name of the said Katherine then of the said Hester.[88]

Such autonomy was the mark of a woman trading for herself, with practice in buying goods wholesale as well.

The word 'occupation' has a spatial meaning that remains significant in seventeenth-century apprenticeship. While many apprentices lived and worked with their mistresses, particularly in smaller businesses, the seamstresses' shop was often not the traditional household-based shop of artisanal workshops but a place away from home, in a shopping gallery like the Exchange, in the prestigious shopping street of Cheapside or further out in Shadwell or Whitechapel.[89] Mary Jones worked in a part-shop rented by her mistress from another seamstress; others spent at least part of their working lives in the small stalls of the Royal Exchange, where their masters and mistresses had shops, and so their work and training was mobile. Many shops were small and could only contain two people, while others had room for several workers, probably not all there at once. Accounts of Herbert and Katherine Allen's shop on the Exchange referred to at least three shop apprentices and another woman working in it.[90] Apprenticeship remained a residential contract, but many single mistresses lived in lodgings and rooms, working elsewhere. In late seventeenth-century France, Clare Crowston has argued, men's guild identity remained fundamentally familial, while women's became increasingly individual, representative of an autonomous trade.[91] The gendered workspaces of London involved a comparable transition,

[87] Judy Z. Stephenson, '"Real" Wages? Contractors, Workers, and Pay in London Building Trades, 1650–1800', *Economic History Review* 71, no. 1 (2018): 115.

[88] LMA, CLA/024/05/131A (1662).

[89] Waugh, *Cut of Women's Clothes*, 42–7; Marjorie McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society, 1300–1620* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 245–8. See also Béatrice Craig, *Women and Business since 1500: Invisible Presences in Europe and North America?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[90] LMA, CLA/024/05/131A (1662).

[91] Crowston, 'Engendering the Guilds', 341–2.

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separating the domestic scene from the workplace; apprentices and mistresses made complaints about both.

Networks of shops and seamstresses like those in Mary Jones's case reveal a working world in which young women could move swiftly towards independent trade, manoeuvring around the regulation of the City. Dorothy Stable, as we saw in Chapter 2, aimed to run her own shop aged eighteen, after five years' training, though her own mistress had left her apprenticeship after a year. She ended up back in Pontefract, where she died, single, in her thirties.[92] Hester Hudson had been given the same arrangement, a four-year contract which her father apparently still expected would lead to the freedom of the City at the end of it.[93] These were pragmatic arrangements which seem to have been specific to girls, most of whom did not become free after apprenticeship and so did not necessarily need to serve the full seven years that custom required. Some went on to work for others; others married, in which case they could use their husbands' freedoms to trade. These manipulations of set terms of service suggest that the trade was learned fast and that shopkeepers needed to take advantage of apprentices' skills before they left. Hannah Woolley's imaginary letter from a girl apprenticed to a trade, to her mother fleshes out how that felt from the other side: requesting her mother to remind her mistress that she had promised to impart 'all the secrets of her trade' to enable her to set up by herself, she writes, 'I have now but a year and half to serve, and it is time that I understood how to manage my business.'[94] Woolley's imaginary letter writer was a good deal more patient than the girls in court who were determined to rush into their own shopkeeping before their terms were out.

The best way courts had to measure what apprentices had learned was how much they were deemed worth. Apprenticeship was traditionally understood by historians as a relationship which began with loss-leading training and ended in valuable free labour; as Patrick Wallis has shown, though, the training and the useful work were more likely to be distributed together across the years.[95] Seamstresses and their families, nevertheless, calculated their worth based on time and apparently on a trained sense of what a girl with one, two or three years' training should have learned (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Like those who calculated their own worth in court, seamstresses and their families cultivated the skill of appraisal: not just of goods but of the labour that made them.[96] Katherine Venner's

[92] West Yorkshire Archive Service, D40/4, 9 December 1698, www.ancestry.co.uk.
[93] LMA, CLA/024/05/72A, Interrogatory (1654). [94] Woolley, *Guide to Ladies*, 90.
[95] Wallis, 'Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England', 832–61.
[96] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, surveys the appraisal of self-worth by court witnesses.

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Table 4.2. *Valuing seamstresses*

Dorothy Stable's labour's worth after three years' apprenticeship, estimated by her mistress	10d–2s per day
Training Christiana Hutchins to learn point from a gentlewoman, 1668	5s a week
Rent of a part-shop for Frances Carey	£10 p.a.
Premium demanded to take on the untaught Christiana Hutchins	£12 plus clothes
Turnover premium for Frances Bickley, 1689	£20
Premium paid by Katherine Venner's family to a Royal Exchange seamstress for five (or seven) years	£50
Premium paid for Sarah Gibson to a mantua-maker in Holborn for four years, 1715	£4
Cost of physick for Ann Gray's two fits of sickness, according to her apothecary	£3 8d
Wages of Miss Goreing's maid, 1697[a]	£2 p.a.
Paid by Miss Goreing for scouring a coat and petticoat	7s
A year's diet, washing, fire and candles for Miss Goreing and her two servants, 1697	£52
Ralph Josselin's annual income c. 1660[b]	£150

[a] TNA, C114/182/32, 'Miss Goreing's Account Book'.
[b] Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (London: Psychology Press, 1996).

Table 4.3. *Costs of shop goods*

1 yard point Venice lace	14s
Cap and linen	16s
Woman's whisk[a]	3s
Gauze pass from Sarah Frost's shop	14d
Pair of gloves bought for Elizabeth Ward	1s 6d
Pair of bodies for Elizabeth Ward	1s 6d

[a] LMA, CLA/002/02/01/0570, no. 215; other items from Mayor's Court cases cited here and Elizabeth Ward in LMA, CLA/024/05/91 (1656).

final two years were estimated as being worth £20 to £40 to her master and mistress – if she behaved. Indeed, her master and mistress were offered £60 with another apprentice but refused it 'meerly because Katherine was well able to manage their business'.[97] Ann Gray was described by her mistress's witnesses to be 'very capable' because she

[97] LMA, CLA 024/05/131B (1662).

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had served over two and a half years. Katherine Bobart said she would have happily taken her on herself for wages as well as lodging and diet, but for her poor behaviour.[98]

The emphasis on learning business skills is borne out in another case in which Alice Cryer sued Elizabeth Jenaway over debts from the shop they ran together. Recalling their dealings as they formed a partnership, Margaret Cooper, a fifty-four-year-old spinster who sold them tea, described how Alice was the more established in trade, and Elizabeth said that she would give her a guinea 'to have instructed her in the said way of tradeing and to goe along with her to Gentlemens houses to observe her way of dealing'. Nothing like an apprenticeship, this transaction nevertheless represents the kinds of skills that were considered worth paying to learn.[99] Ways of dealing involved the display of goods, the bargaining and the management of credit that underpinned new consumption. Those who came shopping were not just individual customers; habitually, women staying or living in London were commissioned to buy for provincial family and friends, and some professional shopkeepers were also proxy shoppers. Hester Pinney's archive contains a letter from a friend, Thomas Rose, beginning:

> Dear Mrs Easter, My wife receivd yours and gives you her thanks for your kinde offer, which she does willingly embrace and desires you to buy two capps for my Girles and a plaine silke Girdle for her self and whatever they cost shall faithfully be repayd.[100]

Hester's extensive shopkeeping experience would have given her a good eye as well as bargaining expertise. Both formal and informal learning provided the foundations of the active participation of women in business throughout the next century.[101]

Part of the skill of shop work was appraisal, bargaining and giving credit. Apprentices learned to wait on customers politely but with firmness. Thomas Rumsey, a grocer's apprentice, was complained of by his master in 1670 for sending customers away without serving them if they did not have ready change.[102] They were expected to know the price of goods and, of course, to account for everything they sold. Keeping money or change back, or letting goods get 'lost', was a regular issue.

98 LMA, CLA/024/05/498 (1689). 99 LMA, CLA/024/05/462 (1685).
100 Bristol University Special Collections, Pinney Papers, Red Box 2.
101 On the range of women's business activity, see, for example, Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006); Pamela Sharpe, 'Lace and Place: Women's Business in Occupational Communities in England 1550–1950', *Women's History Review* 19, no. 2 (2010): 283–306.
102 LMA, CLA/024/05/258 (1670).

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Mary Mason, a sixteen-year-old apprentice working in a shop with the younger and unreliable Christiana Hutchins, testified that she had gone to ask her master a price, leaving Christiana and an 'ancient woman' customer in the shop; when she came back, some cloth was missing, and Christiana suggested the customer had taken it.[103] Frances Bickley's master and mistress alleged that she had been untrustworthy in house and shop. Elizabeth Dunn, who had lodged in the household along with several others, observed Frances give a mask, a fan and a yard of green ribbon to a nurse in the house and sell two quilted caps for 22 pence, of which she gave her mistress only 18 pence. Elizabeth took a ring from her cousin, wrapped it in paper and tucked it in her room's window frame; later, she found it down the stairs, wrapped in a handkerchief of Frances's with a sixpence that she had seen in Frances's hand. She gave Frances the keys to her trunk, asking her to go and fetch her hood and gloves, and Frances took a ring from it; charged with it, she offered a crown in exchange but never gave Elizabeth either the money or the ring. This saga of domestic labour and exchange mirrors shop bartering and suggests how girls might learn to cheat as well as deal honestly.[104] Katherine Venner was involved in similar confrontations over a hood and a scarf, which she insisted she had taken openly from the shop, witnessed by her fellow servants, and with a promise she would 'make satisfaction' for them. Anne Chanor, a servant in the same household, reported hearing her mistress saying 'in a passion that Katherine was a theif and had stolen the same hood and scarf'. Mary Roe, Katherine's mistress's sister, had been in the shop too, and that evening the girls who worked there talked with her privately. Katherine asked Mary Roe why she had pretended to her sister that she had taken the scarf 'privately without giving notice when she as well knew of her taking thereof and bine paid 14 shillings for the scarf'; Mary answered, 'Yes it is trewe I knew yow did tell me of it and did pay me 14 shillings for the said scarf but [my sister] coming on me of a sudden and questioning me touching it I had it not then in mind and had denyed that I knew anything of them … and having soe denyed it I dare not now confess it.'[105] It was evidence of the confusing transactions of a millinery household as well as the power of Katherine's mistress, Mrs Allen, an Exchange seamstress with several apprentices and an elite clientele.

In the increasingly genteel trade of millinery, business and artisanal skills went hand in hand. The hands of seamstress apprentices attracted attention: mistresses watched their skilfulness, relatives looked out for

[103] LMA, CLA/024/05/010 (1674). [104] LMA, CLA/024/05/509B (1686).
[105] LMA, CLA/024/05/131A (1662) – lightly edited to remove repeated clericalisms.

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their appearance. Eighteenth-century commentators observed women's use of their hands to 'tumble over goods' in shops, unravelling textiles and browsing with their hands as well as their eyes. Kate Smith has shown how these sensory engagements helped consumers conceptualise their material worlds.[106] The hands of shopkeepers also embodied a haptic skill, one that had to be learned: not just sewing, but displaying goods. Milliners' and seamstresses' hands were a commodity as well as a tool.

The ways apprentices used their hands was indicative of the status of their apprenticeship. The stories of litigation sometimes dwelt on the minutiae of such distinctions. The interrogatory to witnesses in Frances Bickley's case posed some telling questions: did her master keep any maidservant besides Frances? Was she not forced to do all the work of a servant, 'as washing the house, scouring of pewter and brasse potts, fetching of bread from the bakehouse as farr as Aldersgate?' Elizabeth Morrelly, who had lodged in the Johnsons' house, was a confidante of Frances Bickley, and after she left the house, she continued to see the apprentice about the neighbourhood 'in a very dirty and nasty condition'. She asked her 'how she came so', and Frances told her that John Johnson no longer had a maidservant and was making her do the 'servile work'. Mrs Johnson made her 'carry a great boy of hers about with her upon a Sunday'. They misused and mistrusted her, she said. On the other side, Mrs Johnson's witnesses accused Frances of theft. They described the mask and ribbon she had taken, the money she had pocketed after selling the quilted caps, and a petticoat she had been given to sew, which was mislaid when she left it lying around the shop. Frances left, and her uncle arranged for her to be turned over to Mary Barton, another milliner with a shop on the Exchange, paying £20 for the final five years of her apprenticeship.[107]

The fetching of bread and other errands of which Frances Bickley complained suggest the risks of being drawn into housework, echoing the evidence of tax records that female apprentices were substantially more likely than male not to be living alongside domestic servants. Anne

[106] Kate Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship: The Haptic Skills of Shoppers in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History* 25, no. 1 (2012): 1–10; see also Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002): 375–94, and Claire Walsh, 'Shopping at First Hand? Mistresses, Servants and Shopping for the Household in Early-Modern England', in *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. D. E. Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 13–26.

[107] LMA, CLA/024/05/509B, 509A (1689).

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Crispe, witnessing in another Mayor's Court case, described her work as a servant as 'tending of the Complainant's child & sitting in his shopp and doeing of semstry work'.[108] Of these tasks, only childcare was clearly not part of an apprentice's work. Apprentices complained of being set to household work. At the Westminster Sessions in 1691, Isabella Lamb petitioned to be discharged from her mistress Elizabeth Wood on the grounds that instead of teaching her to make bone lace, as she was meant to do, she had put her to do 'household work and other Business'. Her mistress, Isabella argued, 'cannot perfectly instruct your Petitioner in her trade whereby your petitioner may gett her Living herafter', and she requested to be discharged from her indenture so she could be placed instead with 'some skilfull person using the same Trade' for the rest of her term. This document makes quite clear that the trade specified in Isabella's indenture was understood precisely and that the aim of her seven-year apprenticeship was to enable her to get her own living through a trade. Rather than paying a premium, Isabella was supported by her friends, who had engaged themselves to provide not only her clothes but also food, washing and lodging: it was an investment in her future earning capacity.[109] Gertrude Kirby, apprentice to Angellat Patilla in St Martin in the Fields, made a similar complaint of failure to instruct, this time in washing point lace. She was given back £3 of her premium to place herself elsewhere.[110] Sarah Gibson, bound for three years in 1715 to learn to be a mantua-maker from Joanna Worthington in Holborn, a contract which was made for £4 and paid by her brother, petitioned that instead she had been employed in 'comon household worke, cleaning and washing Lodgers Rooms and attending them'.[111]

The slippage between domestic labour, service and skilled work was significant enough to feature in the basic agreements of apprenticeship, verbally if not on paper. Dorothy Penny, witnessing as part of a lawsuit to recover the premium paid with her daughter Christiana Hutchins in 1674, described how her daughter's mistress Mary Haslam had agreed 'to employ Christiana wholly in the trade of a sempstress and that she should not bee imployed in service and drudgery work in the house but would keep a Maid servant to do the same'. Within three-quarters of a year, Christiana was complaining to her mother and their friends that the Haslams had 'put away their maidservant and made the said Apprentice Christiana doe the drudgery work about the house as washing thereof making fyres and washing clothes and fetching water'. Christiana was one of three orphaned

[108] LMA, CLA/024/05/91 (1656). [109] LMA, WJ/SP/1691/07/009.
[110] LMA, MJ/SB/B 493, p. 49.
[111] Middlesex Sessions, *London Lives* LMSMPS501450002 (1 April 1715).

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daughters of a haberdasher from Marylebone; her mother had remarried, to a gentleman in St Giles in the Fields. Like Mary Jones, Christiana Hutchins had strong company connections; the orphan of a fishmonger, her case was prosecuted by her uncle Robert Hutchins, a wealthy member (and later liveryman) of the Clothworkers' Company. With her mother, he had overseen the 'agreement making', in which Christiana was bound to a barber-surgeon's wife for £20, her clothes provided by her family.

The other side of Christiana's story cut straight to the challenges an unwilling apprentice might pose. Mary Haslam and her husband brought two witnesses who testified that Christiana, so far from being forced into drudgery, had actually preferred it to sewing. Mary Mason was an apprentice in the house with Christiana and described how, when Mrs Haslam told her off for doing her work amiss, Christiana fought back, telling her not to look at it if she didn't like it: 'she did it well enough to serve her own turn and would not do it better'. She told her mistress 'that she never intended to follow her trade but when her time was out she would be a chambermaid And if she never worked again her uncle would give her an Estate to live on without working'. Finally, she said 'she would not nor could she sit constantly pricking of a Clout', picking up a mocking phrase for tailoring. She asked her mistress instead to let her do work about the house. Alice Smith, who had put her own child out to Mrs Haslam, told the same story: Christiana would leave her work in the shop and go to the kitchen and do the work of the house, wandering off to fetch water (precisely the kind of job that other apprentices complained of as drudgery) instead of sewing as her mistress told her to. Christiana's resistance to sewing left her only two other options, it seemed: hoping her uncle would provide better for her, or becoming a chambermaid, another of the options that Hannah Woolley offered in 1668 as a good career for young women.[112] Christiana was only eleven or twelve at this point; she had been apprenticed, apparently, at nine, which was one of the problems. Her mistress complained that she cut up the silk and lace from the shop to make herself 'babies'. But in the four years of her apprenticeship, she gained an astute grasp of the limited opportunities ahead.[113]

Mary Haslam's response to Christiana's intransigence was to send her out to another teacher: she boarded her out in Holborn to learn point with 'a gentlewoman that was rarely expert therein', paying the teacher 5s a week. Christiana behaved so 'rudely and wantonly' that her teacher feared she would spoil her other scholars and declared she would not have her for more than twice the money. This enterprise indicates some

[112] Woolley, *Guide to Ladies*, 25.
[113] LMA, P69/MRY7/A/002/MS04997 (7 January 1658/9).

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of the other ways that specialist sewing and lacemaking was being taught to young women in the city. Mrs Haslam herself took boarders as well as apprentices and claimed in her libel that she treated Christiana as well as a boarder who paid £20 a year for 'boarding and teaching'. Christiana then left the Haslams and was turned over to Mary Culpepper, who testified that when she arrived, she was 'very little instructed in the trade of sempstress'. Her skills remained basic: 'for fine work she could doe nothing therein or had any skill in Sempstry other then to hem an ordinary thing.' Mrs Culpepper refused to take her without a premium of at least £12 (and her clothes), indicating that all Christiana's previous service had left little value in her hands. The Haslams found Christiana, they said, surprisingly young and ill prepared for apprenticeship. A witness described her as 'very little of growth for her age and in a manner a child and not able to dress herself'; her mistress had to comb and dress her hair for her for the first few months, when she was still only ten.

Overseeing Christiana's apprenticeship, her female relatives and her fellow servant scrutinised her hands, which had become hard. They judged that, like her clothes, they had been 'spoiled'; her aunt observed that she could tell that 'she did do all the drudgery work in the house not relating to the trade of a sempstress, for that her hands did very much evidence the same, being made very unfit to handle and work with a needle'. She told Christiana's mistress that the apprentice 'looked as if she did make the fires and dress the meat', and Mrs Haslam replied in her defence, 'they had all their meat from the cooks and dressed none at home.'[114] Hands were a key marker of female gentility in the eighteenth century.[115] Those distinctions may have been less culturally established in the late seventeenth, but judging the work that a hand did, and what it was capable of, was evidently part of the supervision of apprenticeship. Elizabeth Mason, another fellow apprentice, said that when Christiana's aunt complained of the lack of a maidservant, Mary Haslam responded 'that durty Girle does all that'.

Mary Haslam's skill as a mistress, like Frances Carey's, also came under scrutiny. Dorothy Bowyer, a bodice-maker aged twenty-five, testified that 'she knoweth the defendant Mary is a very industrious woman and one that takes a great deale of paine in the world for a livelyhood and the like care and paines to teach and instruct her Apprentice'. Dorothy's testimony of industry and livelihood, and their attendant pains, is also

[114] LMA, CLA 024/05/318 (1674).
[115] Kate Smith, 'In Her Hands: Materializing Distinction in Georgian Britain', *Cultural and Social History* 11, no. 4 (2014): 489–506.

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notable because, unusually for a female witness, the court documents record her occupation. Many courts did not record occupations for anyone, plaintiffs or witnesses, but church courts and equity courts like the Mayor's Court wrote down miniature biographies for their witnesses, detailing age, place and details of occupation or status. Men were ascribed an occupation and no marital status; women were given the status of wife (for example, 'wife of William Culpepper, citizen and fishmonger'), servant (assumed to be single), widow or spinster. Of all the Mayor's Court female witnesses, only Dorothy Bowyer had an occupation and no marital status, suggestive of the new place of industrious women in London's labour market. Bowyer's trade of bodice-making was another piece in the jigsaw of the urban garment trade. Bodices were integral to ordinary women's clothing as well as part of more elaborate outfits. Originally they were made of two sections laced together, including boned stays and a partial or full sleeve so that they could be worn on top of a smock to shape the upper body. By the 1680s, stays were emerging as foundation garments in their own right and were mostly made by men, although women were employed to stitch them; bodices became a separate garment, and making them became a female trade, characteristically employing pauper apprentices and women.[116] Dorothy Bowyer's training is invisible, but by twenty-five years old, she had become an independent worker. She lodged for a while in the same house as the Haslams and worked 'sometimes' with them in Mary's shop; without a shop of her own, but with a trade.

For Dorothy Bowyer, watching mistress and servant together, teaching was something that involved care and pain rather than the seamless transmission of skill that seemed to have been assumed between Frances Carey and Mary Jones. She saw Christiana 'make sober good plain work', when she was in the humour for it, though when she was cross, she would spoil it. Dorothy had a sharp eye, too, for the emotional and physical conflict between Christiana Hutchins and her mistress. She defended Mary's teaching methods against the Hutchins family's allegations of violence, testifying that she saw no unreasonable correction 'save now and then her Mistress gave her a patt with her hand for neglecting or spoyling her work as often she did doe'. Dorothy recalled Christiana saying to her that her mistress threatened to put her away, but 'if she knew not when she had a good servant, she (Christiana) knew when she had a good mistress, and would stay with her'. The regard, however forced, was meant to be reciprocal; if these words seem precocious for a

[116] Lynn Sorge-English, *Stays and Body Image in London: The Staymaking Trade, 1680–1810* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011).

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ten- or eleven-year-old, perhaps they came from Dorothy's own sense of fit working arrangements.[117] A fellow apprentice described a much less amenable relationship, and the capacity of fellow workers and servants to offer such different stories suggests the wide difference between the experiences of apprentices and co-workers. The detail both sides gave, prompted by but amplifying the clauses of the libels crafted for each side, also record the stories and values that were shared about workplace malpractice and good or bad teaching. Elizabeth Mason had moved on to work for a sailor in Ratcliffe but had been an apprentice alongside Christiana for three years. Together, she said, they did 'all the work about the house … washing thereof making fyers and fetching water and scowring the pewter and trenchers'. They were expected to sit up late to let Mr Haslam in, whereupon he raged at them and sent out to light his friends home. Mary, she said, often beat and misused them and hit Christiana's head 'sometimes with a stick and with a pair of Sizers (what was next hand)'. There would always be scissors to hand in a seamstress's workplace: this, along with Dorothy's description of the 'pats' that the mistress gave her servant to correct her work, conveys a working relationship imbued with physical discipline and at least the potential of considerable violence. William Haslam was violent too: Elizabeth Mason said he threw Christiana upon the ground, kicked and stomped upon her and pinched her. Christiana's mother reported that her daughter had a broken, swollen head, a bruised shoulder, arms that were black and blue, and an injury on her side that made her swoon when she tried to lace her bodice. Frances Bickley alleged that she had been 'beaten til she was black with bruises'. Immoderate correction was a standard plea for the dissolution of indentures for both girls and boys; its appearance in legal records conveys both its perceived legitimacy and its limits.

Both Christiana's family and her mistress complained of her flawed appearance. She did not match the requirements of a girl working with patterns of fashion. Her aunt, visiting her, expressed shock at her clothes: she was 'in a poor and ragged condition (as if she had gon abegging) with her clothes all rent and torne and stockings all too peeces with addling and shoes on her feet too big for them that this deponent was ashamed to see her'. She bought her shoes and stockings, pattens, petticoat, a black hood and several aprons. Sarah Hutchinson, another relative, described what she found when she visited in evocative and emotive terms: 'her clothes very ragged & torne & in a perilous durty condicon like unto a sinder girle that sifts sinders on a dunghill'. Cinder girls in early modern

[117] LMA, CLA/024/05/318.

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cities sifted ash to find any remnants of value – bones, paper or metal – before it was taken off to be used as fertilizer. Scavenging jobs were often allotted to women, and they were also readily aligned with sexual dishonesty.[118] Sarah Hutchinson's words brought to the surface the proximity of the rubbish heaps and dirty channels of the city, and the finery sold in milliners' shops. Stinking dunghills were everywhere. The importance of female apprentices being seen to do the right work, wear the right clothes and be well treated in the household involved a struggle to be differentiated from pauper apprentices and maidservants. A seamstress's trade was not servile work, or drudgery, but it could come perilously close to them. Anxiety about clothes and appearance reflects the ideal of neatness that was coming to be associated with the millinery trade: by 1747, a trade directory described millinery as 'a most genteel business for young Madams that are good Proficients at their Needle, especially if they be naturally neat, and of a courteous behaviour'.[119] Wayward apprentices and poorly managed clothes brought the high expectations of genteel parents and the drudgery of so much women's work face to face.

For girls from parish dependents to gentry, apprenticeship offered a precarious structure for non-domestic labour. As both life cycle and training, it helped make the norms of the gendered artisanal workplace and the gendered skills of the working life of women, both as apprentices and as mistresses. At the higher end, sewing and shopkeeping remained prominent. In between, a somewhat wider range of training options came into play. The means by which herbwomen, fruiterers, button-makers and pin-makers transmitted their trade remain largely invisible, as do the expectations of girls apprenticed to them and their families. Court testimonies offer a selective account of how girls learned, biased towards divergences of approach that could be blamed for contractual breakdown. The vast majority of apprenticeships were more harmonious, though many were uncompleted. The shape of court cases was determined by the only kinds of complaint that were acceptable in equity: contraventions of the indenture, itself a very old convention written for boys in craft workshops. Seamstresses' disputes reflect life in shops and households that took on girls with high premiums and were expected to provide proportionate skills; the large numbers of seamstresses and milliners enabled networks of reputation and expertise and strong

[118] See, for example, *The Gossips Braule, or the Women Weare the Breeches* (London: Printed in the Year of Womens honesty, 1655).
[119] *A General Description of All Trades, Digested in Alphabetical Order* (1747), 149.

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occupational identities. They also nurtured a sense of sewing and shop-keeping as female trades, which demanded female discipline.

In seamstress apprenticeships, the journeys to craft proficiency and to performatively submissive femininity went hand in hand, just as city boys learned to be men and artisans together. Apprenticeship, the transition to adulthood and independent work, might usefully be seen not only as training for artisanship but as the crafting of gender.

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