

CHAPTER 2

Making the Bed in Later Stuart and Georgian England

Sara Pennell

As you make your own bed, so you must lie in it.

Early modern English proverb

This is a chapter that deals with perhaps the most important item of furniture and its soft furnishings that any early modern probably invested in and owned. In 2001 Roger Ekirch suggested that the 'elusive realm of sleep' had been long ignored by historians of most things; only now are we 'waking up' to what he calls the 'profound role pre-industrial sleep played in the lives of ordinary men and women' as being of concomitant importance as investigating what they did in their waking hours.¹ And yet this is not a chapter about sleeping or dreaming or conversing with God or sexual congress, in bed.² It is rather an examination of the material making and maintaining of the bed – from frame to cord to 'bed' or mattress, linens and 'furniture' or curtains and valences – and their routes into and out of the consuming lives of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century householders. The bed as a material entity has had peculiar, partial coverage in histories of decorative arts, interior decoration and furnishing, with one or two excursions into the 'meanings' of bed decoration. The state bed, the pinnacle of the upholsterer's art and indeed more art object than place to lay one's (even royal) head, has attracted enormous attention in recent years, from the conservation and reinstatement of the state bed from Melville House, Fife, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, to dedicated conferences and exhibitions.³ The symbolism of the English Renaissance bed was explored in the work of the late Sasha Roberts, while the middling bed has also had its champions: Lorna Weatherill's inventory-based study of British material culture between 1660 and 1760 noted that beds, bedding and associated linens could represent as much as half the value of all household goods in non-elite appraisals, while Amanda Vickery has attended to the bed as a key investment site in the genteel Georgian interior.⁴ And yet, as Weatherill also noted, and which is still the case today, specialist studies of the *material culture* of the early modern bed and bedding are still wanting, once we move beyond the spectacular confines of those state beds.⁵ The only other bed in British history to have achieved the same level of material attention as the surviving group of state beds is the great Bed of Ware: as much because of its Shakespearean fame, as its historic, and much-altered, material being.⁶ There is, however, a material culture of the 'middling' bed that lies between that of the unslept Melville Bed and its ilk, and the ragged Hogarthian bed, that telling symbol of domestic and moral desuetude.⁷ This material culture, while not surviving extensively in its original material forms, can be investigated through documentary sources: not only inventories and personal papers, but also the now easily accessible records of the central London and suburban criminal courts, Georgian newsprint and other eighteenth-century publications. Two central aspects of bed-making will be explored here. Firstly, through examining the means of assembling and maintaining the bed and its furnishings, I will point to the costs (in time *and* money) of the material assembling of those beds so central to conceptions of the idealised married household. Secondly, I will explore how the idea of the bed as a significant 'cost centre' in many households fed into the availability of used beds and bedding for purchase; and how this second-hand circulation was crucial in domestic processes of assembly/maintenance. Work on the pre-modern significance of circulation of used clothing by the likes of Beverley Lemire and John Styles has been seminal in opening up the field of historic second-hand circulation, now afforded its own multi-national studies.⁸ Yet this dominance of clothing in the scholarship for English used goods distribution has occluded the place of other domestic textiles in such circuits. It has also overshadowed the associated but shifting values, from thrift to cleanliness, with which such textiles were invested, and which influenced their resale value in such markets. In twenty-first century

Britain it is almost impossible to dispose of a bed mattress via second-hand conduits, and charity shops seldom sell bed linens. Yet in eighteenth-century London, bedding and bedclothes were often prime, and swift-selling, lots in household sales and furniture auctions.⁹ By considering second-hand bedding in the eighteenth century, and some of the developing concerns with it, the origins of modern consumer resistance to purchasing used bedding might begin to emerge more clearly.

Making the pre-modern bed

By 'wedding and bedding', to use the popular balladeer's phrase, a pre-modern household was set up in more than just the sense of nuptials consummated.¹⁰ The acquisition of the marital bed was essential as much as it was symbolic and, for Daniel Defoe in Augustan England, such acquisition could be a supreme act of patriotic purchasing. In his 1727 imagining of the household furnishings of a provincial grocer living in Horsham – used to illustrate 'to how many counties of England, and how remote, the furniture of but a mean house must send' – the bedding and the curtains are truly national: 'Serge, from Taunton or Excester; or of Camblets, from Norwich' or Kidderminster 'linsey-wolseys' en suite with the room-hangings or window curtains; the sheets, 'if good linen' from Ireland, the blankets, Witney; the ticking and feathers for the mattress from the West Country; and the rugs from Westmoreland and Yorkshire. The making of this idealised British yet domestic bed gazetteers the mercantile flows of textiles around early Georgian England and Ireland, but also reminds us that Georgian bedding was a complex assemblage of component parts.¹¹

For many, assembling the marital bed was not simply achieved in a one-time purchase. While the rich, elderly widow Martha Dodson could purchase a brand new mahogany bed with linen and chintz hangings, entirely and directly from a London upholsterer in 1758,¹² much more common amongst the middling sorts and groups below was the experience of the farming and textile-producing Latham family, living near Preston in the first half of the eighteenth century. The second entry in the account book of Richard Latham for 1724, the year after he and his wife Ann (known throughout the accounts as 'Nany') wed, is for a 'fither bed and bolster' containing 61 pounds-weight of feathers. At £2 3s, this bed-mattress and bolster was the most expensive outlay of the year, after their livestock.¹³ Such a purchase was probably made by a local upholsterer, the traditional provider of mattresses and bolsters, and the tradesman who also serviced such items (as we shall see below).¹⁴ Later in the same year, bolster ticking, bed cord, a red rug and two blankets were bought, possibly from a local fair (since adjacent entries are for fair expenditure) and yet more feathers. No bed frame is mentioned, although this may already have been in their possession; 'stuff for bed curtains' and iron rods were purchased in the autumn of 1725.¹⁵ While the maintenance of this marital bed seldom features in the subsequent forty years of accounts, it may well have been in this very bed that Latham died, in 1767.

Marriage was, however, not the only point at which a new bed and new bedding might be assembled, as Martha Dodson's purchase in her seventies proves.

The east Sussex clergyman Giles Moore (deceased in 1679) married in 1649, but purchased new bedding in May 1656, some three months after being presented to a new living at Horsted Keynes, and to which he moved in September 1656.

The bedding was purchased from 'William Clowson, upholsterer itinerant ... who comes about the country with his packs on horseback', one of Margaret Spufford's

many reclothers in rural England.¹⁶ In November 1659, on a trip to London, Moore also purchased 13 yards of 'grass green serge' at 3s 3d per yard and 'green silk fringe' at 1s 8d per ounce, sounding very much like the makings of bed curtains.

However, as his journal records less than four months later, Moore gave up housekeeping at Horsted Keynes, and went to board with his son-in-law, suggesting that the well-furnished bed might have lain unused or was packed away until his return in 1666.¹⁷

Also contributing to the making of the bed was domestic production. The manufacture of bedding and hangings represented an enormous productive and emotional investment, especially on the part of the housewife, who may have spun the yarn from which sheets and pillowcases were woven, embroidered valences and curtains, and indeed given birth within their embrace. In January 1666, when Elizabeth Pepys finally completed sewing 'with her own hands' (as Pepys proudly recorded) the new bed furnishings and en suite hangings for the best chamber at Seething Lane, Pepys noted that the 'old red ones' were removed to his dressing room.¹⁸ One suspects that, even though a new bed and furnishings were purchased for the same best chamber in November 1668, Elizabeth's handiwork did not go to waste; they were probably redeployed elsewhere in the house, or perhaps sold on.¹⁹

Servicing the bed

Beds, then, were a perpetual site of (re-)furnishing, whether by needle or by negotiation, rather more commonly than 'an item' that came into the household complete and ready-made. This may seem obvious, and yet little attention has been paid to these processes of servicing and maintenance. This is in part because the information for such procedures is often difficult to locate, buried or indeed a 'small thing forgotten' in the multi-faceted recording of domestic in-and-out-goings that comprised household accounts; and less interesting to the historian's eye than the big-ticket purchases, gendered or otherwise.²⁰ To return to the Latham's marital bed, it is astonishing that, given Nany probably gave birth to eight children in or on the mattress purchased in 1724, no further entries – for feather or ticking renewal for example – other than for new bed cords are to be found in the following 40 or so years of the accounts. Does this silence indicate that they sourced their own feathers, spun and wove their own bed-ticking (all entirely possible in this household)?²¹

Other household accounts are more forthcoming about the cycles of maintenance required to keep beds and bedding in serviceable condition. Making up and maintaining household linen of all sorts, from clothing to tablecloths was for a Georgian 'gentleman's daughter' like Elizabeth Shackleton still very much a labour defining her role as domestic paragon, and as 'a museum curator administering her collection'.²² But this somewhat romanticises what was often repetitive and cyclical remaking, repair and renovation work, needed to keep beds in working order. Beds needed their frames realigned and their cords tightened and replaced; bedding required dusting, cleaning and refreshing, and linen needed regular laundering and mending.

A series of payments dating to 1727–37 from the accounts of the well-resourced Charles Aldworth (1711–14) and his sister Susan (who appears to have lived in the parish of St George's, Hanover Square, and also in a crown property at Frogmore on

the Windsor estate) hints at the cycles of maintenance involved in the middling bed. In April 1730, an unnamed upholsterer was paid 14 shillings for 'altering the Redbed'; in May 1731, 9s 6d was 'paid for a New sacking beed [sic] and Workmanship to the red Bed'; in November 1734, a joiner was paid 2s 10d 'for taking down & set[ting] up again Two Beds & for nails', while Mr Paxton (possibly an upholsterer), was paid 6s 6d on 8 November 1736 'for 4lbs $\frac{3}{4}$ s of feathers & for a bed Pully [pulley] feathers 6s pully [pulley?] 6d'.²³ In Elizabeth Bridger's early eighteenth-century account books for Coombe Place, Hamsey (near Lewes, E. Sussex), the December 1719 entry for renewing a bed tick (for 15s) and for 'driving the feathers in' (1s) paid to a Mr Edwards reveals the nose-tickling work involved in rehousing the contents of a 'bed' in a new ticking case.²⁴ And all this refreshing and cleaning doesn't even mention the 'deep' cleaning (and its costs) that debugging a bedstead and its bedding might involve, to which we will turn later.

From the bed we go to the sheets, which required laundering, pressing and mending on a regular basis, to keep them presentable. Weatherill estimates that washing alone could take up to four hours per working week; and as Lemire explores in her contribution, the work was arduous, repetitive and ultimately damaging to the linens themselves.²⁵ That even modest households owned several pairs of sheets of different qualities (as detailed in the inventories Margaret Spufford studied for the late seventeenth century) is an indication that, when possible, householders used their linen differentially, with 'best beds' using the best quality sheets and pillowcases, while servants' beds were probably furnished with the coarsest or perhaps older, more careworn bed linens. Owning multiple pairs of sheets also possibly lightened the load on washing day.²⁶

It is also worth noting that, by the end of the seventeenth century, the variety of fabrics on offer to the householder for making sheets, counterpanes, bed curtains and the like, had multiplied rapidly, with the opening up of East Asian markets.²⁷ To be a canny consumer, and to buy fabrics which would endure, was by no means an easy task – as 'J.F.', the author of *The Merchant's Ware-House Laid Open; Or, The Plain Dealing Linnen-Draper* (London, 1695), detailed in his helpful preface. The little handbook was, he declared, intended to 'prevent People from buying damaged Cloth, which most People buy, it looking well to the Eye, but when it comes into the water, falls into pieces, and are in as much want the week after it is washed as if they had not bought any'.²⁸ The fact that so few examples of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century bed linen survive in museum collections does demonstrate that, for the most part, such textiles were used up to the point of near destruction through laundering and use. When they could no longer be used as sheets, they were repurposed as towels and dishcloths, until they could be useful to the household no longer. Even then, the services of the ragman, collecting good linen rag for papermaking, meant that bed linens were rarely ever wasted.²⁹

But I want to focus here on one aspect of maintenance illuminating the value of bed linens that is less about their eventual recycling, and more about their potential re-use while still serviceable. Even before a sheet was laid across a bed for the first time, one might mark it by embroidering (or, by the end of the eighteenth century, stamping) a monogram or other identifying symbol on it. To this end, the 1746 edition of George Fisher's *The Instructor: or Young Man's Best Companion* included in its (very small) section for 'Instruction and Benefit of the Female-kind', diagrams for cross-stitching capitals, lower-case letters and numerals, expressly for attaining 'to Perfection in marking on Linnen'.³⁰ The schedule of bed and table linens taken by Benjamin Browne (1666–1748), a Westmoreland 'statesman', or

yeoman, farmer, on preparing to downsize his household in or about 1731, documents this practice across generations.³¹ Amongst the pairs of sheets are those marked with the initials of his parents, George and Elinor Browne (GEB), as well as EF (his mother's maiden initials), BAB (the initials of Benjamin and his first wife, Anne) and BEB (initials of Benjamin and his second wife, Elizabeth). Two new pillowcases are simply marked 'B' (Browne is by now a widow for the second time), while one 'fine old sheet [is] without mark' at all.³² Although some sheets were sold in the household sales of April 1731, it is probable that these were not

among them.³³ Here, as with Elizabeth Shackleton's note that she marked the 'two pair of sheets' she made herself in 1774 with 'R.R. and a diamond, the other pair with a diamond red for my own bed', are marks suggestive of linens as treasured goods with significant intergenerational value.³⁴

Yet, when we understand that 'R.R.' on Shackleton's sheets merely recorded these for use in the 'Red Room', it is clear that marks were also simply a means for identification to distinguish the sheets from other sets in the increasing numbers owned and stored in chests and presses.³⁵ Such stitching served principally as a tracking device, should sheets go astray or get stolen, from washing lines and by lodgers. In looking through the many cases involving stolen bed linens in the Old Bailey Sessions papers between 1674 and 1800 (at least 1400 cases of theft involving sheets, 738 cases involving pillows and pillowcases, 1132 involving blankets, rugs or quilts, and so on)³⁶ it is telling on how many occasions a victim was able to testify to a sheet being hers or her mistress's, due to the marks sewn into them. Priscilla Scarr was sentenced to transportation in October 1750, for stealing a pair of sheets from the bed in her 'ready furnished lodgings' and a pillow bear from a drawer, property of Susannah Field. One of the sheets was marked with an 'S', and was easily located with its pair in the east London pawnshop whence Scarr had taken them.³⁷ Ann Stubbs, a defendant in a case of theft heard in February 1762, did try to remove the distinctive coronet marks from the sheets she and Mary Davenport had spirited away from the household of the Earl of March and Rutland, tearing off the corner of one sheet when confronted.³⁸

Marking linen was a means of slowing down, indeed hopefully preventing, illicit movement from drawer to pawnshop, from bed to roadside barter. The hopeful retailers of a stamping device, which could mark in as many minutes 'as much linen ... as would take a month to mark with a needle' emphasised its value against stitched marks which could so easily be picked out, 'by which many people are defrauded of a valuable part of their property'.³⁹ What such cases and devices also reveal is the enormous vitality of a second-hand trade in such domestic textiles: a trade to which we will now turn.

Used bedding and the second-hand market in Georgian England

Let us return to Giles Moore's 1656 purchase of his bedding from William Clowes.

In a note of the purchase, he records:

All bought together at once of the above say'd Clowser [sic] for £9 5s. There is to be abated & deducted 12s and 10d, which yet is here set down as coming to £9 17 10d. I setting them down, not as They were all bought together by mee but as they were rated particularly by him unto Mee after I had bought them which I have set down as a Direction to them who may afterwards prize, value

or sell them. Who if they prize or sell them together they are then to be priz'd and sold at £9 5s and no more but if severally Then are these dates [sic: rates] to be demanded for them[.]40

This note suggests three things. Firstly, that by buying in bulk, or as a set, the chapman was willing to rebate Moore about 6.5 per cent of the total cost; secondly, that Moore saw these goods as holding their value should they later be sold; and thirdly, that Moore was happy to envisage someone making a profit on selling on the goods separately in that transaction. Altogether, these remarks underline a lively and competitive second-hand circulation of, and market for, used household textiles clearly already in existence in Moore's mid-seventeenth century

Sussex, and certainly in urban centres like London well before then.⁴¹

The conventional view of second-hand retailing of any commodity tends towards seeing it serving constituencies that could not afford to buy new, and this is superficially also the case for bed linens and mattresses. Thomas Brown noted in the 1702 edition of his *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London*, in his meandering in the Rag Fair of Long Lane, that the clothes-sellers were selling goods smelling 'as rankly of Newgate and Tyburn as the bedding to be sold at the Ditchside near Fleetbridge smells of the bawdy house and brandy'.⁴² Making the marital bed, indeed any bed, for some did depend on this bottomrung circulation, and the 'no questions asked' services of brokers like the one to whom Elizabeth Scurr sold on the stolen sheets.

Yet we must hesitate before classifying all second-hand retailing of bed linens – or indeed of *any* domestic textiles – as being borne solely of necessity and serving only these 'economies of makeshifts'.⁴³ As Olivia Fryman has discussed, even royal beds and bedding were subject to being circulated through courtier hands (with the so-called James II bed at Knole a prime example) and elite, indeed aristocratic shoppers were not averse to buying what we now euphemise as 'pre-loved' goods, if the price and style were right.⁴⁴

A series of letters between Jean Scott Hay (1629–88), countess of Tweeddale and her husband, John Hay (1626–97), the second earl of Tweeddale dating to the mid 1670s, brilliantly illustrate that bed-furnishing was both an expensive and allabsorbing business, for the countess at least, marooned at their seat, Yester Castle (east of Edinburgh). In one, sent early in 1674 [?], while Hay was in London, she stated that his trip south was as good a time as any to get a great bed to smarten up Yester:

I would have something provided for your house which really is bot ill furnished tho good enough for it, yet will serve a better when we get it, and upon nex bot bot it is fitter to have some lying by as that upon occasions may be used, and therefore I wold have a damask bed & if you could get a secondhand one were not soiled and fashionable, you might buy it if it be either a blew or crimson[.]45

The letters from Jean continue to detail – exhaustively – just what fabric, linings, *passementerie*, colouring and other accoutrements she was after in her new(ish) bed.⁴⁶ The obsession with fabric and with colour bears out David Mitchell's work on contemporary Orphans' Court inventories, as well as supporting his thesis that fashions for colourings of bed hangings followed distinct periodisations.⁴⁷ That this was not the cheap or easy route to the bed of the countess' dreams is made very clear in one letter where she admitted the bedstead scares [?] me more then any thing because it is dear, tho I wold

[^gladly] have gladly one of the new fashion it need not be made so rich and fine, I have sent a patt/fol. 64r/ pattern of such a colour as I wold have the tabie [tabby silk] of & speckled with a fold [sic: gold?] colloured silke I like a molo morala best if it can be had so chype [cheap] afford[ed].48

A quarter of a century later, and in a more modest household, Edward Belson (1680–1746), a journeyman distiller living in Reading at the time of his marriage to Rachel Angel on 20 April 1709, recorded the purchase of the constituent parts of the couple's new bed in his memorandum book in August 1710. From his neighbour the shoemaker William Alder, he purchased 'a good second hand feather bed, weigh'd 64 lbs at 7d per lb', costing £1 17 4d (although the 4d was rebated); from Edward Lambden, a Reading upholsterer, he purchased eight days later, '26 yards of blew water'd cheyney for Curtains etc at 15d per yard [£1 12 6d] & a good secondhand bedstead 11s'.49 This combination of informal neighbourly sale and purchase from a specialised dealer makes clear that the second-hand market for household goods was highly diversified. The Belson bed, costing at least £4 to assemble, was almost certainly used for Rachel's lying-in in January of the following year. As an aggregation of old and new elements, it was nevertheless carefully done; the new 'cheney' hangings (very much in line with the popularity of like hangings in Mitchell's London samples for the period 1705–20) concealed both used bed and frame.50

It is evident from these examples that second-hand circulation of bedding was practised widely in the later Stuart and early Georgian period, both in terms of the routes to accessing such goods and geographically. The burgeoning metropolitan press and accompanying print culture from circa 1720 onwards also permits more detailed consideration of the place of bedding and bed furnishings in the secondhand market, primarily through advertisements of, and catalogues for, auction sales of household furnishings taking place in and around London.

The data presented in Table 2.1 represent a small sample of advertisements drawn from London newspapers in the digitised Burney Collection for the months of April 1730, 1750 and 1770. The 1730s saw the expansion of advertised auction sales beyond those for deceased aristocrats and the casualties of the South Sea Company debacle,51 to include urban gentry, traders 'leaving off business' and those simply moving to a new house. 1770 was selected to see if there was a discernible difference between advertisements from the first half of the century and those of the second, but also predates the 1777 Auction Duty Act (17 Geo III.c.50) that introduced a levy on activities of auctioneers and produced a temporary decline in the number of auctions held.52

Bed furnishings and bedsteads featured in the majority of advertisements in April 1730 and April 1750, and also took first billing in the listing of objects for sale. The advertisements in the 1730 and 1750 samples were also more detailed about the nature of the bed furniture for sale, using both material type and finish (damask, mohair, camlet, 'needlework') and to a lesser extent colour and quality, for example the 'very rich crimson Genoa damask and other beds' in the advertisement for the auction sale of the household effects of Gabriel Bourdon in 1730, as hooks for the potential buyer.53 It is the bed furniture – its curtains, valances, headpieces and so on – which takes pride of place, although bedding also figures: the 4 April advert for the sale of the bankrupt Mary Chester's effects at Egham (Surrey), to take place on Easter Monday (16 April) 1750, details 'wrought linen, damask, harrateen and other Furniture in beds, chairs and window curtains, feather beds, blankets, quilts and counterpanes',54 while the advert a week later for the 'rich household furniture' (no bankruptcy this one), of the late Hugh

Smith of Weld Hall, Essex, lists 'swans, down and goose feather beds', notably *before* the 'antique Italian cabinets'.⁵⁵ Bed linen is only infrequently detailed in the advertisements, although mention is made in more than one advertisement of 'fine household linen' in general. The 1770 sample suggests a shift, in not only the number but also the focus of auction advertisements. Beds and their furnishings are mentioned in much less qualitative detail, and actually singled out as key items no more frequently than pier and other looking-glasses, coaches or harpsichords. More auctions meant more stock, and that stock, with one or two exceptions, was not sufficiently distinguished to merit further description than 'neat household furniture' or 'all the beds and bedding'.

Although what I present here is preliminary (focused as it is on greater London: only in the second half of the century does the provincial press begin to advertise auction sales in any quantity) and much more could be done with this data,⁵⁶ it does suggest that second-hand bed furnishings and bedding were being viewed by upholsters/upholsterers, brokers and the new breed of auctioneers, as a less distinctive commodity by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This was perhaps, indeed, as a result of being more widely in second-hand circulation, but

Table 2.1 A sample of advertisements drawn from London newspapers for the months of April 1730, 1750 and 1770 Year No. of household auction sales advertised

No. listing beds, bedding, bed linens (% of total)	No. listing beds/ bedding/bed linen first (% of total)
April 1730 11 10 (91)	8 (73)
April 1750 7 7 (100)	6 (86)
April 1770 27 12 (44)	11 (41)

Note: Only advertisements for auction sales (confer fixed price or other forms of sale, for example by candle) and sales of household goods belonging to private individuals (confer sales of stock-in-trade of upholsterers, brokers, etcetera; and specialist sales of artworks, books and so on) were included in the samples. Each sale was counted only once, although multiple advertisements for individual sales were published across each month, and across different newspapers. Each sample was gathered in the same way, using the search term 'auction' and limiting search to 'classified advertisements' category for 1–30 April in each year.

Source: Burney Newspaper Collections Online.

changing fashions in bed furnishing – away from heavier damasks, mohairs and crewel-embroidered hangings, towards lighter painted and printed cotton fabrics – may have played their part too; where beds are mentioned in the April 1770 adverts, bedding (mattresses, quilts and the like) continue to be noted, but the material and colour of the hangings less so.

To advertisers in 1770, silk damask bed hangings may have lost their lustre, but they nevertheless remained saleable. However, while it is plausible to include bed-hangings in explanations of second-hand selling above the most basic levels, that prioritise fashion or 'kudos', bed linens and mattresses are less easy to accommodate in this way.⁵⁷ The appeal of second-hand sheets, beds and blankets clearly lay in the value they continued to hold invested in their original quality and subsequent preservation. The small amount of evidence that has yet been derived from sale schedules and printed catalogues, matched against either inventory valuations, or auctioneers' estimates, does support Giles Moore's mid-seventeenth century view that good quality, well-maintained bedding and bed linens could

hold their values in the second-hand market, and attract buyers willing to pay more than the inventoried or appraised valuation.

The evidence of this is not easily quantified, given that so few annotated catalogues or inventories with sale schedules survive, but one source, the catalogue of the sale of the household furniture of Edward Cokayne (deceased on Saturday 26 February 1753), does support this view.⁵⁸ In this catalogue, Stephen Geare the selling broker provided estimated prices in the right-hand margin, while an unknown annotator has given prices realised. The sale must have been very brisk indeed, since almost all the lots were sold above their estimates (almost all achieving 10 to 50 per cent over the estimated value). The beds and bedding certainly held their own, with the crimson mohair tester bed achieving the highest lot price after the plate. It is notable that this was not the sale of a dowager duchess or a great collector; the goods are of high quality, no doubt (Cokayne was a Hackneydwelling citizen and silkman), but it is less likely punters enthusiastically snapped up Cokayne's goods because of his name, than because they were of good quality, on offer at competitive prices.⁵⁹

While the explanations put forward by Jon Stobart, Cynthia Wall and others for buying second-hand furniture and household utensils at auction sales seem to hold here – seizing a bargain, capturing value, clever consumption – we must however factor in the impact of growing fears associated with the cleanliness of used beds and bedding. Bed bugs and other infestations of the bed were of course nothing new. They were the object of some of Thomas Tryon's most lurid cautions in his counsels against filth and slovenliness at the end of the seventeenth century, and regular bed-airing, replacement of sheets and minimal bed-sharing were at the top of Tryon's list of must-dos to avoid infestation.⁶⁰

With the publication of John Southall's *Treatise on Bugs* in 1730, the concern with the material cleanliness of bedding and beds became more visible *and* visualised, in illustrations of the chief culprit, the bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*). John Southall both published the problem and his patent solution (the 'nonpareil liquor'), as well as arguably creating the conditions for a new trade to arise: that of bug destroyer. Bedsteads were mostly viewed as the main culprits in harbouring the bed bug, especially those made with deal and beech. Thus Southall recommended to his readers that in purchasing bedsteads and furniture both old and new, they should undertake a thorough examination of holes in the woodwork, and look for the bugs themselves in the draperies.⁶¹

Southall does seem to have conflated bed bugs (which do not bore into wood, but can find their way into existing cracks and crevices) with wood-boring beetles and bugs, but the message was incontrovertible: used furniture and furnishings were all potential harbingers of such vermin and one needed to be on the lookout for infestation in any like items entering into one's household, through servants' boxes or indeed second-hand bargain. Recipes based on Southall's 1730 'non pareil liquor' were quickly published in best-selling household manuals, too, such as in the fifth (1732) edition of E. Smith's *The Compleat Housewife* (first published in 1727 without any mention of bed bugs). Smith's 'receipt' confidently claimed that it would 'neither stain, soil, or in the least hurt to finest Silk or Damask Bed that is'.⁶² More dramatic still is Hannah Glasse's fumigation technique in *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747), which involved a chafing dish of brimstone left in the centre of the bed chamber, while the housewife herself beat a hasty retreat before being rendered unconscious by the fumes. So much was made of the inclusion of this recipe in the advertisements for subscriptions to Glasse's book and every advertisement published for the second through fifth editions, into the

1770s, that its importance as a selling point is beyond doubt.⁶³ For all their claims of not soiling the 'furnishings' of treated beds, these techniques of eradication were necessarily invasive, based as they were on drilling holes in the bedstead itself, and wiping the hangings with the liquor compounded mainly from turpentine and camphor. Indeed, a Mr Muckleston, advertising his new shop in 1769 – a shop in which he promised he could 'clean and get ready twenty beds' in a week – stressed his higher competency in leaving bedding undamaged in his expert eradication of bugs: 'beware of imposters, who daily puff in the papers, but by woeful experience have left the bedding and furniture in little better condition than they found them'.⁶⁴

This professional extermination trade becomes visible in the London press from the 1740s onwards, with George Bridges being one of the earliest to advertise his skills, in 1748 (at which date he claimed he had already been carrying out his trade for six successful years). Bridges charged a flat rate of five shillings per 'plain bed', and 7s 6d for those with 'cornishes', testers and so on.⁶⁵ Upholsterers in particular seem to have added extermination to their portfolio. Muckleston was an upholsterer, as was Richard Wear, advertising in April 1756 on a 'no cure: no pay' basis his bug-destroying services.⁶⁶ Bed-bug eradication was even required by the royal household, with the Tiffin family (Thomas, who married the daughter of George Bridges, succeeded by his widow, and then his son, Benjamin), claiming to hold the rank of 'bug destroyer to His Majesty' between the 1760s and 1790s.⁶⁷

In the light of such interventions, would not the prospective purchaser think twice about buying bed furniture and bedding second-hand? There seems to be a slight increase in emphasis in advertisements of houses and household goods for sale in London that cleanliness, and freedom from bugs was an issue, from the 1730s onwards. Thus, in the sale advertisement for the household goods of Lady Dixie from her Queen Square property, published repeatedly in the *Daily Advertiser* in September 1742, the virtue of all the goods, but the beds in particular, as being 'clean, in good condition, and free from bugs' is reiterated. In the May 1745 notice of the auction of the household goods of a 'gentleman, deceas'd', the bed curtains are described as 'very clean Mohair, Damask and other furniture', and all furniture 'warranted free from bugs'.⁶⁸ In 1769, one Careless (a slightly unfortunate name, given his trade), advertised his Richmond warehouses full of furnishings and furniture to hire or buy, including 'near fifty second-hand feather beds, with blankets, quilts, bedsteads and curtains', concluding 'I warrant that all I sell from the above houses is clear of bugs'.⁶⁹ How far the *possibility* of infestation featured in changing attitudes to second-hand bedding purchases on the part of the potential buyer as yet remains unknowable, but, in combination with changing fashions in bedclothes and durability of bedding, the evidence from sellers suggests it had become a matter of interest and a possible deal-breaker, by the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

Conclusion

Although no-one has yet studied domestic textiles in the same way as either clothing or solid furniture in English nineteenth-century second-hand circuits, it is probably safe to assume that bedding and bed furnishings continued the descent from being desirable as second-hand purchases across the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰ While other concerns (not in the least the flammability of synthetic materials) have cemented this decline in the twenty-first century,

such practicalities surely sit side by side with a tacit reluctance about sleeping in someone else's used sheets.

Indeed, the trajectory of bedding and bed linens may trace another route for second-hand circuits between pre-modern and modern uses and meanings, quite apart from the 'polarisation' tied up with ambivalent attitudes to mass-produced new furniture and the rising *cachet* of the antique, identified by Margaret Ponsonby and Clive Edwards in the Victorian furniture trade.⁷¹ For the early modern English householder of pretty much any socio-economic level, bed linens and bedding embodied a substantial financial outlay; the possibility of canny consumption (or a bad bargain); and a potential cash cow for those with access to them (via legal and illegal routes), as executors dispersing estates, clever consumers, and domestic servants on the fiddle. These were possessions that were worth maintaining, marking and making anew, as they could hold significant re-sale value, as well as emotional value. But emerging concerns about bodily cleanliness, domestic intimacies and the morality attached to the sharing of beds across the eighteenth century, surely made it very unlikely that the fine beds and bedding of a citizen and silkman at the turn of the nineteenth century would have made quite as much (or even been exposed to auction sale), as they did for Edward Cokayne's executors in the middle of the eighteenth century. It involved conduits both legitimate and illicit, formalised and informal; labour both mundane (feather-driving and linen-scouring) and emotionally charged (embroidered monograms and handwrought bed curtains); and a complex, continual maintenance cycle – of laundering, pressing, storage, mending, de-bugging and re-plumping. The Georgian bed was above all an achievement of all these varying procedures and systems of investment and care, and the eighteenth century perhaps the last era in which it served as the most important domestic locus of such processes.

Notes

1. A. Roger Ekirch (2001) 'Sleep we have lost: pre-industrial slumber in the British Isles', *American Historical Review*, 106, 2, pp. 344–50.
2. See S. Handley (2012) 'From the sacral to the moral: sleeping practices, household worship and confessional cultures in late-seventeenth-century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 9, 1, pp. 27–46; and C. Koslofsky (2011) *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), especially pp. 46–90.
3. For the Melville bed, see T. Murdoch (2002) 'Fit for a king: the state bed from Melville House, Fife', *Apollo*, 155, pp. 3–9; Conference papers 'Bedtime stories: beds and bedding in Britain, 1650–1850' (Leeds: Temple Newsam House, 21–22 June 2012); and the exhibition, 'Secrets of the Royal Bedchamber', Hampton Court Palace, 27 March–3 November 2013.
4. S. Roberts (1995) 'Lying among the classics: ritual and motif in elite Elizabethan and Jacobean Beds', in L. Gent (ed.) *Albion's Classicism: the Visual Arts in Britain, 1550–1660* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 324–57; L. Weatherill (1988) *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain* (London: Routledge), p. 160; A. Vickery (2009) *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 216–7.
5. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 161.
6. See <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-great-bed-of-ware/> (accessed 11 May 2014).
7. See the bed of Tom Idle in plate 7 of William Hogarth's 'Industry and Idleness' series (first published September 1747): <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/>

- exhibition/hogarth/hogarth-hogarth-modern-moral-series/hogarth-hogarth-3 (accessed 11 May 2014); Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 161.
8. For example B. Lemire (2004) 'Shifting currency: the culture and economy of the secondhand trade in England, c. 1600–1850', in A. Palmer and H. Clark (eds) *Old Clothes, New Looks: Secondhand Fashion* (Oxford: Berg); John Styles (2007) *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press); I. Van Damme and J. Stobart (eds) (2011) *Modernity and the Secondhand Trade in Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
 9. Such re-selling is heavily restricted in many American states; UK regulations restrict the resale of non-fire-safe items (including mattresses, nightwear and others): see <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/advice/advice-business-sfsum20.cfm> (accessed 11 May 2014).
 10. For example, see *THE Scottish Contract OR, A Marriage Agreement Betwixt Wanton Willy and Mincing Meggy* (printed for Richard Burton: London [c. 1640–74?]), with its refrain 'Then let us provide for bedding/ And all that is bonny and gay/ For weelee have a joviall wedding/ The Piper shall sweetly play': available at the English Broadside Ballad Archive, www.ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31987/citation (accessed 3 November 2012); J. Bailey and A. McShane (2010) 'Beds and the making of the domestic landscape', unpublished paper given at 'The body in bed' seminar series, Royal Holloway University of London.
 11. D. Defoe (1727) *The Complete English Tradesman, In Familiar Letters* (London: Charles Rivington), pp. 332–3.
 12. Cited in Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 221.
 13. L. Weatherill (ed.) (1990) *The Account Book of Richard Latham, 1724–1767* (Oxford: British Academy/Oxford University Press), pp. 3–4.
 14. The history of the London Company of Upholders (see <http://www.upholders.co.uk>) is given in J.F. Houston (2006) *Featherbeds and Flock Bedds* (Sandy: Three Tents Press), but we know relatively little about provincial upholders/upholsterers in England (but see C. Edwards (2005) *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings* (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 38–74; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 280–3).
 15. Weatherill, *Latham Accounts*, pp. 4, 7. For provision of ironmongery for beds, see Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Top.Oxon.b.278, customer account book of blacksmith Alexander Kirby at Stoke Lyne (Oxon.), c. 1823–35; British Museum, Prints and Drawings, Trade cards Banks 85.54, trade card of John Giles, 'cabinet founder and ironmonger', of Addle Street, London, undated [1750s?].
 16. M. Spufford (1984) *The Great Reclotting of Rural England* (London: Hambledon Press).
 17. F. Stenton Eardley (1939) *Horsted Keynes, Sussex* (London: Macmillan), p. 81; and R. Bird (ed.) (1971) *The Journal of Giles Moore* (Lewes: Sussex Record Society), pp. 19–20.
 18. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 231–56; R. Latham and W. Matthews (eds) (1985) *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 11 vols (London: Bell & Hyman), VII, pp. 14, 24.
 19. *Pepys Diary*, IX, pp. 365, 367.
 20. A. Vickery (2006) 'His and hers: gender, consumption and household accounting in eighteenth-century England', *Past & Present*, supplement 1, pp. 12–38.
 21. Weatherill, *Material Culture*, p. 145.
 22. A. Vickery (1998) *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian London* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), p. 147.
 23. Berkshire RO, D/EN/F30, domestic accounts of Charles Aldworth (1711–14) and his sister Susan, c. 1727–37, uf.
 24. East Sussex RO, SHR/1364, household accounts of Elizabeth Bridger, née Alford (1671–1729), who married Richard Bridger (d. 1729) in 1697; entry for December 1719. The accounts also include extensive records for textile production within the household.
 25. Weatherill, *Material Culture*, p. 143; see also Lemire, this volume, chapter 1.

26. Spufford, *The Great Reclathing*, p. 115.
27. G. Riello (2009) 'The globalisation of cotton textiles: Indian cottons, Europe and the Atlantic world, 1600–1850', in Riello and P. Parthasarathi (eds) *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 261–87.
28. J.F. (1695) *The Merchant's Ware-House Laid Open; Or, The Plain Dealing Linnen-Draper* (London: John Sprint and Geo. Conyers), sig. A3 r.
29. D. Woodward (1985) "'Swords into ploughshares': recycling in pre-industrial England', *Economic History Review*, 38, 2, p. 187.
30. G. Fisher (1747) *The Instructor: or Young Man's Best Companion* (London: S. Birt), diagram on pp. 312–3, quotation from p. 311.
31. For Benjamin Browne, see M.A. Logie (1971) 'Benjamin Browne of Troutbeck: High Constable of Kendal Ward, 1711–32', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, NS 71, pp. 75–89. The schedule may have preceded the sale of his household goods in 1731, for which see S. Pennell (2011) "'All but the kitchen sink": household sales and the circulation of second-hand goods in early modern England' in Stobart and Van Damme (eds) *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade*, pp. 37–56.
32. Cumbria RO (Kendal), WD/TE/box 3, vol. VIII: fols. 125r–126r, 'Part of a schedule of goods, chattels & personal estate belonging to Benjamin Browne of Troutbeck' (u.d.).
33. Cumbria RO (Kendal), WD/TE box 3 vol. VIII, fols. 171–73.
34. Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 151.
35. Spufford, *The Great Reclathing*, p. 115.
36. These are very rough figures generated through keyword searches, for all types of theft; some cases clearly overlap, with 192 cases concerning thefts of sheets and blankets, for example. See www.oldbaileyonline.org (accessed 15 July 2012). See also J. Styles (2006) 'Lodging at the Old Bailey: lodgings and their furnishing in eighteenth-century London', in Styles and A. Vickery (eds) *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700–1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 61–80, esp. tables 1 & 2.
37. *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0 19 June 2012), October 1750, trial of Priscilla Scarr (t17501017–6).
38. *Ibid.*, February 1762, trial of Ann Stubbs & Mary Davenport (t17620224–7).
39. *Dublin Mercury*, 10 April 1770, p. 2.
40. Bird, ed. *Giles Moore*, pp. 19–20.
41. Pennell, 'Household sales'.
42. T. Brown (1702) *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (London), p. 45; Woodward, 'Swords', p. 187; B. Lemire (1991) 'Peddling fashion: salesmen, pawnbrokers, tailors, thieves and the second-hand clothes trade in England, c. 1700–1800', *Textile History*, 22, 1, pp. 67–82.
43. S.V. Lloyd (2003) "'Agents in their own concerns?" Charity and the economy of makeshifts in eighteenth-century England', in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds) *The Poor in England 1700–1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 100–136.
44. O. Fryman, Historic Royal Palaces, personal communication; see also <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/129447> (accessed 11 May 2014).
45. National Library of Scotland, Tweeddale Papers, MS 14402/fols 83r–86v: letter from JSH to 1st Marquess, from [Yester?]: 28 February [1674], fol. 84r.
46. There are further letters on the subject across March 1674 in MS 14402, fols 91–104v.
47. D. Mitchell (2009) "'My purple will be too sad for that melancholy room": furnishings for interiors in London and Paris, 1660–1735', *Textile History*, 40, 1, especially pp. 5–12,

15–18.

48. NLS, Tweeddale Letters, MS14402, from JSH [at Yester?] to JH, 31 January [1674], fols 63v–64r. 'Morala' refers to a type of mohair fabric, rather than to 'morello' [cherrycoloured]. My thanks to Nicola Gentle for communicating other examples of the use of this fabric in late seventeenth-century sources to me; and to Michael Pearce for communicating the details of beds and bedding at Yester and Dalgety in the 1680s and early eighteenth century. See also Mitchell, 'Furnishings', p. 10.
49. Berks RO, Belson memorandum book, D/EZ/12/ 1&2, 1 & 9 August 1710. Other entries confirm this bed and its bedding continued to serve Belson well into the 1720s. Lambden took on apprentices as a master upholsterer between c.1710 and 1730: see the stamp duty he paid on indentures at TNA/IR1, Apprenticeship Books.
50. Mitchell, 'Furnishing', Table 2 & Figure 9.
51. M. Balen (2002) *A Very English Deceit: The South Sea Bubble and the World's First Great Financial Scandal* (London: Fourth Estate), pp. 154–6.
52. S. Ohashi (2007) 'The Auction Duty Act of 1777: the beginning of the institutionalisation of auctions in Britain', in J. Warren and A. Turpin (eds) *Auctions, Agents and Dealers. The Mechanisms of the Art Market 1660–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 21–32.
53. *Daily Post*, 28 April 1730, p. 3.
54. *General Advertiser*, 6 April 1750, p. 3.
55. *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 14–17 April 1750, p. 3.
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56. For example, household sales in London may have been seasonally differentiated.
57. J. Stobart (2009) 'In and out of fashion? Advertising novel and second-hand goods in Georgian England', in B. Blonde, N. Coquery, J. Stobart and I. Van Damme (eds) *Fashioning Old and New: Changing Consumer Patterns in Western Europe (1650–1900)* (Turnhout: Brepols), p. 137.
58. Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection, Johnson. d. 1681, *A Catalogue of the Household Furniture etc of Mr Edward Cokayne* (London, 1753).
59. Stobart, 'In and out of fashion?'; C. Wall (1997) 'The English auction: narratives of dismantlings', *Eighteenth-century Studies*, 31, pp. 1–25.
60. T. Tryon (1682) *A Treatise on Cleanness in Meats and Drinks, of the Preparation of Food ... and the Benefits of Clean Sweet Beds* (London). See also W.W. (1680) *The Vermin-Killer. Being a Very Necessary Family-Book* (London: Samuel Lee); and E. Cockayne (2007) *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 57–9.
61. J. Southall (1793) *A Treatise on the Cimex Lectularis, or Bed Bug*, second edition, (Ipswich), pp. 45–6.
62. The recipe is clearly inspired by Southall's, since it does not appear in any of the preceding editions: E. Smith (1732) *The Compleat Housewife: or, Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion* (London: J. Pemberton), pp. 346–7.
63. A Lady [Hannah Glasse] (1747) *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (London), p. 166. For a subscription advertisement, see the *London Evening Post*, 15–18 March 1746, p. 3.
64. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 18 April 1766, p. 3.
65. *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 22–25 October 1748, p. 3.
66. *Public Advertiser*, 27 April 1756, p. 3; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 282.
67. M.F. Potter (2011) 'The history of bed bug management – with lessons from the past', *American Entomologist*, 57, 1, pp. 14–25.
68. *Daily Advertiser*, 23 September 1742, p. 3; *Daily Advertiser*, 21 May 1745, p. 3.
69. *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 24–27 August 1765, p. 3.
70. C. Edwards and M. Ponsonby (2011) 'The polarization of the second-hand market for furniture in the nineteenth century', in Stobart and Van Damme (eds) *Modernity and the*

second-hand trade, pp. 93–110. 71. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

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