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Crime, criminal networks and the survival strategies of the poor in early eighteenth-century London

Heather Shore

Introduction

This morning one Rebecca Hart, a poor Woman belonging to the Parish of St. James's, was committed to Prison for stealing several Quantities of Coals, the Property of Mr. Nathan Robley. It was sworn against her that she had declared, 'It was no Sin in the Poor to rob the Rich; and that if it was, J— C— had died to procure the Pardon of all such Sinners.' The Prisoner all the Time she was before the Justice, appeared with uplifted Eyes, and behaved herself as if she had been engaged in her Devotions, appealing to Heaven for her Innocence, and invoking the most sacred Names as Witnesses of her not having committed a Fact, for which there appeared unquestionable Evidence.¹

Rebecca Hart's challenge to the magistrates of Westminster and Middlesex provides an emblematic moment. In defending her transgression she appealed to her own spiritual moral economy; legitimisation provided by unanswerable heavenly authorities.² Yet Rebecca's appeal is not so common in the annals of the criminal.³ The relationship between poverty and crime was rarely so straightforward. The eighteenth century has been exemplified as a period when the customary activities of the poor increasingly came under the orbit of the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, the model of social crime that has been constructed by historians of the shifting nature of criminal justice in this period does not sufficiently

address the study of urban crime.⁴ Whilst historians have considered the criminalisation of the activities of the rural and labouring poor in the eighteenth century, relatively few have considered similar processes in urban environments. Moreover, given the centrality of London in eighteenth-century discourse, examination of the meanings and functions of crime in the capital have been markedly thin on the ground.⁵ Those who have done have tended to concentrate (in the case of Peter Linebaugh) on a specific set of dynamics shaped by emerging political consciousness, and as a response to a patrician elite; or (in the case of John Beattie) a more straightforward narrative of the social, economic and demographic codas structuring crime in London and its environs.⁶ This chapter will consider the function and form of crime and criminality in London parishes in the first half of the eighteenth century. The discussion takes as its starting point the idea that crime might be understood as part of the broader makeshift economy of the poor.⁷ Arguably the place of crime in survival strategies has been inadequately assessed; the role of criminal activity in the life-cycle merits closer examination than it has thus far received. To what extent did criminal groupings provide networks of support, information or protection? How far can we argue that a criminal lifestyle offered a valid survival strategy to those who were prepared to risk imprisonment, or more seriously, transportation or death? The discussion that ensues will be necessarily speculative, suggesting ways to read crime in early eighteenth-century London.

Contemporary attitudes and models of criminality

The early eighteenth century was a period of heightened anxiety about crime and order, and consequently one in which the combined forces of media attention, social policy and elite commentary created a vision of the metropolis infested and overrun by organised criminality. Undoubtedly many of the most vivid characterisations of eighteenth-century crime belong to this period. 'Real-life' criminals such as Jonathan Wild and the serial escapee Jack Sheppard, as well as numerous highwaymen, whore-thieves, and street-robbers were the subject of a rich vein of popular literature: *Moll Flanders*, *Jonathan Wild* and *The Beggars Opera* amongst them.⁸

Because of these characterisations and because of the publicity of crime in this period, the lives of early eighteenth-century criminals have been uncovered. At least superficially, we know far more about the 'real' criminals referenced through symbolic allusion in Hogarth,⁹ Defoe and Fielding's work, than we do of those in the work of Charles Dickens for example.¹⁰ These individuals were the more extreme examples of London criminality, made even more extreme by literary, and sometimes visual, characterisation.¹¹ Yet the vast array of material that was produced in this period provides insight into the criminal networks that existed. The term criminal networks refers less to the notions of organised crime that are implicit in elite commentary, but rather, as has been suggested elsewhere, to the networks and focuses of criminal exchange and communication that have traditionally been associated with urban life.¹² Yet arguably these networks had much more in common with the networks of neighbours, friends and relatives that supported local communities than they do with historical notions of the criminal underworld.¹³ What might be seen straightforwardly as criminal behaviour by the authorities, might by the offender be viewed as solutions to poverty, dearth, crisis, under- and unemployment. Naturally such solutions often had a broader communal context. Even at the level of felony, a cursory glance at the records of the criminal justice system will indicate the petty and mundane nature of most crimes.¹⁴ For example at the January Sessions of the Peace in 1727/28:

Martha Rimus of St. Faith's, was indicted for stealing a Fan, value: 18s. the Goods of Robert Pickard; but the Fact not appearing to the Satisfaction of the Jury she was acquitted.

John Thomas was indicted for stealing 3 Brass Candlesticks, on the 6th of this Instant, the Goods of Elizabeth Filks: but for want of sufficient Evidence he was acquitted.

Mary Lewis, was indicted for stealing a Cap, value 3s. on the 13th of this Instant, the Goods of Richard Shervill, and found guilty to the Value of 10d.

Robert Ramsey, was indicted for stealing a Pair of Shoes, value 3s. on the 30th of December last, the Goods of William Vox, and found guilty to the Value of 10d.

Hannah Rowse, was indicted for picking the Pocket of William Smith, of a Silk Handkerchief, and 4 Shillings and 8 d in Money, but for want of sufficient Evidence she was acquitted.¹⁵

It is easy to imagine crimes (or non-crimes) such as these, as part of a broader life-cycle experience of the plebeian classes of the

metropolis. Consequently, the workplace, domestic service, familial connections, sociability and street-life were all points in the lived experience that may have provided opportunities for theft.

One of the problems with studying the criminality of the poor historically is in the nature of the evidence. As Robert Jutte comments in the context of early modern Europe, 'Very few records tell us, however, how members of the marginalised groups themselves may have viewed their social world'.¹⁶ For Olwen Hufton, in her study of eighteenth-century France, crime was an essential part of the makeshift economy:

Theft, vagrancy extortion (*mendicité avec menaces*), prostitution, child abandonment, infanticide, the neglect of the aged, the exploitation of the crippled certainly represent the seamiest aspects of the problem of poverty, but they were an integral part of the struggle for self-preservation of the poorest sectors of the community.¹⁷

Whilst elite perception, and legal tools, drew divisions between the poor and the criminal, such divisions were not so sustainable in reality; a fact that did not escape the more astute commentators. In the eighteenth century many explanations were offered in the attempt to understand and solve the problems of poverty, indigence and crime. Defoe, like other of his contemporaries believed the causes to lie in luxury, sloth and pride.¹⁸ In *Giving Alms no Charity and Employing the Poor a Grievance to the Nation* (1704) he criticised the workhouses and the various schemes undertaken to employ the poor usefully, arguing that this only encouraged the poor in their idleness; begging he saw as a direct consequence of what might be familiarly seen as eighteenth-century 'nannying'. Defoe identified begging as a national vice, thus the English were essentially lazy and would rather beg, thief, or ultimately be supported in the workhouse than do an honest day's work. In contrast Bernard De Mandeville, in *The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turn'd Honest* (1705) attacked 'virtuous society', suggesting that the acquisitive actions of thieves should be seen as enterprise, in much the same way as the actions of other outwardly more 'industrious' professions, such as lawyers and physicians:

Whilst others follow'd Mysteries,
To which few Folks bind Prentices;
That want no Stock, but that of Brass,
And may set up without a Cross;
As Sharpers, Parasites, Pimps, Players,
Pick-Pockets, Coiners, Quacks, Sooth-Sayers,

And all those, that, in Enmity
With down-right Working, cunningly
Convert to their own Use the Labour
Of their good-natur'd heedless Neighbour:
These were called Knaves; but, bar the Name,
The grave Industrious were the Same.¹⁹

Likewise Henry Fielding was well aware of the ironies that the criminal justice system brought to his court, commenting on the case of:

several Wretches who had been apprehended the Night before by Mr. Welch, were brought before Mr. Fielding and Mr. Errington; when one who was in a dreadful Condition, being all over covered with the Itch, was recommended to the Care of the Overseers; another who appeared guilty of no other Crime but Poverty, had Money given to her to enable her to follow her Trade in the Market.²⁰

That same afternoon, 'Mr. Welch routed a Mob Gaming-house in Holborn, where he apprehended thirty idle Persons, all of them Apprentices, Journeymen and Gentlemen Servants, and all in the high Road to Ruin.'²¹

We are used to seeing the eighteenth-century criminal poor through the lens of commentators such as Fielding, Defoe and De Mandeville. The poor of course were part of the nation's political currency. Yet the poor man and the criminal were not easy bedfellows; the honest and industrious were set in opposition to the idle and disorderly. Contemporary notions of criminality were conditioned by manifold factors; to the traditional polarisation of deserving and undeserving could be added age and gender. In particular ideas about urbanity and crime were to sharply impact on policy from the late seventeenth century. For example, despite often anachronistic images of the highwayman haunting the commons up and down the countryside, the highwayman's Act passed in 1692 (and reaffirmed by Royal Proclamation in the ensuing years) very much reflected a fear of urban crime on urban highways.²² The criminal, then, was often *seen* as a separate entity to the poor man. However, we must be careful of overstating such dichotomies, whilst serious crime and serious punishment may have identified and labelled the criminal, the more general shifts and overlaps of 'deviant' and 'normal' life in the metropolis were much more ambiguous. Paul Griffiths has recently suggested that we might see the relationship between criminal communities and other forms of support and sociability as 'overlapping circles'.

Thus in early modern London, he argues that 'A neat split dividing the worlds of criminals and citizens did not exist.'²³ In the *London Hanged*, Peter Linebaugh structured the narrative around his defining argument that in the context of eighteenth-century civil society, the crowd and the hanged were of much the same constituency: 'Research revealed the difficulty of distinguishing between a "criminal" population of London and the poor population as a whole. That is why we can say of the hanged that they belonged to the *poor*.'²⁴ Certainly, these were people who shared the same streets, occupations and alehouses. They weaved the same path between home or lodging-house, unemployment or underemployment, poor relief and charity. To echo Griffiths, their lives overlapped.

However, it is also clear that the London hanged got to that point because of difference; this was not just chance in the lottery that was being poor in eighteenth-century London. Rather a set of circumstances distinguished and led the criminal ultimately to the gallows. The account of the Ordinary of Newgate²⁵ of the 'Malefactors who were executed at Tyburn', gives us some indications to the formula that led to hanging.²⁶ Clearly recidivism was a key factor; hence the Ordinary built upon evidence of youthful misadventure and petty crime followed by a seemingly inexorable path to the robbery and burglary that were the key capital property crimes. Bad company, loose women and improvident 'associations' also marked out the criminal for execution. Thus 25 year old Peter Norman, who was executed in December 1730 for armed robbery, was an ex-apprentice, 'Since he was at his Freedom, he did not incline to work, but apply'd himself to Drinking, Gaming, Whoring, Thieving, Robbing and all Manner of Wickedness and bad Company, who hurry'd him headlong to Destruction.'²⁷

Arguably those who mounted the scaffold were at the extreme end of a spectrum which included the disorderly poor, vagrants and beggars at the opposing end. They were not the same, but they *were* of the same constituency. Historians of eighteenth-century crime have been very aware of this spectrum and have subsequently concentrated their energies on a specific element of this criminality. Thus much of the work on the crimes of the labouring poor in the eighteenth century have been both researched and written through the lens of 'social crime'. Hence, the criminalisation of customary rights and perquisites have played

a central role in histories of crime of the eighteenth century. This work has been based mainly on rural and coastal economies, where perhaps, the criminalisation of parts of the economies of makeshift are more visible.²⁸ However, various historians have sought to explore the meanings of petty crime both in the urban context, and in the workplace.²⁹ As we have seen above, much is known about elite perceptions and responses to crime in the eighteenth century; the role that it played in the lives of the urban poor has been less explored.

Clearly we know that urban poor communities had great recourse to the various charitable doles and benefits that were available.³⁰ Moreover, there is evidence that institutional forms of charity (and the term is used loosely) were also taken advantage of. For example Tim Hitchcock has suggested that beggars and the vagrant poor used the workhouse as a seasonal resource when the streets were less welcoming, and less profitable.³¹ However, this was a fine balance: what seems clear is that for certain of the urban poor recourse to institutional provision meant risking labelling. Hence women who used the house of correction, or the city's Magdalenes in this way, risked becoming known as 'disorderly' or worse.³² Moreover access to poor relief could not be assumed. Keith Wrightson has pointed out that parochial systems of relief were conditioned by an often punitive set of criteria:

The system identified and isolated the poor as a group: stressing their otherness; markedly reinforcing the moral differentiation of the deserving and the undeserving; defining the boundaries of the community by the recognition of settlement and entitlement. The whole relief system was predicated on a recognition of eligibility which was discretionary, discriminatory and conditional. It could be remarkably generous; it could harshly exclude; it could be employed to discipline.³³

This distinction between the institutions of poor relief and the wider world of the poor can also be seen in other parts of Europe. Thus Stuart Woolf, writing about the *Depots de Mendicité* in Napoleonic Tuscany, pointed out the limitations of the poor relief system, 'those poor unable to take advantage of any of the institutions set up for their assistance had to improvise ways of resisting hunger and cold. Some tried to solve their problems by theft and assault'.³⁴ Such responses to structural problems of poverty and dearth, however, belie a more proactive approach to criminality by the urban poor. Thus faced with a system of poor

relief that, at least on the face of it, was heavily conditioned by notions of deserving and undeserving,³⁵ the poor sought more lucrative means of sustaining themselves. Workplace theft, begging and vagrancy, prostitution, petty theft, shoplifting, and receiving of stolen goods are all points on the continuum linking poverty and criminality. For the rest of this chapter three key 'deviant' activities (workplace theft, prostitution and receiving) will be considered in the context of the makeshift economy. Before this, in the next section, the impact of structural factors that affected access to poor relief will be explored.

The parish and the criminal

The main social and administrative unit in the eighteenth century was the parish, and whilst many parishes had a 'crime problem', certain London parishes were specifically identified as sites of criminality. These were not ghettos or enclaves in the sense that we might associate with the nineteenth-century metropolis, yet areas like St Giles, parts of Westminster, the Haymarket, Covent Garden, Drury Lane and Leicester Fields continued to exercise the attentions of local magistrates, parish officers and the vestry.³⁶ For most of its history, the parishes of London had controlled and ordered their poor with a combination of national legislation and local initiative. In the seventeenth century poor relief was organised by the parish vestry, who appointed an Overseer of the Poor to administer relief. Poor relief was an essentially face-to-face system, focused on the relationship between pauper and parish officer.³⁷ From the late seventeenth century this situation was gradually changing. Whilst parish relief on the one hand became more formal, moving away from the piecemeal system of doles and charitable hand-outs that supplemented the old poor law, it also moved away from outdoor relief.

In a period when institutional initiatives for the poor, criminal and general disorderly were being suggested by Quaker commentators, the administrators of parochial relief systems turned increasingly to solutions such as workhouses, charitable schools and even labour colonies.³⁸ For example in 1722 a scheme to provide for the poor of the parishes of St Martin's, St James and St Annes, Westminster, suggested setting the poor to work in a labour colony. This colony would not only make the poor self-supporting, but

rather optimistically would provide the Corporation with profits of £20,000 a year.³⁹ This shift also corresponded with the emergence of the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM), who were at their height in London in the early decades of the century.⁴⁰ The Society's emphasis on cleaning the streets of the 'loose and disorderly' elided neatly with the shifting poor relief policy, many of the SRM initiated prosecutions resulting in committals to the metropolis Bridewells and Houses of Correction.⁴¹ By the early eighteenth century, then, access to relief was not any more limited (if anything a broader stratum of people received relief at some point in their lives⁴²), but the quality of relief had markedly changed. Thus the transformation of poor relief to a system that relied heavily on institutional forms of relief surely affected the ways in which the poor played the system.

Traditionally thinking about crime in London has been based on the idea that the city was essentially anonymous, with few ties of neighbourhood and kinship defining community relations.⁴³ Yet despite high levels of mobility, and the inevitable impact of continuous immigration, local knowledge and the importance of community networks should not be too readily dismissed. Despite the overwhelming size of London, daily life was closely based on the local parish.⁴⁴ Indeed criminals generally committed crimes in the parish in which they resided or in a neighbouring parish.⁴⁵ This suggests that, instead of being the rather anonymous and separate characters portrayed by elite sources, criminals were in fact very much part of the local neighbourhood. In fact they were the brothers and sisters, servants and apprentices, and well-known 'women of the town' that typified any metropolitan parish. For example, Mary Hollingshead was employed by Mary Hiltrop to iron the linen of her customers. When, in 1728, the pregnant Hollingshead stole four aprons belonging to John Nose, her employer begged for clemency to save her from transportation.⁴⁶ In the same year when Mary Coe, a poor washerwoman, was robbed of various goods from her house, she complained, 'in the Neighbourhood of her Misfortune, she learn'd, That a Women had been seen to come out of her House with two Bundles, and a Frying-Pan in her Hand; that she went with other Neighbours to Rag-Fair, and was no sooner got there, but they heard a Woman crying, *Who will buy a Frying-Pan, a Pair of Tongs, or a Poker*'.⁴⁷ Here we see the importance of work and neighbourly relations in the way the community responded to and dealt with crime.

Moreover, whilst parishes contained their fair share of vertical social relations the magistrates, the vestrymen, the local businessmen and householders; the apprentices, the poor, and the criminal led lives that overlapped.⁴⁸ Thus in the spring of 1730 local tradesmen and respectable residents were becoming increasingly intolerant of the behaviour of the inhabitants of the less salubrious parts of the neighbourhood of Drury Lane. In July of that year, in response to petitions from the residents of St Martin-in-the-Fields and St Paul's, Covent Garden, which complained of the 'frequent outcrys in the night, fighting, robberies, and all sorts of debauchery committed by them all night long to the great inquietude of his majesties good subjects', a Committee of Justices was set up in order to enquire into the problem. The result of these petitions was a series of raids, organised by the joint efforts of the Westminster magistracy, local 'reforming' constables, and the input of the SRMs. By mid-July petitions from neighbouring parishes had extended the raids to St Margaret's, St Anne's, St John the Evangelist, St George's in Hanover Square and St James.⁴⁹ These raids, which resulted in fines and committals to the Bridewells, were based on extensive local knowledge. Thus in September 1730:

Sir John Gonson, Justice Railton (the Chairman), Justice Blagny, and 6 or 7 more of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace of the Committee appointed at the last Westminster Sessions, for Suppressing the Night-Houses and other Disorderly Houses in and near Drury Lane, met at Covent Garden Vestry, and took several examinations concerning more of those sort of Houses, and have issued out warrants against several persons keeping the same, and bound over the Neighbours who complain'd of them, in recognisances to prefers Bills of Indictment against them.⁵⁰

Moreover, local knowledge was not confined to neighbours but was also to be seen in the relationship between the offender and the magistrate. Thus magistrates like Gonson, De Veil and the Fieldings clearly had some familiarity with the subjects of their court. In August 1730, when Mary Harvey was committed to the Gatehouse after 'giving very saucy and abusive language to Sir John Gonson the Chairman', there is a real sense of the antagonism that had built up during the course of the disorderly house raids.⁵¹ The lives of the magistrates and the condemned could and did overlap. John Gonson was 'insulted and threatened' in New Fetter Lane in November 1730.⁵² Joseph Lucas, a robber active in the

1740s, apparently wrote wearily to his wife on the eve of his execution, 'Then we feared death as the greatest evil, now I embrace it as the greatest good, and am more afraid of having a reprieve to live again and be miserable, than I used to be of Justice De Veil and his Constables.'⁵³ Of course the Justices' role was multi-faceted. Whilst they had no real involvement in the daily distribution of poor relief, they were active in the Petty Sessions which heard settlement and bastardy examinations.⁵⁴ The crossover of their presence on both the petty and quarter session benches may well have closed down access to certain forms of relief for the criminal poor.⁵⁵

Criminal networks and the makeshift economy

We have seen that the nature of and access to poor relief was changing in the early decades of the eighteenth century; this, along with other social and demographic factors, may have affected the access of certain of London's poor to relief. Moreover, this was a period in which there was a heightened concern about crime in the metropolis; the increased publicity of crime, and the willingness of neighbours and communities to confront 'criminals' in their midst meant that for some London poor, crime may not only have been an occasional resource, but a necessary adjunct to their makeshift economy. Such groupings and networks may have provided an alternative welfare strategy for certain sectors of the London poor. In the early eighteenth century, a central theme for commentators on crime was the prevalence of gangs. Thus elite commentary envisaged a city overrun by organised gangs of criminals thriving comfortably in an inverted world of robbery, gambling, whoring, vice and idleness. Pro-active magistrates like Thomas De Veil, and later Henry and John Fielding, were particularly articulate about their 'gang-busting' activities. In a biography published posthumously in 1748, the writer commented:

But to return to Mr. De Veil, he saw very plainly, that to carry his point, and to become superior to others in his station, it was necessary for him to take more than ordinary pains; and in this, he was indefatigable, nor did he make any difficulty of exposing his person when it was necessary, in order to see his warrants executed, or to come at the bottom of remarkable villainies by several, and those sometimes long and tedious examinations. By these methods, by being

continuously in business, and by keeping very correct accounts of whatever passed before him, he came to make such discoveries, as alarmed one of the largest, and most desperate gangs, that ever infested this, or any other country.⁵⁶

Certainly concerns about gangs and organised forms of crime were hardly new, but in the 1720s and 1730s concern about serious crime, and particularly street crime, was paramount.⁵⁷ This may have been partly influenced by the exposure of the activities of Jonathan Wild; it may also have had something to do with fears about demobilisation after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.⁵⁸ However, this is not a full explanation, and it is unclear why fears of crime were so heightened in this period. Nevertheless, newspapers, broadsheets, popular entertainments, and pamphlet literature were full of crime. This was period when the criminal biography was at its peak, when the ordinary of Newgate was flourishing, when Daniel Defoe was interviewing condemned criminals for the edification of an eager public.⁵⁹ In fact Defoe interviewed both Jonathan Wild and his apparent nemesis, Jack Shepherd.⁶⁰ The moral panic about crime in this period was very much Defoe's terrain, writing in 1731, 'The Mischief of Street-Robberies, which is the Subject of this Discourse, is grown up now to such a Height, especially in the City of London and Places adjacent, that it may very well be call'd Unsufferable.'⁶¹ Clearly, however erroneous, the citizens of early eighteenth-century London had a strong sense of who their criminals were, what their nature was, how they were defined and recognised. They were not merely the poor but a group with their own codes of behaviour, closely connected, and ensconced in a criminal lifestyle. What is interesting about this commentary, and about the formulaic story of descent into 'bad associations' told by the Ordinary of Newgate and the authors of criminal biography, is the emphasis on community. Hence, the 'underworld' mirrored the 'upperworld' in its network of familial and friendship ties, support and help in times of dearth and crisis.⁶² Many of the accounts of criminal lives romanticised the idea of community: In *Villany Exploded: or, the Mistery of Iniquity laid open*, an account of the activities of a so-called gang of street-robbers in Newgate written in 1728 at least in part by Daniel Defoe, included a 'Copy of Articles ... which were sign'd by a Gang of Street-Robbers and House-Breakers, who are now all, or most of them detected and executed'.⁶³ One of the articles stated, 'That whilst any Member of this Society lies in Newgate, or any

other Gaol, he shall be allow'd one Shilling a Day, till he is clear, topp'd off, or transported'.⁶⁴ The bestowing of names based on the apparent leadership of the gang and, occasionally, territorial alignments, emphasised this notion of close-knit criminal communities. Thus Hawkin's Gang, Carrick's Gang, Dalton's Gang, the Gatehouse Gang and The Black Boy Alley Gang, were names familiar to the press and the courtroom in the early eighteenth century.⁶⁵ Yet how fixed were these so-called gangs? Judging by the level of informing by fellow 'gang' members the criminal networks of the metropolis were rather more fluid than the contemporary literature suggests.⁶⁶

In the autumn sessions of the Old Bailey in 1726, an extensive series of indictments brought a group of female shoplifters to court. At the centre was the self-confessed thief, Mary Burton, alias Ravenscroft, alias Fenton, alias Holloway, alias Hatfield, formerly maid to Jonathan Wild, and evidence to the tune of £50 and a royal pardon. Between September and December of that year Mary gave evidence at eleven trials resulting in the executions of four of her accomplices, Katherine Fitzpatrick, Jane Holms, Sarah Turner and Mary Robinson.⁶⁷ At the trial of Sarah Turner, alias Lawson, whom along with Katherine Fitzpatrick later unsuccessfully tried to delay execution by pleading her belly, Burton described one of their outings:

The 2 prisoners came to my room, and ask'd me to *go out*, which in our way of speaking signifies to go a shoplifting. I was not drest, and so they told me where they intended to go, and that they would wait for me, at a Brandy Shop in *St. Pauls Church-Yard*. They went, I drest myself and follow'd them, but before I came to the Brandy Shop, I saw them in the prosecutors shop, and went into them ... *Fitzpatrick* took the silk out of the window, and put it under her hood, but there was a long edging to it, cut in little escallops, that had like to have betray'd us. She sold it for 3s. 6d. a yard, but *Sarah Turner* was angry with her, and said, she could have got 4s. for it.⁶⁸

Burton had been approached previously by John Moone, the owner, with Richard Stone, of a shop at the Queen's Head and Anchor on Ludgate Hill, with the view to turning evidence. Clearly the activities of the women had been coming to the notice of local shopkeepers, as Moone remarked, 'These women, and others of their Profession, had been often at several shops in that neighbourhood, so that they were pretty well known.'⁶⁹ Moone advised Burton to give evidence, she refused but later voluntarily

surrendered her evidence. Apparently Moone's was not the first or only attempt to divide the women. Justice Vaughan told the court how he had approached several of the women with the idea of giving evidence, but for one reason or another they were not reliable enough to be admitted, till 'Mary Burton came in a voluntary Evidence, and the Information that she then gave me, agrees in every particular with what she now swears in court'.⁷⁰ In giving evidence Burton describes the world of shoplifting that these women occupied, the receivers to whom they passed on their stolen goods, the lodging-houses they inhabited, the ale-houses in which they met.⁷¹ This was a world of overwhelmingly petty crime, striking in its mundanity of stolen petticoats, pieces of satin, shop counters, wrappers and damask parcels.⁷² For the shopkeeper victims, these women were local figures whom they knew well enough to approach. Nevertheless, implicit in the testimonies given at the Old Bailey was the language of professionalism, a language later echoed by Burton, who describing the receiver Hannah Britton, stated, 'We went accordingly, and told her that we had spoke with a piece of Silk. She was well acquainted with our Profession, and knew that by saying, *we had spoke with it*, we meant, *we had stole it*.'⁷³ The definition of the professional criminal was inherently problematic, based as it was upon the fuzzy boundaries between the economy of crime and the economy of makeshift. Whilst such gangs or associations represent the rather more extreme resourcing of the makeshift economy, other crimes perhaps fit easier into such a model.

Crime, the life-cycle and the makeshift economy

Prostitution, begging and vagrancy, petty theft, receiving, shoplifting and employee theft were all activities to which the poor might resort in times of increased hardship, or as a way of supplementing a limited income. Indeed, in some cases of workplace theft, pilferage was seen as one of the customary perks of the job (though this view was not always shared by the employer).⁷⁴ Despite the contemporary stereotype of the career criminal, most offenders, even those who filled the pages of the Ordinary of Newgate's Account, had had some sort of employment or occupation, however menial. Indeed the apprenticeship story was central in the criminal mythology sustained in eighteenth-century crime narratives. Jack

Sheppard was apprenticed to a carpenter for six years until, only months before he was due to complete his indentures, he committed himself fully to a life of crime.⁷⁵ The thief and informer James Dalton was first apprenticed to his stepfather's trade of butcher (his own father having been executed); Thomas Neaves, 'the Noted Street-Robber', was also apprenticed to a butcher; the highwayman John Everett was apprenticed to a salesman, but left his master to enter the army; Edward Bellamy, formerly connected to Jonathan Wild, had been a tailor's apprentice.⁷⁶ Moreover, the moral story of the 'idle apprentice' was a key device in both criminal and conduct literature in this period. Yet whilst some apprentices may well have fed their desire for 'idleness and dissipation' by turning to a life of crime, it is worth questioning how far apprenticeship really figured in such men's lives. Using the Ordinaries Accounts, Peter Linebaugh found that 40 per cent of the 1,242 executed men and women for whom he had biographies, had been apprenticed to a trade.⁷⁷ However, as John Beattie points out, there are limitations to what information about apprenticeship can tell us, 'He might be an apprentice or might have completed an apprenticeship years before and not worked at that trade since; he might be a master or a journeyman; he might be prosperous or poor; employed or unemployed.'⁷⁸ Despite Linebaugh's calculations, specific information on apprentices is not always forthcoming in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers. In contrast, in early eighteenth-century London probably the most characteristic workplace theft to come to the attention of the courts was that committed by household and domestic servants. Thus in 1727, William Staples prosecuted his servant, Robert Beaton, who had stolen various goods from his master's house, including a watch, a ring and some money, 'It appeared that the Prisoner being the Prosecutor's Servant, had taken the Goods mentioned in the Indictment out of his Master's House, and carried them to his Mother's, who pawn'd them at the Rose in Rose-Alley, Golden-Lane ...'⁷⁹ Theft by servants was so common as to be frequently commented upon by contemporaries. Indeed, in 1713, when theft of goods to the value of 40s. or more, from a dwelling house was removed from clergy, this was aimed directly at servants: 'Divers wicked and ill-disposed servants, and other persons, are encouraged to commit robberies in houses by the privilege, as the law now is, of demanding the benefit of clergy.'⁸⁰ According to Linebaugh's calculations, sixty-two servants were hung between 1703

and 1772; twenty-one of these had robbed their masters.⁸¹ Of course most of the crimes committed by domestic servants were not serious enough to end up on the gallows, but servants were a vulnerable group. As Bob Shoemaker points out, they were often hired on short-term contracts, with demand for their services fluctuating.⁸² They were often suspected of opening houses to organised gangs of burglars; young women in particular could be vulnerable to the undercurrents of sexuality in a household.⁸³ Whilst servants might turn to pilfering from their households to supplement their income, unemployed female servants were one of the likely groups to turn to prostitution to stop the gaps.⁸⁴

Stories of robberies and attempted robberies by prostitutes from the unsuspecting country innocent were the staple fare of early eighteenth-century literature; moreover this literature linked them closely to the cities' criminal networks. In his pamphlet on the Night-houses (essentially brothels and low-lodging houses), the author commented on the 'Seminaries of Thieves and Prostitutes, and also the Receptacles and Retreats of the Street-robbers, Murderers, Incendaries, and all the several Gangs of wicked People which are so much our Grievance and Terror ...'.⁸⁵ This imagining of the 'underworld' clearly spilled over into real life; indeed the disorderly house raids of summer 1730 were strongly conditioned by the apparent identification of gangs of prostitutes and thieves. Yet it is difficult to be sure about the shape and contours of prostitutes' involvement in crime, or for that matter, the involvement of poor women in prostitution. There does seem to be a strong connection between women's criminality and sexuality. In the Old Bailey Sessions, cases of women described by witnesses as whores stealing from their clients proliferate. The case of Hannah Wittermore, acquitted of privately stealing in September 1727 was typical. Hannah was picked up by Thomas Foaks (described as 'a ludicrous Tarpollian') on 18 of August, and 'carried to the Dog Tavern in Thames Street, where we drank four Pints of Wine, I pulled out my Watch, and she asked to look on it, I let her have it, and went to make Water, then asked for it again, she said she had put it in her —, but I did not feel there for it ...'.⁸⁶ Foaks eventually got his watch back from a pawnbroker, but nothing was proved against Wittermore. In such cases as these local knowledge was often displayed, thus when Sarah Martin and Sarah Mullenux were accused of stealing a watch from Peter Cox in 1727, they were described as 'a young Whore and an old Bawd'.

the following year, when Mary Fowler was indicted of stealing a brass candlestick from the person of Robert Ward, it was noted that she:

has for some Time kept a notorious Bawdy House in *White Horse Alley, Chick-Lane*, at which Place unthinking simple Sots have been frequently ensnared, gull'd &c, and several of the Strumpets have been brought out of the House to justice; but the *Mother* being in a fair Way for a long Voyage, it is hoped the Crew will be dispersed into other Quarters.⁸⁷

Clearly reputation and local knowledge deeply impacted on women caught in the criminal justice system and indeed, in some cases, accused women used narratives of destitution to explain their fall. Thus Anthony Henderson describes the case of Anne Lumley, accused of theft in 1753, who told the court that she had been reduced to poverty when her husband had been killed on active service abroad.⁸⁸ Prostitution then may have been one of those deviant activities which poor women moved in and out of during their life-cycle. Indeed Defoe made pointed comments about the shifting world of prostitution and domestic service.⁸⁹ Moreover, there is a sense that once the parish officers associated claimants with prostitution, movement in and out of the trade became increasingly difficult, leaving the prostitute increasingly vulnerable to the temptations of crime.⁹⁰

Peter King's work on female offenders and the life-cycle has shown that the late teens, and early twenties were the key years for vulnerability to indictment for property crime in the late eighteenth century.⁹¹ However, in London and urban Middlesex, another significant period in the life-cycle can be identified. Thus amongst the accused at the Old Bailey, the age group from the early thirties to the mid-forties included a large proportion of women.⁹² King has argued that involvement in receiving stolen goods is a major explanation for this peak. Thus half of those indicted for this offence were aged between 30 and 45.⁹³ Receiving, or fencing, was a particular area of concern for commentators on criminality in the eighteenth century. Many felt that the criminal law was poorly structured in the way it dealt with receivers. Receiving was not actually a felony in common law; the inherent problem was in the link between the receiver and the offender. Thus to convict a receiver, the thief had first to be convicted of felony. By 1718 receivers who were found guilty of being accessories

to a felony could be transported for fourteen years. However, there were substantial difficulties in convicting receivers, providing a source of great annoyance and concern to Henry Fielding and Patrick Colquhoun.⁹⁴ Receivers were portrayed as a central feature of the world of organised crime, an agent linking the individual criminal to the broader networks of crime in the city.⁹⁵ John McMullen described the fence as a 'patron-sponsor' figure, 'over-seeing and directing various forms of crime'.⁹⁶ Despite this mythologising of the receivers' role, the reality was rather less glamorous. Those accused of receiving almost invariably operated in a much more mundane guise. Thus they were pawnbrokers, old clothes shop keepers, publicans, lodging-house keepers.⁹⁷ In other words they occupied roles, ran trades or small businesses, at the heart of the community.⁹⁸ To some extent this explains why receivers were such a difficult group to criminalise: unlike other offenders they were not an easy group to label and demonise. Indeed they were central players in the interlinking of community and criminal networks in the metropolis, further reflected in the sets of relationships we see played out between thief and offender in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers.

Elizabeth Morris was indicted for receiving goods from the house-breaker William Norman in April 1733.⁹⁹ She was the mother of William Morris, who according to witnesses had been involved in the robbery from the house of Paul Rankin, in St James's Market. Elizabeth Morris kept a smith's shop at the 'Sign of the *Jack and Half Moon* in *Eagle-Court* by the New Church in the Strand'. According to one of the smiths she employed, William Hadly, 'Her chief Business is making Stove-Grates. I never knew that she brought any Goods but old Iron.'¹⁰⁰ A number of witnesses testified that Morris was the victim of physical abuse by her son William, and this had prompted some bad feeling in the neighbourhood. Francis Skelhorn, who sold Morris's Stove-Grates commented that:

Some particular Neighbours may speak ill of her; on Account of her Son, who, indeed, had a vile Character. I have seen him beat her like a Stock-Fish, and break her Goods to Pieces before her Face.

C. What particular Neighbours are those?

F. S. Some that sent her Son to *Bridewel*.

Not only does this case show us the potential duality of the receivers' role, but it also shows how networks of neighbourliness could interact with the criminal justice process. Hence, the

testimony of Francis Skelborn and William Hadly suggest that Morris was a victim of guilt by association, that neighbours intolerant of her son's behaviour have added to the process which has brought her to court.¹⁰¹ The receiver then could be very much a part of the local community networks. Moreover, as in the Morris case, receivers often were bound to their suppliers by bonds of kinship: such as the Tanner family who were indicted for theft and receiving in January 1730.¹⁰² Thus Martin Peter Tanner had stolen a gold ring, a watch case, some Bath metal buckles and some toys, from the toy shop of Henry Horton, for whom he worked as an errand boy, '... by his own Confession he had taken sundry Goods, at several times from his Master, and giving them to his Mother and Sister', Sarah and Diana Tanner. When the Tanners' house was searched various toys belonging to Horton were found. Martin and his mother were found guilty but his sister was acquitted.¹⁰³

Whilst such cases as that of Morris and the Tanners were very typical of those found tried at the Old Bailey, in other cases the ties of criminal networks, rather than familial or neighbourly networks, were apparent. Andrew Dalton¹⁰⁴ in August 1730 described how he had sold ten gallons of liquor belonging to his master to Moll Harvey, whom we have met elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ Street-robbers Thomas Neaves and James Dalton, who both turned evidence in 1728, mentioned various women as well-known fences: Madame Toy, Susan Watts, Hannah Britton (who according to the *Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals* was 'whipped from Holborn Bars to St. Giles's Pound').¹⁰⁶ But even in more stereotypical accounts of receivers (i.e. those operating in the context of gangs) kinship networks are still apparent. For example in the 1720s and 1730s, Moll Harvey worked closely with her sister Isabella Eaton, and various common-law husbands belonging to both of them.¹⁰⁷ Indeed when occupants of Harvey's house were thrown in the Roundhouse one Saturday night for 'fighting and quarrelling', Justice Gonson dismissed it as a 'Family Quarrel'.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the interweaving worlds of the poor and the criminal in early eighteenth-century London. By examining criminality through the lens of community, family and work

it has attempted to show how crime might be read as a key element of the makeshift economy in this period. This is not to argue that the line between poverty and crime was indivisible, but rather the sharp dichotomies drawn by contemporaries were clearly not so tangible in reality. There is always a certain fluidity attached to behaviour identified as 'deviant', and in the eighteenth-century metropolis, developing systems of law enforcement, parochial authority and the organisation of poor relief had a significant impact on the way in which criminality was defined and responded to by local residents and neighbours. Clearly, in certain neighbourhoods, what the authorities defined as crime was tolerated to a greater or lesser extent. Prostitution, workplace pilfering and fencing all have their place in the canvas of the plebeian life-cycle. Moreover, kinship networks were not unusual within the groups identified by the authorities as gangs. Ultimately there can be no clear demarcation between the poor and the criminal in the eighteenth-century metropolis, subject as they were to a criminal justice system that whilst capable of negotiation and discretion also had clear ideas about how poor people should, or should not, behave.

Notes

- 1 *The Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 28, 7 April 1752, cited in H. Fielding, *The Covent Garden Journal and A Plan of the Universal Register Office* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 422.
- 2 For a more formal definition and application of the 'moral economy' see E. P. Thompson, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 76–136. For a recent reappraisal and broader application of the 'moral economy' see A. Charlesworth and A. Randall (eds), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000).
- 3 See R. Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 151–2.
- 4 For an overview on the historiographical handling of eighteenth-century crime, and particularly the impact of 'social crime', see J. Innes and J. Styles, 'The crime wave: recent writing on crime and criminal justice in eighteenth-century England', in A. Wilson (ed.), *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570–1920 and its Interpretation* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 201–65.
- 5 J. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660–1800* (Oxford,

Clarendon Press, 1986); *idem*, 'The criminality of women in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Social History*, 8 (1975), pp. 80–116; P. D'Sena, 'Perquisites and pilfering in the London Docks, 1700–1795' (unpublished MPhil, Open University, 1986); P. Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, Allen Lane, 1991); *idem*, 'Tyburn: a study of crime and the labouring poor in London during the first half of the eighteenth century' (unpublished PhD, Warwick University, 1975); R. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex, c. 1660–1725* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991). Also see essays in L. Davison *et al.* (eds), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689–1750* (Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1992). Since the completion of this chapter, John Beattie has published *Policing and Punishment in London, 1660–1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001).

6 Linebaugh, *London Hanged*; Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*.

7 For a comparative discussion of the interplay between poverty and crime and the economy of makeshifts, see O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth Century France, 1750–1789* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974), particularly part 3. See also P. Lane, 'Work on the margins: poor women and the informal economy of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Leicestershire', *Midland History*, 22 (1997), pp. 85–99.

8 See chapter 1, 'Literature/crime/society', in I. A. Bell, *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (London, Routledge, 1991); P. Rogers, *Literature and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century England* (Brighton, Harvester, 1985).

9 For Hogarth, particularly the Harlot's Progress, see R. Paulson, *Hogarth: Volume 1, The 'Modern Moral Subject' 1697–1732* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1991), especially pp. 241–52; J. Uglow, *Hogarth: A Life and a World* (London, Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 193–7, 204–6, 209.

10 For example see G. Howson, *Thief-Taker General: The Rise and Fall of Jonathan Wild* (London, Hutchinson, 1970); R. Paley, 'Thief-takers in London in the age of the McDaniel gang, c. 1745–54', in D. Hay and F. Snyder (eds), *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1750–1850* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1989), pp. 301–41. For discussion of the 'reality' of Dickens's characters see J. J. Tobias, *Prince of Fences: The Life and Crimes of Ikey Solomons* (London, Vallentine Mitchell, 1974); see also P. Collins, *Dickens and Crime* (3rd edn, London, Macmillan, 1994).

11 For instance James Thornhill's (father-in-law of Hogarth) striking mezzotint of Jack Sheppard in his Newgate cell (Museum of London).

12 H. Shore, "'Cross coves, buzzers and general sorts of prigs": juvenile crime and the criminal "underworld" in the early nineteenth century', *British Journal of Criminology*, 39 (1999), p. 11; P. Griffiths,

- 'Overlapping circles: imagining criminal communities in London, 1545–1645', in A. Shepard and P. Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 115–33, particularly 115–16, 120.
- 13 R. Samuel, *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981). For a socio-anthropological view see M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, Penguin Books, 1962).
- 14 Bearing in mind that the best evidence we have comes from the higher courts, a broad range of much more trivial offences could be dealt with summarily. This could include offences as diverse as: 'vice (as defined by contemporaries), vagrancy and idleness, disobedient servants, certain types of petty theft and embezzlement, violations of the game laws, attending conventicles and other religious offences, and violations of a miscellany of economic and administrative regulations': Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, pp. 35–6.
- 15 *The Proceedings at the Sessions of the Peace, and Oyer and Terminer for the City of London and on the King's Commission of Goal-Delivery of Newgate ...* (otherwise the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*, hereafter *OBSP*), January 1727/28.
- 16 Jutte, *Poverty and Deviance*, p. 178.
- 17 Hufton, *The Poor*, p. 355.
- 18 See L. B. Faller, *Crime and Defoe: A New Kind of Writing* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 19 B. De Mandeville, *The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turn'd Honest* (1705), later incorporated into *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (London, J. Roberts, 1714).
- 20 *The Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 49, 20 June 1752, p. 444.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 4 Wm. and M. c. 8, s. 2 (1692); this statute was the first to establish a permanent reward, offering the sum of £40 for the apprehension and conviction of highway robbers, 'including those who robbed in the streets of the metropolis or other towns': Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, p. 52.
- 23 Griffiths, 'Overlapping circles', p. 125.
- 24 Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*, p. xxi. This view of a threatening underclass is arguably much more apparent during the later nineteenth century, again in London, with the spectre of 'outcast London': see G. Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971); for an account of these shifting perceptions see the authors' introduction to J. Marriott and M. Matsumura, *The Metropolitan Poor: Semi-Factual Accounts, 1795–1910*, 5 vols (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999), I, pp. xi–l.
- 25 For a description of the form of the Account see P. Linebaugh, 'The

- Ordinary of Newgate and his account', in J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England, 1550–1800* (London, Methuen, 1977), pp. 246–69.
- 26 John Beattie gives us some idea of the patterns of capital sentencing and execution for Surrey between 1722–48, which roughly corresponds to the period covered in this chapter. Thus in 1722–24, 41 people were executed (78.9 per cent of those sentenced to death); 1732–34, 8 (38.1 per cent); 1736–40, 36 (49.3 per cent); 1741–48, 26 (42.6 per cent). Later figures from three periods – 1749–75: 68 per cent; 1776–87: 73.1 per cent; 1788–1802: 53 per cent – show us that in each period the largest majority were hung for robbery or burglary. In fact, in all three periods there were never less than 76 per cent of the total executed for property crime: Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, pp. 516, 536–7.
- 27 *The Ordinary of Newgate, His Account of the Behaviour, Confessions, and Dying Words of the Malefactors Who were Executed at Tyburn on Wednesday the 23rd of the Instant December, 1730* (London, John Applebee, 1730).
- 28 For example, A. Charlesworth, 'An agenda for historical studies of rural protest in Britain, 1750–1850', *Rural History*, 2 (1991), p. 42; P. King, 'Gleaners, farmers and the failure of legal sanctions in England, 1750–1850', *Past and Present*, 125 (1989); J. Rule, 'Social crime in the rural south in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Southern History*, 1 (1979), pp. 1–16.
- 29 For example, Linebaugh, *London Hanged*; Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*; J. Styles, 'From an offence between men to an offence against property: industrial pilfering and the law in the eighteenth century', in M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher (eds), *Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 173–210.
- 30 As Steven King has recently pointed out, London 'was the focus of a vast range of private acts and institutions which dealt directly or indirectly with relief and welfare. It had a complex array of alternative welfare sources, including the densest pawnbroking network in the country': S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 13.
- 31 For example, see T. Hitchcock, '"Unlawfully begotten on her body": illegitimacy and the parish poor in St. Luke's Chelsea', in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840* (London, Macmillan, 1997), pp. 70–86; also T. Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse: a study in institutional poor relief in selected counties, 1696–1750' (unpublished DPhil, Oxford University, 1985).
- 32 A. Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis, 1730–1830* (Harlow, Longman, 1999), pp. 16–18.
- 33 K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England',

in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, Macmillan, 1996), pp. 10–46, for this quote pp. 21–2. Whilst Tim Hitchcock has argued that developments in social policy from 1699 broke down the divisions between the pauper and the vagrant, this model is not so easily applied to crime. Hitchcock argues, ‘In a sense, the creation of a sophisticated legal notion of settlement, with its certificates and system of removal, ensured that the sharp division between the vagrant and parish pauper, which had lain at the heart of the parallel development of legislation throughout the sixteenth century, no longer seemed clear’: T. Hitchcock, ‘The publicity of poverty in early eighteenth-century London’, in J. F. Merritt (ed.), *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598–1720* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 166–84, for this quote p. 182.

34 S. Woolf, *The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London, Methuen, 1986), p. 109.

35 Obviously one response to this was to learn the language of the system. In early twentieth-century London, Arthur Harding’s mother understood this: ‘The whole thing was having your poverty well known to the people who had the giving of charity. They noticed that mother was a dead cripple, and that father was a loafer, and that she had children to bring up. And so she got on the list for any of the gifts which came from wealthy families, to distribute among the poor. They made out that she was “deserving”. They were always asking whether we was good children or not, and whether we were clean, and whether we went to Sunday School.’: Samuel, *East End Underworld*, p. 24.

36 For the development of such areas historically see J. McMullan, *The Canting Crew: London’s Criminal Underworld, 1550–1750* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1984); Griffiths, ‘Overlapping circles’; Shore, ‘Cross coves’.

37 T. Hitchcock, ‘Paupers and preachers: the SPCK and the parochial workhouse movement’, in Davison, *Stilling*, pp. 145–66, especially pp. 147–8.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *The Form of a Petition submitted to ... those Noblemen and Gentlemen who desire to subscribe what sums shall be necessary for relieving, reforming, and employing the Poor ...* (1722), cited in M. D. George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (London, Penguin Books, 1966), p. 309.

40 See Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*; *idem*, ‘Reforming the city: the Reformation of Manners campaign in London, 1690–1738’, in Davison, *Stilling*, pp. 99–120.

41 Shoemaker, ‘Reforming the city’, pp. 99–120.

42 Hitchcock, ‘Paupers and preachers’, p. 147.

43 E. A. Wrigley, ‘A simple model of London’s importance in changing

- English society and economy, 1650–1750', *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), pp. 44–70; Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, pp. 10–11.
- 44 See J. Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), particularly chapter 9, pp. 228–61. See also J. P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997). How far these models can be adapted to the eighteenth century is of course a moot point. See Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, p. 11.
- 45 Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, pp. 273–4.
- 46 *OBSP*, June 1728.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Griffiths, 'Overlapping Circles', p. 125; Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*, pp. 46, 56, 71, 144.
- 49 London Metropolitan Archive, WJ/OC/2, folio 102.
- 50 *Daily Journal*, September 1730.
- 51 See *Daily Journal*, 18, 21 August, 2 November 1730; *London Journal*, 22 August 1730; *Daily Post*, 2 November 1730. For a case involving Mary Harvey and Justice De Veil, see *OBSP*, December 1732, no. 40, 41, pp. 15–18.
- 52 Gonson was threatened by two men 'on account of his committing to Bridewell ... one Luke Powel, alias Capt. Hop, a notorious Pickpocket. On this occasion Gonson was saved from further harm by the "Mob"': *Daily Journal*, 7 November 1730.
- 53 Cited in P. W. Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigrants to the Americas, 1607–1776* (Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1992), pp. 143–4. Of course, it is unlikely that these were Lucas's own words, and maybe not even his own sentiments; however, the extract does give some sense of De Veil's activity in this period. For further details about Lucas see Linebaugh, 'Tyburn', pp. 312–23, and appendix III, 'Examination of James Bye ...'.
- 54 T. Hitchcock and J. Black (eds), *Chelsea Settlement and Bastardy Examinations, 1733–66* (London, London Record Society, 1999), pp. xiii–xiv. De Veil, Henry and John Fielding and Saunders Welch were all active in Chelsea poor relief business.
- 55 It has been suggested that the poor themselves may have exploited the official relief channels: Lane, 'Work on the margins', p. 93.
- 56 *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Thomas Deveil, Knight ...* (London, M. Cooper, 1748), pp. 34–5. For the Fieldings see P. Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices: Criminal Biographies of the Eighteenth Century* (London, Routledge, 1992), pp. 24–6. See also Saunders Welch (High Constable of Holborn), *Proposal to Render Effective a Plan to Remove the Nuisance of Common Prostitutes from this Metropolis ... To Which is Annexed a Letter upon the Subject of Robberies, written in the year 1753* (London, 1758).
- 57 Beattie, *Policing and Punishment*, pp. 372–6.

- 58 A further period of heightened anxiety (and concern about gangs) followed the end of the War of Austrian Succession in 1748: Beattie, *Policing and Punishment*, p. 461; N. Rogers, 'Confronting the crime wave: the debate over social reform and regulation, 1749–53', in Davison, *Stilling*, pp. 77–98.
- 59 See M. Harris, 'Trials and criminal biographies: a case study in distribution', in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *Sale and Distribution of Books from 1700* (Oxford, Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1982), pp. 1–36; L. B. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987); Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices*.
- 60 D. Defoe, *A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, &c. of John Sheppard ...* (London, John Applebee, 1724); *idem*, *A True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild, etc ...* (London, John Applebee, 1725). See also Bell, *Literature and Crime*.
- 61 D. Defoe [attributed], *An Effectual Scheme for the Immediate Preventing of Street Robberies, and suppressing all other Disorders of the Night ...* (London, J. Wilford, 1731), p. 9.
- 62 For a discussion of the familial bonds to be found in 'gangs' see A. Farge, *Fragile Lives: Violence, Power and Solidarity in Eighteenth Century France* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993), pp. 152–7.
- 63 *Villany Exploded: or, the Mistery of Iniquity laid open; In a Faithful Relation of all the Street-Robberies, Committed by the Notorious Gang now in Newgate ...* (London, T. Read, 1728), p. 40.
- 64 *Ibid.*, pp. 42–4; also Linebaugh, 'Tyburn', pp. 319–20, n. 1, on the provisions of Mary Young's gang.
- 65 Similar alignments can be found in other periods: see Harding, *East End Underworld*.
- 66 The Black Boy Alley Gang, for example, were eventually broken when two of their members, William Harper (otherwise known as Old Daddy) and Anne Wells turned evidence. See the detailed City Minute Book, in the Corporation of London Record Office, SM 12. See also Paley, 'Thief-takers', especially pp. 304, 309, 318–19.
- 67 *OBSP*, September, October, December Sessions, 1726.
- 68 *OBSP*, September Sessions, 1726, trial of Sarah Turner alias Lawson, and Katherine Fitzpatrick.
- 69 *Ibid.*, trial of Jane Holms, alias Barret, alias Frazier.
- 70 *Ibid.*, trial of Katherine Fitzpatrick and Sarah Turner.
- 71 As Garthine Walker suggests in her work on gender and crime in early modern London, such networks could be gender related, 'The world of stolen clothes, linens and household goods was populated by women: women stealing, women receiving, women deposing, women searching, and women passing on information, as well as goods, to other women': G. Walker, 'Women, theft and the world of stolen goods', in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and*

- the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, UCL Press, 1994), pp. 81–105, for this quote see p. 97.
- 72 B. Lemire, 'The theft of clothes and popular consumerism in early modern England', *Journal of Social History*, 24 (1990), pp. 256–76.
- 73 OBSP, September Sessions, 1726, trial of Jane Holms, Mary Robinson and Hannah Britton alias Bradshaw. See also below, note 106.
- 74 Penelope Lane shows how the embezzlement of materials from the worsted industry in eighteenth-century Leicestershire was a significant part of the informal economy: Lane, 'Work on the margins', pp. 88–9. See also P. D' Sena, 'Perquisites and casual labour on the London wharfs in the eighteenth century', *London Journal*, 14 (1989), pp. 130–47; Styles, 'Embezzlement'. For a later period see B. Godfrey, 'Law, factory discipline and "theft": the impact of the factory on workplace appropriation in mid to late nineteenth-century Yorkshire', *British Journal of Criminology*, 39 (1999), pp. 56–71.
- 75 'G. E.', *Authentick Memoirs of the Life and Surprising Adventures of John Sheppard by Way of Familiar Letters from a Gentleman in Town* (2nd edn, London, 1724), cited in Linebaugh, *London Hanged*, pp. 14–15.
- 76 J. Dalton, *The Life and Actions of James Dalton (the noted Street-Robber) containing All the Robberies and other Villanies committed by him ...* (London, R. Walker, 1730); T. Neaves, *The Life of Thomas Neaves, the Noted Street-Robber, executed at Tyburn, on Friday the Seventeenth of February, 1728–9, etc ...* (London, R. Walker, 1729). For Edward Bellamy and John Everett, see G. T. Crook (ed.), *The Complete Newgate Calender, vol. III* (London, Navarre Society, 1926), pp. 47–52. See Linebaugh, *London Hanged*, pp. 184–92, 202, 205, for the link between the butcher trade and highway robbery.
- 77 Linebaugh, 'Tyburn', pp. 101–2. Linebaugh has discussed the problems of corroborating the Ordinary's Account in 'Ordinary of Newgate', pp. 262–4.
- 78 Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, p. 249.
- 79 OBSP, September 1727, p. 3.
- 80 12 Anne, c. 7 (1713). Discussed in Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, pp. 173–5.
- 81 Linebaugh, *London Hanged*, p. 249.
- 82 Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, pp. 185–6.
- 83 See T. Meldrum, 'London domestic servants from depositional evidence 1660–1750: servant–employer sexuality in the patriarchal household', in Hitchcock, *Chronicle of Poverty*, pp. 47–69. See also Beattie, 'Criminality of women', p. 92.
- 84 Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, p. 186, although Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, pp. 14–16 demurs.
- 85 *An Effectual Scheme*, p. 36.
- 86 OBSP, September, 1727, p. 3.
- 87 *Ibid.*, p. 6; May 1728. There are no page or case numbers for this reference.

- 88 *Ibid.*, January 1753, p. 63. Cited in Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, p. 17.
- 89 A. Morton (pseud. for D. Defoe), *Every-Body's Business is No-Body's Business; or Private Abuses, Public Grievances: Exemplified in the Pride, Insolence, and Exorbitant Wages of our Women Servants, Footmen, etc.* (London, 1725), p. 7, cited in Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, p. 16.
- 90 As Robert Jutte points out prostitution could become a 'one-way ticket', *Poverty and Deviance*, p. 157; Hufton, *The Poor*, pp. 306–17. See Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, p. 17.
- 91 P. King, 'Female offenders, work and life-cycle change in late eighteenth-century London', *Continuity and Change*, 11 (1), 1996, pp. 61–90.
- 92 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5, 82–3.
- 93 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3. For women as receivers of stolen property see Walker, 'Women, theft and the world of stolen goods'. Penelope Lane also comments on the 1730s as a period of vulnerability for plebian women: Lane, 'Work on the margins', p. 86.
- 94 J. R. & M. A., with an introduction by Sir Basil Montagu, *Hanging Not Punishment Enough* (1701; reprint London, Longman & Co., 1812); H. Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, with some Proposal for Remedying this Growing Evil, etc* (London, A. Millar, 1751), pp. 68–75; P. Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis* (London, C. Dilly, 1796), pp. 187–209. See also Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, pp. 189–90; L. Radzinowicz, *A History of the English Criminal Law: Vol. 3, The Reform of The Police* (London, Stevens & Sons, 1956), pp. 71–3, 253.
- 95 C. Hitchen, *The Regulator: or, a Discovery of the Thieves, Thief-takers, and Locks, Alias Receivers of Stolen Goods in and About the City of London ... by a Prisoner in Newgate* (London, W. Boreham, 1718).
- 96 McMullen, *The Canting Crew*, pp. 111–13, for these quotes see p. 111.
- 97 On the link between receiving and old clothes see Lemire, 'Theft of clothes', pp. 258–9, 269. On the link between receiving and pawnbroking see Tomkins in this volume.
- 98 McMullen, *The Canting Crew*, pp. 23–4.
- 99 *OBSP*, 4th Session, April 1733, no. 78, pp. 124–6.
- 100 *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- 101 *Ibid.* Morris was eventually acquitted, but William Norman was sentenced to death.
- 102 *OBSP*, January 1730, p. 24.
- 103 *Ibid.*, Martin Peter Tanner was sentenced to transportation.
- 104 I do not know if Andrew Dalton was any relation to James Dalton, the street robber who was executed in May of that year, or his brother Edward who was executed for murder in October 1732.
- 105 *OBSP*, August/September 1730, p. 7.
- 106 *OBSP*, May 1728, evidence of Thomas Neaves and James Dalton in several cases in the course of this session. Neaves, *The Life of Thomas*

Neaves, pp. 15, 21, 28–9; Dalton, *The Life and Actions ...*, pp. 10, 14–17; A. L. Hayward (ed.), *Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, 3 vols (1735; reprint, London, Routledge, 1927), p. 534. Hannah Britton was tried at the Old Bailey for receiving in September 1726, see above note 73, and see also Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices*, p. 104, note 6. Hannah Britton was transported to Virginia and is mentioned in volume I, of P. Coldham, *English Convicts in Colonial America*, 2 vols (New Orleans, Polyanthos, 1974–6), p. 34. Clearly by 1730 she had returned to her old haunts.

107 H. Shore, 'A noted virago: violence, sexuality and resistance, 1725–35', unpublished paper presented at the Long Eighteenth Century Seminar, in the Institute of Historical Research, January 2000. See also the case of Thomas Williams Junior and Thomas Williams Senior, who were indicted respectively for burglary and receiving, and were informed upon by fellow 'gang' member, James Natris: *OBSP*, April 1730, pp. 16–17.

108 *Daily Post*, 3 November 1730; *Daily Journal*, 3 November 1730.