SHAKESPEARE'S SELF-FASHIONING: SOCIAL IDENTITY AND THE INTERIORS OF THE 'NEW GENRTY' HOUSE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND, 1590-1620.

by

ALEXANDRA HEWITT

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Department of History

School of History and Cultures

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of the domestic environment in the consolidation and display of 'new gentry' status in early modern England. New gentlemen were upwardly mobile members of society who have not, until recently, been recognised as their own distinct group. This is the first study to demonstrate how the form, appearance, decoration and furnishing of the urban house provided a key platform for specifically *new gentry* self-fashioning. The focus of this project is William Shakespeare's residence, New Place, in Stratford-upon-Avon from 1597 to 1616. Shakespeare provides an excellent focal point for this investigation. The playwright's background, education, wealth, profession, and geographic mobility were key traits of new gentry status, but this thesis argues that Shakespeare's investment in New Place would have been especially valuable to his self-fashioning. Importantly, it finds that this pattern of substantial domestic investment was repeated across this section of early modern society. Through its focus on New Place, this thesis also deals with a distinct methodological challenge: how do you study a lost building? The house Shakespeare once occupied was demolished in the eighteenth century and no building has stood on the site for over 250 years. Following the approach of Lena Cowen Orlin's article 'Anne By Indirection' (2014), this project identifies and analyses a range of comparable, extant evidence (buildings, furnishings, decoration and probate records), to build a picture of the likely appearance of the interiors at New Place in 1616. By reconstructing elements of this property using cognate evidence from the period c.1590 to c.1620, this thesis offers a more comprehensive understanding of the role the built environment and material culture played in self-fashioning at this social level. The methodology and approach taken by this study provides vital contributions to the fields of buildings archaeology and country house studies, while a focus on 'new gentry' status offers new perspectives within social history that will further challenge assumptions about the rigid hierarchy associated with early modern society. In developing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of absent heritage, this project is also informed by, and contributes to, museum and heritage studies. This thesis culminates in the presentation of three reconstructed interior spaces at New Place, based on extensive comparable evidence and illustrated by artist Philip Watson, following a design brief which was developed through an iterative research process. The visualisations bring together source material that is usually studied in isolation, but, in reality, was part of one domestic environment. By visualising these rooms in their entirety, this thesis demonstrates how architecture, furnishings and fittings worked together to fashion the identities of their new gentry owners.

DEDICATION

For my lovely Grandad,

John Derek Wainfor, 1935 – 2021.

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This thesis is dedicated to my Grandad, who we lost in 2021. Grandad was one of the smartest, kindest people I knew but he was also one of the humblest, never giving much thought to his own abilities. I think it is safe to say that Grandad was one of my biggest supporters. He could not believe that someone from his family was completing a PhD, and he desperately wanted to see me graduate. I am glad to say that I have finally finished, I am just sorry it took me a little longer than planned.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	**1**
New Place, a brief biography	3
Why Shakespeare and why New Place?	11
Historiography	17
A Lost Building: Methodology and Sources	28
Structure	37
CHAPTER ONE: THE NEW GENTRY	**43**
The New Gentry	46
Reputation and Credit	56
Background	61
Education	63
Occupation	65
Public Office	72
Wealth	74
Grant of Arms	79
'The port, charge and countenance of a gentleman'	82
Shakespeare, a new gentleman	86
Conclusion	97
CHAPTER TWO: NEW GENTRY HOUSES	**100**
The New Gentry and the 'Great Rebuilding'	100
New Place, an urban property	107
Form	111
— Construction	112
— Adaption	116
— Retention	121
Urban Courtyard Houses	126
Facades	137
Stratford Houses	140
Shakespeare's New Gentry Home	153
Conclusion	155
CHAPTER THREE: FURNISHINGS	**158**
Status and Consumption	161
Furnishing the 'new gentry' house	165
— In the hall	166
— In the parlour	171
— In the great chamber	180
Shakespeare's Will	187
The Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories	189
— Stratford appraisals	191

— Rooms 193
— Preparation and production items 196
— Bedsteads and other furniture 198
— Dining 208
— Linens and soft furnishings 212
— Fixed furnishings and miscellaneous items 215
Conclusion 220

CHAPTER FOUR: FIXED DECORATION 222
Early Modern Interior Decoration 225
— Approaches 225
— Engagement with early modern print sources 230
— Collectors of print and paint 239
Availability and Extant Examples: Wall Paintings 243
— Beyond London 243
— Oxfordshire 247
— The Midlands 250
— Stratford-upon-Avon 256
Availability and Extant Examples: Other Forms of Fixed Decoration 263
— London and beyond 263
— The Midlands 268
— Stratford-upon-Avon 270
Conclusion 277

CHAPTER FIVE: RECONSTRUCTING SHAKESPEARE'S NEW PLACE 280
Approaches to Historical Reconstruction 283
Shakespeare's New Place 291
— Façade 291
— Ground floor 293
— First floor 298
Visualising Shakespeare's New Place 301
— The Hall 303
— The Parlour 312
— The Great Chamber 321
— Summary 330
Reflections 330
Conclusion 335

CONCLUSION 337

BIBLIOGRAPHY 346

Note to the reader

This thesis was completed during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which included three national lockdowns and severe travel restrictions. Thankfully, many of the museum collections and libraries consulted as part of this project provided online resources during this time. However, it is worth noting that the restrictions resulting from this pandemic did impact the ability to conduct fieldwork and library/archival research for a substantial period of this project.

Original spelling and punctuation for early modern sources has been retained. Dates are given in Old Style as they appear in the sources.

The bulk of images referred to in this thesis can be found in Volume II. These images are referred to throughout the text in Volume I as figures or 'fig'. However, where close analysis of a particular image takes place in the text – the reconstructions of New Place, for instance - images have been included alongside the text in Volume I. These images are referred to as 'plates'.

Abbreviations in the text and notes:

British Library (BL)
British Museum (BM)
Dulwich Picture Gallery (DPG)
Historic England (HE)
Museum of London (MoL)
National Trust (NT)
Online Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met)
Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)
Victoria Country House (VCH)

(See Volume II for List of Figures, List of Plans and Appendices)

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1
Map of Stratford-upon-Avon in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century © Keven Colls.
p. 141.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1
Items listed in the ‘great Parlor’ of Robert Suckling’s inventory of 1589.
p. 172.

Table 2
Information relating to rooms/spaces and occupations taken from a sample of inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon, 1590-1630s.
p. 194.

Table 3
Beds in parlours, from a small selection of Stratford inventories, 1590-1630s.
p. 200.

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1
The hall at New Place c.1616, a reconstruction © Phil Watson and Alexandra Hewitt.
p. 302.

Plate 2
The parlour at New Place c.1616, a reconstruction © Phil Watson and Alexandra Hewitt.
p. 311.

Plate 3
The great chamber at New Place c.1616, a reconstruction © Phil Watson and Alexandra Hewitt.
p. 320.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores and defines 'new gentry' status in early modern England. It does so by examining how domestic consumption was used to construct and consolidate this particular status and identity. It is the first study to demonstrate how the form, appearance, decoration and furnishing of the urban home provided a key platform for specifically *new gentry* self-fashioning. The focal point of this project is William Shakespeare's townhouse, New Place, in Stratford-upon-Avon. By his death in 1616, Shakespeare had owned and occupied this (now lost) urban property for almost 20 years, and he was firmly established as a gentleman within his hometown of Stratford. My project investigates the role New Place played in the construction, solidification and display of his identity as a new member of the gentry. Shakespeare's townhouse is therefore used as a lens for wider analysis: by reconstructing elements of this property using surviving, comparable evidence, I am able to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the role the built environment and material culture played in self-fashioning at this level of early modern society.[1]

*

Few studies have considered how William Shakespeare might have chosen to adorn his family home, and even fewer have connected this activity to his *particular* social identity.[2] Interest in the site of his lost home, however, has increased in recent years.

[1] See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From Moore to Shakespeare* (London, 2005). According to Greenblatt, 'in the sixteenth-century there were both selves and a sense that they could be fashioned'. For him, 'there are always selves – a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires – and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity', p. 1. Ultimately, he argues that 'in the sixteenth-century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.', p. 2. This idea of an increased awareness of the self and its manipulation through culture and society is taken to mean self-fashioning in the context of this thesis.

[2] Cathryn Enis and Tara Hamling have considered some of ways in which Shakespeare's domestic life has been imagined across the centuries. They focus on wider material responses to Shakespeare's lost domesticity, but they offer valuable insight into how popular conceptions of Shakespeare's home-life feed into our understanding of his domesticity today. Cathyrn Enis and Tara Hamling,

Between 2010 and 2015 a series of archaeological investigations took place on the original location of Shakespeare's New Place.[3] Along with recovered artefacts – coins, pins and ceramics, for instance – the New Place investigations unearthed important architectural information about the form of this house. From the evidence gathered, archaeologists were able to say more about the structure and potential layout of Shakespeare's family home.[4] The publication *Finding Shakespeare's New Place* by Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls and William Mitchell resulted from this activity, providing a fresh appreciation and understanding of the archaeology, architecture and overall history of New Place.[5] As valuable as this archaeological perspective proved to be for a study of Shakespeare's lost home, its interior spaces remained elusive.

This thesis, therefore, explores Shakespeare's likely impact on the interiors of New Place using evidence relating to comparable new gentlemen and their homes. In doing so, it addresses a series of fundamental questions: how might Shakespeare have decorated and furnished this property? What might have determined his choices? How did this relate to his status as a new gentleman? And, importantly, what does this reveal about the self-fashioning of the new gentry as a whole? By exploring these questions, I construct an image of Shakespeare's lost home as well as his position in society, placing him among other men of a similar status and demonstrating how he fulfilled the requirements of new gentry status. Alongside benchmarks such as wealth,

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'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity: Material Responses to Absence in Stratford-upon-Avon, *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 70 (2019), pp. 52-83; see also Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2017).

[3] As custodians of the site, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) embarked upon the 'Dig for Shakespeare' (2010-2015) explorations with the University of Birmingham Archaeology Department and then the Centre of Archaeology at Staffordshire University.

[4] These architectural findings were presented to the public when the SBT re-opened the New Place site in 2016.

[5] Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls, and William Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (Manchester, 2016).

occupation and credit, I show that investment in the domestic environment was a vital component of new gentry status.

New Place, a brief biography

Shakespeare's New Place was built in about 1483 by Hugh Clopton, the youngest son of a prominent Warwickshire family. Archaeological evidence suggests that the house was constructed in the traditional hierarchical layout around two courtyards with a large hall block at its centre.[6] The house passed through a series of owners before Shakespeare eventually purchased and occupied the property from 1597 until his death in 1616. New Place returned to the Clopton family in 1677 when it came under the ownership of Sir John Clopton, a descendant of the original builder. Clopton proceeded to dismantle the house that Shakespeare once occupied and by 1702 a 'new' eighteenth-century townhouse stood in its place.[7] It was John Clopton's house that Reverend Francis Gastrell famously demolished in 1759, unintentionally clearing the site for the excavations to come.[8] In 1884, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) became custodians of the land associated with New Place and have managed it ever since.[9] No house has stood on this site for over 250 years, and following an initial series of excavations conducted in the nineteenth century by antiquarian scholar

[6] Information on the medieval origins and structure of New Place can be found in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, 'Chapter Two: The Origins of New Place', *Finding Shakespeare's New Place,* pp. 30-63. The medieval structure and the original ownership of New Place are discussed in more detail in the second chapter of this thesis.

[7] An in-depth discussion surrounding the second New Place - built by Sir John Clopton in 1702 - appears in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, 'Chapter 6: After Shakespeare: New Place, 1677-1759', *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 177-197.

[8] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 194-197.

[9] The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust were given custodianship of the New Place site by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, famous antiquarian and Shakespeare scholar, following a series of archaeological investigations into the site. For more information on the SBT's custodianship of New Place and its presentation in the modern day, see Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 212-219.

James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, few artefacts remain from the building Shakespeare once occupied with his family.[10]

Documentary evidence

Written evidence relating to Shakespeare's ownership and occupation of New Place is limited and there has been a tendency over the years to fill the gaps in knowledge surrounding Shakespeare's domestic environment with speculation and rumour. The legacy and mythology surrounding Shakespeare's lost domesticity has formed the focus of recent studies, but my project is careful to avoid speculation by concerning itself with the evidence that does survive, as limited as it may be.[11] Enough documentary sources remain to tell us that Shakespeare owned New Place from 1597 to 1616. Building on archaeological evidence and surviving records from other occupiers of the house, this is enough to tell us that Shakespeare chose to purchase a late medieval mansion in the heart of his hometown. While a lack of direct evidence relating to Shakespeare's time at New Place presents a number of clear limitations – namely, that we are left no clues of the playwright's impact on the property – we are left with an exciting opportunity to think about how far Shakespeare could have gone when following the material and domestic trends of his status group. Instead of speculation, gaps in evidence are thus filled with comparable surviving evidence, used to suggest how Shakespeare and others like him *might* have approached self-fashioning through the home.

[10] For details on the Halliwell-Phillipps excavations between 1862-63, see Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 202-212. For a primary account of these investigations see James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *An Historical Account of the New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Last Residence of Shakespeare* (London, 1864).
[11] See Enis and Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity'.

Documentary evidence does tell us when Shakespeare bought New Place and the process through which he acquired it. He purchased the house and land associated with New Place in spring 1597 from Warwickshire clerk William Underhill. Records highlighted by Robert Bearman reveal that Underhill was in significant debt to the Stratford Corporation and a speedy sale of New Place was required to settle his payments.[12] It is possible that the sale was brought to Shakespeare's attention by fellow townsman, Richard Quiney.[13] Between 1595 and 1596, Quiney visited London intermittently on behalf of the Stratford Corporation.[14] Correspondence between Quiney and other Corporation members indicates that he did indeed meet with Shakespeare during these visits.[15]

Official record of Shakespeare's purchase of New Place takes the form of 'an exemplification of the transfer of the title by fine' dated 1597.[16] As Bearman explains, normally a deed of conveyance signed by the vendor (Underhill) and given to the buyer (Shakespeare) would be expected for a property of this size. But no such document exists.[17] Instead, New Place was transferred to Shakespeare via the seemingly convoluted process of a fine, which 'effectively meant that the purchaser had to sue the vendor of the right to own the property'.[18] As Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell

[12] Robert Bearman, 'Shakespeare's Purchase of New Place', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 63 (2012), pp. 478-482.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 480.
[14] Richard Quiney's trips to London are recorded at various intervals in the proceedings and expenses of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation. These accounts have been transcribed and collated into one publication: Robert Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and other records, Vol.6*, *1599-1609* (Dugdale Society, 2011).
[15] Bearman, 'Shakespeare's Purchase', pp. 481-482. For more information on the Quiney letters, see Robert Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money: How much did he make and what did this mean?* (Oxford 2016), pp. 97-101.
[16] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 101.
[17] Bearman, 'Shakespeare's Purchase', pp. 482; Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 101.
[18] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 101.

suggest, the process of fine was less secure as the buyer's right to the property could be challenged within five years of transferral by any heir of the original title-holder.[19] All that remains in relation to the sale of New Place, however, is the purchaser's copy of the original exemplification from 1597, and the vendor's and purchaser's copies of the final concord laid out in 1602.[20] Through this final document, Shakespeare safe-guarded his ownership of New Place, drawing up this second fine in advance of Underhill's heir coming of age.

As well as establishing Shakespeare's possession of the property, these documents also provide evidence of the potential cost of New Place. The 1597 fine makes reference to £60 in silver. Several Shakespeare scholars have suggested that this was the traditional 'legal fiction' for such exemplifications, while others have implied that this figure relates to the sum Shakespeare actually paid for the title to the property.[21] Edmondson, for instance, claims that this amount is too little for a property such as New Place. Previous owner William Bott paid £131 for the house in 1563, while Underhill purchased the property for £110 in 1567.[22] Most recent estimates suggest that Shakespeare paid a total of £120 for New Place - not an extortionate amount of money for a property of this size, but double the amount mentioned in the fine.[23] Whatever the exact sum that Shakespeare eventually paid for this property, it was likely his most substantial investment to date. This thesis, therefore, demonstrates

[19] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 101-2.
[20] Extant documents relating to Shakespeare's purchase of New Place include: 1597 exemplification of fine, SBT ER27/4a; concord of fine, TNA CP 24/1/15; note of fine (draft of final concord), TNA CP 26/1/251.
[21] Samuel Schoenbaum quoted in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 102.
[22] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 103.
[23] This estimate is offered by Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, and is based on the the value of comparable houses in the town, as well as payments made by previous purchasers of New Place – William Bott, who paid £140 in 1563, and William Underhill who purchased New Place for £110 in 1567. *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 102-103.

how this investment was used to construct and display Shakespeare's new gentry status.

The fine also mentions 'Two houses, two barns and two gardens', as well as land beyond the gardens. This land stretched as far as 54.86 m (180 ft) towards the rear of the property, but ownership was divided.[24] Today, the plot makes up the Great Garden of New Place, but it is believed that Shakespeare once owned a significant portion of this site.[25] This amount of land was valuable. Located within the centre of the market town, it could be rented out, used for grazing animals or occupied by additional outbuildings.[26] The survival of these fines offers initial clues as to the extent of Shakespeare's investments. But, as is argued throughout this thesis, the purchase of New Place was only the beginning of Shakespeare's investment in his gentry home.

There is little documentary evidence of Shakespeare's physical impact on New Place, but a handful of references do hint at potential renovations made to the property during Shakespeare's time there. Building activity surged in Stratford towards the end of the sixteenth century following a series of fires in the town.[27] New Place escaped destruction, but it is unlikely to have evaded the mass rebuilding that followed given that that these fires also occurred during a national boom in building.[28] On 12 January 1598, the Stratford Corporation's minutes and accounts recorded '10d pd to mr

[24] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 103.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] In a 1590 survey undertaken upon the death of the Lord of the Manor (the Earl of Warwick), ten barns were listed on Walkers Lane stretching alongside the land behind New Place, and Edmondson suggests that 'Shakespeare's own malt barn was among them'. Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 104; Shakespeare Centre and Archive, SBT MA, iv, 106-7.
[27] Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell observe that 'Stratford-upon-Avon's economy was greatly damaged by the two devastating fires of 1594 and 1595, which, it is estimated, destroyed around 200 buildings', *Finding Shakespeare's New Place,* p. 89.
[28] W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570–1640', *Past and Present*, Vol. 4 (1953) pp. 44-59.

Shaxspere for on lod of ston'.[29] This entry has long been viewed as payment made to Shakespeare for the removal of stone from New Place following renovations.[30] Such building work seems especially plausible if we consider a complaint made in 1549 by the Cloptons against their New Place tenant, Dr Thomas Bentley. The Clopton family accused Bentley of leaving 'the said manor place in great ruin'.[31] A number of people owned and occupied New Place between this date and Shakespeare's purchase, perhaps explaining the diminishing value of the property as highlighted above. Given the debt linked to at least one of these owners (Underhill), the property was more than likely in need of substantial repair by 1597.[32] These tantalising references support the archaeological evidence uncovered centuries later. As will be seen, material evidence suggests that alterations in the form of additional chimneys, ovens and stairs were made to the medieval house towards the end of the sixteenth century.[33]

An indication of the living arrangements at Shakespeare's New Place can be found in records belonging to lawyer and Stratford town clerk, Thomas Greene. A series of notes relating to land enclosure in nearby Welcombe between November 1614 and January 1615 tell us that Shakespeare and Greene were, at the very least, well-acquainted.[34] In a letter dated 9 September 1609, Greene intriguingly stated that he

[29] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 144.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[32] For information on owners of New Place prior to Shakespeare's purchase of the property, see Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 100-101.
[33] A summary of the New Place excavation area can be found in William Mitchell (Project Archaeologist), 'Nash's House and New Place Redevelopment: 22 and 23 and Chapel Street, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 6EP. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS; STRIP, MAP and RECORD EVALUATION and WATCHNG BRIEF' (01.2016), unpublished, on behalf of Staffordshire University Archaeology Department for The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. With permission from William Mitchell, who was kind enough to share his findings and reports from the Dig For Shakespeare (2010-2015).
[34] Within these documents, Greene famously addresses Shakespeare as 'cousin', although the extent of their kinship is contested. Tara Hamling, 'His 'cousin': Thomas Greene' in Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells (eds.), *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 135; Robert Bearman, 'Thomas Greene: Stratford-upon-Avon's town clerk and Shakespeare's lodger', in P. Holland (ed.) *Shakespeare Survey,* Vol. 65, (Cambridge, 2012), p. 295. SBT BRU 15/13/27-29.

'might stay another year at New Place'.[35] This reference has since been used to suggest that Greene and his family were lodgers at Shakespeare's home.[36] By 1611, the town clerk had taken residence at St Mary's, a large house in Old Stratford. But we do not know if, or for how long, he had been living at New Place prior to this move. Greene may have lodged with the Shakespeares from as early as 1601 when he first moved to the town, indeed his reference to '*another* year at New Place' suggests that he may have been there a while. Lodging was not uncommon in early modern England, as demonstrated by Charles Nicholl's study of Shakespeare's own lodging in London.[37] This project, however, is specifically interested in Shakespeare's use of, investment in and impact on New Place, focusing on the key spaces he and his family were most likely to have occupied and used.

No visual representations of Shakespeare's New Place survive, but, in 1737, engraver George Vertue produced a rough sketch of the property's seventeenth-century frontage (fig.1).[38] The representation is allegedly based on the memory of Shakespeare's then elderly great-great-nephew, Shakespeare Hart.[39] If true, Hart

[35] Hamling, 'His 'cousin'', p. 135. SBT BRU 15/12/103.
[36] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 100-114
[37] At this time, Shakespeare was himself lodging in London. Charles Nicholl has investigated Shakespeare's status as a lodger with the Mountjoy family in Cripplegate from 1602 to about 1603, shedding light on the complexities of lodging at this time. But facilitating one lodger was very different to housing a large family of relatively high status, like the Greenes, and demanded a different set of requirements altogether. For two families, with young children, elderly grandparents and servants to live comfortably within one property suggests the potential size of New Place. Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (London, 2007). For a brief discussion on lodging in early modern England, see Hamling, 'His 'cousin'', pp. 137-138; and Andrew Hopper, 'Social Mobility during the English revolution: the case of Adam Eyre', *Social History,* Vol. 38 (2013), pp. 26-45.
[38] 'Drawing of Shakespeare's house' by George Vertue (1737), BL PORTLAND PAPERS. Vol. CCCCXXXVIII (29/246).
[39] Vertue's sketch was allegedly produced after a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1737 with the Earl of Oxford, when they visited a number of sites associated with Shakespeare, including his old family home on Henley Street (now the Birthplace), where Shakespeare Hart was residing. Vertue makes a detailed (if slightly muddled) note of Hart and his connection to William Shakespeare in his notebook, on the page following his sketch. Further details and analysis of this sketch and its authenticity can be found in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 141-145.

would have known New Place as it was before it was rebuilt in 1702. He could have visited the house as a young boy while Shakespeare's granddaughter, Lady Elizabeth Barnard, resided there until the 1660s. Consequently, this sketch may have been an attempt at visualising Shakespeare's New Place based on input from someone in the town who would have known it well. Indeed, it appears to correlate with the type of building activity we know was occurring in Stratford at the end of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century.[40]

Yet questions remain over the reliability of Vertue's sketch. Sketches made from memory are often fallible and, when based on the memory of another, even more doubt is cast over the drawing's accuracy. In the 1670 hearth tax of Stratford-upon-Avon, a total of ten hearths were listed as taxable against New Place. Yet no chimneys feature in Vertue's sketch.[41] Of course, they may have simply been omitted, but Vertue's façade does bear resemblance to the frontage of what is now The Shakespeare Hotel on the High Street, not far from New Place (fig.2). Admittedly, the frontage at New Place may have followed a similar design. As will be discussed, evidence suggests that owners of such properties were keen to keep up with the latest trends of the town.[42] However, it could also be the case that Hart, an elderly man in 1737, confused New Place with this comparable building on the High Street. Or perhaps Vertue's sketch is imagined, reflective of the kind of house people expected Shakespeare to own. Numerous depictions of New Place were made in the centuries following the playwright's death, most depicting John Clopton's eighteenth-century

[40] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 32.
[41] The 1670 hearth tax returns for Stratford list only one property on Chapel Street as having 10 taxable, and 3 non-taxable hearths. This property appears alongside the name 'Mr Oldfield', a tenant of New Place at that time. For published copies of the hearth tax returns see Tom Arkell (ed.) with Nat Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax Returns: Michaelmas 1670* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2010), p. 217.
[42] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), p. 44.

house rather than the medieval property that Shakespeare once occupied, as a souvenir saucer from the nineteenth century demonstrates (fig.3). We must therefore keep in mind the likelihood that Vertue's sketch is not completely accurate.[43] The details of this drawing are explored later in this thesis, but its discussion here demonstrates the difficulties in deciphering fact from fiction when searching for evidence about Shakespeare's New Place.

Why Shakespeare and why New Place?

I am concerned with the material investment of the socially mobile: those individuals who passed through the boundaries of early modern society from middling to gentry status. As Stephen Greenblatt observes, early modern mobility was 'geographical and ideological' as well as social in nature, governed by changes to the State and Church as much as by occupation and background.[44] Until recently there has been insufficient attention paid to this fluid section of society. While there have been influential studies of the gentry and the middling sort, as highlighted below, there has been little acknowledgement of the particular (permeable) status of those individuals who sit between or bridge these categories. The work of the AHRC-funded project *Middling Culture* has drawn attention to this group as part of a reassessment of the degrees of status within the so-called 'middling sort'.[45] Yet, within this innovative research the new

[43] See Alexandra Hewitt, 'Imagining Shakespeare's New Place', an online exhibition via The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (06.06.2018), https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-connected-imagining-new-place/ [Accessed 18.02.21].
[44] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning,* p. 3.
[45] Catherine Richardson (principal investigator), Tara Hamling (co-investigator) and Graeme Earl (co-investigator), 'The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort, Writing and Material Culture, 1560-1660', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the University of Kent, University of Birmingham and Kings College London (2019-2022) https://middlingculture.com/about/ [Accessed 19.05.22].

gentry remain situated in the 'upper-middling' levels of society.[46] As will be shown, the space between middling and gentry in early modern England was opaque. Men who fell into this category have yet to be fully explored as a distinct group with their own set of diverse characteristics. Throughout this thesis, I aim to identify these sort of men, how they qualified for gentry status, and, importantly, the role of domestic decoration in their complex negotiation of social identity. Thus, I not only argue for an expansion in source material for studies of social identity to include material evidence, but I also highlight a previously undefined group that existed and operated within early modern society; the new gentry.

I define new gentlemen as those individuals who moved from middling to gentry status within their own lifetime. Most had backgrounds in trade, craft and local government, and many were considered gentlemen in their local community but not necessarily on a county or national level. Importantly, there was a distinctly urban quality to this group, as much status derived from local government and occupational associations that were most readily formed in towns and cities. Although some new gentlemen chose to build rural properties, such as Walter Jones and Richard Smalbroke, they still worked and networked in the urban settings of Worcester and Birmingham. In this way, new gentlemen were geographically mobile, travelling between their hometown and larger cities such as London for work or civic duties. Some possessed coats of arms, the majority were reasonably wealthy and all relied on good credit and reputation to solidify their status. As will be shown, Shakespeare fulfilled many of these criteria,

[46] Middling Culture's focus on the degrees of status within the 'middling sort' is presented as in the digital engagement resource 'The Social Status Calculator'. The information relating to the group titled 'new gentry' in part resulted from a workshop held in May 2020 surrounding gentry status. The research, definitions and arguments offered in this thesis informed part of that discussion, along with input from Prof Richard Cust. https://middlingculture.com/status-calculator/ [Accessed 19.05.22].

making him, in many ways, an ideal focal point for such a study. His family held authority within his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon through his father's civic positions and Shakespeare himself found success in the new and prosperous theatre business, which undoubtedly saw him travel between his hometown and London on a regular basis. The associations formed through both these local and occupational connections were important for his claim to gentility, as was his literacy, wealth and position as the head of a household.[47] If the fulfilment of these new gentry attributes was not enough to convince people of his elevated status, I argue that his purchase of one of the most impressive properties in Stratford-upon-Avon surely cemented his social identity among his immediate community.[48]

While Shakespeare's 'typicality' as a member of the new gentry is measured throughout this thesis, his 'atypicality' as a case study also needs to be acknowledged. There were very few (if any) new gentlemen who gained the recognition and notoriety that Shakespeare did, even before his death in 1616. Consequently, there are aspects of Shakespeare's life that we might identify as divergent from the rest of his social group. While his process of self-fashioning (as discussed above) might not appear exceptional, much of his status was built through the relatively new theatre industry. Other new gentlemen involved in the theatre, such as the Burbage family, also attempted to fulfil as many gentry requirements as was possible, but they all chose to do so in and around London – the city where they worked. Shakespeare, however,

[47] Numerous autobiographies about Shakespeare have been written across the centuries, but this study uses Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford, 1990); Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle;* Bill Bryson, *Shakespeare: The World As A Stage* (London, 2007); and Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*.

[48] Other large properties in seventeenth century Stratford-upon-Avon included St Mary's (now lost) positioned next to Holy Trinity churchyard, purchased by Thomas Greene in 1611; The College in Old Stratford spanning College Lane and College Street, owned by the Combes family; and Abraham Sturley's house on Wood Street, now Pragnell's jewellers. Hamling, 'His 'cousin', p. 135; Stanley Wells, 'A close family connection: the Combes' in Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle,* p. 155.

chose to solidify his status in his hometown through the purchase of New Place. This might be considered unusual for a member of his occupational group, but, as will be discussed, was not so abnormal for his status group. Nonetheless, the question remains of how typical, or atypical, was Shakespeare in his self-fashioning? Given his modern notoriety, how far can we really compare him to other members of society? These questions are considered in the first chapter of this thesis, but, while this study views Shakespeare's legacy as highly atypical, it does not see his status and position among contemporaries in early modern society as out of the ordinary. As will be discussed, the new gentry may have been a distinct group but it contained diverse identities, characteristics and backgrounds. The material laid out in this thesis provides evidence of what constituted new gentry status, and asks questions around how many of these characteristics Shakespeare himself fulfilled. It therefore offers an exciting opportunity for us to think about status and material investment at this time, as well as where one of the world's most famous writers might fit into debates surrounding self-fashioning.

Thus, New Place represents an important category of building and owner for this study. Shakespeare purchased New Place in 1597 and, as his father had been granted a coat of arms a year earlier, the playwright was likely looking to establish his own status through the purchase and potential renovation of a substantial property.[49] But Shakespeare was not alone in using this sort of material investment as a means of consolidating gentry identity. In early modern England, there was an obligation for men of a certain social standing to own, furnish and decorate buildings commensurate with

[49] For information on Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, and the family's grant of arms see Raymond Carter Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms to Shakespeare's Father' in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 4 (1963), pp. 379-385; Robert Bearman, 'John Shakespeare: A Papist or Just Penniless?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 56 (2005), pp. 411-433.

their status.[50] As places of business, industry, professional networking and sociability, urban domestic properties provided a crucial space for the construction and display of social identity to the local community.[51] Not only was Shakespeare fulfilling the characteristics expected of a new gentleman, he was joining his peers in purchasing property and using its interiors to display them. In this respect, Shakespeare might be considered as the archetypal new gentleman; a useful, not-to-mention recognisable, case study against whom we can examine the lives of similar self-made men.

The cultural significance of the New Place site further adds to the value of this focus. The absence of any discernible physical remains of the building creates a lacuna in the historical study of Shakespeare's biography and home-life. This thesis attempts to reconstruct New Place using comparable extant evidence, thus situating this property, and Shakespeare's engagements with it, within wider social, cultural and material developments and patterns. These reconstructions are illustrative and suggestive, but they are also indicative of the *type* of architecture, decoration and furnishings possibly found in a home like New Place. Through these reconstructions, I will demonstrate that a combination of status, innovation, tradition, and regional trends all determined the way in which men like Shakespeare might have invested in and used their homes as arenas of self-fashioning. While the focus appears to be on Shakespeare, in actuality, this study suggests important information about contemporaries in the same 'intermediate' status group. Actor and new gentleman Edward Alleyn chose to build his new home and school for the poor in Dulwich, and the Street family of Worcester purchased the medieval courtyard property, Greyfriars, to demonstrate their wealth

[50] Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, (London, 1999).
[51] Chris King, *Houses and Society in Norwich, 1350-1610: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (Suffolk, 2020).

and status. In this way, my study develops our understanding of material and artistic patronage in Tudor and Jacobean England beyond the elite and the space of the court.

Traditionally labelled as 'crude' or 'rustic', vernacular interiors are often overshadowed by elite architecture as well as burdened by low survival rates and continued destruction.[52] Research by Anthony Wells-Cole, Tessa Watt, Kathryn Davies and Andrea Kirkham has revealed the diversity, extent and significance of the decoration that existed in early modern homes at various levels of society.[53] But further consideration of the context in which this decoration was used and experienced is needed to appreciate the meaning of these forms of material expression in relation to social identity. Recent scholarship suggests that people drawn from this mobile section of society made significant investment in the domestic sphere.[54] Throughout this thesis, I follow the approach of Tara Hamling, Catherine Richardson, Matthew Johnson and Chris King who view domestic buildings, decoration and furnishings as a form of historical evidence to be studied in its own right, arguing for the significance of the domestic environment in facilitating the operation of status for early modern men such as William Shakespeare.[55]

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[52] Examples of prevailing antiquarian aesthetic ideals include M. Carrick et al. describing the painted arcading linking two scenes found at Creswells Farm in Sible Hedingham, Essex, as 'crudely painted', p. 144. M. Carrick, P. M. Ryan and M. C. Wadhams, 'Wall Paintings at Creswells Farm, Sible Hedingham, Essex', *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 144 (1987), p. 328-339. Such attitudes are also evident throughout Nikolaus Pevsner's work, for example see Pevsner and Alexandra Wedgwood, *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire* (London, 1966), p. 420.

[53] Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Influence of Continental Prints* (New Haven, 1997); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550*-1640 (Cambridge, 1991); Kathryn Davies, *Artisan Art: Vernacular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marches ,1550-1650* (Herefordshire, 2008); Andrea Kirkham, 'Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Wall Paintings in Suffolk', unpublished PhD thesis, submitted for University of East Anglia (October, 2010).

[54] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home.*

[55] Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven, 2010); Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home;* Matthew Johnson, *English Houses, 1300-1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (Harlow, 2010); Chris King, ''Closure' and the Urban Great Rebuilding in Early Modern Norwich', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 44 (2010), pp. 54-80; Chris King, 'The Interpretation of Urban Buildings: Power, Memory and Appropriation in Norwich Merchants' Houses, c. 1400-1660', *World Archaeology,* Vol. 41 (2009), pp. 471-488; Chris King, 'Domestic

Historiography

Social order in early modern England

Early modern descriptions of social order are not especially helpful for an analysis of the socially ambiguous 'new gentry' as they tended to focus on fixed hierarchical classifications and boundaries. According to Keith Wrightson, this emphasis on social hierarchy split early modern society into distinct groups of 'noblemen; gentlemen; yeomen; citizens and burgesses; husbandmen; artisans; labourers', with women rarely considered as part of this social order at all.[56] Early modern descriptions were therefore narrow and rigid, overlooking the diversity that existed within society at this time. As Alexandra Shepard notes, this social commentary was mostly produced by a specific, politically motivated group of people (usually men) who were all above a certain social level.[57] Within these strict classifications, there was seemingly little room for mobility.

Modern scholarship has proved more useful in acknowledging the complexities of early modern social order. Writing in the 1960s, Lawrence Stone was among the first to consider the complexity of early modern society and the men that operated within

Buildings: Understanding houses and society' in Tara Hamling, Catherine Richardson, and David Gaimster (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2016), pp. 115-129.

[56] Keith Wrightson, ''Sorts of People' in Tudor and Stuart England', in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 28. For more discussion on the exclusion of women in early modern descriptions of social order see David Cressy, 'Describing the Social Order of Elizabethan and Stuart England', in *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (New York, 2003), pp. 34-35, and Alexandra Shepard, 'Self and Society in Early Modern England', *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 1-32.

[57] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 1-32.

it.[58] He challenged the rigid models traditionally put forward in early modern descriptions and subsequent scholarship, encouraging future studies to tackle the fluid nature of social identity.[59] Today, historians tend to find the language of 'sorts' most useful when describing the different groups that existed in early modern England.[60] Wrightson defines 'sorts' as 'of a certain kind', making this language less precise than previous categorisations and therefore more attractive as a form of everyday social description.[61] Originally, he argues, this language was dichotomous in nature, mainly adopted in early modern England by the 'better sorts' to distinguish themselves from the 'lower sorts'.[62] Nonetheless, Wrightson highlights the value of this language for early modern commentators; indeed, its fluidity and inclusiveness meant that it could evolve at the same pace as the society it was describing. He also draws attention to the benefit of such descriptions for historians grappling with socially fluid members of early modern society, such as the men of this study, whose positions within the local community do not readily fit into hierarchical models of society. Despite differences in approach and focus, most historians agree that early modern society was more complex than traditionally believed, and that fortunes were readily changed within one lifetime. My study builds on this idea that status was not fixed and permanent, but was movable and unsteady. In such an environment, Shakespeare and men like him were able to use their homes to facilitate their social mobility.

[58] Lawrence Stone, 'Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past and Present,* Vol. 33 (1966), pp. 16-55.
[59] Such studies include Cressy, 'Describing the Social Order'; Wrightson, 'Sorts of People', pp. 28-51; Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017).
[60] Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*; Henry R. French, 'The Search for the 'Middle Sort of People' In England, 1600-1800' in *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 43 (2000), pp. 279-280; Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History.*
[61] Wrightson, 'Sorts of People', pp. 30-31.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Among wider scholarship relating to early modern society, there is a narrower focus on specific levels and groups (see chapter one). The gentry has historically received the most attention, with numerous studies over past decades attempting to define and categorise its members.[63] Work by Nicholas Cooper and Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes is especially effective at acknowledging the permeable nature of this level of society, while also giving significant weight to material investments of this status group. Cooper in particular highlights the way in which various elements of gentry identity were displayed through domestic building, focusing especially on country houses. This thesis builds on this work, using urban building and architecture to demonstrate movement into, as well as within, this level of society.[64]

Alongside scholarship on the gentry, studies of the 'middling' levels of society have emerged in recent years. This section of early modern society was even more wide-ranging than the gentry and is often described using Wrightson's language of sorts. As diverse as the 'middling sort' might appear, the prospect of social mobility was a universal characteristic shared by many of its members, and it was not always upward in its trajectory. Michael Mascuch demonstrates that the threat of poverty and deprivation was a very real prospect for the majority of people occupying this level.[65] Henry French, Johnathan Barry, and Robert Tittler consider how the 'middling sort' negotiated a complex collection of professions, trade, wealth, office holding and collective identities in order to survive.[66] But for those occupying the upper levels of

[63] See R. H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 11 (1941), pp. 1-38; P. R. Cross, 'The Formation of the English Gentry', *Past and Present*, Vol. 147 (1995), pp. 38-64.
[64] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Eastbourne, 1994); Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*.
[65] Michael Mascuch, 'Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity: The Ethos of British Autobiographers, 1600-1750' in *Social History,* Vol. 1 (1995), pp. 45-61.
[66] For various studies focusing on different characteristics of middling identity see Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in Jonathan Barry and Christopher

the middling sort, gentry status was well within reach. It is these people that form the focus of this thesis. Often described as 'chief inhabitants' of towns and cities by historians such as Wrightson and French, rarely are they considered as their own group.[67] This study develops contemporary and secondary literature surrounding the gentry and middling to say more about the complex status of 'new gentlemen' and the place they occupied in early modern society.

The Great Rebuilding

As my project connects new gentry status to domestic buildings, it also engages with scholarship surrounding the early modern built environment. Shakespeare purchased New Place during a period labelled by historians as the 'Great Rebuilding'. According to W. G. Hoskins, this period spanned 1570 to 1640 and adopted two aspects: the rebuilding and modernisation of houses, and an increase in household furnishings.[68] Hoskins's focus was on the rural context, contending that the key characteristics of this rebuilding were the ceiling over of open halls; increased numbers of specialised rooms; and the insertion of architectural features such as glazing, chimneys and staircases. For Hoskins, many of these changes could be explained by a rise in population and economic prosperity, and the impacts were far-reaching.

Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 84-112; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 148-157; Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2000), pp. 289-306; Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself;* Robert Tittler, *The Face of the City: Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007); see also Richardson, Hamling and Earl for 'The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort' project.

[67] Wrightson, 'Sorts of People', p. 38; French, 'The Search', pp. 284-286. The Middling Culture project has attempted to identify and analyse the different levels that existed within the 'middling sort', and this includes those belonging to the upper-end of the scale, see 'seven status categories' as part of their 'Social Status Calculator', https://middlingculture.com/social-statuses-of-early-modern-england/ [Accessed 19.05.22].

[68] Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England', p. 44-59.

Subsequent scholarship on the Great Rebuilding has overhauled many of Hoskins's original arguments relating to chronology and geography, but also cause and effect.[69] It is now generally acknowledged that the Great Rebuilding was not a single, cohesive event. Instead, it is recognised as a concept constructed by historians to describe shifts in building activity that occurred in phases, starting as early as the late medieval period and continuing through to the end of the seventeenth century. What remains evident, however, is that there was a change in the nature and extent of building activity in Stratford-upon-Avon while Shakespeare occupied New Place.[70] This thesis extends Hoskins's observations by demonstrating that many of the developments outlined in his study were, in fact, adopted by members of the new gentry in the urban environment. In this way, my study takes these arguments further by suggesting that advancements associated with the Great Rebuilding in the late sixteenth century were used in the construction and consolidation of status for these men.

Urban members of the middling sort and gentry were involved in important building work from the medieval period onwards. In fifteenth-century Stratford-upon-Avon, there was a trend of important townspeople – including the original builder of New Place, Sir Hugh Clopton - investing in building activity related to public works such as the Guild Chapel and Hall.[71] But the way in which domestic houses (in particular)

[69] See Robert Machin, "The Great Rebuilding: A Reassessment", *Past and Present,* Vol. 77 (1977), pp. 33-56; Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses: A Study of Traditional Farmhouses and Cottages* (London, 1975); Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Yale, 1978); Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England: Revolutions in Architectural Taste* (London, 1994); Maurice Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (London, 2007); Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor England* (New York, 2007); Johnson, *English Houses.*

[70] For more information on changes to the built landscape of Stratford from the medieval period onwards, see Robert Bearman (ed), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Gloucestershire, 1997).

[71] Christine Carpenter, 'Town and 'Country': the Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire' in Bearman (ed), *Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996*, pp. 65-66.

worked and functioned noticeably shifted in the early modern period.[72] A focus on the social significance and implications of the Great Rebuilding is therefore of greater interest to my study. Among this scholarship is Matthew Johnson's work *English Houses*, which is concerned with the wider context and consequences of changes in building activity on rural, vernacular building.[73] He argues that the sixteenth century move towards land enclosure led to the closure, or separation, of the house, resulting in more emphasis on individual experience and an 'increased' desire for privacy. [74] In this way he examines how the early modern social and political context influenced the way people built and adapted their homes. Johnson's detailed consideration of context prompts important questions regarding the motivations of owners below the level of elite.[75]

Despite this expansion in scope, the rebuilding of England's towns and cities remain significantly overlooked, and the gentry houses that existed within them even more so. Many of the developments highlighted by Johnson and Cooper in relation to country and rural houses were not experienced in the same way, or at the same time, in the urban houses that form the focus of this study. Lena Cowen Orlin, for instance, challenges our notion of early modern privacy in the urban environment. She argues that 'there are assumptions, first, that privacy is a desirable state; second, that it was arrived at by positive evolutionary change; and, third, that early modern privacy evolved away from a more primitive, medieval style of life that was public or communal'.[76] As will be seen, commercial activity, spatial restrictions, household

[72] For more information on shifts in building activity and functionality from the medieval through to the early modern period see Chris King's study of Norwich: King, *Houses and Society in Norwich.*
[73] Johnson, *English Houses*.
[74] *Ibid.,* pp. 87-112.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 89.
[76] Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p. 106.

structures and hosting obligations meant that very few, if any, spaces in the urban home were truly 'private' in the modern sense of the word. The seclusion, separation or 'enclosure' of the house is perhaps useful when studying the rural context, but does not quite explain what was occurring in the urban context.[77]

Instead, the value of Cooper's and Johnson's work, is their emphasis on how domestic buildings were used and experienced by their owners. This focus can be applied to the urban context, and has recently been developed by archaeologists such as Chris King and Sara Pearson.[78] King, for instance, highlights the multi-functionality of townhouses as well as the civic and merchant status of their owners. Urban properties were sites of commercial and industrial activity - 'spaces for production, storage and retail alongside domestic and service rooms' – as well as places of living.[79] Many owners of larger townhouses held public positions such as bailiff or mayor, which involved significant hosting and ceremonial responsibilities.[80] Houses, he argues, developed around these additional functions. Yet, King notes that this expansion of requirements did not always lead to increased building activity and alteration; it also showed itself through continuation.[81] Through close analysis of merchant houses in Norwich, he demonstrates that the purposeful retention of the medieval hall revealed its significance 'as a symbol of dynastic longevity and honour'.[82] In Norwich, the Great

[77] Johnson, *English Houses*, pp. 103-4.
[78] Recent studies focusing specifically on urban buildings include Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London, 1997); Anthony Quiney, *Town Houses of Medieval Britain* (Singapore, 2003); Sarah Pearson, 'Medieval Houses in English Towns: Form and Location', *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 40 (2009), pp.1–22; Sarah Pearson, 'Rural and Urban Houses 1100-1500: 'urban Adaptation' Reconsidered' in Kate Giles and Chris Dyer (eds.) *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500* (Society for Medieval Archaeology: Leeds, 2005), pp. 43-63; King, *Houses and Society in Norwich.*
[79] King, 'The Interpretation of Urban Buildings', pp. 471-488; Pearson, 'Medieval Houses', pp. 1–22; Pearson, 'Rural and Urban Houses', pp. 43–63.
[80] Roger Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall: Historical Context and Merchant Culture in the Early Modern City', *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 31 (2000), pp.1–10.
[81] King, 'The Interpretation of Urban Buildings', pp. 483-84.
[82] *Ibid.,* p. 484.

Rebuilding was a process of building, adaptation and retention. It was carried out in a variety of forms depending on the needs and status of the owner.[83]

This emphasises the point that the Great Rebuilding was not a single event involving all members of early modern society at the same time and in the same way. Rather, the Great Rebuilding is a device used by historians to make sense of complex building patterns spanning a significant period of time. Just as the identities and motivations of new gentlemen varied, so did the strategies employed in their building activities. Some decided to build new, others decided to adapt existing properties and a surprising amount retained aspects of existing medieval homes. These complexities are considered when approaching this study of Shakespeare's New Place and comparable properties. While the size of New Place and the process of retention and alteration appears similar to that of the Norwich merchants' houses, Shakespeare himself held no public office. Thus, his use of New Place differed from the merchant elites of cities like Norwich and Southampton. To better understand how Shakespeare used New Place in the process of self-fashioning, I attempt to understand his position within the town as well as wider society. Through this focus, the connection between studies of social identity and buildings archaeology become clear.

Material transitions

In addition to building activity, scholarship surrounding the Great Rebuilding focuses on increased investment in domestic goods: on the expansion in the amount and type of items entering early modern homes. This is especially relevant to this study's focus

[83] King, 'Domestic Buildings', pp. 121-122.

on the interiors of new gentry properties, including the items that filled and furnished homes like New Place. Scholarship has shown that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was a time of great political, religious, economic, and social transition, but it was also one of material transformation.[84] Through their study of inventories from Kent and Cornwall between 1600 and 1750, Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, identify cyclical patterns of consumption, with goods increasing and declining in popularity.[85] Hamling and Richardson further observe that, from the late sixteenth century onwards, there was a definite shift in the quality, quantity and value of goods found in probate inventories, when 'old ways of furnishing a household […] were giving way to new ideals and expectations'.[86] Indeed, the focus of this study (1590s to 1620s) was 'the period of most turbulent change, as new attitudes and practices were being worked through'.[87] It was a time when old traditions mixed with new innovations, and this is reflected in the consumption and material culture of the time.

Research today not only highlights this increase in domestic consumption, it also concentrates on people's attitudes towards the goods they were consuming: the ideologies, values, meanings and emotions attached to household goods.[88] Using

[84] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* pp. 10-12; Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities,* p. 331.
[85] Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 89.
[86] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 11.
[87] *Ibid.*
[88] The expansion in the amount and type of items entering early modern homes feeds into studies of consumption. A desire to understand 'which century 'made us' into consumers' underpins the historiography of English domestic consumption, but studies tend to look to the eighteenth century to find answers. See N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plum, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1983); Carole Shammas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (New York, 1990). However, Sara Pennell argues for an early focus on the seventeenth century for the rise of consumption. She also considers the emotional value assigned to material culture at this time. Sara Pennell, 'Material Culture in Seventeenth-Century 'Britain': The Matter of Domestic Consumption' in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford, 2012), p. 83.

witness statements from early modern court cases, Alexandra Shepard demonstrates that people from all levels of sixteenth and early seventeenth-century society provided estimates of their net worth through the goods they owned. Consequently, Shepard argues, people became adept at estimating the value of the goods belonging to others as well as themselves, creating a 'culture of appraisal'.[89] Although wealth and status were often negotiated locally, the universal language of appraisal and the scale upon which it was brokered transcended regional boundaries.[90] With this shared understanding of the worth of goods as economic capital - their impact on the credit of an individual and even household - Shepard demonstrates that domestic items also held great social value, or indeed, currency. This made domestic consumption a powerful tool at the disposal of men like Shakespeare.

The social value assigned to goods had a significant impact on the design of objects and decoration furnishing early modern homes. Through her study of clothing, Maria Hayward highlights three social models of influence driving fashion during this period that were simultaneously local, national and social in scope. The first is 'trickle down', which saw elite groups setting trends that were then copied by those below. 'Chase and flight' which saw those lower down the social scale actively aspiring to emulate those above. Once this was achieved, the elite would create new styles in an attempt to maintain their own group identity separate from those below. Thus, new fashions were constantly created and then imitated. But, of most interest to this study, is the third model of 'trickle round', which suggests that 'individuals were most influenced by, and exerted the greatest influence over, the people in their immediate circle'.[91] The

[89] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself,* p. 2; p. 36.
[90] *Ibid.,* p. 84.
[91] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), p. 44.

implication being that people were most heavily influenced by their social peers and local community. Seemingly, the greatest way to cement status within a specific group was to follow the fashions of that community. If a prominent townsperson acquired a new decorative scheme or architectural element, another patron might think about commissioning similar adornments to prove their comparative status. Such an act may even be considered a form of flattery, further enhancing position and social standing within that group. The concept of 'trickle round' is part of the wider process of self-fashioning, and Hayward's study demonstrates the impact and use of design and materiality in the complex construction of identity. Given the importance of domestic goods to a person's credit within a specific community, this thesis applies Hayward's 'trickle round' model to the case studies considered in this study, especially among the leading citizens of Stratford-upon-Avon.

Hamling and Richardson have gone even further in highlighting the relationship between social identity and domestic consumption. Through their 2017 publication *A Day At Home,* they have sought to understand more about the connection between people and the physical environment in which they lived and worked.[92] They use a combination of documentary records (household manuals, diaries and probate inventories for instance), alongside surviving material evidence to demonstrate the connections between members of the upper middling sort and investment in their homes. My study extends this focus to the level above, to the new gentry. I argue that the people of this study were afforded an exciting opportunity, for they bought, built and furnished their homes during a time of great material transition. For these individuals on the boundary between middling and gentry, this increase in domestic

[92] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home.*

investment could be used to distinguish and define their complex, at times ambiguous, social identity. As will be shown, when it came to furnishing their interiors, members of the urban elite and new gentry combined requirements of both groups to display their newly acquired status. This is demonstrated through a reconstruction of Shakespeare's home.

A Lost Building: Methodology and Sources

The study and reconstruction of lost materiality is not new or unusual among other academic disciplines.[93] Yet, in the field of history, a reliance on surviving forms of evidence has taken precedence over absent materiality.[94] In their study of material responses to absence in Stratford-upon-Avon, Catheryn Enis and Tara Hamling further highlight the importance and value of studying things that no longer remain.[95] Their essay examines 'a range of cultural and creative responses' to the loss of Shakespeare's 'domesticity' in Stratford-upon-Avon.[96] They view the 'material culture and heritage of Shakespeare's hometown in negative, that is, by bringing into focus what has gone as the contexts for what exists'.[97] By focusing on the meaning and significance of this material absence, Enis and Hamling shed light on source material that did, at one time, exist and the surviving evidence that hints at this existence. As

[93] The value of studying absence in relation to material culture is especially underlined in the field of anthropology. The objective of Mikkel Bille et al.'s edited volume is to 'probe into the specific ways absences have or take power, and thereby have important bearing on people's social, emotional and material lives'. Significantly, they are interested in behaviours surrounding absence, which, this study argues, includes the process of reconstruction as a form of replacing or responding to absence with presence. Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup and Tim Flohr Sorensen (eds.), *Anthropology of Absence* (London, 2010), p. 4.

[94] Sara Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should small things be forgotten?: Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale' in Karen Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture: Second Edition* (Oxon, 2018), pp. 221-239.

[95] Enis and Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity'.

[96] *Ibid.,* p.53. Enis and Hamling take 'domesticity' to mean not just 'the home and family' but also 'the quality or state of being domestic', which implies interaction with the domestic environment'.

[97] *Ibid*.

these studies demonstrate, there is a clear precedent for the study of absent materiality in historical research, especially in relation to Shakespeare.

My study of Shakespeare's lost home and new gentry self-fashioning culminates in a series of artistic renditions, each based on detailed research briefs (appx. 2 and appx. 3). For these reconstructions, I draw on the critical approaches of the heritage sector and digital archaeology. Lost, or altered, historic sites in Britain usually fall under the care and attention of heritage organisations such as the SBT, the National Trust (NT) and English Heritage. As will be discussed, heritage presentations of these sites demonstrate what is possible and achievable when studying absent materiality, but, ultimately, these organisations are restricted by their own collections and fundraising activities. Attempts at reconstructing medieval or early modern interiors are increasingly made in the field of archaeology, as advances in the digital modelling of artefacts and historic sites have helped us to study and analyse what is lost. Projects such as the 3D model of the Guild Chapel in Stratford-upon-Avon (discussed later in the thesis) and the digital visualisation of St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, demonstrate the value of reconstruction as a tool of academic research, as well as a device for public engagement.[98] They also highlight the ethical considerations required when producing such reconstructions, focusing on the transparency, purpose, process and outputs of the digital visualisation of spaces.[99] Although the reconstructions of

[98] See Kate Giles, Anthony Masinton and Geoff Arnott, 'Visualising the Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon: digital models as research tools in buildings archaeology', *Internet Archaeology*, Vol. 32 (2012) https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue32/1/toc.html [Accessed 06.11.20]; The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, 'Visualising St Stephens', hosted on *St Stephens Chapel, Westminster: Visual & Political Culture 1292-1941* https://www.virtualststephens.org.uk/explore [Accessed 04.02.22].

[99] In response to concerns around transparency and the presentation of evidence, the 'London Charter for the computer-based visualisation of cultural heritage' formed to promote openness in 3D modelling. Now, projects such as the Guild Chapel critically engage with concerns around the use of digital technologies in archaeological reconstructions, acknowledging the 'gap' between visuals and the evidence used to create them. As will be discussed in chapter five, the Guild Chapel project takes care

New Place presented in this thesis are not digital, the same critical approach has informed their production. As will be made clear, the evidence used to inform these graphics is set out in chapters one to four of this thesis. But the format and interpretative nature of the graphics presented leaves room for further study and interpretation of the interiors of Shakespeare's home.

The degree to which people have responded to the loss of Shakespeare's homes across the centuries demonstrates the value and potential impact of the reconstructions offered here. As with many heritage sites, such research often becomes a matter of 'public history', which is in itself an emerging field.[100] Margot Finn and Kate Smith frame their approach to public history by asking 'who owns history, and who produces our understanding of the past?'.[101] The relevance of this question to my project is heightened through the cultural significance of Shakespeare himself, as well as the role of The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, as custodians of the New Place site.[102] It is therefore clear that the findings and visualisations offered in this

to provide all the research uncovered and used in the creation of its 3D model, as well as the information required to analyse and interpret the visuals. Rather than promoting the images as simply a tool of engagement, the project leaders have considered the potential for participation and interpretation, allowing for and encouraging future study and alternative perspectives. London Charter: for the computer-based visualisation of cultural heritage (2009, 2017) http://www.londoncharter.org [Accessed 19.05.22].

[100] For definitions and an overview of the field, see James B. Gardener and Paula Hamilton, 'Introduction: The Past and Future of Public History – Developments and Challenges' in James B. Gardener and Paula Hamilton (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public History* (New York, 2017), pp. 1-22. Gardener and Hamilton grabble with the politics and complexities of defining 'public history'. They note that 'there has always been a spatial component implied in the term […] the *public* implies that it is 'outside' the ivory tower in a space called 'the real world', acting as a form of communication among other people rather than an individual activity producing history for an author's peers', p. 2. Traditionally, the term was used to describe historical work outside the academy, but it has more recently come to embody a plurality of subjects, approaches, researchers and practitioners, impacted further by the development of digital technologies and social media, p. 3.

[101] Margot Finn and Kate Smith, 'Introduction', in Finn and Smith (eds.) *New Paths to Public Histories* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 2.

[102] As Claire Reed and Kate Smith demonstrate, public history projects often include a collaborative element which comes with its own set of requirements and considerations, Claire Reed and Kate Smith, 'Collaborating across Heritage and High Education to Reveal the Global History of Osterley Park House' in Finn and Smith (eds.) *New Paths*, pp. 47-72. Although this thesis is not part of a collaborative doctorate, I have worked closely with the SBT throughout my research, as well as participated in a

thesis have implications 'beyond the academy', making the need for transparency around the process and interpretation of this lost home a key factor in its reconstruction.[103] In some ways, these reconstructions add to the many responses to the loss of Shakespeare's domesticity. But the drive, purpose and format of the illustrations presented in this thesis differs from those responses considered in Enis and Hamling's study.[104] Instead of focusing specifically on Shakespeare, I look at his wider social group. I therefore bypass traditional interpretations of Shakespeare's domesticity.[105] I avoid biographical readings of his work and long-held debates around authorship. Instead, I use the status and homes of his contemporaries to put forward my interpretation of Shakespeare's domesticity based on extensive research. The reconstructions provide a lens through which we can observe the interaction between status and interior decoration, demonstrating the wholescale use of the domestic environment in the construction of status, allowing me to realise and visualise the research questions posed in this thesis.

How, then, do you study a lost building like New Place? Lost evidence is a major obstacle when studying those below the level of elite. This is further compounded by the continued adaption, renewal and destruction of urban buildings, as well as a lack of understanding of the original context within which these houses were

number of public projects relating to the New Place site. In particular, I worked with the collections team on a research placement relating to the Shakespeare's potential furnishings – see chapter five for more details.

[103] Gardener and Hamilton, 'Introduction: The Past and Future of Public History', pp. 2-13

[104] Instead of focusing on attempts to reconstruct Shakespeare's home life, Enis and Hamling consider material responses to Shakespeare's lost domesticity – the production of souvenirs from the properties connected to Shakespeare; memorabilia allegedly crafted from Mulberry wood taken from the New Place gardens; and even a section of Shakespeare's hair! Enis and Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity', pp. 52-83.

[105] As highlighted in Enis and Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity'.

constructed.[106] There is, however, a compelling precedent for historical reconstruction using comparable, or cognate, evidence. Lena Cowen Orlin's article 'Anne by Indirection' attempts to reconstruct the life of Anne Hathaway using archival sources for Stratford townswoman Elizabeth Quiney.[107] Orlin promotes the idea that by 'searching for cognates' we can reconstruct the lives of others for whom there is little direct evidence.[108] My project adopts a parallel, material methodology in its reconstruction of New Place. By studying extant buildings, furnishings and decoration that existed at the same time and social level, it is possible to discern general, regional and social patterns to inform a detailed and rounded view of the interiors of Shakespeare's townhouse.

In this study of New Place by comparative analysis, or 'indirection', I use three main forms of cognate evidence: written sources in the form of wills and probate inventories; the structure and form of surviving townhouses; and extant decoration and furnishings. 132 inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon survive from the short period of 1590 to 1630. This timeline covers the period before and after Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place, allowing for the infiltration of different trends into, and out of, the town. The survival rate of inventories from Stratford is not insignificant, especially when compared with market towns of similar size. Thame in Oxfordshire, for instance, recorded only 188 households over a hundred-year period.[109] This larger sample of Stratford inventories is used in chapter three for quantitative analysis to identify key

[106] Pearson, 'Medieval Houses', p. 1; Kate Giles, "Seeing and Believing: Visuality and Space in Pre-Modern England", *World Archaeology,* Vol. 39 (2007), pp. 105–121.
[107] Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 65 (2014), pp. 421–454.
[108] *Ibid.,* p. 424.
[109] Anthony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 34.

trends, similar to those studies by Overton et al., Anthony Buxton and Nat Alcock.[110] The number and naming of rooms listed, items available and general wealth can be cautiously gathered from this sample. Overton et al. warn against the use of inventories to uncover trends in domestic consumption as they 'show the stock of goods in the household at the death of their owner, not consumption activity'.[111] But we can gain an approximate idea of the level of material investment that existed in Stratford at this time and how these compare against new gentry patterns of consumption. These are just some of the ways this full sample of inventories will be used to provide the context in which men like Shakespeare invested in their homes, providing insight into the type of items available in the town during the playwright's time at New Place from 1597 to 1616.

While this full sample of inventories from Stratford is used to identify important trends and patterns in the town, a smaller sample of inventories is analysed qualitatively, in closer detail, to highlight some of the specific objects and groupings found among important townspeople during the period of this study. Information taken from this smaller group of documents includes the type, location and potential use of objects. This project set out to discover more about certain members of the Stratford elite as well as the new gentry more widely; how they lived and what this says about their status. These people were either part of 'Shakespeare's circle' or were prominent townspeople in Stratford.[112] Sadly, the probate documents of important civic leaders

[110] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption;* Buxton, *Domestic Culture;* N. W. Alcock, *People At Home: Living in a Warwickshire Village 1500-1800* (Chichester, 1993).
[111] Other arguments against the use of inventories to decipher consumer trends include the idea that inventories only show 'durable items', not ephemeral consumer goods, and that 'we cannot even be sure that the goods recorded in inventories are the result of a deliberate act of consumption, since they could be inherited rather than purchased'. But Overton et al. do support the idea that inventories are useful when quantifying the 'characteristics of early modern households', an approach followed here. *Production and Consumption,* pp. 85-87.
[112] Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle*.

like Richard Quiney and Abraham Sturley have not survived.[113] In some cases (Daniel Baker and Shakespeare for instance), the wills remain but the inventories do not.[114] Of those inventories that do remain, a sample of 22 documents belonging to some of Stratford's prominent citizens were selected for closer analysis in chapter three. These individuals were chosen either for their new gentry status, their civic role in the town, their wealth as suggested by their inventory or their potential connection to the Shakespeares. Importantly, each individual is known to have resided in or around the town. In this way, this selection of inventories also represents the diversity that existed among the upper middling and new gentry sections of society in a town like Stratford. The sample includes gentlemen such as John Gibbs (d.1625) and Leonard Kempson (d.1625), prominent business owners like William Rogers (d.1597), civic leaders such as William Smith (d.1601), and widows of gentlemen like Alice Williams (d.1622). Although there are significant differences between male and female probate practices, property rights and consumption habits, the items included in widows' inventories still reflect what was available in Stratford for wealthy families at this time.[115] Considered

[113] A number of factors may have contributed to the disappearance of inventories. Technically, anyone possessing more than one property in different dioceses had their probates proved by either York or Canterbury Prerogative Courts. According to Overton et al., few of these inventories survive pre-1660, making locating probate records belonging to new gentlemen and wealthy members of the Stratford elite somewhat challenging. It is more than likely that these men held properties across different dioceses, like Shakespeare, in Stratford and London. In such cases, probate would be proved by the Prerogative Courts and may well be lost for that reason. In general, however, many more wills survive than inventories, meaning that these documents were likely to have been housed independently, separated from the time of their compilation.[113] As such, those inventories that remain from Stratford may have belonged to those slightly lower down the social spectrum than Shakespeare and his associates. Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* p. 22; For more information on the probate documents themselves see Tom Arkell, 'The Probate Process' in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evens and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000)*,* pp. 72-102.

[114] Will of William Shakespeare 1616, TNA PROB 1/4. Transcribed and published in Honigmann and Brock (eds.), *Playhouse wills*, pp. 105-109; Will of Daniel Baker, 1641, TNA PROB 11/186/579. Transcribed in Stephanie Appleton, 'Women and Wills in Early Modern England: The Community of Stratford-upon-Avon 1537 – 1649', unpublished PhD thesis., University of Birmingham, 2016, pp. 348-356.

[115] For information on the economic lives of women and their property rights, see Amy Louise Erickson, *Women & Property In Early Modern England* (London, 1995).

together, these documents help us to uncover the type of items and rooms found in Stratford, adding to the picture of what may or may not have been found in New Place.

As suggested, each type of source (both material and documentary) analysed in this thesis comes with its own distinct set of advantages and challenges. Issues relating to the study of probate documents are widely acknowledged, ranging from the omission of rooms and objects, to problems with the appraisal process itself.[116] These challenges are considered in greater detail in chapter three, but, as suggested above, problems start with the survival and selection of documents. Similarly, the greatest impediment to the study of material evidence is dispersal and loss. While some concerns are specific to a particular source, like wall paintings, most forms of material evidence are plagued by low survival rates. These issues are discussed in the chapters that follow, along with important considerations surrounding regional trends and chronology. Nonetheless, the various limitations that arise from both material and documentary evidence might be addressed by considering both forms of evidence together.[117] Through the case studies carefully selected for this project, I attempt to combine probate documents, surviving houses, their owners, and any extant decoration found within.[118]

[116] Lena Cowen Orlin's work on probate documents are among the most rigorous studies concerning the challenges to the use of this source material. Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Fictions of the Early Modern English Probate Inventory' in Henry Turner (ed.), *The Culture of Capital Property, Cities and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (New York, 2002), pp. 51-83; Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Empty Vessels' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday objects: medieval and early modern material culture and its meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 299-308.
[117] King, 'Domestic Buildings', pp. 115-129; Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 16.
[118] Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999), p. 44, quoted in Harvey *History and Material Culture*, p. 3.

Case studies and properties were selected based on their new gentry status and their investment in building activity. These individuals, for the most part, lived and operated in the urban environment, but a handful of individuals discussed in this thesis built homes in the countryside. The rural houses belonging to new gentlemen Walter Jones (of Oxfordshire) and Richard Smalbroke (of Yardley) differ significantly from the urban properties owned by Richard Churche (Nantwich), Robert Suckling (Norwich), and, ultimately, Shakespeare. Yet, Jones and Smalbroke were chosen as case studies for this project as they followed 'best practice' when it came to the construction of gentry status, both following contemporary advice surrounding upward mobility with significant enthusiasm. Jones, for instance, gained wealth through his legal profession, civic authority through his role as a member of parliament, and, significantly, built a rural, statement home following the latest architectural trends. This was the blueprint for gentry self-fashioning. In this way, Jones's building activity and his trajectory are used as a model for comparison, especially in chapters one and two of this thesis. Men like Jones and Smalbroke also emphasise the diversity that existed among the new gentry. A range of occupations, civic positions and wealth existed among this social group. This diversification is reflected in the range of case studies presented in this thesis and, while direct comparisons between case studies may not be immediately obvious, each individual was carefully selected because they demonstrate the breadth of new gentry traits.

Throughout this study, I conducted sustained research in two phases of fieldwork. The first phase was one of scoping, investigating properties and towns - including Worcester, Ludlow, Oxford, Nantwich, Hereford, Shrewsbury, and Southampton - that could be used to create a foundation of understanding and context. The preparation

for this work was substantial. A focus on chronology, status and region were essential, as New Place existed within a very specific context and identifying properties that fulfilled all three requirements was not straightforward. Nonetheless, I started this project with a large collection of properties to explore and investigate. The second phase of fieldwork involved an in-depth selection of cognate evidence, as I identified and analysed particular properties that were especially comparable to New Place in terms of form, scale, location and/or status of owner (appx.1). Tracing the history of these buildings through Historic England listings, previous regional studies and local history publications, I conducted a significant amount of background research into each property. Where possible, I went to the buildings themselves to further identify surviving structural elements or examples of fixed decoration, as well as to investigate the original form of the building. Had museum collections such as the SBT or NT not been closed due to the global pandemic, I would have conducted further in-person fieldwork into the type of furnishings used to fill these homes. Fortunately, many organisations invested heavily in the digitisation of their collections, so I was able to conduct much of this research online.

Structure

This thesis begins with a focus on social identity. Chapter one centres on those individuals who moved through the permeable boundaries of early modern society, from middling to gentry in their own lifetime. I consider the 'new gentry' as their own distinct group, with their own specific set of attributes. Using a selection of case studies, I analyse the strategies employed by potential members of this social level, focusing especially on the importance of credit and reputation; background; education;

occupation; office-holding; networks; wealth; heraldry and lifestyle. Letters, wills, and accounts are used to decipher the complex status of these men and the various characteristics that made them 'new gentry'. Shakespeare is then placed alongside the literature and evidence presented in this chapter. In this way, I demonstrate Shakespeare's identity as a new gentleman and the various ways in which he was able to negotiate and display this status, ultimately setting the scene for the consolidation of this status using his domestic environment.

Chapter two demonstrates how these individuals constructed their new gentry status through the form of their homes. I focus on urban buildings that were comparable to Shakespeare's absent townhouse in terms of location, type and/or owner. I chart the various options available to men like Shakespeare, as well as the type of adaptions and alterations they made to their properties. Houses from Stratford-upon-Avon, the Midlands and further afield are considered in an attempt to identify various urban trends. New Place was a relatively rare house-type in a town like Stratford, so a consideration of larger cities such as Norwich and Southampton is necessary to find examples of urban courtyard properties that were comparable to Shakespeare's home in size and form. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that the very act of purchasing, altering or even retaining a property played a key part in the process of becoming a gentleman. Yet, this was only the start of a sustained commitment to domestic investment.

Furnishings are the focus of chapter three as I use wills and inventories to discuss what might have been found in properties similar to New Place and the role they played in the construction of social identity. To gain a better sense of the interiors of

larger townhouses like New Place, I focus on the probate inventories belonging to men like Robert Suckling of Suckling House in Norwich. I take a room-by-room exploration into these documents, suggesting the key chronological and national trends that Shakespeare likely followed. This chapter then utilises the collection of probate records from Stratford-upon-Avon for the period spanning 1590 to 1630, allowing for shifts in trends just before and after Shakespeare occupied New Place.[119] By concentrating on a few key individuals, I take a qualitative approach to the interpretation of these documents. From the 132 surviving Stratford inventories, I narrow my sample size to focus on 22 belonging to prominent townsmen and women. These documents provide insight into the type of furnishings that were available and typical for prominent Stratford residents during Shakespeare's lifetime, shedding further light on the significance of the local context within which houses were furnished. Keeping in mind both local, national and social patterns, this evidence is then used to build a picture of Shakespeare's interiors in the final chapter of this thesis.

From furnishings to fixtures, chapter four focuses on interior decoration. This section combines ideas of self-fashioning and material investment to focus on the display of status through fixed ornamentation. I examine extant wall paintings, plasterwork and wood carvings from surviving properties to reveal the close relationship between fixed decoration and the social identity of new gentlemen. A focus on region and chronology is especially vital for a study of this evidence, so literature surrounding vernacular wall paintings is considered to understand more about challenges to the study of such material. This chapter sets out a series of case studies to demonstrate what was available, desirable and accessible for new gentlemen like Shakespeare. Domestic

[119] Jeanne Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699, Vols. 1 & 2,* (The Dugdale Society in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2002).

decoration could be used to send specific messages about home owners and their status. Indeed, each attribute expected of a gentleman could be displayed through this form of patronage.

Chapter five brings together the wealth of evidence set out in the proceeding chapters of this thesis. In doing so, it offers unique visual representations of the interiors of Shakespeare's New Place. The interior of three rooms – the hall, parlour and great chamber – are presented with the assistance of artist Phillip Watson. His illustrations are grounded in the information gathered throughout this project taken from inventories, surviving buildings, and extant decoration and furnishings (appx. 3). The discussion accompanying these reconstructions highlights some of this evidence, outlining the way in which various elements of the room – from its position in the house to the objects and decoration found within – worked together in the performance of status. Through these illustrations, we gain a better understanding of the material harmony that existed within the early modern domestic environment; how each element worked together to enhance and embed the position of the owner.

The process of reconstructing these interior spaces also forms a focal point of this final chapter. The reconstructions I present in this thesis not only highlight the close relationship between domestic interiors and new gentry status, they address the idea of absent material culture. The purpose and value of the New Place reconstructions, as a tool of both research and public engagement, are considered alongside other forms of historical presentation. Given the cultural significance of a building such as Shakespeare's New Place, heritage reconstructions are discussed and analysed. Three-dimensional modelling, often used in the field of archaeology, is also considered

as a means of disseminating research and engaging with domestic material evidence. As will be discussed, such attention is increasingly important to the study of history and those people, experiences and identities that have previously been overlooked. The illustrations offered through this PhD project can be used as a starting point for such discussions and activities, having impact beyond this study.

This project, therefore, responds to three major yet traditionally separate fields: early modern social history; buildings archaeology; and material culture studies. In developing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of lost buildings and absent heritage this project is also informed by, and contributes to, museum and heritage studies. In its focus on Shakespeare and the heritage of Stratford-upon-Avon, my research provides new information about the playwright which will be of interest to Shakespeare enthusiasts worldwide. Ultimately, the over-arching aim of this thesis is to consider Shakespeare in his social and material context, and, through this lens, to present a new understanding of new gentry self-fashioning in early modern England.

CHAPTER ONE
THE NEW GENTRY

This thesis begins with a focus on the identity, qualities and social mobility of the 'new gentry' in early modern society. Through a series of carefully selected case studies, I identify and analyse various characteristics associated with this upwardly mobile group. Starting and finishing in Stratford, I then consider the significance of local context to gentry status and how Shakespeare himself consolidated his own social identity within his hometown as well as among wider peer groups. After analysing the qualities needed to construct new gentry status in early modern England, I go on to demonstrate how they were confirmed and displayed using material investment. In this way, I set the context for Shakespeare's self-fashioning and use of his urban gentry home, New Place.

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On 18 December 1601, the men of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation met to discuss town affairs.[1] Members gathered in the Guild Hall on Church Street, once the home of the religious organisation the Guild of the Holy Cross, now the seat of the town council since Stratford was granted borough status in 1553. As town bailiff, Richard Quiney was responsible for calling the meeting to order. Recently returned from London on Corporation business, he likely had much to report to the other members of the council.[2] The absence of his friend, Abraham Sturley, was noted with

[1] Meeting of the Stratford Corporation, 18 December 1601, minutes recorded by Richard Quiney (bailiff), SBT SCLA, BRU 2/2, transcribed in Robert Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation and other records, Vol.6, 1599-1609* (The Dugdale Society: Bristol, 2011), p. 86.
[2] Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts, Vol.6,* p. 167. Robert Bearman highlights that, although no decision-making is recorded in the minutes of this meeting, that 'does not…mean that there were not prolonged discussions on Corporation business'. At this time, the Stratford Corporation accounts record a long-running dispute between Richard Quiney and the town council against Sir Edward Grenville. This dispute fuelled Quiney's trip to London earlier that month. He made notes on this visit for a meeting held on 30 December, see p. 169.

an apology - 'petiit veniam' – but, given their association, the former bailiff was likely well aware of Quiney's latest news.[3] The two men had served on the Corporation together for decades, through the poor harvests and the fires that devastated the town. Debt afflicted both Quiney and Sturley over these trouble-filled years, but neither would see the other destitute. Borrowing and lending money was the norm for the inhabitants of Stratford, making a trustworthy reputation an essential commodity.[4] Status, reputation and social order mattered a great deal to the men of the Stratford Corporation. As William Harrison commented, 'we in England divide our people commonly into four sorts, as gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, and artificers or labourers'.[5] But many of the members of the Stratford Corporation fell into more than one of these deceptively fluid categories.[6] Quiney and Sturley may not have possessed their own coat of arms to display in their homes, unlike fellow townsman William Shakespeare, but they, like many provincial civic leaders, had the status and reputation of gentlemen within the town.

The composition of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation at the turn of the seventeenth century might not seem unusual. Many of its members were mercers, inn keepers and professionals who, together, governed the market town. Perhaps more surprising is the idea that some of these men were considered gentlemen within their local community. The theory set out by early modern commentators like Harrison suggests

[3] Letters between Richard Quiney and Abraham Sturley from this time reveal a significant amount about their association and financial transactions. See Robert Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money: How much did he make and what did this mean?* (Oxford 2016).
[4] For a detailed account of the Quineys' life through documentary sources see Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 65 (2014), pp. 421–454.
[5] William Harrison, 'Chapter V: Of Degrees of People in the Commonwealth of England' in *The Description of England: The Classical Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life* (1577), edited by Georges Edelen (Toronto/London, 1994), p. 94.
[6] SBT SCLA, BRU 2/2, p. 87, for a transcribed list of Corporation members and attendees at this meeting see Bearman, *Accounts, Vol. 6*, pp. 167-169.

that society at this time was composed of clear hierarchies, with the gentry at the top, consisting of only the most wealthy and ancient members. Thomas Smith set out an equally rigid idea of social order, and during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a number of writers professed this outlook.[7] Members of early modern society, including the urban elite of Stratford, would have understood the theoretical boundaries that existed at this time. But this system played out rather differently in practice. It has become increasingly clear that early modern society was not made up of homogenous groups separated by rigid boundaries. The expansion of the middling layers of society made hierarchical distinctions increasingly difficult to identify and therefore negotiate. As will be shown, Harrison himself conceded that movement within early modern society was possible, especially for men wishing to enter the ranks of the gentry. But how did this work in practice? And what role did the domestic environment play in this negotiation of status?

In this chapter, I demonstrate how men like Richard Quiney, Abraham Sturley and William Shakespeare navigated the shifting levels of early modern society. Far from being unusual, the path followed by these men from middling to gentry status was well-trodden. These men represent the 'new gentry', who, regardless of motivation – be it financial security or social aspiration – sought to acquire gentry status during their lifetime. The discussion that follows shows how these men constructed their status as new gentlemen within their local community and beyond, as well as how we might define and understand this group who, until recently, have not been central to the concerns of traditional historiographies.

[7] Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum. The manner of government or policie of the realme of England,* (1583) quoted and discussed in David Cressy, 'Describing the Social Order of Elizabethan and Stuart England', in *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (New York, 2003), pp. 29-30.

The New Gentry

Upward Mobility

Gentry membership swelled during the period of this study (1590 to 1620). 'The rise of the gentry' thesis, which dominated scholarship in the mid-twentieth century, demonstrated just how many people were 'new' to its ranks.[8] Figures and statistics vary, but Henry French asserts that 'by 1640, perhaps only 18 per cent of the country's gentry could claim to have held the status since the fifteenth century'. 'By contrast', he argues, '27 per cent had achieved the status during the period 1500-59, and another 30 per cent during Elizabeth's reign'.[9] It is clear that there was a significant upsurge in those joining the ranks of the gentry by the end of the sixteenth century and at the start of seventeenth century, suggesting that Shakespeare was far from unique in his claim for 'new' gentry status.[10] French notes that 'the gentry were always open to newcomers with sufficient wealth to acquire and sustain the status bearing attributes sanctioned by the group'.[11] As will be shown, these attributes depended on the individual and their geographical position. In the minds of more established members of the gentry, men like Shakespeare would never be truly accepted as gentlemen. They might, however, have more success within their local community.

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[8] Henry R. French, ''Gentlemen': Remaking the English Ruling Class' in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 274. For traditional historiography surrounding the gentry as a social group see: R. H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 11 (1941), pp. 1-38; Lawrence Stone, 'Social Mobility in England 1500-1700', *Past and Present,* Vol. 33 (1966), pp. 16-55; Eric Mercer, 'The Houses of the Gentry', *Past and Present,* Vol. 5 (1954), pp. 11-32.

[9] French, ''Gentlemen', p. 273.

[10] Scholarship differs over the factors contributing to this rise, with price inflation, the Tudor administration, Reformation and 'changing social horizons' often cited as the key drivers. French, ''Gentlemen', p. 273; Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, (London, 1999), pp. 3-7.

[11] French, ''Gentlemen', p. 272.

Most of those entering the ranks of the gentry came from the middle sections of early modern society; 'a broad mass of the working population' who are significantly more challenging to define than the gentry.[12] Historians are equally divided over which characteristics most accurately define the middling sort and an individual's position within it.[13] Some discuss middling membership in terms of occupation, professional associations and wealth, whereas others reference credit, reputation and material possessions.[14] But, as French argues, occupations and shared activities did not necessarily equate to 'middling' identity. Shakespeare, for instance, rose to the ranks of gentleman but many of his peers in the theatre did not. Instead, French's extensive work on the nature of the middling sort suggests that elevated status and position within a parish or town was expressed in the term 'chief inhabitants', as distinct from the main body of 'inhabitants'.[15] This was especially true in the urban context. As Peter Borsay writes, 'however fine a man's mind and clothes, they are little use in the pursuit of status unless displayed amongst those people willing and able to compete with him. The village could hardly provide this competition; the town could.'[16] When individuals

[12] Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2017), p. 9.

[13] See the 'Social Status calculator', produced by the AHRC-funded project *Middling Culture* as a digital engagement tool exploring the complexities of middling status and the different levels operating within it. https://middlingculture.com/status-calculator/ [Accessed 30.11.21].

[14] For various studies focusing on different aspects of middling identity see Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 84-112; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 148-157; Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2000), pp. 289-306; Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2015).

[15] Henry R. French, 'The Search for the 'Middle Sort of People' In England, 1600-1800' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43 (2000), pp. 284-286.

[16] Peter Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance: the development of provincial urban culture c. 1680-c. 1760' in *Social History,* Vol. 2 (1977), p. 594. In this article, Borsay sets out his arguments for the urban renaissance of English towns from the late-seventeenth century onwards. This thesis finds many of his arguments around the 'changing nature of culture life' to be convincing, including the explanations behind these changes, namely economic surplus and social competition. However, this study would extend Borsay's arguments to the start of the seventeenth century, when many of the points presented through this article can in fact be traced.

described themselves they were directed by localism, comparing themselves against other members of their community rather than through 'nationwide affinities'.[17] In this way, members of the middling sort possessed a number of identities and were part of a plurality of groups depending on their location.[18] These 'middling' groups had their own characteristics and shared experiences, and only by recognising your own peer group within a given regional, local, community and occupational context, could status be crafted. This was also important for gentry status, but has been somewhat overlooked in traditional scholarship surrounding this social group.

Rosemary Horrox considers the urban gentry as a distinct category outside the confines of land or lineage (focusing on the medieval period rather than the early modern). She loosely defines this group as 'individuals who, while primary resident in a town, were described by contemporaries or chose to describe themselves, as gentlemen or esquires'.[19] Through her focus on 'provincial towns' in the fifteenth century, Horrox establishes that contemporaries actually recognised urban gentry and that they owed their gentility to a variety of factors: namely, the ownership of land/property; connections and associations; service to a town, patron and/or the crown; occupation and mercantile status; and marriage and family. She argues against the long-held belief that 'medieval merchants might aspire to gentility by buying their way into landed society beyond the town walls'. Instead, she suggests that the situation was more complex, that this rise had its own distinctly urban quality, and that 'soldiers, lawyers, administrators and household servants, as well as the archetypal

[17] Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance', p. 286.
[18] Henry R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750 (Oxford, 2008)*, pp.12; French, 'The Search', p. 293.
[19] Rosemary Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century' in John A. F. Thomson *Towns and townspeople in the fifteenth* century' (Gloucester, 1988), p. 22.

country squire, could all lay some claim to being considered gentle'.[20] Interestingly, the rules governing gentility seemed to be more malleable in the urban environment. Furthermore, these individuals seemed to acquire gentility during their lifetime, moving from middling to urban gentry. For Horrox, 'the urban gentry thus spanned what have traditionally been set as two separate societies, and in doing so they challenge the assumption that the social hierarchies of town and country can be treated as though they are separate'.[21] This study aims to extend these insights by examining this group in the early modern period, when it was arguably more numerous and influential.

Definitions

So, who were these men moving between the gentry and the middling sort? How can they be defined and identified? As established, these two sections of society have been studied and categorised many times over but still remain troublesome to define.[22] In a way, it is because of the fluidity and complexity of these groups that 'new gentlemen' were able to emerge. The overlap and interchange between the gentry and middling sort meant that individuals could pass between the two with relative ease. Indeed, references to such men can be found in contemporary commentary. Harrison discusses 'the making of new gentlemen' in his 1587 *Description of England*, outlining

[20] Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry', p. 22.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[22] More recent studies of and approaches to the gentry include: P. R. Cross, 'The Formation of the English Gentry', *Past and Present*, Vol. 147 (1995), pp. 38-64; Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Eastbourne, 1994); Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*; Nicholas Cooper, 'Rank, Manners and Display: The Gentlemanly House 1500-1750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 12 (2002), p. 291; French, ''Gentlemen', pp. 272-274. For recent studies on the 'middling sort' see: Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People* (Basingstoke, 1994); French, *The Middle Sort*; Craig Muldrew, 'The 'Middling Sort': An Emergent Cultural Identity' in Keith Wrightson (ed.) *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 269-279; Catherine Richardson (principal investigator), Tara Hamling (co-investigator) and Graeme Earl (co-investigator), 'The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort, Writing and Material Culture, 1560-1660', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the University of Kent, University of Birmingham and Kings College London (2019-2022) https://middlingculture.com/about/ [Accessed 30.11.21].

the possibility that men without lineage may obtain gentry status by fulfilling the following requirements:

> Whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, whoso abideth in the university giving his mind to his book, or professeth physic and the liberal sciences, or, beside his service in the room of a captain of wars or good counsel given at home, whereby his commonwealth is benefited, can live without manual labour, and thereto is able and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall for money have a coat of arms bestowed upon him by heralds … , and thereunto being made so good cheap, be called master, which is the title that men give to esquires and gentlemen, and reputed gentleman ever after.[23]

Harrison not only describes the essential characteristics of a gentleman (as most early modern commentators are wont to do), significantly, he outlines the criteria that could be used to *create* gentry status by those who did not already possess it. Men such as 'citizens and burgesses', who he describes as 'next place to gentlemen', and merchants who 'often change estate with gentlemen, as gentlemen do with them,'.[24] The rigid 'degrees' and 'four sorts of man' we see laid out by Harrison at the start of his commentary soon give way to the practicalities of negotiating status within this changing society. The possibility, indeed likelihood, that men moved between the hierarchical structures set in place becomes even more apparent if, like Harrison, we focus on those men who transition from middling to gentry status.

Movement between these groups has been acknowledged by many historians, but there seems to be a general reluctance to define or categorise the individuals that did so.[25] Keith Wrightson is a notable exception, as he identifies these men as 'successful members of the middle ranks', 'upright businessmen', people who 'were able to

[23] Harrison, *The Description of England,* pp. 113-114.
[24] *Ibid.,* pp. 115.
[25] The AHRC-funded Middling Culture project is in the process of re-assessing the various levels and groups that existed within the 'middling sort'. Richardson, Hamling and Earl, 'The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort 1560-1660' project, https://middlingculture.com/ [Accessed 30.11.21].

accumulate capital in the course of a life and to diversify their economic activities and investments'.[26] There is a distinctly urban quality to the men Wrightson describes, and they appear to share a number of characteristics, interests and activities such as:

> '[…] acquiring leases of urban property, lending to other businessmen within their networks of connection, financing mortgages, investing in industrial projects, in shipping or in the public funds. They might invest in land too, following the old path from the acquisition of trading wealth to the purchase of a country estate and entry, or re-entry, into the landed gentry'.[27]

Interestingly, both Wrightson and Michael Mascuch believe that few of these men possessed a genuine longing to join the ranks of the landed gentry.[28] Rather, these 'leaders in trade and finance' represented an increasingly powerful section of the ruling elite in their own right, and were content to 'retain their own distinctive place within it'.[29] Crossover between the two groups, according to Wrightson, came from the fact that these commercial leaders begin to embody notions of gentility and honour, traditionally cultural traits of the gentry.

However, some among these urban leaders did pursue the title of gentlemen, and they are labelled by Wrightson and French as 'gentlemen-tradesmen' or 'chief inhabitants' (respectively).[30] Most of these men lived and worked in the urban environment, and might be considered as part of Horrox's 'urban gentry'.[31] Indeed, some of these individuals already possessed the gentry qualities outlined by commentators like Harrison, but might have sought to solidify their claim through the purchase of arms. Rather than slotting into traditional models laid out by the gentry, Wrightson suggests

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[26] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 303.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*; Michael Mascuch, 'Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity: The Ethos of British Autobiographers, 1600-1750' in *Social History*, Vol. 1 (1995), p. 45.
[29] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 304.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 305; French, *The Middle Sort,* pp. 201-261.
[31] Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry', pp. 22-44.

that these 'gentlemen-tradesmen and their wives moulded the concept of gentility to suit their own needs'.[32] It therefore becomes increasingly apparent that the motivations behind the pursuit of gentry status varied and, seemingly, there is little to differentiate them from the mercantile elite. On the one hand, financial security and a desire to maintain one's position in society might motivate men who already saw themselves as gentlemen to consolidate this status. As Wrightson and Mascuch suggest, survival was a priority for most householders given that status, wealth and life in general were precarious in early modern England.[33] For some, stability meant financial security or simply consolidating and cementing gentry status. On the other hand, social aspiration might have pushed some men to pursue gentry status, as the increasingly lavish investment in the urban domestic environment might suggest. Often, it is difficult to distinguish what is behind the change of circumstance of these men, or indeed when it occurred. What is apparent from both Wrightson's and Horrox's work, however, is that regardless of motivation, the men who occupied the space between gentry and middling represent a somewhat fragmented, yet distinct, group.

Urban businessmen certainly made up a significant proportion of those who acquired gentry status during their own lifetime, but they were by no means the only individuals in want of arms. For Clive Cheeseman, first-time applicants of arms fell into a new group of men, yet he grapples with the prospect that they were considered gentry before their arms were bestowed: [34]

[32] Ideas of gentility for gentleman-tradesmen were 'civic, respectable and virtuous, incorporating work, thrift, prudence and temperance and exhibited not so much in heraldry as in good character'. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 305.
[33] Mascuch, 'Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity', pp. 45-61; Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 56.
[34] Clive Cheeseman, 'Grants and Confirmations of Arms' in Nigel Ramsay (ed.), *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington, 2014), p. 94.

> ‘Understanding their [new gentry] lives in greater detail, including their other financial and social commitments, their connections and associations and backgrounds, will illuminate the question of what benefit they hoped to gain from a grant or confirmation of arms; it may even shed light on the obscure question of whether a grant was constructive or reflective of gentility.’[35]

A variety of men, and some women, applied for arms during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Examples can be drawn from yeomen, country traders, artisans, merchants, actors, lawyers, city office holders and even the clergy. While this study supports Cheeseman’s use of the term ‘new gentry’ and his desire to understand what it encompassed, I would like to expand the term beyond grants and confirmations of arms. The attainment of arms might seem like an obvious, indeed essential, route to gentry status, but it was not a simple path to follow, nor one chosen by all. As Cheeseman himself acknowledges, the question of ‘whether a grant was constructive or reflective of gentility’ remains shrouded in uncertainty.[36] While some men might go so far as seeking confirmation of status through a grant of arms, arms can also be viewed as formal recognition of existing reputation and esteem. Indeed, Cooper claims that ‘a coat of arms was not a necessity, and the ease with which one could be acquired cast doubt on the value of what was on offer’.[37] A number of the gentlemen considered in this study did not apply for a coat of arms, yet it appears that their gentility was nonetheless recognised among their associates and local community.

Wrightson’s ‘gentlemen-tradesmen’ and Cheeseman’s applicants for arms fall into the same general category of men. In Harrison’s terms, they became ‘new gentlemen’, but they might also be considered more generally as ‘the better sort’, ‘the urban elite’

[35] Cheeseman, ‘Grants and Confirmations’, p. 97.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 12.

or ‘chief inhabitants’.[38] Admittedly, the term ‘new gentry’ is not neat, nor is it specific, but its breadth and capacity makes it valuable for this study. The men who fall under this category were diverse. They were not always driven by the same motivations, nor did they possess identical backgrounds and occupations. But, together, they did share a distinguishable set of attributes and interests, borrowed and adapted from both the established gentry and the middling sections of society from which they were drawn. For these individuals, middling qualities of credit, background, occupation, public office, business and association combined with gentry interests in land, education, gentility, wealth and heraldry. At the centre of this early modern debate around who qualified as a gentleman ‘was the question of whether gentility was bestowed by birth or virtue’.[39] Lack of ancient lineage seems to have united these new gentlemen. They may technically be second generation gentry, like Shakespeare, or may never apply for arms, yet among their immediate community they came to be considered as gentlemen.

Shakespeare’s social identity should not simply be thought of in terms of occupation and wealth, it should be considered within the urban collective of Stratford-upon-Avon, the town where he chose to build his status and purchase his family home. Unlike the established gentry, many of the shared experiences traditionally associated with the middling sort were not nationally acknowledged, instead they were directed by localism.[40] But these men were rarely rooted in one place. With his home in Stratford and work in London, Shakespeare was geographically mobile. This was a common trait among this group. Their social and geographical mobility meant that they had to

[38] Harrison, *The Description of England,* pp. 114; French, *The Middle Sort,* pp. 201-261.
[39] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 12.
[40] Wrightson, ‘Sorts of People’, p. 38; French, 'The Search’, 284-286.

fulfil a variety of requirements and behaviours depending on the context and situation they found themselves in. Consequently, *where* these individuals chose to build/purchase their homes is significant as it reveals the location of their self-fashioning. It exposes the context within which they chose to craft their identity and the group among whom they wished to belong. By calculating the gentry and middling attributes most significant to that locality, we gain a better understanding of how an individual could construct their status and what characteristics they were most likely to display.

Between 1570 and 1630, there were forty-five gentlemen living in Stratford-upon-Avon, seventeen of whom did not come from gentry families, but were self-made, involved in trade and/or civic office.[41] Other men in the town, such as Abraham Sturley, likely 'styled' themselves as gentlemen, not in possession of their own coat of arms but considered of gentry status by the local community due to their influential position within the town.[42] Instead of using their own arms, they might display royal emblems, or a symbol of their profession. Such people made up the 'elite' in Stratford-upon-Avon: 'new' gentlemen mixed with members of the upper middling, with little difference in terms of wealth or influence between them.

[41] Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls, and William Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (Manchester, 2016), p. 91.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Reputation and Credit

Both Abraham Sturley and Richard Quiney were in possession of a good reputation. As affluent business leaders and town bailiffs, these were the sort of influential men among whom Shakespeare needed to cement and display his identity. Sturley was a 'leading citizen' in Stratford-upon-Avon by the time Shakespeare purchased New Place in 1597.[43] Born in Worcestershire, he studied at Queen's College, Cambridge, before entering the employment of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote. This education and early employment gave him a good start in life as the patronage of the Lucy family would have also reflected favourably on his reputation. By the time he moved to Stratford in about 1580 he was well-placed to begin an illustrious career in the Stratford Corporation. He quickly became one of the town's leading aldermen, and his service in public office culminated in his election as bailiff between 1596-7, around the time Shakespeare purchased New Place.[44] To be elected as a civic official, Sturley needed the trust of the other councilmen. He was a wealthy man, living with his family in a large property on Wood Street.[45] Investment in land and property gave the impression of financial security, and Sturley's extended house in the heart of the town would have been a clear indicator of his solid credit. Although there is no evidence of Sturley ever applying for a grant of arms, he was a 'chief inhabitant' and likely considered a gentleman by his immediate community.[46]

Another of Stratford's leading citizens, Richard Quiney (b.1553), was born into a prominent Stratford family. Son of mercer and alderman Adrian Quiney, Richard was

[43] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 185.
[44] Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford, 1990), p. 240-243; p. 355.
[45] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 185.
[46] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 91.

himself a wealthy mercer and, like Sturley, he became a significant figure in the town Corporation. In 1580 Richard was elected principal burgess, followed by alderman in 1588 and twice as town bailiff in 1592 and 1601.[47] In 1581, he married Elizabeth Phillips and together they had a large family, running successful businesses alongside a sizeable household. Quiney was geographically mobile throughout his career. The devastating fires of the 1590s saw him travelling to neighbouring counties and London as he diligently raised money for repairs and relief on behalf of the Corporation.[48] Over the course of their lives, both Quiney and Sturley built the reputation needed to be successful in a town like Stratford. Already, we see that reputation and status were carefully interwoven in the complex tapestry of early modern social identity. For the new gentlemen of this study, they went hand-in-hand. Both financial security and upward mobility were dependent on reputation. But, significantly, many of the factors contributing to a good reputation were also used to construct status.

Reputation was so important to the status of men like Sturley, Quiney, and Shakespeare because towns like Stratford operated on a system of credit: of borrowing and lending, with little money ever actually changing hands. Muldrew refers to credit in social rather than monetary terms, as 'the amount of trust in society, and as such consisted of a system of judgements about trustworthiness'.[49] In viewing credit as a currency that could be won, traded, bartered and lost through language and perception, the early modern economy was a market based on reputation and moral

[47] Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', p. 428; Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, 'The Mayor Civic History: Bailiffs: 16th/17th Century' https://www.stratford-tc.gov.uk/the-mayor/civic-history [Accessed 20.05.22].
[48] Orlin offers extensive evidence of Quiney's travels, citing council resolutions, his reports back to the council, payments in the chamberlain's accounts and his reimbursement requests. See footnote '20', p. 429 for full references. Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', p. 429.
[49] Muldrew, 'The Culture of Credit', p. 148.

values.[50] Papers belonging to Richard Quiney illuminate the operation of credit in Stratford during the late sixteenth/early seventeen century.[51] These papers include letters spanning 1597 to 1601, citing multiple references to the lending of money among Stratford's leading citizens.[52] In 1598, Sturley appeared to have encountered some financial difficulties, and was looking for a loan. In a letter to Abraham Sturley, Quiney wrote:

> our countryman, Mr Shaksper, is willing to disburse some money vpon some od yarde or other at Shottri or neare about vs; he thinketh it verj fit patterne to move him in the matter of our tithes.[53]

Evidently, Quiney's own financial situation and credit alone were not enough to help support his friend,[54] as later that year, Quiney wrote to his 'Loveing Countreyman' Shakespe, asking for his help securing a loan of £30, but for whom, we do not know.[55] As concerning as this may seem today, it was not uncommon for individuals to find themselves in these circumstances. Most would be accustomed to owing money as well as having money owed to them, as Bearman explains:

> […] taken together, Quiney's correspondence over this period forcibly reminds us that, then as now, all those involved in business both owed money and had money owning to them, and that the key to success, or at least to the avoidance of failure, was to ensure one's obligations did not exceed expected returns.[56]

Despite his debts, Sturley still owned one of the larger properties in Stratford. Had his obligations 'exceeded expected returns', he had this form of capital to fall back on. But

[50] Muldrew, 'The Culture of Credit', p. 151. See also Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 1-32.
[51] Orlin, who focuses on the life of Elizabeth Quiney, notes that these documents include '...tallies for his travel expenses to represent Stratford in London and elsewhere; drafts of petitions he prepared on behalf of the town; notes he wrote to himself on private as well as public matters; and forty-four examples of what was evidently an extensive correspondence'. Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', p. 424.
[52] See Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, pp. 93-101.
[53] Extract from letter taken from transcription provided by Paul Edmondson in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 114.
[54] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 98.
[55] 'Quiney Letter: Richard Quyney to William Shakespeare', 25 October 1598, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, SBT ER 27/4, https://collections.shakespeare.org.uk/search/archive/arch-119843 [Accessed 20.05.22]. For an in-depth discussion of this letter and Quiney's request, see Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, pp. 93-98.
[56] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money,* pp. 98.

far from liquidating this asset, there is evidence that Sturley was actually making improvements to this house around the time that these letters were sent (see chapter two).[57] What we see through these documents is business transactions between associates, neighbours and kinsmen. The fact that Richard Quiney was even willing to assist his friend, and risk his own credit, implies that Sturley's creditworthiness within Stratford remained intact.

Quiney's letters remind us of the precarious nature of credit in early modern England, but they also reveal that financial security also relied on the reputation of others. Credit, reputation and status in places like Stratford were essential to the overall success of the town: each person's credit woven together in a complex web of inter-reliance. In this way, household reputation also had a significant impact on credit.[58] As Muldrew observes, 'the reputation for fair and honest dealing of a household and its members became currency for lending and borrowing'.[59] In particular, the morality, religion, structure, production, and conduct of a household hugely impacted the credit of its head. The actions and abilities, for example, of the mistress of a house would impact their husband's reputation, and vice-versa. Women do not often appear in discussions of early modern social order, but they played a vital role in the economy of early modern England.[60] Elizabeth Quiney was a businesswoman in her own right, but her own sound reputation and credit certainly impacted favourably on her husband,

[57] Decoration found in a front chamber at Abraham Sturley's house includes the royal symbol of James I in plasterwork at frieze level. This piece is dated post 1603 and, among other extant decoration, suggests Sturley made changes to his house around or after this date. This decoration is discussed in more detail in chapter three.
[58] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 296.
[59] Muldrew, 'The Culture of Credit', p. 148.
[60] For more discussion on the exclusion of women in early modern descriptions of social order see Cressy, 'Describing the Social Order', pp. 34-35; Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*', pp. 1-32; Jane Whittle (principle investigator) and Mark Hailwood (co-investigator), 'Forms of Labour: Gender, Freedom and Work in the Pre-Industrial Economy', funded by the European Research Council at the University of Exeter (2019-2024) http://formsoflabour.exeter.ac.uk [Accessed 20.05.22].

Richard. Elizabeth was born into a well-established family of mercers in Stratford-upon-Avon.[61] Her father, Thomas Philips, was an 'inaugural' alderman on the town council and she inherited a good deal of property upon his death.[62] In the accounts of an inquiry launched following the town fire of 1595, the Quiney household was listed as numbering sixteen people, many of whom would have been servants and household staff.[63] As mistress, Elizabeth would have managed all its members.

It is clear from Richard Quiney's correspondence that Elizabeth held a trusted and prominent role in her husband's financial and business transactions. Lena Cowen Orlin states that these letters 'show her not only at the centre of a kinship network and not just as her husband's deputy but also as a professional woman in her own right, one with remarkably diversified interests', and, importantly with her own separate credit and reputation.[64] She was lending money herself, and to the local gentry no less. While her husband was indebted to Sir Edward Greville, Elizabeth was owed money by Lady Greville, a sum that totalled 'considerably more than twenty pounds'.[65] Indeed, Orlin suggests Elizabeth's money management skills helped keep the Quiney family afloat while her husband 'overstretched' their finances.[66] In a letter written to his son, Adrian Quiney praises his daughter-in-law for 'mak(ing) all means she can to satisfy both your credits'.[67] Elizabeth's reputation, the various financial roles she played and the contribution she made to the Quiney household were all essential to

[61] Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', p. 425.
[62] *Ibid*., p. 426; Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare's Wife*, (London, 2007), p. 111.
[63] Greer, *Shakespeare's Wife*, p. 113.
[64] Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', pp. 430-1. Orlin comments that letters written by Adrian Quiney to his son note that 'Richard and Elizabeth had separate "credits"'. The evidence given for this is that Richard Quiney is believed to have owed money to Sir Edward Greville, whereas Elizabeth Quiney was owed money by Lady Greville, p. 444.
[65] For a full account of this transaction, see Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', p. 444.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 439-440.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

her husband's status, as well as her own. A good marriage and the ability to run an independent household went a long way to contributing to the reputation of new gentlemen, and through the Quineys and Abraham Sturley, we have seen that there were a number of factors contributing to a person's credit in a town like Stratford-upon-Avon. In this context, status could be built in the same way as reputation. In the remainder of this chapter, we consider other ways status could be constructed for new gentlemen, beyond the context of Stratford-upon-Avon.

Background

For members of the established or 'elite' gentry, lineage was a clear indicator of gentry status.[68] As Harrison declares: 'gentlemen be those whom their race and blood, or at the least their virtues, do make noble and known'.[69] Many members of the new gentry were not able to claim gentry lineage and so were forced to depend on their 'virtues' for gentry status. Frequently middling in origin, their backgrounds were often in trade and local government, and among such men, parentage and familial reputation rather than ancient lineage held significant sway.[70] Gabriel Harvey was born in c.1550 in the Essex town of Saffron Walden.[71] He was the eldest son of Alice and John Harvey, a prosperous rope-maker who gained wealth from property, farming and brewing.[72] John Harvey owned several properties in the town including a large house where he lived with his wife, two daughters and four sons. He was an important member of the

[68] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry,* p. 22.
[69] Harrison, *The Description of England,* pp. 113.
[70] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* p. 7.
[71] Jason Scott-Warren, 'Harvey, Gabriel (1552/3–1631), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (07/01/2016) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12517?rskey=k3aIM1&result=1 [Accessed 20.05.22].
[72] Peter M. Daly and Bari Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantle-piece (ca. 1570): An Early Instance of the Extra-Literary Use of Aliciato Emblems in England' in P. Daly (ed.), *Andrea Alicato and the emblem tradition: essays in honour of Virginia Woods Callahan* (New York, 1989), p. 178.

Walden Corporation, and between 1572 and 1573, he held the influential position of Corporation Treasurer. John sent his eldest son, Gabriel, to Walden Grammar school, and then on to Cambridge University.[73] Investment in the first-born son was an essential paternal responsibility, especially for a prominent townsman looking to maintain or elevate the status of his family.[74]

John's reputation and status within Saffron Walden would have had a significant impact on that of his son's. Capital could be 'derived in the first instance from an individual's family of origin' among members of the urban elite in towns like Saffron Walden.[75] John's influential position and occupation were clearly sources of pride for the family, as indicated in a decorated stone chimney piece surviving from his former home.[76] Gabriel Harvey's familial background in trade, and therefore manual labour, might not have impressed the elite literary circles of Cambridge and London, but the status of his father within the local community of Saffron Walden, where he invested in property and spent the rest of his days, would have helped to elevate his own status within the town.[77] Gabriel had a successful university career, holding several important positions including a fellowship at Trinity Hall. Following his academic career in

[73] Daly and Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantle-piece', p. 179; Scott-Warren, 'Harvey, Gabriel', *ODNB.*
[74] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 291.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 290.
[76] The Harvey overmantel is currently on display in the Saffron Walden Museum and features decoration celebrating the industry of rope-making. The overmantel is discussed in more detail in chapter four.
[77] Harvey's parentage did not impress everyone in his social circle, especially outside of his local context. While attending university Gabriel, and his brother Richard, began a pamphlet feud with writers Thomas Greene and Richard Nashe. Writing in 1592, Greene labelled their father a ''knave' whose 'cheefe living is by making fatal instruments, as halters and ropes, which divers desperate men hang themselves with'.[77] Harvey was not alone in having his parent's background used as a slur against his name. Christopher Marlowe ceremoniously introduces his title character, *Doctor Faustus,* with the line 'now he is born, base of stock' (Chorus, II). Marlowe himself came from a middling family outside London. His father was an immigrant shoemaker from Canterbury, so it is quite possible that the words he put into the mouth of his chorus had been used against him at some time or another. Scott-Warren, 'Harvey, Gabriel', *ODNB.*

Cambridge and a residency in London, Gabriel moved back to Saffron Walden.[78] But he never held a civic position himself. As such, his father's town connections would have proved essential to his credit. Within Saffron Waldon, there is every likelihood that the Harveys were considered gentlemen in all but official title.

Education

With no lineage to speak of, education was the main route into the gentry for some individuals. It was a desirable (although not essential) characteristic for many new gentlemen and could be used as a means of negotiating entry into the group as well as one's position within it. For most members of the new or lesser gentry, education began at home then continued at elementary and grammar school, where pupils began a rigorous introduction to humanism.[79] From there, 'only a small proportion of grammar school boys went on to university'.[80] Attendance at Oxford or Cambridge was an expensive and serious undertaking for middling (and gentry) parents, even with financial aid.[81] But for families looking to elevate the status of their son, universities offered a chance to further classical knowledge, as well as exposure to influential networks.[82] Some men built entire careers around university. Gabriel Harvey, for example, joined Christ's College, Cambridge, as a pensioner (his place fully or part funded by the state) and graduated with a BA in 1569-70.[83] At Cambridge, Harvey formed a number of networks that benefitted his social and career advancement, including his friendship with poet Edmund Spenser and patronage from

[78] It is not known when exactly Harvey returned to his hometown.
[79] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, pp. 258-9.
[80] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London, 2010), p. 24.
[81] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 262.
[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 264-8.
[83] Scott-Warren, 'Harvey, Gabriel', *ODNB*

Sir Thomas Smith. A number of writers from this period followed a similar route of local grammar school, university and patronage. This included two of Shakespeare's theatre contemporaries: Thomas Middleton, the son of a bricklayer who matriculated at Oxford, and Christopher Marlowe, the son of a shoe maker who graduated from Cambridge.[84] A major benefit of university education was the associations that could be formed while in attendance; key to acceptance into the gentry.

Some members of the new gentry completed their education through the Inns of Court. This was an especially favoured route for the urban elite; the sons of civic officials and merchants wishing to earn wealth and status via the legal profession.[85] This route was taken by Walter Jones of Chastleton House, the son of a clothier, who received his BA in 1570 from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, before enrolling at Lincoln's Inn in 1572.[86] From there, Jones began a successful legal profession which would see him serve as JP, MP and as an attorney on the Court of Star Chamber. His education not only provided legal training, but the networks and reputation required for entrance into the gentry. A man with such an education would be expected to have an in-depth understanding of humanism and the classics, but also a wider understanding of citizenship, world order and civic responsibility. The Inns of Court were labelled by early modern writer Edward Waterhouse as 'schools of civility and chivalry, as well as law'.[87] These were all valuable elements of gentry status, and characteristics that

[84] Charles Nicholl, 'Marlowe (Marley), Christopher,' *ODNB* (03/01/2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-18079?rskey=F9AjJj&result=1 [Accessed 20.05.22]; Gary Taylor, 'Middleton, Thomas', *ODNB* (24.05.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-18682?rskey=A9b96X&result=1 [Accessed 20.05.22].
[85] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 272
[86] Hilary Turner, 'Walter Jones of Witney, Worcester, and Chastleton: Rewriting the Past', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 73 (2008), p. 35.
[87] Edward Waterhouse quoted in Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 273.

Jones was then able to display through the building and decoration of his country house at Chastleton (as discussed in chapter two).

Not all members of the gentry, however, pursued further education and it was by no means the only route to gentry status. Heal and Holmes highlight that, in many areas of early modern England, the majority of gentlemen did not attend university or the Inns. In the 1570s, for instance, 'between 17 and 26 per cent of a sample of Norfolk gentlemen had attended university'.[88] Helen Jewell comments that 'people who did not aspire to these academic heights were by no means uneducated in the early modern period'.[89] The classics and basic principles of humanism that were apparently essential to gentry identity could be taught by private tutors or at grammar school, while civic responsibility, religious instruction, rhetoric and governance could be gained through experience.[90] Indeed, many men chose to enter the working world fresh from grammar school, furthering their education in other ways such as apprenticeships.

Occupation

Almost all new gentlemen worked for a living, whether or not they attended university. Unlike the more established gentry, they could not rely solely on income from land, property and rents. 'Dual employment' was especially visible among members of the urban elite, and men like Sturley and Quiney demonstrate the range of occupations to which many of the urban elite belonged.[91] It was through the associations formed here

[88] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 264.
[89] Helen Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England* (London, 1998), p. 10.
[90] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 266.
[91] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 194.

that they might gain a sense of group identity and belonging.[92] Even those gentlemen deemed part of the 'learned professions' often participated in dual employment. Walter Jones had a distinguished legal career, starting as town clerk for Worcester, he went on to become a Member of Parliament. Yet, he also remained involved in trade through his family's cloth business.[93] Combining a 'learned profession' with a background in trade was not uncommon. Some men might continue to manage their profitable family business, whilst also pursuing a career in one of the more reputable professions as a means of furthering their wealth, and significantly, status.

Historically, occupations belonging to the 'learned professions' included the clergy, lawyers and medical practitioners, but some historians have expanded the term to include administrators and those involved in the theatres.[94] These occupations often carried significant status as their 'learned' nature implied a certain degree of gentility. Rather than physical involvement in production, trade or craft, professional men would use expertise gained through education or extensive training to advise or assist other members of the commonwealth. For men such as Walter Jones, occupation was seen as more of a calling, or vocation, than a means of earning income. Many professions aligned with humanist ideals of honour, and citizenship, whilst also adhering to the traditional gentry distaste of manual labour.[95] But even within these reputable professions, hierarchies still existed.

[92] Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism', pp. 84-112.
[93] Turner, 'Walter Jones', pp. 33-44.
[94] Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England* (Essex, 2000); Christopher Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and the Vipers of the Commonwealth: the 'lower' branch of the legal profession in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986); Eric Gieskes, *Representing the Professions: Administration, Law, and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Newark, 2006).
[95] O'Day, *The Professions*, pp. 25-43.

Barrister and town clerk Thomas Greene was a man for whom professional occupation was his greatest means of social advancement. Greene built his career in both branches of the law: the lower branch, most readily linked to middling status, included attorneys, solicitors and clerks; whereas the upper, more elite branch, consisted of barristers and judges.[96] Unlike Walter Jones, Greene did not earn significant wealth from this usually prosperous career, but he did earn the right to call himself a gentleman. The son of a mercer from Warwick, Greene came from a wealthy, upper middling background.[97] He began his legal training at Staple Inn in London, 'one of the lesser inns', originally set up to train those occupations associated with the lower branches of the profession. By the end of the sixteenth century, it had become a 'training ground' for those wishing to enter the more prestigious Inns of Court.[98] In 1595 he entered Middle Temple, sponsored by two existing members, John Marston and his son (also John).[99] Marston senior was an established legal professional, appointed counsel and then steward of the largest Midlands city of Coventry in the 1580s. His sponsorship of Greene demonstrates the significance of association to a man's career, and ultimately status. Middle Temple was one of the most prestigious of the Inns of Court. Here, Greene would have rubbed shoulders with the sons of elite gentleman and the top law makers in the country, including his acquaintance, wealthy lawyer Hercules Rainsford and his son, Henry.[100]

[96] For more information on the differences between the upper and lower branches of the legal profession see the 'Introduction' in Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and the Vipers,* pp. 1-9.
[97] Robert Bearman, 'Thomas Greene: Stratford-upon-Avon's town clerk and Shakespeare's lodger', in P. Holland (ed.) *Shakespeare Survey,* Vol. 65, (Cambridge, 2012), p. 291.
[98] Bearman, 'Thomas Greene', p. 291.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *Ibid.,* p. 292.

Greene was finally able to call himself a barrister in 1602, but, while awaiting his call to the bar, he had undertaken work as an attorney for the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation.[101] In 1603 Greene secured the appointment of Stratford's town clerk or Steward, and was to be paid a fee of £7 per year.[102] Alongside his role as town clerk, Greene was also appointed as steward for Henry Rainsford (1604), followed by the Throckmorton family of Coughton Court (1610 to 1617). These were prestigious and influential roles, no doubt acquired through his networks at Middle Temple. Greene is thus described by Bearman, as a 'barrister-steward', someone who was involved in a number of roles and occupations within the legal profession.[103] He had local responsibilities to the Stratford Corporation, bringing him civic and public prestige, associations with the local landed gentry, as well as a position in the Middle Temple.[104]

But Greene's status was ultimately secured through his career within the Inns of Court. In 1622, he was elected Reader in Middle Temple, in 1627 he was appointed Master of the Bench, and in 1629 he was nominated as Treasurer, all prestigious positions in the upper branches of the legal profession.[105] Despite Greene's apparent professional success, he appears to have encountered serious financial difficulties and, in 1617, Greene sold St Mary's and moved his family to Bristol, where he eventually became

[101] In 1601, Richard Quiney recorded a payment of 10 shillings to 'Thomas Greene our Soliciter' for 'hys paines', in addition to 3s 4d which Greene 'had layed out in searche of Recordes for us'.
Richard Quiney quoted in Bearman, 'Thomas Greene', p. 294.
[102] *Ibid.,* p. 296.
[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 295-6.
[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 296-7. Whilst working as town clerk, Greene purchased a share of the Stratford tithes, a portion of which belonged to the Stratford Corporation with whom he was employed. This purchase likely impacted his professional relationship with the Corporation, but demonstrates how the associations and business connections made through such occupations could be used to a clerk's advantage. Through these connections, Greene made a number of substantial investments, including his purchase of a large house in Stratford known as St Mary's. He allegedly bought the house for £400, and was occupying the property by 1611.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

steward to the city's sheriffs.[106] Here, Greene was a small fish in a big pond. Clerks did not enjoy the same status among the great city merchants as among the urban elite in Stratford.[107] He may have achieved promotion within the Inns, but not the wealth or private practice that came with these aggrandisements. As Bearman writes 'Greene was one of a very small minority who failed to secure further advancement in the law - promotion to government office, appointment as Justice of the Peace or Recorder, or Member of Parliament' – offices held by Walter Jones throughout his career.[108] From his profession, Greene achieved status, referring to himself consistently as a gentleman, yet he remained a town clerk for much of his life, never achieving the significant wealth men of his occupation and position on the bench achieved.

Greene's career highlights the complex nature of professional identity, but significant status could also be gained through 'new' occupations. The Burbage family were pioneers in the theatre industry and, over the course of two generations, they used their profession as a means of developing wealth, networks, reputation and eventual entry into the new gentry. James Burbage (c.1531-1597) and his two sons, Cuthbert (1564/5-1636) and Richard (c.1568-1619), built their careers in the theatre and did not follow the university route pursued by some wishing to make a name for themselves in this industry.[109] Little is known of James Burbage's origins, but it is believed he

[106] Among his creditors were his old friend Rainsford, a number of fellow Middle Templars, and Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall. Bearman, 'Thomas Greene', p. 304.
[107] Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and the Vipers,* pp. 204-266.
[108] Bearman, 'Thomas Greene', p. 303-4.
[109] Mary Edmond, 'Burbage, James', *ODNB* (03.01.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3950#odnb-9780198614128-e-3950 [Accessed 20.05.22];
Mary Edmond, 'Burbage, Cuthbert', *ODNB* (03.01.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-60972?rskey=t6pc4V&result=1 [Accessed 20.05.22];

hailed from Kent and apprenticed as a joiner in London, where he married and set up his household, becoming a citizen and freeman of London. In these early years, he appears to have been practising his trade as a joiner, but became steadily involved with the Earl of Leicester's troupe of players, rising to lead the company in 1572. [110] From here, James Burbage's theatre career began. He was to open, own and run a number of theatres including The Theatre in Shoreditch where he lived with his family and later the Blackfriars indoor theatre, in addition to running the acting company, the Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men).[111] As with the legal profession, the theatre profession comprised numerous occupations and levels. Craftsmen, landlords, actors, and writers were all involved in this new industry, and the Burbage family had a hand in all levels.[112]

James Burbage's son, celebrated actor Richard Burbage, continued in his father's footsteps. He made a name for himself on the stage and further developed the Chamberlain's Men with his associate, William Shakespeare. The eldest Burbage son, Cuthbert, took on his father's entrepreneurial legacy. In 1598 Cuthbert ordered the demolition of The Theatre, rebuilding it as the Globe in Southwark.[113] Many players, including Shakespeare, owned shares in both the acting company and the Globe, highlighting the networks that arose from this industry as it expanded.[114] Many of these

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Mary Edmond, 'Burbage [Burbadge], Richard', *ODNB* (03.01.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3951#odnb-9780198614128-e-3951 [Accessed 20.05.22].

[110] John H. Astington, 'His theatre friends: the Burbages' in Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 248.

[111] Astington, 'His theatre friends', p. 248.

[112] Eric Gieskes, *Representing the Professions,* p. 162.

[113] Astington, 'His theatre friends', p. 255.

[114] The 1605 will of famed player and Globe shareholder, Augustine Phillips, provides a 'nearly complete roster of the King's Men in May 1605', shedding further light on the extent of associations in the theatre world. Will of Augustine Phillips 1605, TNA PROB 11/105/387. Transcribed and published in E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock (eds.), *Playhouse wills 1558-1642* (Manchester 1993), pp. 72-75; Peter Thomson, 'Phillips, Augustine', *ODNB* (25.05.2006)

associations grew to include patrons from the royal courts of Elizabeth I and James I, and even the monarchs themselves. Through his involvement in the King's Men, Shakespeare became a servant of James I, awarded the rank of 'Groom of the Stool', and afforded the elite networks that came with it.[115] If utilised correctly, these occupational associations could significantly impact the status of their members. This was especially the case for those men who earned their living playwriting. Both Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare embarked on their careers with the aid of aristocratic patronage. Before the theatre profession came into its own, writing in the form of poetry was seen as an educated, gentry pursuit.[116] Yet, as the theatres became increasingly commercialised, writers found themselves competing against each other for commission and a divide emerged between the profit-driven writers of the theatre and the genteel writers of poetry.[117]

The theatre was a profession in which it seemed anyone from any background could enter, but once in, rising through the ranks among this group required strategic networking. These new gentlemen of the theatre were involved in a complex web of mutually beneficial obligations – associations on a familial, local and occupational level – all of which had significant impact on their ability to call themselves gentlemen. As significant shareholders in the Globe and outright owners of Blackfriars, the Burbage brothers 'saw their business expand and prosper'.[118] By 1616, they were living in Holywell Street (now Shoreditch High Street) in 'substantial' properties. Both men invested their significant wealth in property and their own homes, a key requirement

https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-68148?rskey=Fs9wXO&result=1 [Accessed 20.05.22].

[115] See Park Honan, 'Chapter 15: The King's Servants' in *Shakespeare: A Life*, pp. 395-317.

[116] Nicholl, 'Marlowe (Marley), Christopher,' *ODNB.*

[117] Gieskes, *Representing the Professions*, pp. 216-225.

[118] Astington, 'His theatre friends', p. 256.

of gentry status. But unlike Shakespeare, they invested in London, the city where they had developed their own status and associations.

Richard died in 1619, outlived by his brother who went one step further in his consolidation of status. In 1635, a year before his death, Cuthbert acquired a coat of arms – a shield displaying three boars' heads – yet surviving records show that he was referred to as a gentleman long before this.[119] The purchase of arms was not unusual for wealthy theatre men, but it has been suggested the practice was mocked in many literary circles.[120] Nonetheless, here we have an example of a group of men, a family, who built their wealth, associations, reputation, and gentry status through a new profession, by-passing the necessity of a 'classical' education.

Public Office

Despite their different occupations, educations and locations, many of the individuals considered so far had a significant new gentry characteristic in common; service in public office. This was especially important for the building of local associations and authority. The positions of Justice of the Peace (JP) or Member of Parliament (MP) were most traditionally associated with gentry status, two roles held by Walter Jones. But for the elite of Stratford, the obvious move into public life was via the Corporation. Standards were high on the twenty-eight man Stratford Corporation and the responsibilities far-reaching. Duties might include ‘collecting rents, viewing properties for needed repairs and maintenance, surveying woods, supervising repairs to the bridge, disbursing funds for other activities and projects, and submitting records during

[119] Edmond, ‘Burbage Cuthbert’, *ODNB.*
[120] Astington, ‘His theatre friends’, p. 258.

a term as chamberlain, or chief financial officers', as well as adjudicating minor legal disputes in the town.[121] Quiney's route of burgess (citizen), alderman and then town bailiff was one commonly taken. His 'industry and attitude' to the role of bailiff can be seen through the number of council meetings held and his attendance at those meetings. It is estimated that he attended 37 out of 44 meetings between 1599 and 1602. If we take into account absences due to business, 'he had the perfect score'; something that would have reflected favourably on his reputation.[122] If new gentleman did not hold civic positions themselves, their fathers often had or did. Although Gabriel Harvey did not serve in office himself, he would have been known to the town officials in Saffron Walden through his father, who had served on the Walden Corporation as Treasurer. Associations and connections formed through such roles would have bestowed a certain degree of prestige on their sons who were to become gentlemen during their own lifetimes.

Public office went beyond local politics and government, as new gentlemen also held roles within the Church. Actors and Globe shareholders John Heminges and Henry Condell served as wardens in their local parish of St. Mary's, Aldermanbury within the City of London.[123] The position of church warden was an auspicious and trusted role in the local community as '[…] they helped organise services, noted absentees, distributed local poor relief, oversaw the upkeep of the building and maintained the goodwill of its surrounding community'.[124] In 1619, both men were listed as trustees of the parish's land, an equally important role within the local church as it meant that the

[121] Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', p .428.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 428.
[123] Heminges signed the register twice as second warden and three times as first warden, with Condell signing twice as second warden. Paul Edmondson, 'His editors John Heminges and Henry Condell' in in Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle*, p. 315.
[124] *Ibid.*

officeholder was trusted with the church's investments. Despite some initial mistrust over Condell and his ability to hold these positions on account of 'he being a player', later testimonies paint him in a more favourable light. Linking Condell's office to his reputation, one associate commented that Condell had '[…] borne all offices up to the place of churchwarden and always held in good repute and estimation among his neighbours'.[125] These men took the negotiation of status seriously, recognising that their authority and trustworthiness within the local community was significantly linked to their overall reputation. Heminges and Condell earned the right to refer to themselves as gentlemen long before their deaths, and Heminges was eventually granted a coat of arms.[126] While civic office was required to maintain one's position in the urban elite for men like Richard Quiney, public roles could also be used to build trust, reputation and status. Heminges and Condell worked hard to reverse the somewhat dubious image of actors by crafting part of their identity through the office of churchwarden.

Wealth

Wealth was perhaps the most obvious route to gentry status and this can be seen through the example of actor, theatre entrepreneur and founder of Dulwich College, Edward Alleyn.[127] Born in 1566, Alleyn was the son of an 'innholder' in Bishopsgate, who later became head of Bedlam hospital.[128] The latter position gave Alleyn's father

[125] Edmondson, 'His editors', p. 315.
[126] *Ibid.,* p. 318. Edmondson notes that Heminges was granted a coat of arms in 1629, a year before his death.
[127] S. P. Cerasano, 'Alleyn, Edward', *ODNB* (03.01.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-398?rskey=8SKdzV&result=2 [Accessed 03.06.2021].
[128] Susan P. Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn: 1566-1626' in A. Reid and R. Maniura, *Edward Alleyn: Elizabethan Actor, Jacobean Gentleman* (Suffolk, 1994), pp. 11-12.

significant land leasing opportunities and a very comfortable income, eventually leaving Edward and his brothers with a large inheritance. In 1583, Edward emerged as a player in the Earl of Worcester's Men.[129] By 1592, he had made a name for himself as an actor, performing with both the Admiral's Men and the Lord Strange's Men, thus casting his net of associations wide.[130] His acting successes brought him notoriety and celebrity status, but Alleyn's wealth came from business, associations and his marriage. In 1592 he married Joan Woodard, the stepdaughter of theatre magnate, Phillip Henslowe, whose own story of social mobility is a captivating one.[131]

By the end of the 1590s, following a lengthy legal dispute with his step-father, Alleyn received the majority of his father's inheritance and was quick to invest. He had already made 'sizeable' investments amounting to £450, including shares in the Bear Garden which hosted the gruesome yet popular form of entertainment, bearbaiting.[132] By 1600, Alleyn was in possession of a significant income primarily through inheritance, property, from shares in the Bear Garden, the Rose, the Fortune Theatre, and his involvement in the Admiral's Men. In 1604, Alleyn and Henslowe paid a fee of £450 and finally secured the position of Mastership of the Bears, a role they had coveted for years. This was an illustrious court position, and one that could be extremely profitable.[133] In 1608, Henslowe recorded his earnings for the three days

[129] Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn', p. 13.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[131] A dyer by trade, Henslowe's titles also included Groom of the Chamber and owner of the Rose Playhouse, the home of the Admiral's Men. S. P. Cerasano, 'Henslowe, Philip (c.1555-1616)', *ODNB* (03.01.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12991?rskey=ncoBxI&result=1 [Accessed 18.05.2022].
[132] Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn', pp. 15-16.
[133] The role was extensive and included sourcing and training the bears, as well as supervising baiting matches across the capital, including Greenwich and Whitehall as well as the Bear Garden. See Dr Hannah O'Regen, Dr Andy Kesson, Prof. Greger Larson for 'Box Office Bears' research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the University of Oxford, University of Roehampton and the University of Nottingham (2020-2023) https://beforeshakespeare.com/2020/08/03/box-office-bears-a-new-research-project-on-animal-baiting/ [Accessed 18.05.2022].

after Christmas, providing an insight into the type of returns that could be gained through such investments. The Fortune brought in 25s on the first day, 45s on the second and 44s 9d on the third. The profits from the Bear Garden across the same three days came to £4, £6 and £3 13s, proving to be a significantly more lucrative venture. Furthermore, the Masters of the Bears received special fees from court, providing further income.[134]

Alleyn also invested in non-theatre properties, fulfilling that all-important gentry requirement of land-owning. His existing wealth saw him invest in leaseholds in Kennington and Firle, Sussex, but in October 1605 he purchased the manor of Dulwich for a hefty £5,000 from Sir Francis Carlton. Alleyn then acquired the neighbouring Rycotes Estate, enlarging his own estate to 1,110 acres from Denmark Hill to what is now the current grounds at Crystal Palace. By 1612/13 Edward and Joan had moved to Dulwich, and according to Alleyn's household accounts, began furnishing their new home.[135] The primary intention was to open a new charitable school for boys and almhouses for the elderly, similar to the famous charitable college founded by Sir Thomas Sutton near Farringdon (City of London) a few years earlier.[136] Alleyn's school was to become the prestigious Dulwich College, receiving its patent in 1619. The building, decorating and founding of such colleges was a clear display of piety, charity, but above all status for extremely wealthy members of society such as Sutton and Alleyn. Furthermore, the founding of these schools demonstrates the importance of

[134] Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn', p. 22.
[135] Edward Alleyn, 'Diaries and Accounts' (1617-1622). Dulwich College, MSS 9. For a full transcription of Alleyn's accounts, see William Young, *The History of Dulwich College*, *Vols. 1 & 2* (London, 1889).
[136] See Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Thomas Sutton (1525-1611)', ODNB (03.01.2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26806;jsessionid=BF897ECBA331B59F73B28D0013ED81EE [Accessed 18.05.2022].

benefaction for gentry status: these men were able to express their status as leaders and caretakers of the commonwealth through their charitable donations and displays of wealth. Alleyn is perhaps a rare example of the significant income that could be gained through networking and business opportunities offered through the new theatre industry. By the end of his life he was considered a gentleman, and his main route to success was his wealth, however for Alleyn, this went beyond mere maintenance and security.[137] His change in circumstance had all the trappings of aspiration.

For all new gentleman, wealth gained through assets and investment was an especially significant characteristic. Although Harrison only mentions money in relation to a new gentleman's ability to purchase arms, 'titles and income' were linked in more ways than one.[138] According to Cooper, for established gentlemen 'the claims of both virtue and lineage had to be maintained against the irresistible challenge of wealth', and, whereas a lack of wealth often led to embarrassment and possibly a change of lifestyle, it did not necessarily result in the loss of gentility for established members. Wealth did, however, provide the 'framework of power', and as Edward Alleyn demonstrates, 'it was the means whereby one achieved positions of honour in the state', at least within the local community.[139] It could also be used as a means of gaining entry to the gentry. But for some new gentlemen, wealth was about maintaining one's credit and lifestyle. A large income was desirable to ensure comfort as well as reputation.

[137] In his final will, Henslowe left the majority of his wealth to Alleyn, estimated to have totalled between £10,000 and £12,000, an astonishing amount of money. These sums are considerable when compared to the money changing hands between members of the Stratford elite, demonstrating the level and wealth on which some members of the new gentry operated. By his death in 1626, Alleyn had acquired significant wealth through his theatre ventures and investment, as is demonstrated through his will. To his second wife Constance, for instance, he left £1, 500. Will of Edward Alleyn 1626, TNA PROB 11/150/544. Transcribed and published in Honigmann and Brock (eds.), *Playhouse wills*, pp. 150-155.
[138] Harrison, *The Description of England*, p. 114; Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 12.
[139] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 12.

Alexandra Shepard proves that calculating a person's worth and income in early modern England is a difficult and complex process.[140] But surviving records do indicate that men like Richard Quiney, Abraham Sturley and Thomas Greene sought to significantly increase their income through investment during their lifetimes. Sadly, the inventories of these men are lost, but probate documents of Daniel Baker (Quiney's nephew), a fellow alderman and former bailiff, hints at the degree of wealth these Corporation men possessed. Daniel Baker was a draper and alderman on the town council, and a prominent Stratford citizen.[141] His will totals a sizeable ten pages in which he sets out his property and wealth. Although calculating a man's exact worth through probate documents alone can be misleading,[142] such documents provide an indication of the general wealth these men possessed (what they could and could not afford for instance), as well as the general income level in which they were operating.

In addition to a domestic dwelling on the High Street, Baker's other property investments included:

> […] the yardland be it more or lesse in the Common Fieldes of Aston Cantlowe in the Countie of Warrwick, And all those my Tenementes howses and inclosed groundes sett lyinge and beinge in little Wilmcote in the parish of Ould Stratford alias Stratford vpon Avon. And alsoe the inheritaunce of the tithes of grasse and hay arrisinge in two meadowes called Shollery meadowe and broad meadowe lyinge and beinge within the Parish of Ould Stratford alias Stratford vpon Avon in the said Countie of Warwick And all those my two Sault Phattes [?wellinge] lyinge and beinge in Droyght wit[c]h in the County of Wigorne […] All those my severall tenements or Cottages with their appurtenances sett

[140] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself.*
[141] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 256.
[142] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 48; Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 138.

> lyinge and beinge in Stratford aforesaid in a streete there called the Bridge-streete nowe […][143]

This is a large amount of property for any individual to possess in a town like Stratford. The wealth of men such as Baker was mostly tied up in land, property, stock, domestic items and loans, and when we consider Baker's standing in the town, his investments do not seem all that unusual, simply impressive. Baker left the majority of his estate to his grandson, Abraham Baker, but he also bestowed sizeable contributions to the poor, to kin and friends. He left £500 to a Marie Taylor and to his granddaughters, leaving a further £420 to Martha Baker for her upcoming marriage to mercer John Vivers of Banbury.[144] These donations and property bequests were not insignificant given that around half of the properties in Stratford with a purchase price attached to them 'changed hands for £30 or less' between 1570-1630.[145] The kind of figures seen in Baker's will demonstrate that a number of Stratford residents were more than surviving, they were thriving. For some new gentlemen, achieving significant wealth was about more than financial security, it was aspirational. Men like Edward Alleyn were not content with simply being part of the urban elite, they wanted to be accepted into the landed gentry, and for this, they needed a great deal of money and, ultimately, a coat of arms.

Grants of Arms

The question of whether a coat of arms confirmed or conferred gentry status has long been debated, but a number of new gentlemen chose to pursue this route

[143] Will of Daniel Baker, 1641, TNA PROB 11/186/579. Transcribed by Stephanie Appleton in 'Women and Wills in Early Modern England: The Community of Stratford-upon-Avon 1537 – 1649', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2016, p. 348.
[144] Will of Daniel Baker, 1641.
[145] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 95.

nonetheless.[146] In 1629, player and Globe shareholder John Heminges was granted his own coat of arms. He had been referred to as a 'gent' numerous times prior to this, including in his daughter, Mary's, marriage documents of 1627.[147] Indeed many of the case studies in this chapter suggest that most men were already considered gentlemen before applying for arms. This is not a revolutionary concept; even the heralds who granted and confirmed arms recognised that a coat of arms was not the only qualification to gentry status. In an address given during a visitation, herald John Raven laid out the qualities he looked for when granting arms:

> ancient stock […] is not enough: they [the gentlemen] should live uprightly and entertain virtuous actions which are profitable for all', indeed 'without virtue it is impossible to be a gentleman.[148]

According to Adrian Ailes, as long as these men 'demonstrated their family worth' or reputation, paid the correct fees, 'followed correctly heraldic protocol and gentlemanly procedure', and, significantly, had their gentility acknowledged by others, they were entitled to apply for arms.[149] Fundamentally, a person had to possess all the necessary qualities of a gentleman *before* they could apply for arms. Walter Jones and Thomas Greene applied for grants during their own lifetimes, and even members of the theatre profession could build the qualities needed to purchase their own arms.

The idea that John Heminges was reputed a gentleman long before his grant of arms implies that he had already fulfilled the qualifications for gentility. But applications and grants were not always straightforward. Heraldic refusals and contestations reflect the

[146] See Raymond Carter Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms to Shakespeare's Father' in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 4 (1963), pp. 379-385, for the meaning behind grants of arms, and how they simply conferred rather than assigned status.
[147] Edmondson, 'His editors', p. 318.
[148] Adrian Ailes, 'Shakespeare and the Heralds' Visitations', in Nigel Ramsay (ed.), *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington, 2014), p. 119.
[149] Ailes, 'Shakespeare and the Heralds' Visitations', pp. 120-123.

ambiguous and subjective nature of this social identity. The criteria fulfilled by some of these men was evidently not enough for certain heralds and more established members of the gentry. Actor and associate of Heminges, Augustine Phillips, similarly found himself applying for arms in his own lifetime. Little is known about Phillips before his appearance on the stage in the 1590s. We do not know his background, parentage, education or whether he held another occupation before entering into a career on the stage, and he is first mentioned as a player in the Lord Strange's Men between 1590-92.[150] He may have been one of the founders of the Lord Chamberlain's Men formed around 1594, and seems to have been connected with the company until his death. Phillips describes himself as a 'gent' in his last will and testament and this same document suggests that he was a wealthy and influential theatre professional. His executors included other theatre professionals seeking arms - Cuthbert Burbage and John Heminges. Indeed, it would seem that Phillips was one of a number of theatre professionals pursuing arms at this time.[151]

Phillips also appears in a report compiled by herald William Smith contesting a number of controversial grants. The complaint alleged that 'Phillips the player had graven in a gold ring armes of Sr Wm Phillipp, Lord Bardolph, with the said L. Bardolph's cote quartred', suggesting that Phillips was using the arms of Lord Bardolph as his own.[152] Other accusations levelled against theatre professionals can be found in a report attacking grants made by William Dethwick for William Shakespeare and Thomas Pope. Here, the report attacks the background and literary occupations of the men. The reference to both Shakespeare and Phillips as a ‘player' might be also be seen

[150] Thomson, ‘Phillips, Augustine’, *ODNB.*
[151] Will of Augustine Phillips 1605.
[152] Thomson, ‘Phillips, Augustine’, *ODNB*.

as somewhat dismissive. But arms were still passed on to William in 1602 following his father's death and despite this attack.

These 'players' were not alone in their pursuit of arms. Town clerk Thomas Greene and Walter Jones were all granted their own arms during their lifetime. For these men, arms were the last piece in the puzzle, confirming rather than conferring the status they had worked hard to earn. There was also a sense of security from this form of recognition; arms and the title that went with it was passed down from father to son, thus bestowing gentility on the next generations to come. Although not an essential quality of new gentry status, a grant of arms was perhaps more of an aspirational characteristic. It provided further recognition of status for these new gentlemen and, as will be shown, a chance to publicly display it.

'The port, charge and countenance of a gentleman' [153]

The attributes considered above – of education, occupation, office-holding, wealth and arms – were all important to attainment of gentry status. But as Heal and Holmes write, gentility also 'came to depend upon the moral qualities of the individual, as well as his house and descent'.[154] Gentry status was, in many ways, defined by lifestyle, and this lifestyle could be achieved through the embodiment of specific values, especially surrounding civility, manners and authority.[155] These values were frequently connected to the ancient members of the gentry. But, increasingly, these ideals were followed and used by its newest members as a means of solidifying and demonstrating

[153] Harrison, *The Description of England,* pp. 113-4.
[154] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 277.
[155] Nicholas Cooper, 'Rank, Manners and Display: The Gentlemanly House 1500-1750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 12 (2002), p. 291.

their arrival into the ranks of gentry. Cooper's work demonstrates that these values were most frequently displayed through materiality and architecture. As will be shown, the ability to display gentry status was an essential tool for its newest members.

Both the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation awakened an interest in the humanist ethos of civility. The revival of interest in the stoic philosophers and classical statesmen, like Plato and Cicero, influenced contemporary thought and 'extended this humanistic argument into the perception that a true gentleman was independent from his social environment'.[156] Writers and poets such as Thomas Wyatt advocated withdrawal from the world, prescribing contemplation, reflection and scholarship for the ultimate gentry lifestyle.[157] Appropriate activities for the contemplative gentleman included the writing of 'extensive memoirs, diaries and genealogical notes'.[158] A number of the new gentlemen considered in this chapter readily undertook such pursuits, including Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Greene who passed much of their time recording personal accounts or writing reflectively.[159] Cooper argues that this contemplative withdrawal was facilitated by architecture, especially in the rural context. As the family looked to separate themselves from those below them, including their servants, the house was adapted to facilitate this hierarchical segregation. Smaller, more intimate spaces were used for dining and hosting, with the kitchen and service rooms increasingly separated from spaces of sociability. Although (as discussed in chapter two) Cooper's model cannot necessarily be applied to many of the new gentry town houses considered in this study, his

[156] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 277.
[157] *Ibid.*
[158] *Ibid.*, p. 278.
[159] For works produced by Gabriel Harvey, see Scott-Warren, 'Harvey, Gabriel', *ODNB.* For the personal writings of Thomas Greene, see 'Three leaves of the diary of Thomas Greene, town-clerk of Stratford-upon-Avon' (1614-1615), SBT BRU15/13/27-29.

arguments do prompt us to consider the connection between lifestyle, status and interior spaces, and the importance of values in the construction of gentry identity for these men.

Civility was also concerned with authority, order, and governance. Despite this idealistic desire for withdrawal and privacy, Heal and Holmes highlight that gentlemen were in fact 'not born and bred for a private and retired life, but for society and action in the commonwealth'.[160] This came through in social practice and is especially evident in the urban context. Facilitated by increased access to education, starting at grammar school, and a renewed focus on humanism, gentlemen were expected to pay attention to 'public duty and statesmanship'.[161] As seen, new members of the gentry like Walter Jones were increasingly occupying high public offices. In towns and cities, members of the urban elite occupied positions such as mayor and treasurer. The role of the gentry 'statesman' became more about governing and detachment from those classes below, but with these new roles, there came an increased pressure to socialise with those of the same peer group. In this way, sociability, manners and hospitality remained a vital element of gentility.

Edward Alleyn wrote detailed accounts of his household and lifestyle between the years of 1617 and 1622. Among other things, these diaries list numerous examples of hosting and entertaining, frequently describing attendees and even the food that was consumed. Christmas of 1618 was an especially social period for the actor and theatre entrepreneur. On the 25 December, he entered the note:

[160] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 282.
[161] Cooper, 'Rank, Manners and Display', p. 294.

> christmas daye the pore dind & supt with us[162]

This may refer to the hosting of school pupils (also known as pensioners) of his recently founded charitable college at Dulwich. Charity and hospitality went hand-in-hand for members of the gentry.[163] Providing food for those in need was a universally acknowledged responsibility of the 'better sort' and was practised across the country, especially at times of celebration like Christmas. As Heal and Holmes comment, 'in the general pattern of gentry living hospitality probably meant above all the relatively routine entertainment of one's peer group and extended kin'.[164] Over the next two days, Alleyn continued to perform his role as host. On 26 December 1618 he recorded:

> ther dind with us 21 persons as pare: Lane : Steevens : ward : under-wood : canterburie : ottey with ther wifes : wido matthew : & Her daughter : wydoe Jones : widoe beck : Hen Collins : bygroue & the miller with divers children

Then again on 27 December:

> Ther dined with us to daye mr briges & His friend Jo: Lewis, Jo: staple, Rich: griffon: Will: perrie, Tho. Hamon the thacher His neighbour goodman pagett redman Jo: boger Cowe Leech with ther wides & starkey[165]

This level of hosting, even over the festive period, would not go unnoticed by guests or his local community. His success in the stage and business was well-known and he had recently invested in a significant amount of land, founded his own school and set himself up as a benefactor who would be remembered for centuries to come. His lifestyle now had to match his hard-won status. Not one for withdrawing from society, his civility and manners could be demonstrated through generosity and hospitality.

Having obtained a classical education, wealth, property and established a household, new gentlemen could now adhere to the gentry lifestyle and values. Significantly,

[162] Transcription of Alleyn's accounts in Young, *The History of Dulwich College*, p. 119.
[163] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p.286
[164] *Ibid.*, p. 288.
[165] Transcription of Alleyn's Accounts found in Young, 'Edward Alleyn's Diary', p. 119.

traditional ideals of gentility could be 'realised' and displayed through material investment. It was not enough to simply adhere to these obligations and characteristics, members of the new gentry had to *show* how they met them. As Harrison wrote, a new gentleman 'is able and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman'.[166] Clothing, heraldry, funeral monuments and conspicuous consumption could all be used to demonstrate ideals of gentility. But perhaps the most popular means of displaying gentility was through the home. This was certainly the case for new gentlemen. But they also used their homes as a form of identity construction, as another attribute of gentry status. Indeed, the house was the site of these nexus of factors – the occupation, wealth generation and 'credit', the household's moral virtues, the networking and hospitality with peers and subordinates, and the display and the materialisation of gentry identity. The very ability to purchase and use a home in this way clearly indicated a certain level of status.

Shakespeare, a new gentleman

William Shakespeare provides an excellent case study for an investigation into new gentry status given that, as will be shown, he fulfilled many of the requirements considered above. The aim of this thesis is not to present a complete biography of the playwright, but it is necessary to consider certain aspects of his life in order to understand precisely what about his circumstances earned him the title of new gentleman. Through his example, we can see how reputation, education, occupation, wealth and a grant of arms worked *together* to construct the gentry status that Shakespeare further secured and reflected through his home, New Place.

[166] Harrison, *The Description of England,* pp. 113-114.

Reputation and credit

By 1597, Shakespeare's reputation among the Stratford elite was growing. This is evident through the series of letters passed between Richard Quiney and other leading citizens. In October 1598, Quiney wrote to Shakespeare requesting his assistance securing a loan of £30, assuring him that he would not 'loase creddytt' were he to do so.[167] For Bearman, these letters demonstrate Shakespeare's 'creditworthiness' among his fellow townsmen, providing 'clear evidence that Quiney saw Shakespeare as a man of some substance and influence'.[168] Early modern society was built on trust, making Quiney's ability to rely on Shakespeare valuable to his status within the town. As Muldrew notes, 'because credit was based on words, it could be communicated much more rapidly'.[169] This made Quiney and Sturley's written recognition of Shakespeare's ability to provide financial aid even more powerful to the recognition of his reputation and status in the town. How he built this reputation among men like Quiney and Sturley was key to his overall recognition as a gentleman. The qualifications used by these individuals to construct their own new gentry status were the same as Shakespeare himself would need to follow.

Given that Shakespeare chose to purchase his family home in Stratford, his standing among the Stratford elite is significant, and this included the landed gentry. As Stanley Wells observes, 'Shakespeare had direct and well-documented points of contact with three generations of the Combes, a prominent Warwickshire family of wealthy Protestant landowners closely associated with Stratford-Upon-Avon throughout his

[167] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 81.
[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8; see also Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 116.
[169] Muldrew, 'The Culture of Credit', p. 154.

lifetime and beyond'.[170] These documented connections include Shakespeare's recorded involvement in the Welcombe land enclosure (which also concerned the Combes), as well as gifting his sword to Thomas Combe in his last will and testament.[171] Although we do not know the extent of Shakespeare's relationship with this family, the bequest of a sword – given from one gentleman to another – inferred a perceived equality (or at least equivalence) of status. It also reflected Shakespeare's standing among the local gentry. In 1596, Thomas Combe (senior) purchased a property known as The College, not far from New Place but grander in scale.[172] Shakespeare's connection with the Combes might have been publicly declared through hosting and socialising this prominent family, adding further to his public image and reputation as a member of the gentry. His association with the local landed gentry would have only enhanced his own claims of gentility within Stratford, and suggest that he was serious about building this status in his hometown.

Background

The Shakespeares had a background in farming, trade and civic office, but they also had tenuous links to ancient gentry lineage. Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, came from a prosperous, free-holding, farming family in Wilmcote. She was the youngest daughter of Robert Arden, rumoured to be 'of the ancient house of the Ardens of Park Hall'.[173] This connection would prove significant for Shakespeare's own gentry claims,

[170] Stanley Wells, 'A close family connection: the Combes', in Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle*, p. 149.
[171] Wells, 'A close family connection', pp. 157-160.
[172] *Ibid.,* pp. 155-156.
[173] David Fallow, 'His father John Shakespeare', in Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle*, p. 27. Although there is little to suggest that Mary did descend from this important West Midlands family, Michael Wood claims there is some evidence that implies Mary's descent from Thomas Arden, 'one of several younger sons of Walter Arden of Park Hall'. Thomas possessed land at Wilmcote and Snitterfield, with his son Richard inheriting both. It is believed that Mary's father, Robert Arden, was this

contributing to the 'ancient' lineage traditionally required from the heralds during their visitations.[174] Mary married John Shakespeare, the son of one her father's tenants, in about 1557. The couple moved to Stratford and went on to have eight children (four surviving to adulthood).[175] Germaine Greer implies that Mary Arden married beneath her, but Michael Wood attests that both Mary's and John's stories were one of social mobility.[176] By the end of her life, Mary Arden had gone from the daughter of a prosperous husbandman, to gentry status through the claims of her husband and son. As with Elizabeth Quiney, Mary Arden's background, reputation, work and position as matriarch of the household would have played a significant part in the reputation and status of her son, as well as the family's successful grant of arms.[177]

John Shakespeare was born in about 1530 to a tenant farmer from Snitterfield. He presumably undertook a glover's apprenticeship in Stratford and by 1552 he was living at, or at least owned property on Henley Street.[178] John held a number of civic roles before being elected alderman in 1565, high bailiff in 1568, and chief alderman in 1571.[179] He also had a prosperous career through his occupations as a tanner, glover and wool trader, or 'brogger'.[180] By the 1570s, he owned a number of properties in Stratford, two houses on Henley Street and one on Greenhill Street, as well as land outside the town at Over Ingon Meadow.[181] In 1568 he unsuccessfully petitioned for a

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son, making him a descendent of this prominent family, Michael Wood, 'His mother Mary Shakespeare' in Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle*, pp. 14-15.

[174] Sutherland claims that Shakespeare was very much away of his mother's potential connection to the ancient Arden family, 'The Grant of Arms', pp. 284-285.

[175] Wood, 'His mother', pp. 21-22.

[176] Greer, *Shakespeare's Wife*, pp. 31-32.

[177] See Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms', pp. 284-285 for a discussion of Shakespeare's interest in his potential ancient lineage. This is reflected in Shakespeare's attempts to have his father's coat of arms quartered with the Arden arms, p. 381.

[178] Fallow, 'His father', p. 27.

[179] Robert Bearman, 'John Shakespeare: A Papist or Just Penniless?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 56 (2005), p. 413.

[180] Fallow, 'His father', p. 26.

[181] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money,* p. 9.

grant of arms, yet in 1596 this petition was renewed and arms were granted.[182] Much attention has been paid to John Shakespeare's financial troubles and potential 'fall from grace' during the 1570s and 1580s, which reportedly resulted in his retirement from public life and loss of reputation.[183] Yet, his credentials as a gentleman were reiterated by herald William Dethwick in the 1590s, claiming that John 'hath borne magistracy and was Justice of peace at Stratford upon Avon'; his gentility, and therefore his son's, was upheld. [184]

Education

Little is known of William Shakespeare's education. Unlike Gabriel Harvey and Walter Jones, there is no record of Shakespeare ever having attended university so his gentry status could not be constructed using this specific qualification. As the son of a burgess, he most likely attended the King's New Grammar School in Stratford-upon-Avon from the age of seven or eight to around the age of fourteen, where he would have received the beginnings of a classical education based on the principles of humanism.[185] From there, Shakespeare by-passed university and went straight into some form of occupation. We know that he married Anne Hathaway in 1582, but whether he learnt the skills of a glover or brogger from his father or undertook another apprenticeship elsewhere is less clear. The couple had three children (Judith, Hamnet and Susannah) in quick succession, making Shakespeare the head of a household

[182] Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms, p. 380.
[183] There are a number of debates surrounding the life of John Shakespeare, relating especially to his wealth, religion, attempts at gaining gentry status, and, most prominently, his alleged fall from grace during the 1570s & 1580s – see Fallow, 'His father', pp. 26-49; Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms', pp. 379-385; Bearman, 'John Shakespeare', pp. 411-433.
[184] Ailes, 'Shakespeare and the Heralds' Visitations', p. 120.
[185] For more details on Shakespeare's potential education at the grammar school in Stratford, see Park Honan, 'To Grammar School' in *Shakespeare: A Life*, pp. 43-59; Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place,* pp. 77-80.

from a relatively young age. Only two children survived, with Hamnet not reaching adulthood. If we follow Lena Orlin's assertions that Anne Hathaway held a similar role in the Shakespeare household as Elizabeth in the Quiney family, she too would have played a significant part in her husband's reputation and status at an early stage. Like Quiney, she likely possessed her own credit, separate from Shakespeare's, and there is some evidence of her own entrepreneurial activity as a money-lender within the town.[186]

Occupation

Shakespeare had one of the most famous literary/theatrical careers in history, and his occupational successes led him to gentry status as well as notoriety. He reportedly began visiting London during the 1580s and, at some point, joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men as a player, a position that he upheld for much of his career.[187] Shakespeare first appeared as a playwright in 1592 when pamphleteer Robert Greene notoriously referred to him as 'an upstart Crow'.[188] His subsequent success in playwriting is well-documented, and the income and associations he received through this occupation, as well as through patronage and investment, are of significance to his gentry status. In 1593, Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* was published in London by Richard Field, another Stratford man. The poem is dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, an extremely wealthy and well-connected courtier. Southampton acted as Shakespeare's patron for a number of years, and, as

[186] Orlin reveals that Anne Shakespeare was owed money by Thomas Whittington in his will of 1601, 'Anne by Indirection', p. 448.
[187] Shakespeare was 'listed as an actor on documents in 1592, 1598, 1603 and 1608'. Bill Bryson, *Shakespeare: The World As A Stage* (London, 2007), p. 80.
[188] Robert Greene quoted in Bryson, *Shakespeare*, p. 80.

demonstrated, the patronage and attention of such a powerful courtier was valuable to a writer's career and reputation.[189] This patronage provided financial as well as reputational security, meaning Shakespeare could participate in both the traditional gentry pursuit of poetry, and the 'new' commercially profitable form of writing for the playhouse.[190]

Wealth

Like many new gentlemen, Shakespeare was a man of dual occupation, but the theatre was where he made the majority of his associations and financial investments.[191] His role in the Lord Chamberlain's Men was one of actor, writer and investor.[192] In 1594, he bought shares in the company, costing him between £50 and £80, a venture that would eventually provide an income of about £120 a year.[193] In 1599, when the company moved from the Theatre in Shoreditch to the Globe in Southwark, Shakespeare joined Burbage, Heminges and Condell and purchased shares in the new playhouse for around £100; an investment that would have earned him an estimated £80 a year by 1605.[194] In 1608, he invested again, this time in the Blackfriars Theatre along with his friends, the Burbages, costing him a further £100. The return on such investments, as seen in the case of Edward Alleyn, could be lucrative and would have gone a long way to making Shakespeare a wealthy man.

[189] The Earl of Southampton allegedly gifted the staggering sum of £1, 000 to Shakespeare, which would have significantly aided his business and property investments at this time, although we have no way of corroborating this report. Bryson, *Shakespeare*, pp. 85-88.
[190] Gieskes, *Representing the Professions*, pp. 216-225.
[191] For Shakespeare's major investments, see table 4.1 in Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 119.
[192] At the start of the seventeenth-century, the company might take as much as £10 per performance at Blackfriars indoor theatre during the winter months. Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p.149
[193] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 147.
[194] *Ibid.,* p. 104.

The associations forged through his theatre investments were also significant to his status. Shakespeare appears in Augustine Phillips's will with other Globe shareholders, and in his own will, Shakespeare bequeathed 'to my fellows Iohn Hemnges, Richard Burbage & Henry Cundell xxvjs and viijd A peece to buy them Ring(es)'.[195] These men with whom Shakespeare was professionally, financially and socially connected all claimed new gentry status.

Outside of the theatre, Shakespeare invested heavily in his hometown. Unlike his father, he did not hold any public office, so his associations, reputation and credit among the Stratford elite came, in part, from John Shakespeare's existing civic connections. In addition to the properties owned or leased by his father, which he would eventually inherit (including the house on Henley Street leased to Lewis Hiccox), Shakespeare built his own property portfolio.[196] As Bearman notes, 'the purchase of land was the much preferred option for the investment of surplus capital for men aspiring to enter the ranks of the local gentry', and, like Edward Alleyn and Walter Jones, we see numerous examples of this among the new gentry.[197] In 1597, it is estimated that Shakespeare purchased New Place for around £120.[198] In 1602 he acquired 107 acres of land costing £320, followed by securing possession of a copyhold of land opposite his gardens at New Place in Chapel Lane.[199] In 1605, we see his involvement in the Corporation's tithes at Old Stratford, Welcombe and Bishopton, for which he paid the significant sum of £440 and which would bring returns

[195] Will of William Shakespeare 1616, TNA PROB 1/4. Transcribed and published in Honigmann and Brock (eds.), *Playhouse wills*, pp. 105-109.
[196] Bearman suggests that, from about 1600 onwards, the rental income from the Shakespeare's house on Henley Street would have been about £2 a year, if not less, but that Lewis Hiccox may have made a large entry fine when he became tenant. Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 86.
[197] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[198] See the 'Introduction' of this thesis for a more detailed discussion of the purchase of New Place.
[199] For information on Shakespeare significant investment in 107 acres of land see Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, pp. 105-114.

of at least £40 per year.[200] Over a period of eight years, Shakespeare had invested a total of £900 on land and property (including his shares in the Globe), a considerable amount in such a short period.[201] Evidently, this was a prosperous time for Shakespeare, one which saw his credit and reputation grow. Following this period of spending, Bearman argues that Shakespeare took measures to 'protect his hard-won investment income', including his potential involvement in the malting trade as a means of supplementing his income.[202] He did, however, make one final investment in 1613 with his purchase of the Blackfriars Gatehouse, London, for £140.[203] The nature of these investments and the sums involved align with what we have seen so far from our new gentleman. Particularly significant, however, is the fact that Shakespeare chose to invest in property in his hometown, in contrast to the known pattern among his London theatrical associates.

Although it is difficult to comment on Shakespeare's worth and the income gained from his various occupations, properties, land and inheritance, the investments made throughout his career suggest that he received a good income.[204] Despite complications and complexities surrounding Shakespeare's finances, 'he undeniably died a man of considerable means'.[205] Shakespeare's will does not cover ten pages,

[200] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 135. The issue of the Stratford tithes is complex and spans a number of years, involving a number of Stratford's elite men, for more explanation see pp. 119-122 and pp. 135-145.
[201] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[202] *Ibid.*, p. 131. Here, Bearman addresses claims from one local source that Shakespeare may have supplemented his income through the sale of malt, although he concludes that 'we cannot be certain to what extent and over what period Shakespeare remained in the malting trade', p. 133.
[203] See table 4.1 in Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 119.
[204] Bearman estimates that as well as his writer's and actor's salary, his theatre investments, his property and land investments, Shakespeare most likely earned other income, such as through the sale of malt and odd tasks like the 44 s shillings he was paid 'in gold' to help make an elaborate emblem for the Earl of Rutland. Many of these income streams, however, remain unrecorded. Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 153.
[205] *Ibid.*, p.174

unlike Daniel Baker's last will and testament.[206] But compared to many in the town, the money, goods and property left by Shakespeare were not insignificant.[207] Against his fellow actors and shareholders (excluding Alleyn and Henslowe), Shakespeare's will comes out on top, with men such as Augustine Phillips and Henry Condell bequeathing sums of around £100 plus land and property.[208] As seen with most new gentlemen, there would have been periods of financial tension, of debt and legal disputes, that would have put a strain on his resources and income, but, as Bearman maintains, records indicate that 'Shakespeare's […] career was not characterised by […] crises, rather by a steady rise to a position of more adequate sufficiency'.[209] Shakespeare was earning enough money to maintain his family's position in Stratford, and his increasing wealth and occupational success meant he could elevate his status even further among the Stratford community. As this thesis will demonstrate, New Place played a vital part in this process.

Arms

It is commonly argued that William Shakespeare applied for a coat of arms on behalf of his father. The application was accepted by herald Sir William Dethwick in 1596 on the grounds of Mary Arden's supposed connection to the ancient Arden family as well as the credentials offered by John Shakespeare as:

> A Justice of the Peace and […] Bayliffe the Q. officer and cheffe of the towne of Stratford upon Avon xv or xvi years past.[210]

[206] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money,* p. 163.
[207] *Ibid.,* p. 122.
[208] *Ibid.*, p. 165.
[209] *Ibid.,* p. 22. See full text for more information on documents relating to Shakespeare's legal disputes, money lending/borrowing and involvement in complex financial investments such as the Stratford tithes.
[210] A note from one of two original drafts of grant of arms to John Shakespeare c.1596, quoted in Ailes, 'Shakespeare and the Heralds' Visitations', p. 120. The original document is held by The College of Arms under the reference Record Shakespeare Draft Grant of Arms 1 (formerly MS Vincent 157, no.

It is estimated that these arms would have cost Shakespeare in the region of £10 - £20.[211] For this price, the family were presented with a crest consisting of a gold shield cut diagonally by a black spear, topped with a falcon supporting a gold spear (fig 4).[212] The following year Shakespeare further cemented his family's gentry status through the purchase and potential renovation of New Place, where he could have proudly displayed his family's shield.

In 1602, herald Robert Brooke challenged 23 grants of arms made by Dethwick, including the arms granted to John Shakespeare. According to Brooke, in addition to the coat of arms being granted to an 'unworthy' individual, they too closely resembled the arms of another ancient gentry family. Issue with Shakespeare's own occupation is also evident through references made in the challenges to Dethwick. Brooke accused his fellow herald of granting arms to all and sundry, even 'Shakespeare the Player'.[213] As seen, some heralds took issue with the qualifications offered by new gentlemen, especially if they were a member of the theatre profession. Such complaints were not unusual, but their presence in written reports reveals the kind of requirements expected of would-be claimants from existing members of the gentry. Given that John Shakespeare died in 1601, a year before these challenges were issued, Dethwick's response to these attacks was not only a defence of his initial

23) https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/grant-arms-john-shakespeare-draft-1 [Accessed 18.05.2022].

[211] Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, p. 71.

[212] Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 'Shakespeare Coat of Arms', https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/william-shakespeare/shakespeare-coat-arms/ [Accessed 18.05.2022].

[213] Ailes, 'Shakespeare and the Heralds' Visitations', p. 108. A page from a booklet illustrating arms granted or confirmed by Dethwick contains the arms granted to the Shakespeares, along with the description 'Shakespeare the Player by Garter'. Other critical comments alongside arms can be found in the same booklet, which can be found reproduced in Cheeseman, 'Grants and Confirmations', pp. 90-91.

ruling, but of the right of William Shakespeare to use these arms. With the loss of Hamnet, Shakespeare no longer had a male heir onto whom he could bestow these arms – a significant blow to the family's lineage, as well as a devastating personal loss. Yet, even without the ability to bestow this heraldry onto future generations, arms were clearly significant to Shakespeare and his gentry claims, as in late 1599/early 1600 he approached the heralds to have his family's coat of arms quartered with the ancient Arden family arms.[214] There is no evidence that this second application was granted, given that the arms granted to John Shakespeare appear on William's funeral monument in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.[215] Yet, the very fact that Shakespeare himself applied for his shield to be quartered shows that he took heraldry, and indeed lineage, seriously in his pursuit of gentry recognition.[216]

Conclusion

Shakespeare thus became a gentleman in his own lifetime, and was clearly a man of some standing among his local community at the time of his death. He was part of a diverse social group, from mercer Abraham Sturley to theatre magnates like the Burbages. A handful of these new gentlemen chose to apply for their own coat of arms, others were content to be considered gentlemen within their immediate community. But some men, like Walter Jones and Edward Alleyn, sought to significantly elevate their status and did so by amassing substantial wealth. As a geographically mobile individual, Shakespeare was negotiating his status among Londoners, as well as the elite of Stratford. Ultimately, he chose to consolidate and display this newly acquired

[214] See Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money*, pp. 74-6
[215] *Ibid.*
[216] Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms', pp. 379-385.

status in his hometown through the purchase and potential renovation of New Place. In what follows, I demonstrate how investment in the domestic sphere was one of the most significant qualifications of new gentry status. Through the building, alteration, decoration and furnishing of their homes, new gentlemen were not only able to demonstrate their credit, reputation and gentry status, they were able to navigate their position within this emerging group

CHAPTER TWO

NEW GENTRY HOUSES

This chapter focuses on the form and façade of new gentry homes in the urban environment. Through the use of surviving houses belonging to members of the new gentry and urban elite, it considers how men of this level built or purchased houses to match their status, and how these properties might be altered and adapted in the process of self-fashioning. Inevitably, I consider the phenomenon of the Great Rebuilding: a period of increased building activity extending across England during the years Shakespeare lived at New Place. I reflect on how this transformation played out in the urban context, as well as how new gentlemen like William Shakespeare participated in it. Throughout this chapter, I use a series of extant case studies to demonstrate what was possible and popular for new gentry patrons looking to cement their status through building in early modern towns and cities.

The New Gentry and the 'Great Rebuilding'

Between 1607 and 1613, lawyer and new gentleman Walter Jones invested his considerable wealth in the construction of a large home in the Oxfordshire countryside. Chastleton House (fig.5) was built in the 'modern' square-block, or compact, style.[1] Its exterior, although simple in appearance, was the embodiment of symmetry and order, reflecting the most innovative early modern designs, not dissimilar to those found in popular architectural treatises such as John Shute's *First and Chief Grounds of*

[1] For more information on the form and façade of Chastleton House see Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680* (London, 1999), pp. 102-5 and pp. 160-3.

Architecture (1563).[2] Constructed in stone, with a considerable amount of glazing, Chastleton House bears resemblance to the great aristocratic house, Hardwick Hall, although is somewhat more modest in scale and embellishment. Unlike medieval rural houses, new gentry properties such as Chastleton were outward-facing, so their owners might survey the surrounding land and gardens, rather than gazing 'internally', at their own courtyards and outbuildings.[3]

Chastleton was a mixture of new and old.[4] Beyond its modern facade, the house maintained a sense of traditional internal hierarchy, through the inclusion of a great hall and full sequence of state rooms spreading across two floors. Today, a little parlour follows on from the great hall, with a great parlour located beyond that. Climbing one of two large newel staircases, an elaborately decorated great chamber can be accessed on the floor above, flowing into a sequence of stately guest chambers.[5] The second floor houses a long gallery with an impressive barrel-vaulted ceiling, constructed for the purpose of exercise, entertaining, and the display of art.[6] This modern house fulfilled all the requirements expected of its educated gentry owner, providing a space for business, leisure, hosting and, significantly, display.[7] From its form to its function, its exterior to its interiors, Chastleton House was an

[2] John Shute referenced in Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven, 2010), pp. 74-75.
[3] For a discussion on the classical and symmetrical building techniques favoured among gentry buildings, and what this can tell us about their tastes and education, see Nicholas Cooper, 'Rank, Manners and Display: The Gentlemanly House 1500-1750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 12 (2002), pp. 291-310.
[4] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 162.
[5] For more information on the significance of room sequences to status in gentry houses, including Chastleton House, see Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 294-299.
[6] Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Galleries', *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (New York, 2008), pp. 226-261.
[7] Key texts relating to gentry houses and the Great Rebuilding include: Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Yale, 1978); Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*; Maurice Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (London, 2007).

exemplary exercise in self-fashioning from a man who had only recently joined the ranks of gentry.

Yeoman and new gentleman Richard Smalbroke similarly invested in the construction of a new home, although of a very different style and scale.[8] Blakesley Hall (fig.6) was built c.1590 in the rural area of Yardley, just outside Birmingham. Blakesley was a yeoman's house, used by the Smalbroke family for business, the production and storage of goods, as well as for gentlemanly pursuits such as hosting. Timber-framed, with its wooden beams arranged in an attractive herringbone pattern, the exterior of Blakesley Hall projects a message of wealth and comfort. In its layout and types of rooms, it follows the 'ideal' plan set out by early modern writers such as Gervase Markham some years later in *The English Husbandman* (1613).[9] Markham guides the 'honest plain country man' through his 'new' (but spatially traditional) vision of the model yeoman's hall-house. This concept includes a great (single storeyed) hall, with a service range (featuring kitchen, buttery, milk house and dairy house) at one end for the production and preparation of food, and a parlour for dining and hosting at the other end (fig.7).[10] Blakesley follows a similar plan. Although it differs from the symmetrical plan of Chastleton House, as Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson note, 'the arrangement of its chambers suggests what was considered desirable for large rural houses'.[11] Despite their differing functions, Richard Smalbroke and Walter Jones chose to build new houses to demonstrate their status as new gentlemen,

[8] Marie Fogg, *The Smalbroke Family of Birmingham* (West Bromwich, 2009).
[9] Gervase Markham referenced in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* (London, 2017), p. 30.
[10] Gervase Markham, *The English husbandman. The first part: contayning the knowledge of the true nature of every soyle within his kingdom…Together with the art of planting, grafting and gardening* (London, 1613). On fig.7, 'A' refers to the great hall, 'B' to the parlour, and 'K' to the kitchen which is flanked by other service rooms. Accessed via *The Project Gutenberg E Book* (2007) https://www.gutenberg.org/files/22973/22973-h/22973-h.htm#Chap_F_II [Accessed 21.05.2022].
[11] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 30.

combining a mixture of 'modern' architecture, with traditional hierarchical layouts. Importantly for this study, they represent the type of building activity that was expected of gentlemen. Thus, in many ways, Jones and Smalbroke represent the model new gentlemen in terms of domestic building, providing the blueprint from which we can compare and contrast other new gentry builders from the same period.

Traditional scholarship tells us that Chastleton House and Blakesley Hall were built during a period known as the 'Great Rebuilding', labelled by W G Hoskins in 1953 to reflect a so-called 'revolution' in building that occurred in England between 1570 and 1640.[12] According to Harrison and other early modern writers, the English built landscape changed dramatically during the sixteenth century, with people investing more in the furnishing, building or adaptation of their homes.[13] Modern scholars have since recognised that this boom in building occurred at different times: starting in the medieval period, developments in building often occurred in phases and to varying degrees across different parts of the country.[14] Transformations seemingly occurred at almost every level of society. At a higher level, the aristocracy and landed gentry built sprawling country piles and symmetrical prodigy houses - as seen, to a certain

[12] W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640', *Past and Present,* Vol. 4 (1953), pp. 44-59.

[13] William Harrison, writing in the 1570s, pronounced that 'every man almost is a builder'. Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classical Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life* (1577), edited by Georges Edelen (Toronto/London, 1994), p. 279.

[14] Subsequent scholarship on the Great Rebuilding has overhauled many of Hoskins's original arguments relating to chronology and geography, but also cause and effect. It is generally acknowledged that the Great Rebuilding occurred in phases, over a number of years, perhaps starting as early as the late medieval period, continuing through to the end of the seventeenth century. It is also believed that the Great Rebuilding was regional in nature, occurring at different times and in different ways depending upon the geographical area. See Robert Machin, "The Great Rebuilding: A Reassessment", *Past and Present,* Vol. 77 (1977), pp. 33-56; Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses: A Study of Traditional Farmhouses and Cottages* (London, 1975); Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*; Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England: Revolutions in Architectural Taste* (London, 1994); Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England*; Orlin, *Locating Privacy*; Matthew Johnson, *English Houses, 1300-1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (Harlow, 2010).

extent, at Chastleton. While at the 'lower' vernacular level, merchants, tradesmen and yeomen were building fashionable but functional houses like Blakesley, or else were adapting existing properties.[15]

The motivations and impacts of this boom in building varied in nature, but the results are well known.[16] Importantly, as Hamling comments, 'everywhere new or improved buildings pronounced the status and wealth of their owners'.[17] In this respect, architectural historians like Mark Girouard and Nicholas Cooper, and archaeologists such as Matthew Johnson, have paid increasing attention to the socio-cultural aspects of this building phenomenon, focusing on individual buildings, their owners and the wider context within which they were built.[18] Through this approach, the focus shifts to how people used, experienced, and lived in their homes. As I will demonstrate, members of the new gentry invested in their properties in interesting and significant ways. Often, the homes of such men played an essential role in their self-fashioning as new gentlemen; a valuable piece in that complex puzzle of status construction and consolidation explored in the previous chapter.

Self-fashioning thus played a part in the design and adaption of early modern homes. For Cooper, gentry houses were expressions of their owners' aspirations, education

[15] Key texts relating to gentry houses and the Great Rebuilding include: Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* and Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry.* Important texts referring to the Great Rebuilding at a vernacular level include Hoskins's original study 'The Rebuilding of Rural England', and more recently, Johnson, *English Houses.*

[16] Developments included an increase in stone or brick buildings; the insertion of staircases, chimneys and windows; the closure of the 'open' hall; the separation of service spaces from higher status rooms; an increase in the use of specialised rooms and so on. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England', pp. 46-50.

[17] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, p. 68.

[18] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*; Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry;* Johnson, *English Houses;* Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England*. Some of the social influences considered in these studies are the social relationships that existed within the household (Girouard), the rise of the humanism and the influence of education (Cooper), the impact of the Reformation (Howard) and the enclosure of the house aligning with the enclosure of land (Johnson).

and civility.[19] In this way, he views members of the gentry as architects, actively participating in the design of their houses. But the gentry were not alone in this pursuit. Johnson looks at the middling status and activities of owners at the vernacular, 'provincial' level:

> […] moving through the English countryside, people of all social classes, from landless labourers to commentators of gentry and aristocratic levels, would have known how to understand a house's social position from its outward appearance, and would have made quite nuanced judgements about the occupants of the house from the evidence of what they saw.[20]

There was a shared language of architecture in early modern England, just as there was a shared understanding of social order. Most people were in some way aware of their position in society, and, according to Johnson, this awareness translated into the home. He asserts that middling members of society, although not quite architects, were at least aware of how they might use their homes to construct and display their individual identity using a language that was commonly recognised. As discussed, the members of the urban elite and new gentry considered for this study fall somewhere between Cooper's and Johnson's owners. These men were aware of their newly acquired status, they had the money to display it through material investment, yet few had the space, desire or even wealth to design and build new country houses. Like their middling counterparts, many new gentlemen built and occupied houses among their immediate and local community.

The investments made by Jones and Smalbroke in the creation of their homes represent the type of building activity new gentlemen *could* become involved in and *how* this activity might be used to reflect their newly acquired status. As mentioned, these men provide a blueprint for the new gentry house. In their apparent adherence

[19] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry;* Cooper, "Rank, Manners and Display".
[20] Johnson, *English Houses,* p. 133.

to contemporary commentary and advice, they show us what was expected from a 'modern' gentry home. They are important case studies for this thesis as they seemingly follow plans for the 'ideal' home. As will be shown, aspects and elements of these properties are visible to varying degrees in the houses discussed below. But, in practice, not all new gentlemen were able or willing to participate in the so-called Great Rebuilding in quite the same way.[21] Driven by the need for financial security and social maintenance, many new gentlemen did not have the means or necessarily the desire to construct country houses like Chastleton. The majority of the new gentlemen considered in this study, including Shakespeare himself, chose to invest in towns and cities, participating in the urban built environment in a variety of ways. In their domestic investments, these men were dictated by space and function, as well as by their status.

This chapter is therefore interested in how these new gentlemen were participating in rebuilding activities across England's towns and cities; in the sort of houses they were investing and living in, and, significantly, how they used this increase in activity to construct and display their newly acquired status. There is a lot to consider. Debates tend to be dichotomous in nature, focusing on chronology and context: urban versus rural, city versus town. But equal weight should be given to the range of house forms available and, significantly, the social diversity of owners. To add focus, I consider surviving buildings comparable to Shakespeare's own home, New Place, in different and not necessarily linear ways (see appx.1). Just as there was diversity among the new gentry, the same can be said of their houses. Chastleton House and Blakesley Hall demonstrate that there was a variety of ways in which new gentlemen could participate in the Great Rebuilding. This led to a diversity in building that is especially

[21] Michael Mascuch, 'Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity: The Ethos of British Autobiographers, 1600-1750' in *Social History,* Vol. 1 (1995), p. 45.

reflected in the case studies of this chapter. Some of these properties were owned by gentlemen, others by leading townsmen who could not quite call themselves gentry. Given the indistinct boundaries that existed between these two levels, a consideration of houses belonging to a wide range of individuals sheds further light on the different strategies employed by the gentry and the middling sort, as well as where they overlapped and intersected.

New Place, an urban property

William Shakespeare purchased New Place during this boom in building. Yet the house he bought and presumably altered does not follow traditional scholarship surrounding this phenomenon. Unlike Chastleton House and Blakesley Hall, New Place was neither 'new' nor rural. It was a late medieval, urban property, built in 1483 by gentleman Hugh Clopton (fig.8). As such, the original New Place underwent two defined phases of building: first, its medieval construction; second, Shakespeare's potential alterations over a century later. Clopton was a wealthy member of the gentry from a prominent Warwickshire family who found success as a merchant in London and eventually rose to the position of Lord Mayor of London in 1491.[22] He chose to build his 'grete house' in the heart of Stratford-upon-Avon, on the corner of Chapel Street and Chapel Lane in the hall-house plan favoured by the gentry elite at this time.[23]

[22] For biographical information on Hugh Clopton and his building of New Place, see: Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls, and William Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 30-63; William Mitchell, 'William Shakespeare's New Place: investing in, or inheriting a legacy?', *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* Vol. 53 (2019), pp. 66-87.

[23] Hugh Clopton's will of 1496, in which he referred to New Place as his 'grete house', quoted in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 31. This document was found and transcribed by the antiquarian scholar, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, and was subsequently published in his work *An Historical Account of New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Last Residence of Shakespeare* (London, 1864).

We can say more about the form of New Place than any other element of this lost building thanks to a series of archaeological excavations completed over several years.[24] We know that Shakespeare purchased a courtyard property, similar in style to those seen in prosperous merchant towns and cities discussed below. New Place had a wide street frontage, with a hall block set back from, but running parallel to the street, and a side range containing service spaces and domestic accommodation. Similar to Suckling House in Norwich, New Place was built around two outdoor spaces. The first was a courtyard surrounded by buildings on three sides, creating a cloister-like effect, with the fourth side likely lined by a short wall dividing the plot from the neighbouring building (now Nash's House). Positioned in the middle of this first courtyard was a well, one of two supplying the household with water (the other located in an entrance-passage).[25] As with many of the houses considered in this chapter, this courtyard originally served a commercial function, with the frontage likely used as shops and the cellars below for storage during Hugh Clopton's occupancy. The second, eastern space to the rear of the property may have served as a second courtyard or garden for leisure, cooking and medicine. Archaeologists also unearthed evidence of barns and other outbuildings in this section of the site, indicating that there may have been another entrance here to allow for the movement of animals in and

[24] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 204-212; pp. 215-221. The first excavations of New Place were undertaken by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps between 1862-3. His excavations and the work published from his findings contributed significantly to modern interpretation of Shakespeare's home, but it does appear as if elements of the site were cleared at this time. Further, as Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell highlight, Halliwell-Phillipps was working in the C19, when archaeology was in its infancy and 'many of the more subtle interpretative features that modern archaeologists record today were missing or misunderstood', p. 212. The site was then excavated again between 2009/10 and 2015 in the community-based archaeology project, 'Dig for Shakespeare'. During these excavations, modern archaeologists uncovered much of what we know about the site today. The findings of this project resulted in the publication *Finding Shakespeare's New Place* by Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell.

[25] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 41.

out of these buildings. Ultimately the property that Shakespeare purchased was both gentry *and* urban, and as a consequence, it hovers in a relatively unmarked territory of scholarship.

The rebuilding of England's towns and cities has been somewhat neglected in modern scholarship. Many of the developments highlighted by historians and archaeologists in relation to rural houses were not experienced in the same way or at the same time in the urban houses that form the focus of this study. Of the few studies that do centre on the urban Great Rebuilding, chronology, functionality and regional differences remain dominant issues.[26] Shakespeare's New Place underwent two distinct phases of building (up to the seventeenth century), and in what follows we see that many urban buildings followed similar chronologies. The work of Sarah Pearson and Chris King highlights that each town and city underwent their own, distinct phases of rebuilding.[27] King demonstrates that in the prosperous city of Norwich significant rebuilding activity can be seen as early as the fifteenth century, with various phases of building occurring over the course of the sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth century.[28] A layer of complexity, therefore, surrounds the chronology of urban rebuilding, which invariably depended on access to materials, local market, economic and social factors, alongside forces including plague and fire. In 1585, fire

[26] Key studies focusing specifically on urban buildings include Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London, 1997); Anthony Quiney, *Town Houses of Medieval Britain* (Singapore, 2003); Sarah Pearson, "Medieval Houses in English Towns: Form and Location", *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 40 (2009), pp.1–22; Sarah Pearson, "Rural and Urban Houses 1100-1500: 'urban Adaptation' Reconsidered" in Kate Giles and Chris Dyer (eds.) *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500* (Society for Medieval Archaeology: Leeds, 2005); Chris King, ''Closure' and the Urban Great Rebuilding in Early Modern Norwich', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 44 (2010), pp. 54-80; Chris King, 'The Interpretation of Urban Buildings: Power, Memory and Appropriation in Norwich Merchants' Houses, c. 1400-1660', *World Archaeology,* Vol. 41 (2009), pp. 471-488; Chris King, *Houses and Society in Norwich, 1350-1610: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (Suffolk, 2020).

[27] Sarah Pearson, 'Medieval Houses in English Towns: Form and Location', *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 40 (2009), pp.1-22; King, ''Closure' in Early Modern Norwich', p.61

[28] Chris King, ''Closure' in Early Modern Norwich', pp.54-6

ravaged the Cheshire town of Nantwich (made wealthy for its mining and salt trade), destroying many of its buildings, thus leading to a period of forced rebuilding for many of its inhabitants.[29] This was a familiar story for towns and cities up and down the country. Even Stratford-upon-Avon was tormented by fires in the 1590s, shortly before Shakespeare's purchase of New Place.[30] The significance of locality to these phases and types of rebuilding has resulted in a number of regionally focused studies that show the value of context to the study of buildings.[31]

Yet, the size and manorial layout of New Place set it aside from other houses in the locality. While we need to consider the regional context in which a property was built, we also need to look further afield to find properties truly similar and to gain a sense of the scale, meaning and significance of a house like New Place to the status of its owner. As discussed in chapter one, Shakespeare's purchase of New Place was a significant milestone in his journey towards gentry status. His family had secured a grant of arms, he was a fully established playwright and theatre entrepreneur, and over the next five years he was to make a number of substantial investments in land and property in and around Stratford-upon-Avon.[32] New Place was the site he selected as his family home and, as such, it was the place he chose to construct and cement his own identity and status.

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[29] Christopher R Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City 1450 – 1750* (Oxon, 2013), pp. 277-278.
[30] Fires in 1594 and 1595 caused extensive damage to the town. Alan Dyer writes: 'it was claimed that over 200 houses were destroyed and the total damage amounted to the then huge sum of £12,000. Alan Dyer, 'Crisis and Resolution: Government and Society in Stratford, 1540-1640', in Bearman (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996*, p. 95.
[31] Regional surveys include Roger Leech, *The Town House in Medieval and Early Modern Bristol* (Swindon, 2014); Nigel Baker, Pat Hughes and Richard K Morriss, *The Houses of Hereford 1200-1700* (Oxford, 2018); Helen Clarke, Sarah Pearson, Mavis Mate, Keith Parfitt, *Sandwich - 'The Completest Medieval Town In England: A study of the town and port from its origins to 1600* (Oxford, 2010); Alan Dyer, "Urban Housing: a documentary study of four Midland towns 1530-1700", *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* Vol. 15 (1981), pp. 207-218; King, ''Closure' Rebuilding in Early Modern Norwich', pp. 54-80.
[32] For a breakdown of Shakespeare's major investments, see table 4.1 in Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 119.

Form

Urban houses belonging to new gentlemen followed their own distinct trends and typologies, somewhat separate from their rural counterparts. Over the years, there have been numerous attempts to characterise and categorise the diverse forms these properties could take.[33] Yet, houses in this context were severely impacted by a number of specifically urban factors. In the busy towns and cities of early modern England, domestic buildings often served very different functions to houses found in the countryside. Urban houses were primarily dictated by space, or a lack thereof. As King comments, 'distinctive architectural solutions were found to adapt buildings to crowded urban conditions' such as 'usable attic spaces' and undercrofts for storage.[34] The 'traditional' tripartite arrangement of many rural manorial houses (based on a hall with service rooms at one end and a parlour at the other), could not always be accommodated in the same way in the urban context. Many urban medieval buildings, such as the shop or row houses discussed below, did not include a traditional open hall at all due to functional and spatial necessity.[35] Consequently, the long-established idea of 'closure' as central to this revolution in housing does not in fact apply to many urban buildings given that there was no open hall to enclose in the first place. Similarly, where a medieval open hall might be found in the urban environment these spaces

[33] William Pantin was among the first to apply a typology to urban buildings, splitting the urban buildings he had studied into properties that possessed halls running parallel to the street frontage, and those that ran at right-angles. Some years later, John Schofield characterised London houses based on how many rooms were present in the property. For Roger Leech, most townhouses fell into one of two broad groups: the shop house, with the ground floor reserved for commercial use and the floors above for domestic accommodation; and the hall house, where the property was spread out and built around a large open hall. Within these two groups, there was scope for huge diversity in form, making Leech's broad typology the most useful, not to mention flexible, way of thinking about urban buildings.
See W. A. Pantin, 'Medieval English Town-House Plans', *Medieval Archaeology*, Vols. 6–7, no. 1 (1962-3) pp. 202–39; Roger Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall: Historical Context and Merchant Culture in the Early Modern City', *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 31 (2000), pp. 1–10; John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (Yale, 2003).
[34] King, 'The Interpretation of Urban Buildings', p. 472.
[35] Sarah Pearson, 'Rural and Urban Houses'.

were often purposefully retained; their function might have changed, but their ceremonial significance remained.[36] Importantly, such scholarship highlights that the rebuilding of urban houses, especially those belonging to the elite, was characterised by retention as much as adaption and construction.

Construction

Churche's Mansion, Nantwich

Like Smalbroke and Jones, some members of the urban elite chose to construct new houses. These houses came in a variety of forms and reveal what was popular and possible for new gentlemen who were not constrained by an existing building. Each element of the home could be constructed to their exact requirements, revealing a great deal about the choices made by members of the new gentry. Wealthy land owner and merchant, Richard Churche, built his new house on the edge of Nantwich in about 1577. Somewhat removed from the town centre, it survived the fire of 1585 and remains fortuitously intact (though somewhat altered).[37] Churche came from a long line of prominent merchants and his family had numerous connections with the town, including its buildings.[38] Churche chose to construct his new house on Hospital Road,

[36] Studies focusing on the 'closure' and retention of the hall in urban buildings include Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, especially 'Chapter 4: The later medieval hall'; Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall', pp.1–10; and King, ''Closure' in Early Modern Norwich', pp. 54-80.

[37] For information on Churche's Mansion see James Hall, *A history of the town and parish of Nantwich, or Wich-Malbank, in the county palatine of Chester* (1883), pp. 124-125; 'Churche's Mansion', *Historic England* https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1039605 [Accessed 06.11.18]. At the time fieldwork was conducted for this project, Churche's Mansion was operating as an antiques shop. The below website contained a number of images of the property that were of particular use as at the time of my visit, as members of the general public were not permitted to take photographs whilst inside. 'The History of Churche's Mansion', *Adam's Antiques* https://www.churchesmansion.com/history.html [Accessed on 06.11.18].

[38] 46 High Street is among the other properties in Nantwich belonging to a member of the Churche family. It is believed that this property was built after the Great Fire of 1583 for Thomas Churche, brother of Richard Churche and a mercer. This property is also a large urban building featuring decorative

a strategic location as this was one of the main routes out of Nantwich towards London. This same location provided him with the opportunity to construct a property of significant scale.

Churche built his house in the new, symmetrical style most favoured by members of the gentry. Churche's Mansion (fig.9), as it is now known, is a three-storey property, built in a single block, and was originally surrounded by a small moat (which was more decorative than functional). On the ground floor, Churche's status as the head of a respected household was confirmed through the traditional, tripartite layout of the house which centred around a hall with service spaces at one end and a parlour at the other. Nonetheless, developments associated with the Great Rebuilding can also be discovered throughout this property. The hall is single-storeyed (not open to the roof) and the floor above possesses a number of large, separated spaces. Above the parlour and the service rooms are a series of chambers presumably used as spaces of sleeping or other domestic activities. The room above the kitchen, in the south east of the property, contains fragments of a finely decorated fireplace indicating it was a room of status. Two small spaces labelled today as the 'linen store' and the 'guard robe' surround either side of this fireplace. The existence of these intimate, smaller spaces such as closets follows the traditional narrative of increased separation, withdrawal and privacy within the household, especially found in houses of the rural gentry.[39]

studding and intricate external carvings. Jeremy Lake, *The Great Fire of Nantwich* (Nantwich, 1983), pp. 106-111.

[39] See Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 298-9 for more information on the privacy of gardrobes and closets, and their connection to privacy. See also Orlin's chapter on 'Closets', *Locating Privacy*, pp. 296-326.

Churche's Mansion demonstrates that gentry architectural trends were perhaps easier to accommodate in new houses. The double-pile form of this house quite obviously displayed Churche's taste for the new and fashionable (and his ability to afford it), as did the inclusion of fireplaces, glazing and the ceiled hall, allowing for a sequence of higher status rooms on the first-floor. This was a merchant's house in a prosperous town, and, despite its manorial layout and specialised rooms, it was also a building in which business was undertaken on a daily basis. This mansion would have been used for both networking and socialising, work and pleasure, all accommodated under one roof.[40]

Function and form were intrinsically linked in the houses of the urban elite, a trait which also applied to properties belonging to the new gentry. Cooper presents the idea that members of the gentry acted as their own architects and builders, demonstrating their education and civility through the design of their homes.[41] We might include Richard Churche in this group. He had the space and the money to build his house in the fashionable, gentry style. This was unusual for urban builders, but it perhaps shows Churche's aspirations to live like a member of the rural gentry, or, at least, to demonstrate his comparable status in an urban setting. Where possible, he seemed to follow gentry trends in building, yet he also built a house that was functional and located in the town where he worked. This was key to urban elite building. Similar to Wrightson's description of the 'gentleman-tradesman', these men took the elements of gentry living that suited their occupation and reputation, whilst maintaining the functionality required from their homes as places of work and business.[42] This was

[40] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home.*
[41] Cooper, 'Rank, Manners and Display', pp. 291-310.
[42] Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2000), p. 305.

perhaps easier to achieve when building a new house, but, as will be shown, some elements could be incorporated into existing buildings.

The Black and White House Museum, Hereford

The Black and White (B&W) House Museum in Hereford is a more typical example of the new townhouses constructed by members of the urban elite at the start of the seventeenth century. It was built as a row house, or shop house, by butcher John Jones in about 1621 (fig.10).[43] Row houses were the most common house type in early modern towns, including Stratford-upon-Avon. They were built over a number of storeys, on narrow plots of land called burgages, with only one or two rooms positioned on each floor. The ground floor was usually reserved for production or commercial spaces such as shops, with the floors above serving the domestic functions of the household.[44]

In the B&W House, a modern staircase connects the commercial ground-floor space with the floor above. This first-floor room was presumably used as a hall, great chamber or some other reception space in which to host and dine. Another, smaller room is located beyond, with a staircase leading up to the attics. These attic spaces are presented today as chambers for sleeping. As a successful butcher, Jones presumably had a relatively large household made up of his own family, servants and apprentices, and they would have all needed somewhere to sleep. Large bay windows found on the first and second floors provided lighting for various chambers throughout

[43] Information regarding the Black and White House Museum (formerly the Old House Museum), has been gathered from: Baker, Hughes and Morriss, *The Houses of Hereford*, pp. 116-121; and Charles Kightly, *The Black and White House Museum: Guidebook* (Hereford, 2017).
[44] See King, *Houses and Society in Norwich,* pp. 27-31, for a discussion of row, or shop, houses.

the property. These same spaces would have been well-heated by the four main hearths listed in the 1665 Hearth Tax,[45] showing Jones's ability to follow and accommodate the key architectural trends associated with the Great Rebuilding. Despite their compact designs, such townhouses often had high status owners. As Hamling notes, 'wealthy merchants and tradesmen particularly favoured this plan because even a massive house could occupy a prime position in the centre of town, offering the potential to exploit commercial possibilities as well as the high-profile location'.[46]

Adaption

The Black Lion, Hereford

The new houses of Richard Churche and John Jones show what was fashionable and possible for wealthy citizens building from scratch in early modern towns and cities. They reveal how easily the newest trends and tastes might be combined with traditional ideas of hierarchy in the erection of new houses. But many new gentlemen were not building new. Instead, there were those, like Shakespeare, who chose to buy existing properties, adapting them to suit their own needs, tastes and status. These buildings often had medieval origins, but were rebuilt or adapted in the subsequent building booms of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The construction of new houses and the adaptation of older properties is indicative of the way in which the Great Rebuilding unfolded in towns and cities across the country; both activities

[45] A 1665 Hearth Tax entry for presumed occupant of the house, Richard Vincent, lists a total four hearths. As Hughes and Morriss note, 'in 1664, only 15 out of 122 chargeable dwellings had four hearths', Baker, Hughes and Morriss, *The Houses of Hereford*, pp. 116-117.
[46] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, p. 83.

co-existed in the urban environment and both belonged to this boom in building. Within the city of Hereford, new buildings like the B&W House were being constructed at the same time as existing houses, such as the Black Lion, were drastically altered by members of the city's elite.

The Black Lion was built on the west side of Bridge Street close to the medieval Wye Bridge, one of the main thoroughfares into the city.[47] Today, the property covers a series of long plots of land, stretching from its frontage on Bridge Street, down to the city wall at the rear.[48] The front of the property has two timber-framed bays (fig.11), dating to the second half of the sixteenth century. The house underwent major transformations in the early seventeenth century when the frontage was raised (to include an attic level), jettied (over the street), altered, and potentially extended into the plot next door (although this bay no longer survives). Another two-storey range was then added, running at right angles to the street along the north of the plot. This range likely contained rooms for dining, entertaining, business or withdrawal, creating a first-floor suite-style arrangement of spaces. The impressive decoration (discussed in chapter four) found in a first-floor room at the front of this north range suggests a chamber for 'best' use. A further smaller series of buildings appears towards the rear west of the property, also believed to be early seventeenth century in origin, potentially used for service, storage or production. These three blocks of buildings create a U-shape (or a half H plan), allowing for a very narrow yard in the centre. Every bit of

[47] All information on this property is gained from Baker, Hughes and Morriss, *The Houses of Hereford,* pp. 80-85 and 'Black Lion Inn', *Historic England* https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1205517 [Accessed 02.11.18]. As Hughes and Morriss point out, the Black Lion is a confusing building to analyse given the many changes made to it, and the fact that the building has yet to be fully surveyed, p. 81. Most of their research and observations involve evidence gathered from the surviving structure of the building, town plans and documents relating to the house.
[48] Baker, Hughes and Morriss, *The Houses of Hereford*, p. 80.

usable space was occupied by some form of building on this narrow plot, highlighting the premium at which land came in prominent, urban locations. This work drastically altered the form of the building and illustrated the owner's attempts at elevating the function and status of this narrow medieval property.

At the start of the seventeenth century, merchant 'John Walter of London' owned the Black Lion. The house was sold in 1623 to James Golopher, a baker who then transferred ownership to his brother Walter, also a wealthy London merchant. Despite this curious transferal of ownership, it was James who continued to occupy the property until 1662.[49] Uncertainty surrounds the adjustments made to this property as we cannot say for certain who made the extensions described above. From this list of owners, however, we can say with more surety that the house belonged to a member of the urban elite. Given the occupations of both John Walter and Walter Golopher, the Black Lion was likely a merchant's house whose owners also worked in London. The property was located in a prosperous merchant town, and, as such, adjustments made to its form would reflect its function and status. The 1662 lease made out to James Golopher's son, also James, lists 'edifices, buildings, shops, cellars, solars, rooms, chambers entries, cots, lights, easements, profits and commodities'.[50] Although later than the period of this study, this document nonetheless suggests 'ample accommodation and a good standard of living'.[51] The Black Lion is not as grand as New Place, but its owners held significant positions in their local society as well as in London. It certainly seems that these men were using an increased activity in

[49] Two main sources of documentary evidence are cited in relation to ownership of the house: the title deeds in possession of the owners at the time of their study, and the list of tenants who, as part of their rent, made Dean and Chapter Common Fund. Baker, Hughes and Morriss, *Houses of Hereford*, p. 80.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid*.

building, evident throughout towns such as Hereford, to create houses that suited their needs and status, but they did not necessarily need or indeed want to build new every time.

1 Church Street, Ledbury

Stories of alteration and extension can also be found in market towns similar to Stratford-upon-Avon. Ledbury in Herefordshire had an urban population of about 600 by 1600. Like Hereford, it experienced a surge in building activity in the second half of the sixteenth century as its wealth and notoriety grew thanks to a booming cloth trade.[52] Prominent members of the local community took part in the Great Rebuilding with enthusiasm, the results of which are laid bare in the town's narrow lanes lined with timber-framed buildings. In the centre of town, not far from the sixteenth century market hall, 1 Church Lane remains today and is home to Ledbury Town Council. This building was once the home of Richard Skull, a town constable married to Elizabeth Skynner, the daughter of a gentleman and Justice of the Peace.[53] The proximity of this building to the market place, a space of both business and community gathering, implies that this was a property of some significance. As town constable, Richard Skull was charged with maintaining order in the town. He was likely known to many occupants of the town and his house would have played host to all levels of the Ledbury community.[54]

[52] Sylvia Pinches, *Ledbury: a market town and its Tudor heritage* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 25-26.
A document from 1548, relating to the abolition of the Catholic chantries, estimated the adult population of Ledbury was about 640 (this may have included rural parishes). An 'Easter Book' from 1597 calculates that there were 515 adults in town and 531 in the rural parish, totalling 1,046. In 1607, the Easter book records an urban population of 624.
[53] Kathryn Davies, *Artisan Art: Vernacular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marches, 1550-1650* (Herefordshire, 2008), p. 140.
[54] Archaeologist Lilian Sanders has linked 1 Church Street with a building recorded in documentary evidence as Booth Hall – she summarises that they are one of the same. Sanders notes that, in one

Skull's house was constructed before 1500. The property was drastically rebuilt and extended almost a century later at the time Skull likely occupied the house with his wife. The building that remains today suggests that the property was L-shaped, with a jettied gable at the front west end facing the marketplace, and a long side range running along Church Lane towards the east. The smaller west range is the oldest part of the property, and, similar to the Black Lion, the longer range is the later seventeenth century addition.[55] The majority of the property's domestic accommodation was therefore added during Ledbury's building boom, between 1580 and 1620. Many of the town's timber-framed buildings were constructed at the end of the sixteenth century, with just six buildings surviving from before this period (including No 1 Church Street).[56]

Like the B&W House, the ground floor of 1 Church Lane was likely used for commercial activity with the rooms above reserved for domestic use, but the elongated arrangement of high-status chambers on the first floor indicates the higher status of the owner. In the rural houses of the gentry, chambers were increasingly positioned to create a grand suite of rooms. According to Cooper, the existence of these stately first-floor arrangements reflected the civility of the gentry owner.[57] Increasingly, and where space allowed, urban elite builders used rebuilding to adopt and adapt a handful of these gentry transformations, even in the smaller properties of market towns like

document, Booth Hall is referred to as the living quarters of the town constable, and that it contained a brick cell built beneath the property. She also believes that one of the chambers, located in the front, on the first floor of this property, was likely used as a Court of Piepowder, although there is little evidence to confirm this theory. This same room contains remains of early modern wall paintings. Lilian Sanders, *The 16th Century Painted Room Ledbury,* (tourist pamphlet: Ledbury, 1991), p. 3.

[55] James Duncan, 'An analysis of the historic fabric of late 16th and early 17th century buildings in Herefordshire' (unpublished EPE report, 2007), pp. 11-2 and pp. 14-6 for 1 Church Lane, Ledbury.

[56] Pinches, *Ledbury*, pp. 30-31.

[57] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 273-300.

Ledbury. Members of the urban elite and the new gentry were adapting their medieval properties to match their commercial and business needs, but they were also altering their domestic spaces to complement their evolving status and the increased obligations that came with this elevation. Rather than the simple imitation of rural gentry trends, the existence of these stately spatial arrangements shows the admission of the owner into a new kind of gentry group. For these men, certain elements of gentry architecture proved useful and necessary for their changing roles and responsibilities among their local community. Wrightson labels these men as 'gentlemen-tradesmen', who manipulated gentry traits to suit their own merchant needs. But in this study, they form part of the flexible group of new gentry.[58] Often leaders in business as well as civic officials, whether they lived in prosperous market towns or large cities, their domestic dwellings needed to reflect and cater for these wide-ranging functions and identities. Among the local community, these men might be considered gentlemen, and they needed a house to match this status.

Retention

Individuals like Shakespeare might invest in new building activity either through the creation of new houses or the extension, alteration or rebuilding of existing properties. But retention is also identified by historians as a key feature of the urban Great Rebuilding and it is generally accepted that Shakespeare himself retained elements of his grand medieval house.[59] Retention, in the context of this study, refers to the idea that parts of an older property were kept by its new owners for a specific purpose or meaning. This is something especially encountered in the medieval hall houses so

[58] Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, p. 305.
[59] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 154-155.

often purchased by wealthy merchants or chief inhabitants of prosperous towns and cities. Retention could be achieved in a number of ways: through the maintenance of form, indeed some owners chose to keep the medieval layout of their properties well into the seventeenth century; and, significantly, through the continued presence and use of a large medieval hall.

The Commandery, Worcester

The Commandery in Worcester is a medieval urban property with a surviving great hall (fig.12). The original building dates to the twelfth century, when the site was used as a monastic hospital and almshouse. In the sixteenth century, this religious complex was dissolved in the tumult of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and converted from a religious house into a domestic dwelling.[60] With its grand timber roof and large bay window, Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell 'carefully compare' this space to the hall once located at New Place.[61] But, as will be shown, the status of The Commandery and its owners are somewhat higher than Shakespeare, and the type of hall found in this Worcester property was perhaps more aspirational than achievable in a property such as New Place. By the sixteenth century, The Commandery belonged to the Wylde family. Thomas Wylde was a wool trader who first leased and then bought the dissolved hospital complex from 1541 onwards. He was also a member of the civic elite, 'holding various positions for the city of Worcester including bailiff in 1555-6, MP

[60] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 40. This kind of building activity presented its own set of challenges, especially in the urban context, somewhat separate to those considered so far. As a result, the houses that emerged from such activity were very different in situation and scale to the newer houses we have already encountered. Nonetheless, converted religious properties formed part of the Great Rebuilding, and many of the transformations made to them follow familiar patterns of adaption and alteration. Significantly for this study, as Hamling and Richardson note, 'converted ecclesiastical buildings offered a traditional manorial style of living within an urban setting', and this was especially important for those men who had recently joined the gentry.
[61] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 58.

in 1551 and auditor in 1555-6'.[62] Through the purchase and adaption of this former monastic complex, his status was solidified. During the sixteenth century, the conversion of religious sites in important cities became an elite pursuit. In near-by Coventry, Richard Dudley, Earl of Leicester, converted a dissolved Carthusian monastery, the Charterhouse, into a gentry home.[63] Upon Thomas Wylde's death in 1559, The Commandery, with its impressive thirty-one rooms, passed to his son, Robert. As Hamling and Richardson note, Robert's status and significant wealth put him in an altogether different category than most members of the middling sort, and even many new gentlemen, 'yet his clothing business and city residence mean that he would have mingled with the middling urban elite as well as the country gentry'.[64] His home, therefore, needed to accommodate diverse forms of sociability.

Wylde transformed The Commandery's medieval, monastic refectory into an enormous hall during the sixteenth century (fig.13). This hall remains (relatively) unaltered and, as commented by Nicholas Pevsner, it is 'impressive in size and detail'.[65] Far grander than anything we would expect to find in New Place, this room nonetheless contains a number of important elements that demonstrated the status of its owner. The space stretches four-and-a-half bays (fig.14) and contains a number of distinctive features: a high timber roof; a huge polygonal bay window; and expertly carved timber beams supporting the sturdy walls and roof. Robert Wylde not only chose to retain this medieval space, but to enhance its hierarchical origins by adding a screens passage to the west, separating the hall and service spaces, and a gallery

[62] Endnote '33' in Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 272.
[63] 'Charterhouse', *Historic Coventry* https://www.historiccoventry.org.uk/project/charterhouse/ [Accessed 14.05.20].
[64] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 40.
[65] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Worcestershire* (London, 2007), p. 735.

above. Such additions allowed urban elite owners to recreate the tripartite layout of great halls historically found in country gentry houses.[66] The purposeful maintenance of the medieval hall runs contrary to scholarship relating to the rural Great Rebuilding. Scholars of both vernacular and gentry architecture maintain that the closure, or ceiling, of the open hall to make way for other more intimate and specialised rooms, was a key feature of the Great Rebuilding.[67] But work by Leech, and more recently by King, has argued for the continued significance and use of the hall in the urban context, especially within the houses of the merchant elite.[68] Far from abandoning these areas of the home, owners like Robert Wylde continued their material investment in these medieval spaces.

Items used to furnish The Commandery hall, mentioned in Robert's inventory of 1607/8, do indicate a change in function.[69] As Hamling and Richardson note, 'despite the provision of tables and seating, it is clear that the hall was not used for dining on a regular basis'.[70] A lack of heating (in the form of a fireplace) provides further evidence that the hall was no longer regularly used for such purposes. Leech argues that this was a common feature of medieval halls in Bristol merchant houses, and a similar trend can be seen in the merchant houses of Norwich.[71] If these large, open halls were not being employed for regular dining or hosting, what were they being used for and why maintain them? The men purchasing these medieval properties were civic officials, many of whom, like Thomas Wylde, served as aldermen and mayors. These

[66] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich,* p. 101.
[67] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 277.
[68] Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall', pp. 1-10; King, *Houses and Society in Norwich.*
[69] Inventory of Robert Wylde 1607, WAAS, Inventories and Wills, 008.7, fol.45. Transcribed by Stephanie Appleton.
[70] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 119.
[71] Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall', p. 3. For Norwich, see King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, p. 101. For a specific example, see the unheated medieval hall at Suckling House p. 138.

hall houses often had a long line of civically significant owners. According to King, a complex relationship developed in medieval cities between the public spaces of guild and corporation halls, and the domestic space of halls belonging to elite citizens.[72] Public and domestic spaces were used somewhat interchangeably, both playing host to an array of civic activities. Maintaining, or inheriting, these ceremonial spaces connected the current occupier - their status, wealth and authority - to previous civic owners. Ultimately, this inferred a kind of civic lineage, different to the ancient blood lines so important to members of the established gentry, but a legacy instead forged through civic authority and created through visual and material culture, such as heraldry and portraiture.[73] Yet, the holding of public office was not essential for participation in this civic lineage. As Shakespeare demonstrates, connections to the civic elite could be inferred through the domestic environment without the need to ever actually hold local office. Through the retention of the great hall at New Place, Shakespeare could link to his father's history as town mayor, but also his own connections with civic officials such as Daniel Baker, Abraham Sturley and Richard Quiney.

The form - the shape, construction and evolution – of a building was actively used by occupiers of early modern homes to both construct and reflect their status. This is evident in the urban properties considered so far. As established, new gentry status was complex, representing diverse identities and experiences. This diversity is

[72] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, pp. 157-169.
[73] *Ibid.,* pp. 169-175. King highlights the 'corporate lineage' that could be created through material culture, including funeral monuments, memorial portraiture and ultimately, the house. He argues that 'the prominent display of familial and social connections could be an important means of establishing a claim to status and political authority.' See also Robert Tittler, *The Face of the City: Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007) for discussion of the material display of corporate lineage.

reflected in the type of houses new gentlemen and leading townspeople occupied as well as the sort of building activity in which they were involved. Some urban leaders, such as Richard Churche, chose to build ‘modern’ homes that best served their specific requirements and personal taste. Others chose to adapt existing buildings, like the Black Lion, in prime locations. But many new gentlemen like Robert Wylde chose to alter yet retain large medieval properties with great, open halls. As will be shown, this combination of activities appears to have been followed by the wealthiest and most elite members of urban society, people who were on the cusp of, or had just entered, the ranks of the gentry. By unpacking the developments and activities associated with the form of these complex properties, we begin to understand how the various elements of domestic building could specifically be used in the construction of new gentry status. This is perhaps best seen through the development of urban courtyard houses.

Urban Courtyard Houses

Large medieval halls could only be found in large medieval properties such as New Place. The courtyard house was a relatively rare house-type in the urban context. This was especially the case in smaller towns, yet the property Shakespeare chose to purchase for himself and his family in Stratford-upon-Avon most certainly falls into this category. Courtyard houses had the potential to combine any number of aspects of the urban Great Rebuilding. Often the biography of these dwellings is long and complex, involving convoluted tales of building, adaptation, and purposeful retention. The people who occupied these houses were, usually, extremely wealthy. Like Robert Wylde, they were merchants, mayors or members of the gentry (often all three), some

of whom may well be described as a category above Shakespeare in terms of status and wealth. But, for others, these houses could be used to elevate, if not consolidate, a newly acquired social identity. A market town like Stratford did not possess many such properties. To gain a sense of the type of house Shakespeare purchased in 1597, and how he might have left his mark, we must look further afield. Below, I examine two houses that are similar to New Place in terms of layout and position, and one that was similar in terms of level of owner. Together, they provide essential clues as to how Shakespeare might have used New Place to demonstrate his own position within his hometown.

Suckling House, Norwich

A collection of large courtyard properties can be found in thriving medieval and early modern cities like Norwich and Southampton. Norwich was an immensely wealthy city, one of the biggest and most prosperous outside London. The elite citizens who lived and worked here were some of the wealthiest and most powerful in the country.[74] Compared to other early modern cities, Norwich contains a relatively good amount of surviving courtyard properties, eight of which are known to have contained medieval halls.[75] Quite clearly the context of these cities differs significantly from Stratford, but in order to find properties that are truly comparable to New Place in terms of structure, form and appearance, a consideration of these wealthier merchant properties is necessary, not-to-mention telling. Shakespeare purchased and occupied a house usually found in cities like Norwich or Southampton, with owners who were mayors,

[74] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, pp. 59-104.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 157-158.

JPs or the wealthiest of merchants. This in itself was symbolic, and suggested a great deal about Shakespeare's own consolidation of status.

Suckling House is especially similar to New Place in scale and layout. Like Shakespeare's townhouse, it was located on a crossroad, surrounded two courtyards, and had an open hall at its centre. Suckling House had a series of civically powerful owners, who made various additions and alterations throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[76] Sometime before 1570, the house was purchased by Robert Suckling, after whom the property was later named.[77] Suckling was a mercer who held numerous prestigious civic offices, acting as sheriff in 1564, burgess in 1571 and 1576, and mayor in 1572 and 1582. He also had close ties with the local gentry. His son, Sir John Suckling, was comptroller of the household of James I and Charles, and another of his sons, Edmund, became Dean of Norwich. This house had to serve both Suckling's commercial and civic interests, but also his hosting requirements. Suckling retained the medieval form of this courtyard property, making few extensions and additions, whilst maintaining the open space of the hall. Some improvements, however, were made to the space including the insertion of chimney pieces.[78] A stone gate was also discovered to the north of the hall displaying Suckling's arms and the arms of the Merchant Adventurers along with the date 1564, the year he became sheriff. In 1595, six years after Robert Suckling's death, his family sold the property to his stepson, Christopher Beret. Beret also held public office, serving as sheriff in 1615 and mayor in 1634. His additions were of a similar mode to his step-father's, and

[76] See appx.1 for previous owners and alterations of Suckling House.
[77] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, p. 110.
[78] A fragment of chimney piece was found bearing the Suckling arms impaling Cardinal (potentially commissioned to commemorate Suckling's third marriage to Joan Cardinal in 1577).

included a wooden porch containing his personal arms and a decorated chimneypiece in an upper floor.[79]

Archaeological evidence and Robert Suckling's inventory of 1589 shed light on the arrangement of spaces in Suckling House.[80] The north courtyard and range of buildings were more commercial in function, likely containing the warehouse and the counting house parlour listed in the 1589 inventory. The street frontage was also positioned in this northern block, which served as a separate tenement with shop in the early fourteenth century. Located in the middle of the property, a range ran parallel to the northern frontage, containing a medieval open hall with a parlour at the south-eastern end (fig.15), and service spaces to the west (fig.16). Also in the west range was another, larger parlour, positioned between the service rooms, towards the south of the property, and commercial spaces towards the north. This west range formed the longest block of buildings, spanning the entire length of the property and running at right angles to the hall. Towards the rear of the house was the second courtyard (fig.17), which was overlooked by the kitchen and buttery. A gallery, installed during one of the building's many renovations, was located in the space between the service rooms and the courtyard, accessible from the west end of the hall. And positioned on the upper floors of the property was a great chamber, potentially used for entertaining, in addition to other, more intimate domestic chambers, creating a gentry sequence or suite of rooms likely arranged and adapted during the sixteenth century. As we will see, this layout is very similar to the spatial arrangement Shakespeare likely employed at New Place.

[79] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, p. 111.
[80] See King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, pp. 111-114 for more detail and analysis of the 1589 inventory of Robert Suckling.

From Robert Suckling's inventory, we know that the larger 'great' parlour, found in the west range, was the most heavily furnished space in the property.[81] It was positioned at the service-end of the hall, overlooking the street. Relatively few urban courtyard properties possessed parlours positioned in this way, but Shakespeare's New Place may well have been part of this phenomenon. Given its furnishings and location between the domestic and commercial spaces of the house, Suckling's 'great' parlour could have been used for business, as well as for formal dining and hosting, with the smaller parlour located at the east of the hall functioning as a more intimate family space.[82] This is an interesting arrangement, combining both architectural modes of the gentry, with the specific requirements of the urban elite. The idea that the 'little parlour' should be used for the 'private' dining of the family and selected guests chimes with developments seen at this time in the homes of the rural gentry. Yet the inclusion of a larger, grander parlour facing the street is very much an urban trend. This space was used for socialising of a very different nature. Rather than intimacy and withdrawal, these spaces were about public display. Business associates and civic officials entertained in this room would have witnessed the grandest pronouncements of status. The form and layout of Suckling House demonstrates the relationship between the commercial functionality of a house and its more refined or 'genteel' living accommodation. Importantly for this study, New Place followed a similar blueprint.

[81] King calculates that the items listed in the great parlour total £28 10s 10p. This is compared to the £5 7s listed in the little parlour. King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, p. 112.
[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

Tudor House, Southampton [83]

Like Suckling House and New Place, Tudor House in Southampton (fig.18) is located on a crossroad, positioned on both Bugle Street and Blue Anchor Lane. In the twelfth century, the rear of the property backed onto the quayside where ships loaded and unloaded rich cargo. Tudor House was built on the site of an earlier medieval building, King John's Palace, home to a series of wealthy merchants. At this time, Southampton was already a significant international port and King John's Palace was positioned at its heart.[84] It is no coincidence that Sir John Dawtrey, Overseer of the Port of Southampton and Controller of Customs for Henry VIII, chose this strategic site to create his new home. Dawtrey's construction of Tudor House in 1491 coincides with Hugh Clopton's building of New Place in about 1483; both owners were established members of the gentry who also held significant offices in London. These townhouses represented a new mode of living for urban gentlemen. Dawtrey needed to build his home near the quayside, where he conducted his business and exercised his

[83] Susan Tucker, *Tudor House and Garden: 900 Years of History in the Heart of Southampton Old Town* (West Sussex, 2011), p. 25. It is important to note that the C17 owner of this house, John Clungeon, may have been involved in a trade that profited from slavery. John and his son owned a ship named the 'Plantation' and were profitable merchants of overseas commodities. The wealth acquired by some owners of gentry houses did come from this trade, especially as the seventeenth century progressed, and alterations made to some of these properties, especially in port towns and cities, were funded either directly by the slave trade, or by sugar/tobacco grown on plantations where people were enslaved and exploited. Indeed, part of the Great Rebuilding in general may have been funded in this way. It is therefore important to highlight that it is not just country houses that were built from these profits, but the C16 and C17 rebuilding of towns and cities was also, in some way, paid for by money earned from the slave trade, or sugar/ tobacco. Further research is needed to examine the extent of this impact. Detailed information regarding the origins of the sugar and slave trade in England can be found in the community-curated 'London, Sugar & Slavery' galleries at The Museum of London. https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/permanent-galleries/london-sugar-slavery [Accessed 23.05.22]. More information on the owner John Clungeon can be found in his will of 1636, TNA PROB 11/173/237, and via this article 'Apprentices to the Clungeon Family of Tudor House', *Tudor House and Garden* (19.12.2018): https://teamtudor.wordpress.com/2018/12/19/apprentices-to-the-clungeon-family-of-tudor-house/. [Accessed 23.05.22]. Clungeon's listing as mayor in 1628 can be found here: https://www.southampton.gov.uk/media/keglagmp/list-of-current-mayors_tcm63-363508.pdf [Accessed 23.05.22].

[84] Susan Tucker, *Tudor House,* pp. 6-7.

authority, but he also required a house that reflected his position and status among the Southampton elite. Thus, like Clopton, Dawtrey built his medieval courtyard property in a prime location at the peak of his career. Although Southampton provides a very different context to Stratford-upon-Avon, the origins and the layout of both Tudor House and New Place are remarkably comparable.

By the sixteenth century, Tudor House had retained much of its medieval form and followed a similar plan to the original structure.[85] A four bay frontage ran along Bugle Street, with a hall block attached beyond (fig.18). A long side range ran towards the north, at right angles to the hall, containing service spaces and domestic chambers above. These blocks surrounded a large central courtyard. Sir Richard Lyster, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, occupied the house throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. He had married Dawtrey's widow and further enhanced the property, including the extension and addition of service chambers in the long north range, bringing the kitchen up from the cellars and closer to the hall. At some point during the sixteenth century, Pantin estimates that the ground floor spaces found in the street frontage ceased being used for commercial activities and began to be used as street-facing parlours instead, similar to transformations made to both Suckling House and potentially New Place. Above these spaces, the first floor was arranged around four sequential chambers. Unlike Blakesley Hall, these spaces are not separated by a long corridor, but instead lead off from one another creating a suite of rooms similar to those found in gentry houses such as Chastleton.

[85] Pantin, 'Medieval English Town-House Plans', p. 222.

While Suckling House and Shakespeare's home were comparable in the position of the parlour, Tudor House and New Place were most similar in their arrangement of the hall (fig.19). Both appear to follow a traditional tripartite arrangement in so far as they were large, open to the roof, and set back from the street. From one end, service spaces could be accessed through a screens passage. These spaces were located at right angles to the hall and front range. This arrangement was found at Suckling House and The Commandery, and many more courtyard houses of a similar nature. However, the halls at New Place and Tudor House were both single-ended. No parlour, or equivalent room, was directly attached to either halls. As discussed, urban properties followed unique, and often convoluted, plans due to spatial and functional constrictions. Most urban houses were unable to follow the traditional manorial-style layout as closely as rural properties.

If the parlour in Tudor House, as Pantin suggests, was located in the street frontage, how would this have impacted the hierarchical arrangement of the house?[86] The fact that the hall was directly attached to this front range, rather than separated by a courtyard, may have gone some way in solving this problem. In fact, the hall and the parlour were partially connected via a space dedicated to a sixteenth century newel staircase. We know that New Place did not follow a similar layout, as a courtyard separated the hall and the front range. But Tudor House does tell us that the traditional, hierarchical arrangement of the hall, and gentry suites of rooms, could be catered for in the urban context. Not all courtyard properties followed the same plan, but Tudor House is perhaps as close as we can get to New Place in terms of origin,

[86] See Hamling and Richardson for discussion of 'fore parlours' positioned at the front of a house, overlooking the street, *A Day at Home,* p. 183. See Orlin for general importance of the urban parlour, *Locating Privacy*, pp. 96-111.

position, scale and layout. It demonstrates that through a combination of retention and spatial adaption, internal gentry arrangements could be followed in some capacity. For these new gentlemen, there were expectations to be met when it came to domestic building. Yet, flexibility and personality were permissible in the execution of form and function.

The Greyfriars, Worcester

The Greyfriars in Worcester follows a different layout to New Place, but is a medieval courtyard house on a similar social level. Like New Place, Greyfriars was built in the 1480s. It is located on Friar Street in the centre of the town and its street frontage spans four bays (fig.20). The original house was constructed around this central front range, with a courtyard behind and two short wings flanking either side (fig.21). From the street, the façade and scale of the frontage rivals Tudor House and The Commandery. But Greyfriars did not possess the sprawling complex of buildings found in these other properties. Nor were its owners as high status. Brewer and high bailiff, Thomas Green, was the original builder of the house, and in about 1566, Greyfriars was purchased by cloth merchants, the Street family, who then made several of their own additions and alterations.[87] These owners were part of the Worcester urban elite, and may even be considered new gentry, but they certainly were not on the same level as the courtiers and wealthy merchants who occupied the courtyard houses so far considered. Yet Greyfriars was a striking property in the centre of a thriving town, and shows how men on a similar social level to Shakespeare were using and altering the

[87] Julie MacLuksy, *Greyfriars House and Garden* (National Trust: Swindon, 2016), pp. 4-7; Richard K. Morriss and Ken Hoverd, *The Buildings of Worcester* (Gloucestershire, 1994), p. 96.

form of courtyard properties to display their status beyond the merchant cities of Norwich and Southampton.

The medieval, and subsequent early modern, layout of Greyfriars is difficult to decipher due to substantial twentieth century rebuilding and restoration work.[88] According to Hamling and Richardson, 'it most certainly had an open hall set back behind the front range and orientated at a right angle to the street'.[89] This layout follows the more complex house types seen so far, where the property's frontage is reserved for commercial activity and the domestic accommodation set behind, away from the hustle and bustle of the street. Yet custodians of Greyfriars, the National Trust, position the hall differently.[90] They suggest that, under its sixteenth century owners, the hall was located along the street frontage, with service chambers located in one of the connecting wings. It was not unusual for halls to be arranged in this way, indeed a number of houses identified by Pantin in his original study of medieval urban house plans had their halls positioned along the street.[91] 1-3 Priory Street in Coventry, for example, had a parlour, hall, and service areas running along the frontage.[92] Admittedly, such an arrangement appears more out of place in larger courtyard properties. Yet, Greyfriars was not as sizeable, or complex, as many of the courtyard properties so far considered. Whatever their social level, the owners of these properties could manipulate the form of these properties to suit specific functional and spatial needs.

[88] For more information on the C20 work and renovations, see MacLuksy, *Greyfriars*, pp. 12-15.
[89] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 105. This layout was originally suggested by Patricia Hughes in her study of Worcestershire medieval houses, Patricia Hughes, 'Buildings and the Building Trade in Worcester, 1540–1650' (1990), unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, p. 140.
[90] MacLuksy, *Greyfriars*, pp. 22-23.
[91] Pantin, 'Medieval English Town-House Plans', pp. 209-217.
[92] *Ibid.*, p.212. A similar layout can be found in the four-bayed property of no. 33-34 Upper High Street in Thame, Oxfordshire, M. R. Airs and J. G. Rhodes, 'Wall Paintings from a House in Upper High Street, Thame', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 45 (1980), pp. 235-259.

Unsurprisingly, the Street family made a number of alterations to Greyfriars in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century, bringing it in line with new architectural trends. This second phase of building included many of the transformations we would expect to find in upper middling and new gentry houses at this time. Between 1603 and 1610, Francis Street the Younger inserted a new, wider, staircase, beyond the eastern wall of the front range.[93] At the top of the staircase, overlooking the rear courtyard, the owners added a small corridor connecting the northern end of the front range with the southern. This corridor may have been used as a gallery, similar in nature to the space found on the first-floor of Blakesley Hall. Windows and chimneys were added in various locations to the property. Further decoration in the form of a wood carved frieze and panelling remains in the large first-floor chamber overlooking Friar Street. Given the skill and prominence of this decoration, the Street family would have used this space as a parlour or great chamber, creating a suite of more intimate domestic accommodation on the first floor, in accordance with gentry architectural modes.

Greyfriars was not as large as its neighbour The Commandery, but it occupied a prominent position in the town of Worcester, as did its owners. The property's medieval origins, and courtyard arrangement mimicked the houses of many of the country's wealthiest citizens, whilst remaining compact and functional for its new gentry owner. Thus, Greyfriars demonstrates an important point for this study; you did not have to be a courtier or one of the country's wealthiest merchants to purchase and adapt a medieval style courtyard property, nor did you have to live in large cities like Norwich

[93] MacLuksy, *Greyfriars*, p. 7.

or Southampton. Whatever their scale or status, these courtyard properties still possessed the spaces and symbolism you might expect to find in a gentry home, yet they were adapted and repurposed to suits the needs and identities of their urban owners. If New Place was half as grand as these properties, it would have made a striking impression on people living in Stratford. This is evident from the houses considered so far, but will also become clear through a consideration of Stratford's built environment.

Façades

As seen, properties owned by members of the urban elite were usually located in prominent positions within towns and cities. This meant that they were perfectly situated to outwardly reflect the tastes and social position of their owners. A property's façade was therefore the first tool at the disposal of these self-fashioning new gentlemen. Status could be demonstrated through a property's façade in two ways: via its construction materials and decoration; and via its scale. Elaborately decorated facades formed key elements of new houses, but they were often altered on medieval houses as part of a wider process of adaptation or rebuilding. In this way, owners throughout the Great Rebuilding drastically transformed the façades of early modern urban properties in their attempts at self-fashioning.

The lavish use of timber and glazing were important architectural elements in the display of wealth and status, as seen most obviously through houses such as Churche's Mansion (fig.9).[94] These costly materials were then excessively decorated,

[94] Described by Nikolaus Pevsner as 'an outstanding piece of decorated half-timber architecture', the façade of Churche's Mansion is a celebration of its owner's wealth and status: Nikolaus Pevsner and Edward Hubbard, *The Building of England: Cheshire* (London, 1971), p. 71. The house is heavily timber-

indeed the carvings adorning the Black and White House in Hereford are the most striking features of its seventeenth-century façade (fig.10).[95] Consisting of three narrow bays, the front of the house features close studding from top to bottom. Geometrical patterns embellish the attic level, and playfully carved beams and pendants spill from the jettied first and second levels. Faces of grotesques and beasts are skilfully embossed beneath first floor windows; and bunches grapes with foliage are woven into hanging bosses and window brackets. The main entrance is given its own space in the form of a porch, taking up valuable space in the street. The porch bears further examples of richly carved eaves topped with a coat of arms belonging to the Butchers' Guild,[96] thus providing further evidence of the pride and status members of the urban elite took from their occupation (fig.22). Heraldry often played an important part in the decoration of such facades. Indeed, heraldic shields belonging to the Street family and their Worcestershire associations are proudly displayed above the arch separating the courtyard of Greyfriars from the street beyond (fig.23). The existence of such decorative elements is not only indicative of the wealth and status of the owner, but also of their associations and therefore reputation; all key aspects of new gentry status.[97]

framed and the front of the property encompasses four finely decorated gables, with a slight jetty visible from the first-floor upwards. Its façade displays a combination of close studding and symmetrical patterns woven together to create a uniquely intricate design, all expertly executed by celebrated Nantwich carpenter, Thomas Clease. An inscription found under a window to the right of main entrance reads:

> 'Rychard Churche and Margerye Churche, his wife, Mai iiii
> Thomas clease made this worke, anno dni. Mccccclxxvii
> in the xviiii yere of the reane of our noble queen elezabeth'.

[95] Kightly, *The Black and White House Museum*, p. 2.
[96] *Ibid.,* pp. 24-5.
[97] For the use of heraldry in the display of gentry networks, association and kinship, see especially Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and gentry communities in Shakespeare's England' in Nigel Ramsay (ed.), *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington, 2014), pp. 190-203.

For larger urban properties, wealth and status was announced by the expanse of the frontage. Hamling notes that 'with a practical limit on the number of storeys that even the loftiest houses could support, the wealthiest citizens chose to multiply this plan sideways over additional plots'.[98] Often these larger townhouses projected a 'uniform' appearance, separated by gables giving the impression of a series of separate yet connected houses. This can be seen through the courtyard properties so far encountered, with both Tudor House and Greyfriars spanning three storeys and four gables.

The Greyfriars's entrance is located in the middle of the street frontage, whereas the entrance to Tudor House is found towards the north end of its long façade. Both houses feature a considerable amount of timber - constructed and decorated with close studding, and wattle and daub used to fill the spaces in between the compact timber framing. The ground floor of Tudor House is timber framed, with herringbone brick nogging in the infill panels. This choice of building material was significant for the self-fashioning of the owner. As Anthony Quiney observes, 'for all its utility, an element of fashion prompted the choice of brick, and in the last two centuries of the Middle Ages so did the matter of cost'.[99] Bricks became increasingly preferable as a choice of building material given their longevity and their capacity to reduce the risk of fire. But building in brick was expensive, especially when many of these medieval properties were constructed. Even in the sixteenth century, the arrangement and appearance of brickwork such as that found at Tudor House is somewhat unusual, and further suggests the wealth and importance of the owner. Significantly, it has been suggested that the medieval property Shakespeare purchased was also partly

[98] Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household,* p. 84.
[99] Quiney, *Town Houses,* p. 101.

constructed in brick, although we do not know if it was visible from the street frontage.[100] As will be shown, the exterior appearance of both Tudor House and Greyfriars possessed comparable features to those that archaeologists suggest Shakespeare made to New Place.[101]

Stratford Houses

New Place was a rare building type in early modern Stratford-upon-Avon. That much is clear from the evidence presented throughout this chapter. But where did it sit within the rest of the town's built environment? Stratford is unusual for a historic market town in that a relatively high number of records relating to its history, governance and built environment remain today. Given the notoriety of the town's most famous resident, scholars across the centuries have endeavoured to locate and analyse these records, meaning that more work has been done on the Stratford source material than most historic market towns. As a result, we can provide a good amount of detail surrounding the historical context of Shakespeare's hometown. Many of the house types and transformations considered in this chapter could be found in the town at the end of the sixteenth century. Stratford went through its own phases of building based on the ebbing and flowing of local economic, political and cultural transformations, as well as natural forces such as fire and plague.[102] Below, I focus on the rebuildings of the late fifteenth century (to coincide with the construction of New Place) and the late sixteenth

[100] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 54.
[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.
[102] For a detailed social, political, religious and topographical history of Stratford-upon-Avon see Robert Bearman (ed.), *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Gloucestershire, 1997).

century, when much of the town was rebuilt following a series of fires in the 1590s.[103] Through this focus, I demonstrate the significance of locality against the wider, national patterns relating to wealth and status considered so far.



Map 1. Stratford-upon-Avon in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century © Kevin Colls. From Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell's *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, figure 2.24, p. 57.

[103] Stephanie Appleton goes into significant detail about the fires of the 1590s and their impact on the town, see Appleton, 'Women and Wills in Early Modern England: The Community of Stratford-upon-Avon 1537 – 1649', unpublished PhD thesis., University of Birmingham (2016), p. 195.

Stratford-upon-Avon was established as a planned borough in 1196.[104] The medieval town was arranged around a series of intersecting streets with space set aside for housing and a total of four marketplaces (map 1).[105] Its twelfth-century grid system was divided into plots of land called burgages. The medieval frontages of these plots contained sets of buildings, while the rear area was usually occupied by outhouses, yards and/or gardens. Many of the town's most important buildings were constructed during this period, including New Place and a number of the houses considered below.[106] Member of the local gentry, Hugh Clopton, invested a significant amount of money in the construction of New Place, but he was also a benefactor of public building projects including Clopton Bridge. Built in the 1490s, the bridge expanded trade routes through Stratford by allowing passage across the River Avon (map 1).[107] Clopton also funded the 're-edification' of the Guild Chapel, which stood opposite his new courtyard property, New Place, on Chapel Lane.[108] The Guild Chapel, along with the neighbouring Guildhall, belonged to the religious organisation of the Guild of the Holy Cross. Founded in the late thirteenth century, the Holy Cross was an important religious fraternity and major landowner in medieval Stratford. Many of its members were local tradespeople and merchants, but some members of the gentry also belonged to such religious groups.[109] Thus, the Holy Cross was made up of Stratford's leading townspeople. As Christopher Dyer observes, the leaders of this fraternity along with bishopric officials from the Church 'formed an oligarchy' within Stratford.[110]

[104] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place,* p. 17.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[106] Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford: a Successful Small Town' in Bearman (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996*, pp. 51-53.
[107] Christine Carpenter, 'Town and 'Country': the Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire' in Bearman (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996*, p. 65.
[108] *Ibid.*
[109] *Ibid.,* pp. 62-79.
[110] Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford', p. 59.

Importantly, this religious organisation played a major role in the revitalisation of the town during the late medieval period through investment to houses and shops, but also public buildings such as the school, almshouses, Guildhall and the Chapel.[111] This activity represents the first phase of important building work considered in this study; it was also the period in which Shakespeare's home was constructed.

The English Reformation brought about significant changes to the religion and administration of sixteenth-century Stratford-upon-Avon as well as its buildings, bringing about a second wave of renewal to the town.[112] In 1553, a charter created a new Corporation to govern the borough, replacing the Guild of the Holy Cross that was dissolved as part of changes brought about with the Reformation. This charter put estates previously belonging to the Guild into the hands of the new Corporation made up of fourteen aldermen, who between them elected fourteen burgesses and a bailiff.[113] This group of men claimed control of some of the town's most significant land and property, including the Grammar School, Guildhall and Guild Chapel. These chief inhabitants, as we have seen, made up the elite of Stratford, and between them they owned and altered some of the most significant properties in the town.

Yet Stratford's early modern topography followed much the same plan as its medieval layout, with some extensions and alterations.[114] Throughout the sixteenth century, medieval frontages were often extended down the length of the plot, as seen through

[111] Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford', p. 52.
[112] For information relating to the impact of the Reformation on Stratford-upon-Avon see Ann Hughes, 'Building a Godly Town: Religious and Cultural Divisions in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1560-1640' in Bearman (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996*, pp. 97-109.
[113] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 67-70.
[114] *Ibid.*, p. 17. The twelfth century grid system comprised of 'three streets crossed by three streets', and this plan remains to this day. p. 67.

the Black Lion in Hereford. Plots often followed ancient field boundaries, rarely uniform in shape but similar in size.[115] The burgage plots in medieval Stratford were relatively large, the idea being that they could be subdivided or subleased by their wealthy owners.[116] As the town transitioned from medieval to early modern, these divisions become more apparent in the frontages that lined its streets. Wide facades, like New Place, suggested that the owners were in a position to maintain the full width of the original burgage plot, rather than divide and sell it off.

Stratford was split into six administrative wards: Bridge Street, High Street, Chapel Street, Sheep Street, Wood Street and Henley Street (map 1).[117] Bridge Street, often the first road encountered by visitors to the town, held Stratford's main market. Chapel Street was the location of the butter and cheese market, marked by a White Cross which stood in front of New Place and the Guild Chapel, making it a prime location for business and trade.[118] In fact, early modern Stratford was a relatively prosperous market town and by 1591 it had a population of about 2, 500 (quite a bit larger than Ledbury at 600).[119] Nonetheless, Christopher Dyer writes that 'in spite of the evidence for their varied occupations, commercial activities, and distinctive landscapes, doubts are still expressed about the urban character of small towns such as Stratford'.[120] The people of Stratford held an assortment trades, crafts and occupations that went beyond rural subsistence; butchers, mercers, tailors, teachers, lawyers and

[115] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 18-19. Mitchell and Colls state that the measurements of Stratford's medieval burgage plots were defined in the town charter as '31.2 perches (17.60 m or 57.75 ft) in width and twelve perches (60.35 m or 198 ft) in depth', p. 19.
[116] T. R. Slater, 'Domesday Village to Medieval Town: the Topography of Medieval Stratford-upon-Avon' in Bearman (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon 1196-1996*, pp. 40-41.
[117] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 68.
[118] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[119] Alan Dyer, 'Crisis and Resolution', p. 90.
[120] Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford', p. 46.

playwrights (to list a few) could all be found in this sixteenth-century market town.[121] As Dyer states, because of its location and ability to serve the needs of its hinterland, medieval Stratford 'was able to trade over a larger area, draw the custom of major producers, attract at least a few ambitious entrepreneurs, and occupy a superior rank among the market towns of its region'.[122] Some entrepreneurs, like Hugh Clopton, and later Richard Quiney, Abraham Sturley and William Shakespeare, conducted business in London, but instead of emigrating, they chose to remain in Stratford, bringing their connections and capital into, rather than out of, the town. This is evident in their extensive investment in their Stratford homes.

Mason's Court, Rother Street

Today, only a handful of the houses belonging to the early modern Stratford elite remain intact, and even fewer medieval hall-houses survive in their early modern form. Mason's Court on Rother Street is a rare example. Running parallel to Church Street and Chapel Street, Rother Street formed part of Stratford's medieval grid system and was the location of the town's cattle market. John Gibbs occupied Mason's Court from the last quarter of the sixteenth century to his death in 1625. Gibbs served as bailiff four times in Stratford, in 1592, 1598, 1602 (when he stepped into the office following the death of Richard Quiney), and 1607. His inventory further labels him as a 'gentleman'.[123]

[121] Appleton's PhD thesis provides detailed information on the trade and fluctuating economy of Stratford at this time: Appleton, 'Women and Wills', p. 193.
[122] Christopher Dyer, 'Medieval Stratford', p. 61.
[123] Inventory of John Gibbs, 1625 (172) transcribed in Jeanne Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699, Vol. 1,* (The Dugdale Society in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2002), pp. 348-351; see Jeanne Jones *Family Life in Shakespeare's England: Stratford-upon-Avon 1570-1630* (Gloucestershire, 1996), pp. 16-18 for more information on Gibbs's household. Five extra people were listed in his household in 1595.

Mason's Court was constructed in about 1485 and conformed to the original burgage plot set out in 1196. Built in timber, infilled with plaster and later brick, this medieval building spanned two storeys, its frontage containing five bays.[124] Internally, this property followed the familiar hall-house plan. A hall was positioned in the property's frontage, running parallel to the street. It was originally open to the roof, with service spaces leading from one end, and higher status chambers from the other. The house was built around a central courtyard, flanked on either side by two wings and accessed via a central passageway cutting through the street frontage, similar to the passage found at Greyfriars.[125] Shakespeare's childhood home, the Birthplace on Henley Street, followed a comparable plan. The hall at the Birthplace was also located in the street frontage, with a parlour to the left, and a cross passage on the right, separating the hall from service spaces and allowing access to the yard beyond. An angled wing was then added to the rear in the seventeenth century, presumably by Shakespeare's tenant at this time, Lewis Hiccox.[126] Although altered over the centuries, the form, and indeed internal layout, of both Mason's Croft and the Birthplace is evident today.

In about 1600, Gibbs made a number of alterations to his house including the insertion, or extension, of the right rear wing.[127] From his 1625 inventory, we gain an indication of the types of rooms positioned within. The ground floor was the likely location of spaces described as the hall, parlour, buttery, and potentially the kitchen, although

[124] 'Mason's Court', *Historic England* https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1206233 [Accessed 10.06.20].
[125] Robert Bearman, *Stratford-upon-Avon: A History of its Streets and Buildings* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007), p. 47.
[126] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home.* Hamling and Richardson discuss the layout of Shakespeare's Birthplace under the occupancy of John Shakespeare, p. 22, and then the extensions made by later tenant, Lewis Hiccox, illustration 70, p. 40.
[127] 'Mason's Court', *Historic England.*

this service space may have existed in a separate outbuilding. The entry chamber, 'the nexte chamber therto', 'Mr Palmer's chamber', and 'the next romes', may then have been located on the floor above. Outside spaces included the barn and the yard, which housed a number of agricultural items and objects related to the production of food and drink. The identity of 'Mr Palmer' remains unclear, but the title of his chamber suggests that the Gibbs family had a lodger. As they had no children, they likely had the space.[128]

From its surviving structure and Gibbs's inventory, we know that Mason's Court was updated and altered by its early modern owner to include all the spaces required for gentry living in a town like Stratford. Still, its medieval form, with the hall at its centre, was retained. This study has demonstrated the significance of this retention as a symbol of status and authority for prominent members of the urban elite, especially those with civic positions such as Gibbs. First and foremost, he described himself as a gentleman, and we may therefore see this urban courtyard property as a rare survival in its form, but also its status as a gentry home. Significantly, the story of Gibbs and his home show us that the urban new gentry of Stratford were using medieval courtyard properties to participate in the acts of retention, adaption and alteration that we have seen in the bigger towns and cities of Norwich and Worcester, albeit on a smaller scale.

[128] See the biographical information alongside Gibbs's inventory of 1625 in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 348-351.

Harvard House, High Street

A significant amount of new building also occurred in Stratford during the time Shakespeare purchased New Place in 1597. This construction work was, in part, driven by the fires of the 1590s, which destroyed many of the existing properties lining its streets. Harvard House (no. 26) on the High Street (fig.24) remains one of the best-preserved properties from this phase of rebuilding. This striking single-bayed townhouse was originally constructed in about 1596 for Thomas Rogers, a butcher, corn and cattle dealer, and town bailiff from 1595 to 1596.[129] As King highlights, wealthy members of the civic elite often used the domestic environment to celebrate and commemorate the attainment of significant civic positions and the lineage that came with them.[130] The highly decorated façade of Harvard House includes the date 1596 and the initials of Rogers, alongside those of his wife and son (fig.25). This date might mark the completion of his new home, but it also celebrated Rogers's position as town bailiff.

Harvard House was narrow, constrained by the width of its plot which had, at some point been divided from its original medieval burgage. Nevertheless, Rogers's house radiated modernity and taste through its appearance and form. As with the B&W House in Hereford, the façade of Harvard House is elaborately adorned with close studding and intricate wood carvings (fig.24). Architectural features, including its large windows and corbels, are exaggerated and enhanced through the existence of patterns of scrolling vines and repeated geometric shapes. Fantastical faces of

[129] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 34; 'The Mayor Civic History: Bailiffs: 16th/17th Century', *Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council*, https://www.stratford-tc.gov.uk/the-mayor/civic-history [Accessed 23.05.22].
[130] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich,* pp. 169-175.

humans and beasts are expertly carved into many of the building's supporting timbers, with Tudor roses and a bull's head also appearing on this impressive frontage – likely in reference to Rogers's trade as a butcher.[131] Timbers creating the close studding are decorated in relief patterns of strapwork and foliage, drawing the eye across the full length of the building. What this townhouse lacks in scale, it makes up in decoration. This façade was a clear pronouncement of the owner's wealth and status, and was likely not the only such example to be found in Stratford at this time.

Unlike New Place, Rogers's townhouse was a row or shop house, although its exact form remains somewhat unclear.[132] This was the most common type of urban building and its contemporaneous construction with Shakespeare's purchase of New Place demonstrates what was available, and desirable, for members of the urban elite who were choosing to invest in their homes. Harvard House was a modern property at the time of its construction. It covered three full storeys, was two rooms deep, and contained a sizeable chimneystack and staircase between the rear and front rooms.[133] Although the property was substantially altered and restored over the centuries, we gain some sense of its original arrangement from its current layout and from a 1639 inventory belonging to Rogers's son, also Thomas.[134] The inventory lists seven chambers in total, plus outbuildings: the hall and parlour, presumably located on the ground floor; the little chamber and the 'joyne chamber' potentially on the floor above; finally, 'an upper chamber', 'ye next chamber', and 'ye staire head chamber' likely

[131] Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p. 83.
[132] According to Hamling and Richardson, the house may have contained additional storage areas in the form of a 'makeshift lean-to', although the exact building and arrangement of this house is still contested as the property has been substantially altered over the years. Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 35.
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[134] Inventory of Thomas Rogers, 1639 (209) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories: Vol. 2,* pp. 72-74.

found on the top, second floor. Although narrow, this house possessed the space and façade expected of a member of the urban elite. Importantly, it shows what was possible for wealthy men wishing to participate in the Great Rebuilding in Stratford at the end of the sixteenth century.

Sturley's House, Wood Street

Sturley's House (5&6 Wood Street) was a six window-ranged townhouse, not all that dissimilar in scale to New Place.[135] Much of Abraham Sturley's House remains in some form today, although it has been divided and drastically altered. Like all the elite urban properties considered in this chapter, it occupied a prime position in the town, located on one of Stratford's main streets. But unlike many of the Stratford houses so far encountered, the frontage of this property took up a significant amount of the street. Few documents survive in relation to this property. Yet, part of its surviving form and extant interior decoration provide clues to its original arrangement and use.

Sturley's House provides an interesting case study because of the potential position of its parlour. A decorative plasterwork ceiling and frieze survive in a ground-floor room, looking out onto Wood Street. Given the nature of this decoration (discussed in chapter four), Hamling and Richardson suggest that this room was used as the best reception space, likely a parlour.[136] As demonstrated, street-facing, or 'fore', parlours were rare but not inconceivable in the urban setting.[137] Stratford tailor, Richard Boyce, lists two parlours in his 1603 inventory, one of which is labelled as 'the parlor to the

[135] '5&6 Wood Street', *Historic England* https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1207458?section=official-list-entry [Accessed 29.05.22].
[136] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 185.
[137] *Ibid.,* p. 183.

streete'.[138] Fore parlours could be very useful in their performance of status for owners involved in commercial or civic business, as the room's interior and its guests were on full view to all who walked through the town. Given the size of this property, it is also likely that Sturley built himself a hall, if not open, presumably large and used to accommodate his civic duties as alderman and town bailiff. Like Tudor House, this hall may have been set back from the street, with the parlour taking pride of place in the street frontage. The façade and decoration remaining at Sturley's House today suggests he too built a modern townhouse, but, like many of the larger hall houses considered in this chapter, he walked a fine line between tradition and novelty. Sturley had more flexibility when building his new house than Shakespeare altering his existing medieval structure. But both men aimed for the same overall affect, investing in their homes in slightly different ways, whilst also adhering to the expectations of the day.

Shrieve's House, Sheep Street

William Rogers's house, now known as Shreive's House, was also damaged in the fires of the 1590s. Rather than build a completely new property, he repaired and extended his existing house. Rogers was a mercer, victualler, tavern owner and Sergeant-at-Mace.[139] His house was not on the same scale as New Place or Sturley's House, but provides an example of a surviving property which surrounded a yard and was elongated during its rebuilding. The form of this early modern property remains relatively intact today and the survival of Rogers's original outbuildings and barn is

[138] Inventory of Richard Boyce, 1603 (108), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories: Vol. 1,* pp. 223-227.
[139] Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories: Vol. 1,* p. 165.

unique for Stratford. The house functioned as a tavern, so its use and arrangement differs from most domestic dwellings, but, thanks to a 1597 inventory, we do know that the property had a hall and a parlour, with other chambers for non-commercial accommodation.[140]

A long series of connected two-storeyed buildings flanked one side of a yard, containing service spaces such as the kitchen and barns (fig.26). These spaces were built by Rogers in his renovations beginning after the fire in 1595, and were then continued by his wife, Elizabeth, following his death in January 1596/7. The alterations made by William and Elizabeth Rogers are comparable to those completed at a similar time to the Black Lion in Hereford and 1 Church Lane in Ledbury. The extension of the front section of the house towards the rear of the plot was a common transformation of the Great Rebuilding. Prior to this period, spaces of domestic production and preparation, such as the kitchen and 'yeelehowse' (for meat salting and malt making), were often found in separate outbuildings, minimising the risk of fire. With the use of brick in the construction of buildings and the insertion of chimneys, these spaces merged through the addition of service wings onto the main frontage of the house. The survival of Shrieve's House and its original form helps us to see the modern innovations members of the Stratford elite were following in the rebuilding of their domestic properties, and at what time. As Hamling and Richardson observe, 'it is entirely possible that William Shakespeare (godfather to Elizabeth's nephew William) would have been familiar with this property, and conversant with the kind of configuration of hall, buttery and kitchen that defined only a small percentage of

[140] Inventory of William Rogers, 1597 (85) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories: Vol. 1,* pp. 160-166.

Stratford's most wealthy middling houses'.[141] If men such as William Rogers were using this upsurge of building activity to modernise their homes in this way, why not Shakespeare?

Shakespeare's New Gentry Home

While this study argues that Shakespeare changed the internal appearance of New Place, there is nothing to suggest that he seriously altered the overall form of this already impressive property. Like the owners of many urban courtyard houses, its medieval structure was purposefully retained. But why? Many of the men considered in this chapter chose to maintain the medieval form of their courtyard properties because of its public and symbolic link to previous civic and merchant owners.[142] Shakespeare, however, had no such connections. His lineage in local government came from his father, John Shakespeare. As seen, Shakespeare certainly had close ties with civic officials in the town through his investment dealings with Richard Quiney and other leading aldermen, but he did not hold a civic position himself. His house, on the other hand, was erected for a leading member of the town. Built by a former London Mayor and member of the gentry, it was made to host large gatherings and important events. Moreover, New Place was situated next to one of the town's key market places, and opposite one of its most significant public buildings, the Guild Chapel, where Stratford's most prominent citizens worshipped. From its construction, New Place was perfectly positioned to serve the commercial and civic requirements of its owner. Yet, Shakespeare needed neither.

[141] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 76.
[142] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich*, pp. 169-175.

Instead, this act of retention can be seen as symbolic of Shakespeare's new gentry status and the requirements that went with it. As Cooper, Heal and Holmes emphasise, to be taken seriously as a member of the gentry, you needed a house to match.[143] A space to host, entertain, withdraw and significantly, a space to announce your status. Shakespeare may not have held a local, civic position, but he could boast of royal service, as a member of the King's Men and as a Groom of the Chamber.[144] In many ways, these courtly positions elevated him above the leading citizens of Stratford-upon-Avon, and this would have been reflected in his home. These medieval courtyard houses were as close to gentry architecture as a new gentleman could get without actually building or buying their own country house. They were functional, but they were also symbolic. And the tradition that came with its medieval origins and previous ownership was part of that lineage or association new members of the gentry worked so hard to create. It was a way in which Shakespeare could participate in the civic lineage of the town without actually holding office. For him, New Place was not a civic or merchant property, it was a gentry home.

While Shakespeare may have retained the form of New Place, I suggest that that he did alter the fabric of the building, combining tradition with novelty and, significantly, personality. Changes to the façade as well as the arrangement and function of rooms was another way in which Shakespeare could significantly alter his property while maintaining its medieval form. Archaeological evidence has gone a long way in helping us think about the form and façade of New Place as it was originally constructed. Some of this evidence allows us to say more about how spaces were divided within the

[143] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry;* Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Eastbourne, 1994), pp. 282-311.
[144] For more information on Shakespeare's service to James I and the King's Men see Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford, 1999) – especially chapter 15: 'The King's Servants', pp. 295-317.

property, and where features such as chimneys, ovens, screens passages and larger windows were found (discussed further in chapter five). Nonetheless, many gaps have been left open in our knowledge and understanding of the layout of this large townhouse. In the final chapter of this study, archaeological findings are combined with evidence gathered from the comparable buildings analysed throughout this chapter to say more about the spatial arrangement of Shakespeare's courtyard property.

Conclusion

I have argued that Shakespeare carefully selected, retained and altered New Place for the specific purpose of crafting and cementing his new gentry status. We have seen that a particular set of attributes was required for entry into this new group of men. However, fulfilment of each and every one of them was not always necessary or possible. Shakespeare had achieved success, authority from his connections at court, wealth and reputation enough to be considered a gentleman, and, significantly to purchase a gentleman's house. In making New Place his family home, he was aligning himself with members of the established gentry like Hugh Clopton, civic officials such as Abraham Sturley, and even prosperous merchants like the Sucklings and the Wylde family. His attainment of civic office was not necessary as his new home provided the local status and connections he might need. His retention of this medieval form was symbolic of his new gentry status. Although this status was different from the kind of men who occupied courtyard houses in larger towns and cities, it was nonetheless equivalent. Instead of viewing retention as symbolic of civic lineage and authority, we might also see it as representative of new, significantly urban, gentry status. The

alterations and adaptions Shakespeare then made to the house further demonstrated his modernity and membership into this new group of men. As we will see, this form of self-fashioning continued through the furnishing and decoration of his interior spaces.

CHAPTER THREE

FURNISHINGS

The Great Rebuilding not only brought about a boom in the (re)building of houses, but an expansion in the amount and types of items used to fill and adorn them.[1] In this chapter, I demonstrate how this increase in domestic investment was utilised by the urban elite and new gentlemen considered in this study. Not only were these men best placed to permeate the boundary between middling and gentry, they also crossed the lines between producer and consumer. Through their households, occupations and investments, many of them were involved in both the making and expending of domestic goods. Below, I focus on this increase in domestic consumption, its relationship to social identity, and the evidence used to study it. I analyse wills and inventories belonging to a handful of new gentlemen and members of the urban elite across various locations to say more about how men at this level used the interiors of their urban properties to further consolidate and display their status. In doing so, a picture emerges of what was expected of William Shakespeare in his new position as a gentleman and owner of one of the most impressive properties in Stratford-upon-Avon. The context of Shakespeare's hometown may have differed from the major cities of Southampton and Norwich, but certain expectations and consumption patterns crossed regional boundaries, especially at the level of gentry. As is argued throughout this study, a broad sample of new gentlemen must be considered if we are to acknowledge the diversity of this group of people, as well as common characteristics and trends. Recognising that geographical differences did exist, I also focus on the

[1] W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640', *Past and Present,* Vol. 4 (1953), pp. 44-59; Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Abingdon, 2004).

context of Stratford-upon-Avon and the sample of inventories surviving from the period 1590 to 1630.[2] From these documents, we learn more about the kind of domestic objects available and popular in Stratford during Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place, ultimately addressing the question: how might Shakespeare's furnishings compare with patterns elsewhere in the town, whilst also keeping up with the fashions and expectations of the new gentry more broadly?

*

In 1625, appraisers compiled an inventory of goods belonging to the recently deceased Stratford 'gent', John Gibbs of Mason's Court.[3] This inventory itemised and valued objects found in the gentleman's house on Rother Street at the time of his death (or just after). His appraisers John Wolmer, Richard Hathaway and Richard Tyler (also identified as 'gents') were likely known to the deceased in some way, or were at least deemed to be of a similar social level. They moved through the house, room by room, valuing the personal possessions of the recently departed townsman. Starting in the medieval hall then passing through the parlour, they further located items in the 'entrye chamber', 'the nexte chamber therto', 'Mr Palmers chamber' as well as 'the nexte romes'. From there they could have proceeded to the outbuildings of the kitchen and the barn, before finishing with the appraisal of malt, barley, bricks, tiles and other such items in the yard. John Gibbs's inventory is not especially extensive, but it may have taken the three men some time to appraise the goods found in this medieval courtyard property, the sum total of which came to a respectable £307

[2] Jeanne Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699, Vols. 1 & 2,* (The Dugdale Society in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2002). The slighter longer period of 1590 to 1630 (as opposed to 1620) was selected to develop a wider sample of inventories, and to gain an understanding of the chronological shifts within Stratford compared to other areas.
[3] Inventory of John Gibbs, 1625 (172), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories,* pp. 348-351. For more information on John Gibbs, see chapter two of this thesis.

17s 4d.[4] Its survival not only hints at the various spaces that could be found in Mason's Court, a property that still stands today, but of the quantity and type of objects chosen to fill and furnish the home of a man who is identified in this thesis as urban, or new, gentry.

Today, scholars are well aware of the misconceptions that accompany the study of early modern probate documents (wills and inventories). They are mindful of the complex process in which wills and inventories were compiled as well as the invested interests behind each appraisal.[5] Far from providing complete insights into the early modern domestic environment, such documents do, however, offer tantalising clues about the homes of the testators, especially when considered alongside other forms of evidence like material culture. Throughout this chapter, I make use of museum collections such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT), the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and the National Trust (NT) alongside probate documents to create a richer picture of the interiors of new gentry homes. Together, this evidence can tell us a great deal about what people owned and how they chose to style themselves and their homes. Probate documents therefore offer essential evidence relating to the self-fashioning of the group that this study is most interested in: the new gentry. Alongside long lists of items of subsistence – pots, pans, foodstuffs, and linens, for example – inventories record furniture, tableware, decorative items and what we might call 'luxury' or high-status objects, like the 'faire silver and guilte bole & salte with a dossen

[4] Other inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon are analysed later in the chapter.
[5] For an in-depth analysis of both the uses and challenges of probate documents as historical sources see Tom Arkell, Nesta Evens and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000) and especially Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Fictions of the Early Modern English Probate Inventory' in Henry Turner (ed.), *The Culture of Capital Property, Cities and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (New York, 2002), pp. 51-83; Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Empty Vessels' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday objects: medieval and early modern material culture and its meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 299-308.

of Apostle spones' in John Gibbs's entry chamber, priced at £14. These were items of worth, both monetarily and socially, and suggest a great deal about the status of the owner. By considering where these items were located in the house, and what objects they appear alongside, we begin to build a picture of how men like Gibbs and Shakespeare furnished their homes and how they took this opportunity to display their credit and status to all who entered.

Status and Consumption

This study is interested in the economic *and* social 'value' of domestic goods and how, specifically, this relates to social status. Recent scholarship not only highlights an increase in domestic consumption in this period, it also concentrates on people's attitudes towards the items they were consuming: the ideologies, values, meanings and emotions people attached to them.[6] Traditional scholarship maintains that people scorned excessive consumption in the wake of the English Reformation, declaring it ungodly and immodest, actively working against one's credit and reputation. A variety of evidence is used to support this claim, ranging from the writing of contemporary moralists such as Gervase Markham and Philip Stubbes, to the sumptuary legislation that was renewed and extended throughout the sixteenth century.[7] Yet, as Sara Pennell observes, we need to look at the nature of consumption at this time to fully understand attitudes towards it.[8] 'Excessive' consumption of luxury goods may have

[6] Sara Pennell, 'Material Culture in Seventeenth-Century 'Britain': The Matter of Domestic Consumption' in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford, 2012), p. 83.
[7] Gervase Markham, *The English husbandman. The first part: contayning the knowledge of the true nature of every soyle within his kingdom…Together with the art of planting, grafting and gardening* (London, 1613); Philip Stubbes, *A perfect pathway to felicitie conteining godly meditations and praiers, fir for all times* (London, 1592). For more on Tudor sumptuary legislation, see Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), pp. 17-63.
[8] Pennell, 'The Matter of Domestic Consumption', p. 83.

been rebuffed, but the expansion in the type and amount of domestic goods was also viewed as a divine pursuit. Even William Harrison, who seemed especially concerned with the sixteenth-century increase in domestic investment, commented 'God is my judge, but to show that I do rejoices rather to see how God hath blessed us with his good gifts'.[9] Early modern members of the middling sort cautiously walked the line between 'excess' and 'success', 'ungodly' and 'godly' displays.

Like Harrison, scholars today draw connections between early modern social order and domestic goods. Alexandra Shepard demonstrates that people from all levels of society were able to provide an accurate total of their personal property when providing witness statements for court cases. 'The goods in people's possession', Shepard attests, were 'significant as generators of income; as repositories of wealth that could be realised through exchange; and as the basis for assessing and securing the credit of an individual or household'.[10] People invested in household objects as these assets offered more security than money. In an economy built on credit and reputation, the ownership of such items demonstrated surety and reliability. Household goods could be sold or liquidated to balance outstanding debts or to loan money should the need arise. As a result, people became adept at estimating the value of the goods belonging to others as well as themselves.[11] Shepard's study indicates that this was a widely understood practice, part of a 'culture of appraisal'.[12] The very idea that witnesses were asked to provide a total of their worth in court is testament to the significance of capital and credit to a person's reputation and perceived reliability in a court of law.

[9] William Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classical Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life* (1577), edited by Georges Edelen (Toronto/London, 1994), p. 200.
[10] Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2015), p. 43.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 2; p. 36.

Thus, with this shared understanding of the worth of goods as economic capital, and their impact on the credit of an individual and even household, domestic items also held great social value, making consumption a powerful tool at the disposal of the new gentry.

Consumption and display may therefore have been more widely accepted than traditional scholarship would have us believe, but there were still certain codes assigned to the ownership of objects, and these often related to status. Catherine Richardson maintains that 'middling goods' were connected by processes of production, consumption and innovation.[13] As Mark Overton et al. demonstrate, work that took place in the domestic environment necessitated the consumption of other domestic objects.[14] This led to further innovation and expansion in the type and number of goods produced. Richardson argues that 'with this wider range of possessions come other indicators of increased status', such as the emergence of a middling focus on aesthetics.[15] Interestingly, Richardson claims that the biggest difference between this level of society and members of the elite was design and patronage, best seen through the gentry desire for coherent sets of decoration and furnishings.[16] Through expanding global markets, the possession of previously unseen, often labelled 'exotic' objects also came to signify status.[17] Thus, for both the

[13] Catherine Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford, 2011), p. 19.
[14] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* p. 63.
[15] Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture*, pp. 20-23.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[17] As highlighted through the term 'exotic', goods imported from outside Europe were described problematically, often with curiosity, suspicion, or 'othered'. This is a period of human as well as material mobility, in which people and cultures were increasingly commodified. But, as with the emergence of consumption, it is the eighteenth century that has historically been the focus of such studies. Scholarship is increasingly shifting attention to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, through collaborative projects such as TIDE and MEMOs. For studies on interactions between England and the Islamic World, see the *Medieval and Early Modern Orients (*MEMOs) project – Lubaaba Al-Azami and Samera Hassan, 'A Memo of Introduction', *MEMOs* website (18.06.20) https://memorients.com/articles/a-memo-of-introduction [Accessed 03.05.22]. For an in-depth analysis of language and terms 'that were central to the conceptualisation of identity, race, migration and

middling and gentry, 'newness' and 'innovation' seemingly characterised developments in consumption.

This chapter demonstrates that the material separation between middling and gentry can be seen through tensions involving tradition and innovation, rather than aesthetics and design.[18] Yet, 'consumption hierarchy was not simply the same as the social hierarchy'.[19] In the role of producers and consumers, the urban middle ranks were investing in 'novel and more varied forms of goods' such as mirrors, clocks, pictures and curtains. Much of the wealth described by the rural gentry in their witness statements came from landowning and 'a greater proportion of their material worth comprised capital assets and status symbols rather than the means of production'.[20] Arguably, gentlemen did not have the same reliance on systems of credit as the middling sort or even urban elite, nor was their income so connected to their own production or manual labour. Tradition and continuity were key to gentry status, and thus items passed down through inheritance or gifting held as much status as a new or 'modern' item purchased by a member of the middling elite. According to Pennell, 'the seventeenth century in England marks a period in which certain objects *in their own right* […] came to be seen as extensions of the self and of familial identity, and thus worth of preservation'.[21] As discussed, new gentlemen held complex, multifaceted social identities; they often found themselves walking a fine line between

transculturality in the early modern period', see Nandini Das, João Vicente Melo, Haig Smith, and Lauren Working, *Keywords of Identity, Race, and Human Mobility in Early Modern England* (Amsterdam, 2021) part of the ECR-funded project 'Travel, Transculturality, and Identity in England, c. 1500-1700 (TIDE)', http://www.tideproject.uk/tide-keywords/ [Accessed 03.05.22].

[18] See Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson for a discussion of potential factors contributing to this increase in consumption, as well as the impact of material transitions. *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2017), p. 110.

[19] Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London, 1996), p.185, quoted in Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 299.

[20] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 72.

[21] Pennell, 'The Matter of Domestic Consumption', p. 79.

gentry tradition and middling 'modernity'. When it came to furnishing their interiors, as with the building and adaption of homes, members of the urban elite and new gentry combined requirements of both the gentry and middling sort to display their newfound status.

Furnishing the 'new gentry' home

William Harrison set out a clear image of what he expected to encounter in the houses of 'knights, gentlemen, merchantmen, and some other wealthy citizens'.[22] But what, in practice, would have been found in the new gentry houses of this study? Significant attention has been paid to the furnishing and decoration of gentry properties and, thanks to recent projects, the domestic material culture of the 'middling sort' is increasingly brought into focus.[23] But the interiors and objects belonging to those who passed between these groups, especially in the urban setting, has received less attention. This section analyses the furnishings located in the probate records belonging to some of the urban elite and new gentlemen mentioned in this study, highlighting those spaces and items that set them apart from these other social groups. As outlined in previous chapters, these case studies are drawn from a variety of regions but have been selected to show the diversity as well as the commonalities that existed between new gentlemen. The home that Shakespeare furnished was relatively unique in the context of Stratford, but its purchase and renovation was a typical act of

[22] Harrison, *The Description of England*, p. 200. In an oft-quoted passage from his *Description of England,* William Harrison points at the lavish provision of fine domestic goods not just among noblemen and wealthy citizens but also 'descended yet lower, even unto the inferior artificers and farmers'. While Harrison's work should be treated with some caution, his work does suggest that as far back as 1570, domestic goods and 'new' forms of ownership were allied with social identity.
[23] For gentry interiors see Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Yale, 1978); Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680* (London, 1999). For middling investment in domestic interiors see Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*.

self-fashioning for the new social group he had joined. As such, I look beyond Stratford to see how men of a similar level and domestic setting to Shakespeare chose to furnish their home. Ultimately, I am interested in those new gentry trends and expectations that transcended regional patterns and boundaries, and how this might have impacted Shakespeare in his furnishing of New Place. Throughout this section, there is a recurring theme; the existence of seemingly high status, or gentry, items appearing alongside goods related to production and business. This push and pull of new gentry identity – between occupation and gentry pursuits, invention and convention - played out most conspicuously in the urban domestic environment, and is evident in the items used to furnish the most significant spaces in the home. Below, I focus on items identified in halls, parlours and great chambers as the main spaces in which new gentlemen created and displayed their social identity.

In the hall

The 1633 Chastleton House inventory of gentleman Walter Jones begins with a concise list of the moveable goods found in his hall: 'One longe table and a Carpet one Court Cupbord 4 long forms & sixe joined stooles'.[24] This scarcity of objects may have resulted from omissions, consciously or unconsciously made by appraisers, but they also hint at wider transformations relating to the hall and its changing function in the homes of new gentlemen.[25] At one time, the halls of country properties such as Chastleton House were functional, communal and convivial.[26] Implements of

[24] The inventory of Walter Jones 1633, Oxfordshire Archives: Chastleton Estate Papers E/24/1/W/2
A full transcription can be found in the appendix of Jonathan Marsden, 'The Chastleton Inventory of 1633', *Furniture History,* Vol. 36 (2000), pp. 37-42.
[25] Lena Orlin outlines the various challenges to the study of early modern probate documents, focusing specifically on significant omissions made by appraisers. Orlin, 'Fictions', pp. 51-83.
[26] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 276-279.

production and dining would have been found alongside various pieces of furniture and wall hangings, demonstrating its use as a space of work, food preparation, communal dining and entertainment.[27] But with the separation of service spaces from the hall, and the increasing use of more 'intimate' rooms such as the parlour for dining, what was once the heart of the house became a space of symbolism. By Jones's death in 1633, Nicholas Cooper argues that the country gentry hall was little more than an entrance space, used to greet guests, a grand lobby in which to begin the tour of stately rooms within (fig.27).[28] The medieval scale and position of this space may have been retained as a means of impressing visitors, but it was no longer used as a place of communal feasting and entertaining. And this is seemingly reflected through its relative lack of furnishings.

But many members of the new gentry and urban elite did not, and often could not, follow the same trends as their rural counterparts. As demonstrated, urban gentlemen frequently chose to retain their large and open medieval halls, altering their function but not their significance. Halls belonging to the civic elite in cities like Norwich and Worcester exuded symbolism, status and civic authority, and the items valued in their probate records reflect this. In Worcester, Robert Wylde's inventory of 1608 lists in the hall:

> Inprimis two longe Tableboordes, one with a frame, the other without, one short Table-boord in the right Baye windowe with a Frame, one square Table at the Skreen with a Frame, one other old Table-boord, in the left baye windowe, with fower joined Formes, and nine joined stooles a Skreene, one deske, two horssmens staves, and a morice pike at xxxs[29]

[27] As will be demonstrated through the analysis of inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon.
[28] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 285.
[29] Inventory of Robert Wylde 1607, WAAS, Inventories and Wills, 008.7, fol.45. Transcribed by Stephanie Appleton.

Far from the most copiously furnished space in the inventory, the hall in The Commandery contains significantly more goods than the rural inventory belonging to Jones. This may, in part, be due to chronological shifts in furnishing and use of the hall, but it can also be explained by differences in function. The long table would have taken pride of place in the urban hall of The Commandery, alongside other items associated with civic duty. Tables were themselves symbolic, as maintained by Hamling and Richardson, 'the acquisition of large-scale crafted furniture to enhance a house was a statement of ownership and permanence, representing an investment in the present and the future'.[30] The symbolic significance of such pieces helps explain the appearance of furniture traditionally relating to dining and feasting, in spaces that were no longer used for this function.

In the halls of merchant properties like The Commandery, large items of furniture continued to be used for hosting but in a civic or ceremonial capacity. This may also explain why we find more furniture listed in the halls of leading townsmen and civic officials. Chris King notes that the halls of Norwich merchants (many of whom served as mayor), were often spaces in which 'public' ceremonies and 'mayor-making rituals' took place, primarily centred around hospitality.[31] Robert Suckling's 1589 inventory lists 'a carved framed table with 4 lions' in the hall, priced at £1 10s.[32] A large oak table of similar decoration (early 1600s) remains in East Riddleston Hall, West Yorkshire (fig.28). One side of the table is adorned with an elegantly carved frieze, featuring three carved lion heads above the table's legs. The table would have been positioned

[30] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 124-125.
[31] Chris King, *Houses and Society in Norwich, 1350-1610: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (Suffolk, 2020), pp. 158-159.
[32] Inventory of Robert Suckling 1589. Transcribed and published by F. R. Beecheno, 'The Sucklings' House at Norwich (II)', *Norfolk Archaeology*, Vol. 20 (1921), pp. 166-177.

at the far end of the hall so its decoration was visible to those who entered the space. With the family seated along the opposite length, this decoration would have been viewed by guests seated opposite. The investment of such furniture in the hall demonstrated a 'commitment to traditional ideals of manorial life, of gatherings of household and community', even if they were no longer conducted in the physical space of the hall.[33] These activities were key traits of gentility, and were increasingly followed by those wishing to join its ranks.[34] The commissioning and display of such furniture in the most traditional space in the house signalled the family's investment in its own lineage, past and future. Its location and decoration exuded authority, inspiring respect from guests and peers. Long tables such as these fulfilled both the symbolic and functional requirements of men like Robert Suckling; developments usually associated with the rural gentry were utilised and manipulated by those new to its ranks living in towns and cities.

Weaponry was also a typical display of authority in the halls of the urban elite, as seen through the two 'horssmens staves' and 'morice' pike found in Robert Wylde's inventory. In his study of merchant houses in Bristol and London, Roger Leech suggests that the display of armour signifies the owner's status among the local militia; symbolic of their role in maintaining civil order and royal authority.[35] Further displays of devotion to the crown could be demonstrated in the exhibition of royal arms, most

[33] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 125.
[34] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Eastbourne, 1994), p. 283.
[35] Roger Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall: Historical Context and Merchant Culture in the Early Modern City', *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 31 (2000), pp. 1-10. The Wyldes' commitment to the protection of civil order and the crown was demonstrated a number of years later during the Civil War, when Charles (II) Stuart and his Royalist troops set up their headquarters at The Commandery in August 1651. 'History of the Commandery', *Museums of Worcester* https://www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk/museums/the-commandery/commandery-history/ [Accessed 19.08.20].

commonly visible in forms of fixed decoration, but also through royal portraits. A 'kinge Iames picture' is among the items listed in the Wylde's hall, and would have complemented the armour also on display in this space. Wylde was not only an industrious clothier, but a mayor and gentlemen, and these were important signifiers of status for urban leaders, akin to the authority, power and responsibility held and displayed by members of the county gentry.[36]

Painted portraits were conspicuous forms of self-fashioning and, as discussed in chapter four, they became increasingly popular during the period of this study.[37] Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, merchants and civic officials commissioned portraits of themselves or of other figures who were in some way representative of the same occupation or status. Robert Tittler demonstrates that civic portraiture was viewed differently from personal or courtly portraits. [38] These paintings often hung in public civic spaces, but they could also be found in the halls of private houses. Men like Robert Suckling might commission a portrait of themselves to commemorate their election into office.[39] But they might also commission and display portraits of other civic officials, memorialising those who held the seat before him, creating a kind of civic lineage through association rather than blood. The display of such portraits alongside coats of arms aligned with the changing function and status of the hall, as well as its owner. The combination of bulky furniture, weapons, and royal and civic portraiture created an image of patriarchy, authority, lineage and wealth.

[36] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, pp. 276-318.
[37] Susan Foister, 'Paintings and other works of art in sixteenth-century English inventories', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 123 (1981), pp. 273-282.
[38] Robert Tittler, *The Face of the City: Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007).
[39] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich,* p. 173; Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (London, 2012).

Displayed in the retained medieval halls of the urban elite, the stage was set for its owners to perform their newly acquired status.

In the parlour

If the hall exemplified tradition, the parlour embodied adaption. It was the setting of increased domestic consumption and display, with probate records hinting at its progressively crowded condition. Starting out as a ground-floor bedchamber, the parlour was increasingly used in houses of the gentry as an intimate space for dining, entertaining and leisure: this is demonstrated through a shift in the type of furnishings found within. As Overton et al. comment, 'by the early sixteenth century beds had disappeared from parlours in the houses of the gentry, and they became eating and reception rooms only.'[40] This certainly appears to have been the case for many of the new gentlemen of this study.

[40] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, pp. 131-132.

Table 1 items listed in the 'great Parlor' of Robert Suckling's inventory of 1589

'In the great Parlor'	£ s d
Item a framed table with draws	1 0 0
Item one other framed table with leaves	1 0 0
Item 2 longe forms and a short forme	6 0
Item a lyverye table & a frame	5 0
Item a lyverye cubbord	8 0
Item 1 chayre imbroydered upon red clothe	1 0 0
Item 1 other chayre of tent worke	13 4
Item 4 womens stooles of tent worke	1 0 0
Item 6 womens cushyns of tapestrye	1 0 0
Item 4 other cushyns of tent worke and one of needell worke	1 10 0
Item 2 longe windowe cushyns of tent worke	2 0 0
Item 1 carpett of Turkey worke	9 0 0
Item 1 turkey carpet of blew for the side table	2 0 0
Item 1 payre of lattyn cobbeyrens	4 10 0
Item 1 payre of tongs and a fyre panne typped with latten	5 0
Item two hanging tables	10 0
Item 2 cushyns of tente worke	10 0
Item 2 small iron doggs with knoppes	2 6
Item a greene carpet for the carving bord & 1 other for ye lyverye table	10 0
Item 1 foote stoole and a bench clothe	1 0
Item ye hanging in ye parlor of greene and redde Saye	1 0 0
Total	**28 10 10**

Robert Suckling's inventory suggests that his street-facing 'great parlour' (table 1) was devoted to receiving and hosting important guests.[41] An assortment of tables, seating and storage is listed in this space, accompanied by soft furnishings and tools for

[41] Inventory of Robert Suckling 1589, pp. 166-177.

tending the fire. While items found in halls were bare and imposing, the goods furnishing Suckling's great parlour suggest comfort and an increase in domestic consumption. Tables located in this room were often smaller than those found in the hall, encouraging more 'intimate' forms of dining and conversing. These tables came in a variety of shapes, from the square table listed in Robert Wylde's great chamber, to the octagonal frame found today in the parlour of Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire. These tables were decorative as well as functional, and this can be seen through Suckling's 'a table with draws' and 'one other framed table with leaves', both forms of extending tables that combined the status of the long tables found in halls, with the practicalities of a smaller space. The appearance of these tables also implies that the parlour was a flexible hosting room, and could accommodate intimate groups.

Guests and family members could choose from a wide range of chairs and stools in the parlour. Two upholstered chairs are itemised in Suckling's great chamber, one of 'tent worke' priced 13s 4p, and the other 'imbroyed on upon red clothe' valued at a respectable £1. Given its description, the latter may have displayed similarities to an armchair now in the V&A dating to the early seventeenth century (fig.29). This stately chair was skilfully carved and turned, gilded, and then upholstered in rich red velvet. Its sturdy frame and arms make it an imposing item, while its delicacy of decoration gives it an air of elegance. The fine upholstery lining its back and seat would have provided a level of comfort as well as aesthetic splendour, strikingly different to the rigidity of the straight back joined chairs so often found in middling households. As Richardson obverses, 'plainer' wooden chairs were usually decorated with carvings, furnished with detachable cushions, and set around tables with stools and smaller

chairs.[42] Upholstered furniture, on the other hand, was more likely found in houses of the gentry, and often formed part of matching or coherent sets. Indeed, the four stools of 'tent work' also listed in the parlour of Robert Suckling likely corresponded with the chairs mentioned above. According to Richardson, this 'coherent sense of design made possible by commissioning all the furnishings for one room' created an 'interconnectedness of individuals within a household and their relative status'.[43] The head of the household would place himself on the most expensive seat in the room, while guests and family members would fill the other seats according to their rank and situation. Access, as much as the type, design and cost of furniture, reflected one's status within the domestic environment and new gentlemen would have priority over all material goods in their own home.

The parlour therefore became a room in which expensive goods could be used and showcased. With the hall, it offered space to display precious metalwares (often stored and listed in butteries), further facilitated through the development of early modern storage furniture.[44] Court cupboards appeared with increasing regularity in probate

[42] Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture,* p. 101.
[43] *Ibid.,* p. 27*;* p. 101.
[44] The buttery was a nebulous space, taking different forms, often just a portioned area in an existing room. Some courtyard properties, such as Suckling House, contained more than one, although this was rare. As such, these rooms rarely survive as a distinct space, especially in properties that have since undergone extensive renovation or extension. Yet, their significance as a space comes in the treasures they so often housed; valuables we might expect to find in the hall and/or parlour. Plate and silverware are frequently recorded in butteries across various wills and inventories. In Robert Wylde's 'buttrye within the greate parlor' we find listed 'the pewter in the Buttrye of all sortes' priced at £5 and 14 shillings, and 'the brasse' at 40 shillings. Robert Suckling's inventory, taken some twenty years earlier, states that 'petwer vessels newe and old of divers sorts contayning by waight 374^{lb} at…to the hundred at 6^{d} the pound' could be found in the 'Butterye next the little Parlor', totalling £9 and 7s. It was not unusual to find such items listed in these spaces. For more information on butteries and the items listed in this room see Maurice Barley, 'A Glossary Of Names For Rooms In Houses Of The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in L. I. Foster and L. Alcock (eds.), *Culture and Environment, Essays in honour of Sir Cyril Fox* (London, 1963), p. 483.

documents across the period of this study.[45] In Robert Wylde's inventory of 1608, these cupboards are listed in The Commandery's great parlour and great chamber, spaces associated with dining and status.[46] These highly decorative pieces often comprised two or three open shelves, and were used to display plate as well as offer a space on which to serve food during mealtimes.[47] Court cupboards were large, frequently made from high quality wood such as oak and ornately decorated with carvings or inlay, as seen through the piece held by The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (fig.30). This court cupboard dates from about 1620 and demonstrates the structure and decoration that could have been found in the house of an urban elite or new gentleman. Constructed in oak, every element was enhanced with ornamentation. The front legs are carved into classical baulsters which support the equally decorative shelves. An inlaid frieze of leaves and flowers adorns the top section of the cupboard, creating further texture while showcasing modern decorative techniques and practices.[48] Such pieces worked to accentuate the owner's most prized and valuable possessions.

Throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries other forms of storage evolved into conduits of display. An entry in the 1592 inventory of Nantwich merchant Richard Churche (of Churche's Mansion) highlights the various forms these storage pieces took: 'Item Tables cupboards forms stooles chaires coffers chestes and other household stuffe' at £4 6s 8d. One of these items survives in the form of a press

[45] Overton et al. demonstrate the rise in popularity of court cupboards throughout the seventeenth century through the increase in appearance of these items in Kent inventories see *Production and Consumption*, p. 92.
[46] Inventory of Robert Wylde, 1607.
[47] Victor Chinnery, *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 315.
[48] For information on the decorative method of inlay, see Chinnery, *Oak Furniture*, pp. 193-198.

cupboard (fig.31).[49] Commissioned for Richard and Margery Churche in about 1577, this impressive structure bears the initials 'RC' and 'MC'. Originally, the cupboard was a 'light golden colour'. Raised onto three feet, its lower half features two large panel doors giving access to the cupboard's interior. These panels feature a delicate floral pattern, with two relief figure heads protruding from the centre of each door potentially (and rather uniquely) representing its owners.[50] Three architectural columns flank these doors, two carved onto the outside and one in the centre. The upper part of this cupboard contains some of the most impressive oak carving of the period. At either end we find two elaborate caryatids - one female, one male - supporting an intricate frieze running along the top of the cupboard. In the centre, the Royal Arms of Elizabeth I take pride of place, surrounded by doors displaying the royal symbols of a leopard and a dragon. Classical motifs spring from every corner of this cupboard, demonstrating the taste and gentility of the owner alongside the central exhibition of loyalty to the monarch. Richard and Margery Church made sure to leave their mark on this impressive item, understanding the role it played in their display of identity.

Utilitarian items were, therefore, anything but ordinary. They demonstrated the expansion of domestic goods and the evolution of their display, but significantly, they highlight the ever-changing requirements and fashions of the period. Press cupboards, according to Overton et al, began to replace court cupboards as the seventeenth century progressed.[51] They were used for serving and sometimes storing food and, like the Churche's cupboard, were often proudly displayed in the parlour or best

[49] For a full description and analysis of the court cupboard from Churche's Mansion, see S. Bourne, 'The Cupboard of Rychard and Margerye Churche', *Regional Furniture Society Journal,* Vol. 2 (1988), pp. 1-5.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 93.

chamber. They combined the closed storage solutions of livery cupboards (fig.32) with the display element of court cupboards. The bottom section stored linens to be used during dining, and the recessed upper section could be used to display plate.[52] Food and wine would be brought in from the buttery and placed on the cupboard's surface, ready to fill the wine bowls and other plate laid out before the guests. Here, we see how these domestic spaces and the items filling them worked together in the performance of status.

As well as spaces of reception and dining, Hamling and Richardson demonstrate that parlours were also used for leisure.[53] Often thought of as a gentry luxury, more time for recreation began to be dedicated by the lower gentry and middling groups of society. Leisure usually took place in the evening and included 'social' activities such as games, sport, music, drinking and reading.[54] Reading could be a social experience if performed aloud, or a private, reflective pastime of inward contemplation. As the head of the household, a new gentleman might deliver passages of scripture to members of his household, fulfilling his role of spiritual guide and instructor. Often these activities took place in the multifunctional space of the parlour, but in particular, these more 'intimate' leisure activities would take place in those rooms labelled 'the little parlour' (if a gentleman was lucky enough to have one in his urban home). These parlours were usually less elaborately furnished, and contained items predominantly relating to seating, comfort and leisure. One of the most expensive items in Robert Suckling's little parlour is the 'payre of Virginalls' at £1. Cards, chess and other games could be accommodated by the smaller square tables often found in these spaces,

[52] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*.
[53] In particular, see 'Chapter 5' in Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 177-217.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

including in Wylde's little parlour where we also find 'Chesse & Chessboord'. Although there were growing concerns surrounding the morality of leisure at this time, especially competitive pursuits such as sport, cards and board games, these pastimes remained an acknowledged element of gentry status, to be practised in the intimate spaces of little parlours, hidden deep within the country home.[55] The appearance of such items in the houses of new gentlemen demonstrated their commitment to leisure and those pursuits most commonly associated with members of the established elites.

In addition to leisure, business and administration also took place in this adaptable space, especially in the uniquely urban 'fore parlours' discussed in chapter two. Suckling's great parlour, a ground floor room located in the front corner of the property, certainly contained all the items needed when hosting important guests, peers and business associates. Although administrative items were usually found in the homes of highly literate men for professional use, Hamling and Richardson comment 'inventories suggest that the developing textual elements of business transactions obliged some merchants and traders to think on the same terms'.[56] Several desks are listed in Robert Wylde's inventory, including one in the hall, one in the great chamber and an entry of 'desks' in the study adjoining the little parlour. Given the date of the inventory, these pieces were likely variations on the portable writing slope from SBT's collections.[57] The various locations in which these objects were listed at the time of Wylde's appraisal do not necessarily indicate their permanent home. The desk in the hall, for example, could have easily been brought through into the great parlour if its

[55] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 191-192; Girouard, *Life In The English Country House*, p. 90.
[56] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 154.
[57] Desk box, oak, c. 1600, SBT 1994-22. https://collections.shakespeare.org.uk/search/museum/strst-sbt-1994-22/view_as/grid/search/everywhere:desk/page/1 [Accessed 29.05.22].

presence was required during a significant business transaction. These portable items demonstrate the shifting, multifunctional nature of the urban elite home, and how the objects found within altered the status of the space.

Standing desks as we know them today did not emerge until much later in the seventeenth century, but portable structures designed for writing were a common appearance in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century homes.[58] The oak desk box (fig.33) belonging to the SBT is 25.5cm high, 41cm long and 37cm wide, and was designed to sit on a table or lap.[59] It slopes downwards for ease of writing, and comes with a moulded book rest to support reading materials. Further decoration is visible on the front and side panels in the form of scratch moulding. The lid is attached via butterfly hinges which, once lifted, allow access to the desk's interior without too much disturbance to the papers or book resting on its top.[60] A shelf is built into the inside of this structure, allowing for the organisation of items within, an increasingly popular administrative pursuit of the conscientious businessman. Although these desks were relatively inexpensive, Hamling and Richardson note that 'their ownership indicates a new kind of administrative work being undertaken in this period, and their location (usually in the parlour or study) indicates the physical location of such activities'.[61] Such an object could also be moved about the house with relative ease, instantly changing the function and feel of the space in which it was relocated. Work, urban administration, networking, hosting and dining all took place within one space, usually the main parlour. However, some of these activities, especially the more sociable

[58] Chinnery, *Oak Furniture*, pp. 377-379.
[59] Elizabeth Sharrett, 'Writing Desk Box' in Delia Garratt and Tara Hamling (eds.) *Shakespeare and the Stuff of Life: Treasures from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust* (London, 2016), pp. 84-85.
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 155.

pursuits, were gradually transferred to other spaces in the house - to first floor rooms like the great chamber.

In the great chamber

The great chamber at Chastleon House was sumptuously furnished. Walter Jones's inventory of 1633 paints a picture of taste, refinement and, significantly, gentility.[62] One drawing table, one square table, one court cupboard of 'walnut tree', eight 'needlework chaires of irish stitch, and 'one large needleworke backe' constitute the room's furniture, priced together at £14 4s 8d. Draped over these wooden structures could be found 'one longe turkey carpet, 'one cupboard cloth and one side bord cloth of arras'. The windows were also softly furnished with 'three faire window cushions of arras', all totalling an impressive £20 13s 4p. Fire implements accompanied the huge fireplace still positioned within this large space today and an interesting entry of 'xxiiij pictures' priced at £3 likely references an extant frieze containing twenty-four roundel portraits that still encase the room.[63] The great chamber at Chastleton could be found at the head of a grand staircase, positioned above the great parlour. In the context of the country house, it was a room of state, forming part of a grand sequence of rooms which began on the ground floor and finished on the first. Its main functions were formal dining and after-dinner entertainment, and as such, it held many similarities with parlours.[64] Yet, this first-floor reception space played host to an even wider variety of occasions and celebrations such as weddings and musical performances; entertainment originally associated with the hall.[65] The position of the great chamber

[62] Marsden, 'The Chastleton Inventory of 1633', pp. 37-42.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* p. 134.
[65] Girouard, *Life In The English Country House*, pp. 93-94.

on the first floor made it a more exclusive space. Originally designed 'as a room of presence', it was the space in which the head of the household would receive his guests in 'full pomp and ceremony'.[66] This was quite clearly reflected in the furnishings located within. Needlework, upholstery, fine woodwork and ornate decoration were all employed in the elaboration of this space, and Jones's inventory provides a glimpse of this room's potential in the hands of an exceedingly wealthy new gentleman living in the rural environment.

It is the quality and cost of the goods itemised in this room, especially the soft furnishings, that sets it apart from other interior spaces. Many elite examples of decorative textiles were produced in workshops, much like the tapestry panel in fig.34, either abroad or increasingly in England.[67] But in the houses of the lesser gentry and upper middling sort, textiles might also be embroidered and embellished within the household, serving as a source of pride for the family. In his will of 1630, John Heminges makes detailed gifts to his daughters regarding the soft furnishings in his London home:

> Item I giue devise and bequeath vnto my daughter Rebecca Smith nowe wife of Captaine William Smith my best suite of linnen wrought with Cutworke which was her mothers […] Item I giue and bequeath vnto my daughter Margarett Sheppard wife of Mr Thomas Sheppard my red Cushions imbrothered with bugle which were her mothers […] Item I giue and bequeath vnto my daughter Elizabeth my greene Cushions which were her mothers'; 'Item I giue and bequeath vnto my daughter Merefield my Cloth of silver striped Cushions which were her mothers. [68]

[66] Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven, 2010), p. 148; Cooper, *House of the Gentry*, pp. 293-297.
[67] In the 1570s, the Sheldon family established one of the first English tapestry workshops in Warwickshire, some of their surviving work is now cared for by the V&A and SBT. See information on the V&A website linked to tapestry fragment (c.1600), T.634-1993. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O109892/tapestry-fragment-sheldon-tapestry-workshops/ [Accessed 23.05.22].
[68] Will of John Heminges, 1630, TNA PROB 10/484. Transcribed in E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock, *Playhouse wills 1558-1642* (Manchester, 1993), p. 166.

The items that Heminges leaves his daughters either belonged to their mother, or else were produced by her. These goods likely held significant emotional value, forming part of a material lineage created through the ownership, embellishment and display of these items. Needlework often fell under the remit of women, as a practical task (mending) but also as a form of leisure, decorative art, communication and literacy.[69] Embroidery provided a rare opportunity for women to explore and demonstrate their identity in the overwhelmingly patriarchal environment of the early modern home. But decorative needlework produced by the mistresses of the house also reflected favourably on its head. Dexterity in needlework demonstrated refinement and diligence, essential qualities of a gentlewoman. These valued skills could then be displayed in the semi-public spaces of the parlour and great chamber, adorning the chairs and cupboards found within, further adding to the credit and reputation of the household as a whole.[70]

Cushions of red and green, cloth decorated in silver stripes and linen embossed with cutwork tell us that Heminges certainly invested in the embellishment of his home. This is demonstrated through a red velvet cushion now in the V&A's collections, accented with tassels and dated between 1600-1630 (fig.35). Although this object is elite in style and production, it provides a visual impression of John Heminges's red cushions 'imbrothered with bugle' (tassels). These statement pieces could be moved around the home, but more often than not they formed part of a set, adorning the higher status spaces of the house like the great chamber. 'Arrace', 'churchwork', 'cutwork' and turkeywork all referred to the style of decoration and methods used to

[69] Susan Fry, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Pennsylvania, 2013).
[70] For more on the display and interpretation of textiles in the early modern home, see Catherine Richardson and Tara Hamling, 'Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles', *Textile History,* Vol. 47 (2016), pp. 4-26.

embellish textiles in the early modern period, and, as demonstrated, can be found in the probate documents of new gentlemen.[71] Embroidery encompassed an array of imagery and subject-matter. [72] Repeated geometric patterns imitating the woven carpets of the Middle East covered tables and cupboards; biblical scenes embellished fine joined chairs (fig.34); and foliage, flowers and animals were scattered across needlework samplers. The decoration found on these domestic textiles was part of a wider visual culture that enveloped the early modern home. Coherent designs might be adopted within a single room, appearing on both wall and textile.[73] This visual culture was an important element of consumption (see chapter four), but significantly, it was an essential tool of self-fashioning. It is therefore no surprise that decorative textiles can be found within the inventories of new gentlemen, and more often than not, itemised in their great chambers.

In the houses of the urban elite, great chambers held more multi-functional purpose than their rural counterparts. 'Chambers' were loosely labelled in most townhouses, their functions unspecified and far-ranging. Thus, the very appearance of a '*great*

[71] 'Turkeywork' was an umbrella term used to describe textiles from the Middle East, or textiles following a similar design but made in Europe. Within this broad term, there were numerous different styles and designs, but most followed repeated, geometric patterns surrounded by a border. Eastern textiles grew in popularity across Europe during the medieval period, especially in the Spanish Courts. They first entered England in the twelfth century, but became more widespread during the reign of Henry VIII when we begin to see them mentioned in household inventories and accounts. These carpets came from a variety of places inside and outside of Turkey, from both the Ottoman and Persian empires, including Georgia, Armenia and Caucasia to name a few. Western tradition has often labelled these carpets after the European artists who have portrayed them. Lotto carpets, for example, are named after the Venetian artist Lorenzo Lotto who portrayed the same style of rug in a number of his paintings. In their original, eastern context, different styles and types of textiles were differentiated by the region in which they were produced. Many of the large pattern carpets portrayed in Holbein's works were Ushak carpets from the West Anatolian region of Turkey. This information was gathered from Lauren McKay, 'Woven Treasures from the East in the Tudor Royal Court', an online paper delivered for the Textile Museum Associates of Southern California & The Textile Museum, Zoom (13.11.2021).

[72] For more information on the different forms of textiles and embroidery found in this period, see the V&A, 'Embroidery styles: an illustrated guide' https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/embroidery-styles-an-illustrated-guide [Accessed 23.05.22].

[73] Danae Tankard, 'Late 16th-century domestic wall painting: an example from Fittleworth, West Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections,* Vol. 154 (2016), p. 201.

chamber' in an inventory is an immediate indication of status. These spaces still contained many of the trappings of a gentry house, as demonstrated through Wylde's great chamber which features a large collection of textiles: 'two Carpetts thone of Arrace work thoether of greene Clothe and Three Cupboord Clothes frindged prized at £iij'. But the biggest difference between urban great chambers and those found in country houses like Chastleton is the appearance of beds. As Overton et al. explain 'the great chambers in Kent appear to echo those of the great houses […] but they also served as a dining and sitting room for the head of the household and his family', and significantly, these spaces overwhelming contained beds. Although beds were no longer listed in the parlours of these urban elites (unlike those in Stratford), the great chamber continued to be used as the principal bed chamber, dedicated to either the head of the household or his most esteemed guests.

Robert Suckling's inventory suggests that the great chamber was the location of his most expensive bed: 'Item a postid bedd with a tester valance and curtaynes of sarcenett' priced at £4.[74] Listed separately but alongside this object are 'a covering of tapestry' at £1, 'a payre of blanketts' at 8 shillings, 'a fether bedd with boulster' at £3 and two pillows costing 6s 8d. Some twenty years later, two bedsteads 'of wainscot with Testernes of the same' can be found in the great chamber of Robert Wylde, complete with:

> Item three Featherbeddes, a[n]d three bolsters of Feathers, seaven Feather pyllowes, Three Flockbeddes, one Mattris, fower Arrace Coverlettes, and two other ould Coverlettes and Five double blanckettes prized at £xvj xs [75]

[74] Inventory of Robert Suckling 1587, p. 173.
[75] Inventory of Robert Wylde 1608.

Tester beds 'were a symbol of wealth and status' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[76] They were robust statement pieces and often elaborately furnished. The oak tester bedstead displayed at The Greyfriars, Worcester (fig.36), is appropriately adorned for a great chamber; the bedposts are expertly turned, the headboard and tester assembled with joined panelling. Carved architectural arches fill two panels of the headboard, decorated in the classical style, thus reflecting the elegance and civility of the owner. Bedding – much like the mattresses, pillows, coverlets and blankets itemised in Wylde's inventory – would have layered this fine structure.[77] The curtains or valance found on such beds would also be embellished as well as offering warmth and some privacy to the occupants. Beds were typically the highest value pieces of furniture in the house, so it seems reasonable that members of the urban elite would want to display their most lavish possession in the space of the highest status. Furthermore, the head of the household would want his most esteemed guests to be accommodated for the night in one of the most finely furnished rooms in the house. With space at a premium, the great chamber often doubled as the principal sleeping chamber in the townhouse, and a new gentleman such as William Shakespeare would want to be surrounded by his most prized belongings as he took to bed for the evening.

Chambers in general served a number of purposes and storage increasingly became a priority throughout the period of this study. The more goods a person owned, the more wealth and credit they seemingly possessed. But these goods also needed to be housed.[78] As mentioned, cupboards, chests, trunks and coffers regularly featured

[76] Elizabeth Sharrett, 'The Hathaway Bed' in Garratt and Hamling (eds.) *Shakespeare and the Stuff of Life,* pp. 58-59.
[77] See sections on 'Beds' and 'Bedding' in Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 238-245.
[78] Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor England* (New York, 2007), pp. 105-111.

in the inventories of new gentlemen.[79] Often, these items served two functions; the organisation of household objects and the display of consumption. The most common storage items found in first-floor chambers were chests (fig.37) and coffers, used to store domestic items such as linens, clothes, towels and so on.[80] Up to sixteen 'chysts' can be found in Robert Suckling's inventory of 1589, ranging from the 'lytle lether chyst with iron barres' at 3s 4p in the 'lytle parlor chamber', to the '2 Cypress chystes' found in the great chamber.[81] These chests were likely used to store the long list of 'lynnen, diaper and playne' also itemised in his inventory at £35 4p. Often found in spaces loosely labelled as 'chambers', these seemingly mundane objects served an important purpose; to house the abundance of domestic goods owned by new gentlemen.

The increased appearance of storage items indicates a growth in domestic goods and the tension between storage and display. These factors not only impacted the type of furnishings found within the early modern home, but the fabric of the home itself. For Orlin, 'the histories of buildings and furnishings are thoroughly intertwined' as 'more personal property demands more rooms'. [82] She suggests that it was this increase that fuelled the so-called 'revolution' in housing, rather than a perceived desire for privacy. This, to a certain extent, is supported by the new gentry inventories of this study. It seems that the main spaces of the hall, parlour and great chamber not only contained a significant amount of 'stuff', but these domestic goods were located alongside

[79] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* pp. 90-91.
[80] Trunks and coffers sat directly on a surface or the ground, as such, they could be moved about quite easily and thus appealed to the transient lifestyles of the late medieval gentry and urban elites. Chests, on the other hand, were raised onto four feet and represented fixed storage solutions more suited to the permanent modes of living in the late sixteenth century. Although they could still be moved with relative ease, their flat surfaces (lids) meant that they might also serve as alternative seating. Geoffrey Wills, *English Furniture 1550*-1760 (Middlesex, 1971), pp. 17-22; Anthony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 198-200.
[81] Inventory of Robert Suckling 1589.
[82] Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, pp. 105-111.

conduits of display. Far from being spaces of privacy and specialisation, these rooms were public and multifunctional, especially in the urban context. They had to fulfil a number of requirements, including the public-facing roles held by many of their new gentry owners. This is reflected in the amount and type of items found within. As Orlin writes, 'none of this luxury was intended for the private enjoyment of the principal family. Like all status building, that of early modern England was a public performance'.[83] Analysis of this small selection of new gentry wills and inventories allows us to better understand the public role Shakespeare was expected to play as a new gentleman furnishing his home. But how did his probate document compare to those considered above and what, if anything, can it tell us about Shakespeare's status and his domestic interiors?

Shakespeare's Will (1616)

There is nothing especially unusual about William Shakespeare's will. It contains a number of revisions, but this was not remarkable for the time and many of the probate documents considered in this study also feature a number of amendments.[84] His will therefore reminds us that despite his modern-day notoriety, Shakespeare was a man who lived and worked within the legal and social parameters of the early modern period.[85] The majority of Shakespeare's inheritance went to his daughter Susannah

[83] Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p. 110.
[84] Work undertaken by the TNA suggests that Shakespeare's will was originally drafted in 1613, around the time he purchased Blackfriars Gatehouse in London. In January 1616, the will was further amended to reflect his daughter's, Judith's, upcoming marriage to Thomas Quiney. It was then annotated and signed for the final time in March 1616 when Shakespeare's health presumably took a turn for the worse. Regardless of the specific dates of alteration and the events prompting them, the fact that they were made at all was customary for a man of Shakespeare's standing. Amanda Bevan, 'Shakespeare's will: a new interpretation', *The National Archives* (05.04.2016) https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/shakespeares-will-new-interpretation/ [Accessed 23.05.22].
[85] Shakespeare's will is by no means the longest nor the most detailed of wills remaining from Stratford-upon-Avon. The will of fellow townsman, Daniel Baker (1641), is considerably more comprehensive.

Hall and her husband, John Hall, both of whom are named as executors. Importantly for this study, Shakespeare's will mentions a (small) number of household items, many of which we have encountered in the new gentry probates considered above. As was common, he bequeathed 'All the Rest pf mu goodes Chattel<les> Lease plate Jewels & household stuffe' to his executors.[86] Clothes, silverware (including a silver gilt bowl), plate, a sword, and jewels are specifically listed with varying detail, and bequeathed to different members of his circle.[87] As discussed, these are the type of items we would certainly have expected to find in the home of a new, or urban, gentleman. Ultimately, we do not know how the objects listed in Shakespeare's will were used or where they were located, but their presence in this document does suggest that Shakespeare participated in a number of the new gentry trends explored in this chapter. Like Robert Wylde, he pronounced his gentry status through his sword. His wealth and taste was inferred through the silver and gilt bowl. Although these legacies do not allow us to go beyond speculation, they are enough to tell us that Shakespeare participated in patterns of self-fashioning that were both 'new gentry' and, as will be shown, local.

Shakespeare's overseers were local men: lawyer and town clerk, Francis Collins, and county gentleman, Thomas Russell. Of his witnesses and legatees, Susan Brock notes that many of them 'laid claim to the title of gentleman or played a significant part

Baker was clearly a man of some means, successful in his trade as a wool draper and mercer, we gain a vivid image of the contents of his home through this document, which goes some way to filling the holes left open by the absence of an inventory. Will of Daniel Baker, 1641, TNA PROB 11/186/579. Transcribed by Stephanie Appleton in 'Women and Wills in Early Modern England: The Community of Stratford-upon-Avon 1537 – 1649', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2016, p. 348.

[86] Will of William Shakespeare, 1616, TNA PRO PROB1/4. Transcribed in Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse wills*, pp. 105-109.

[87] See Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells (eds.), *The Shakespeare Circle: an alternative biography* (Cambridge, 2015) for essays on those people and families that formed part of his social circle.

in the civic life of Stratford-upon-Avon'.[88] This group included gentleman William Reynolds (legatee); Hamnet Sadler (witness and legatee), godfather to Shakespeare's son; Julius Shawe (witness), bailiff; and his theatre associates John Heminges, Richard Burbage and Henry Condell (all legatees). These are precisely the type of men we would expect to find in the will belonging to someone like Shakespeare; men drawn from a similar social and occupational level, as well as immediate family and friends. Brock goes on to write that 'through them Shakespeare was acquainted with the gentry of Warwickshire and the surrounding counties, whose social and business connections he certainly exploited'. [89] Although not a civic official, he seems to have been firmly entrenched in the town's elite circles, as well as the Warwickshire gentry.[90] He also held ties to the royal court through his role in the acting company, the King's Men. Given the significance of this community to Shakespeare's status and probate, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the local framework, contextualising the playwright's will within the probate materials from his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories

The furnishings of the new gentlemen discussed above have been analysed qualitatively, in reference to particular men for whom an inventory or will survives. But a different, broader approach is required when it comes to the study of extant inventories from Shakespeare's hometown. As highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, 132 inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon survive between 1590 to 1630. This

[88] Susan Brock, 'Last things: Shakespeare's neighbours and beneficiaries' in Edmondson and Wells (eds.), *The Shakespeare Circle',* p. 226.
[89] Brock, 'Last things', p. 226.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

timeline covers the period before, during and after Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place, allowing time for the infiltration of different trends into, and out of, the town. This larger sample of Stratford inventories has been used quantitatively to identify key trends such as average room number and wealth, similar to studies by Overton et al., Anthony Buxton and Nat Alcock.[91] A smaller selection of 22 inventories was analysed more closely to find specific examples of items and object groupings from Shakespeare's hometown. Using this combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, we can gain an approximate idea of the level of material investment that existed in Stratford at this time and how these compare against the new gentry trends discussed above.

The smaller selection of Stratford documents belonged to individuals from Shakespeare's broad social group in and around Stratford, and were likely to have lived in urban properties similar to, if not the same as, those discussed in chapter two. They were important individuals in the local community of Stratford-upon-Avon: some of those selected were able to call themselves gentlemen, whereas others held important leadership and/or business roles, but together they represent the type of people among whom Shakespeare was attempting to construct his status. As such, the items they chose to adorn their homes may have had a significant impact over the decorative choices made by Shakespeare himself. Considered together, these documents help us to uncover the type of items and rooms found in Stratford, adding to the picture of what may or may not have been found in New Place.

[91] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption;* Buxton, *Domestic Culture;* N. W. Alcock, *People At Home: Living in a Warwickshire Village 1500-1800* (Chichester, 1993).

Stratford appraisals

The process and context in which probate records were compiled was complex. It is therefore useful to consider how and why these documents were put together, as well as the challenges to studying them if we are to utilise them in this search for the social identity of the Stratford elite.[92] Buxton describes the probate process as 'the proving of the will and the granting of administration of the estates of the deceased', and its origins were rooted in the Medieval Church.[93] It was the responsibility of the Church to oversee 'the disposal of deceased persons' personal estates only'; their movable goods, debts and leaseholds, but crucially not their freehold property as this came under the jurisdiction of the civil courts.[94] Ecclesiastical courts were therefore responsible for ensuring that the last wishes of the deceased (testator) were carried out efficiently by those left in charge of their affairs and estates (overseers). The church then encouraged these last wishes to be set out in writing, in the form of a last will and testament.

Executors (personal representatives) ensured that the wishes of the deceased were carried out and that all movable goods including debts were counted, recorded and valued in the form of an inventory.[95] These personal representatives often had a stake in the estate and affairs of the deceased so were likely to be next of kin, as in the case

[92] Barry Trinder, 'The Wooden Horse in the Cellar: Words and Contexts in Shropshire Probate Inventories' in Arkell, Evens and Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part,* pp. 268-284; Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Rights of Privacy in Early Modern English Households' in Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2016), pp. 423-435; Tom Arkell, 'Interpreting Probate Inventories' in Arkell, Evens and Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part*, pp. 72-102.
[93] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* p. 20.
[94] Arkell, 'The Probate Process', p. 20.
[95] Jeff & Nancy Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800: a System in Transition' in Arkell, Evens and Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part,* pp. 23-5.

of Shakespeare's will, or people involved in a similar craft or trade.[96] In the 1611 inventory of yeoman Thomas Hiccox, appraisers included Abraham Sturley (former bailiff), Lewis Hiccox (his brother and overseer), John Smith (former bailiff) and William Shawe.[97] This group of family members and civic officials represents the usual circle of people we might expect to appear in the inventory of such a man. Probate documents were thus used as checks on personal representatives to ensure they were carrying out their duties, as much as they provided protection against creditors to whom the deceased may be indebted.[98] According to Buxton, 'inventories were principally economic instruments', with descriptive language limited to use for differentiation and identification.[99] However, as Shepard's work has established, the very act of valuing someone's goods was part of a wider culture of appraisal, and one that could be used to the advantage of new gentlemen.[100]

Those individuals selected as appraisers, as Thomas Hiccox's probate demonstrates, were often from a similar social level or trade for the most accurate valuations.[101] A member of the gentry, for example, would usually be present for the appraisal of another gentleman's property. In this way, these documents reveal a great deal about status networks within a community, as well as the value different groups attached to certain domestic goods. The various approaches and priorities taken by appraisers (each with their own agenda), and even the local authorities overseeing the process, varied hugely, making these documents far from objective. As Orlin notes, omissions

[96] Cox & Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', p. 29.
[97] Inventory of Thomas Hiccox, 1611 (123) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories*, *Vol.1,* pp. 251-253.
[98] Cox & Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', p. 25.
[99] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* p. 22.
[100] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself.*
[101] Cox & Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', p. 30.

of items and even entire rooms were consciously and unconsciously made during the appraisal, leaving us with half the picture.[102] Yet the subjective nature of probate is the very thing that makes these records so useful to the study of social identity. An understanding of the purpose of appraisal and the interests of those involved sheds light on systems of credit, cultures of appraisal and demonstrations of worth at work in specific areas, and significantly, amongst different social groups. If we read these documents against the grain, what they do and do not say can be equally enlightening.

Rooms

Orlin advises against using probate documents to draw conclusions about the size and status of a house, but a consideration of the number and type of rooms most frequently listed among one region or group provides a useful context in which to build a more detailed picture of an individual's home and lifestyle.[103] Taking a quantitative reading of the full sample of Stratford inventories between 1590 and 1630, the average number of rooms (not including outbuildings) listed in the Stratford inventories is 3.7. A few documents, such as the 1603 inventory of inn keeper Thomas Dixon alias Waterman, list more outbuildings than domestic spaces.[104] Of the 132 inventories analysed from Stratford during this period, a handful do not list any rooms at all, and of those that do, 49 contain five or more rooms, well above the average for the town.

[102] Orlin, 'Fictions', pp. 51-83.
[103] *Ibid*.
[104] Inventory of Thomas Dixon (alias Waterman), 1603 (105a.) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories*, *Vol.1,* pp. 201-219.

Table 2 Information relating to rooms/spaces and occupations taken from a sample of inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon, 1590-1630s

Name	Date of inventory	Occupation (as described in inventory)	Public Office	No. of rooms/ spaces mentioned
Ralph Shawe	1592	Wool driver	-	5
William Rogers	1597	Tavern owner	Sergeant-at-Mace	15+
Henry Rogers	1597	Butcher and victualler	-	8+
William Smith	1600	Mercer	Capital burgess; Alderman	9
William Hobday	1601	Glover	-	4
Joyce Hobday	1602	Widow of William Hobday	-	4
John Marshall of Bishopton	1608	Curate	Clerk	9
Thomas Hiccox	1611	Yeoman	-	9
Daniel Smith	1613	Yeoman, malster	-	13
Thomas Kirbye	1614	Butcher, malster, yeoman	Capital burgess	10
Anne Lloyd	1616/17	Widow, husband unknown	-	None listed
Adrian Quiney	1617	Gentleman	None listed, son of bailiff Richard Quiney	None listed
Francis Boyce	1617	Tailor	Sergeant-at-Mace	10
Alice Williams	1622	Widow of gent. Thomas Williams	-	7
Richard Baker	1622	Draper	None listed, son of bailiff Daniel Baker	7
Bartholomew Hathaway of Shottery	1624	Yeoman	-	10
John Sadler	1625	Gentleman	Capital burgess; Alderman; Bailiff	8+
Leonard Kempson	1625	Gentleman	Constable	7
John Gibbs	1625	Gentleman	Bailiff (x4)	10+
Lewis Hiccox	1627	Yeoman and innkeeper	-	13
Ann Shawe	1630	Widow of bailiff, Julius Shawe	-	6+
Thomas Rogers	*1639*	*Malster*	*None listed, son of alderman Thomas Rogers*	*11+*

Table 2 provides a full list of those 22 householders selected for *closer,* qualitative analysis. The number of rooms/spaces belonging to these case studies has been calculated based on the different areas listed in each inventory. For instance, the yard

is included as one space, as are the kitchen, cellar, buttery, barn, and any other outdoor spaces. When an inventory contains an entry such as 'and other chambers', a plus sign appears next to the total number of spaces to indicate that additional rooms are mentioned but not specified. Two of the inventories selected in this smaller sample do not list rooms at all, and of the remaining inventories, the average number of rooms or spaces is 8.75, including yards and cellars. This average reflects the status of the testators, as confirmed by Buxton, Alcock and Overton et al. Each identify a correlation between house size (number of rooms) and status in their studies of Thame, Stoneleigh, Kent and Cornwall, respectively.[105] Given the assumed size of New Place, this project purposefully selected those inventories containing the highest volume of rooms, items or descriptive language given. Shakespeare's house, well in excess of ten rooms, was significantly above the average of other members of the town's elite (albeit, many wealthier inventories are missing), and it is from a consideration of their probate documents that we are fully able to appreciate the scale and impression of New Place in the town of Stratford.

The rooms most commonly mentioned in this smaller sample are halls, parlours, chambers and butteries, followed by lofts, cellars and out-buildings, such as the brew house.[106] A total of twelve inventories list kitchens (as early as William Rogers' inventory of 1597), a 'modern' trend associated with the separation of this space from the rest of the house. Galleries do not appear in any of the inventories selected, nor

[105] Buxton, *Domestic Culture;* Overton et al., *Production and Consumption;* Alcock, *People At Home.*
[106] Although outside the allotted period of focus (1590-1630), Thomas Rogers' 1639 inventory was selected for analysis due to its connection to Harvard House, a key case study. Furthermore, Rogers' father, also Thomas, was an important member of the Stratford elite who built his home a year before Shakespeare's purchase of New Place, during the period known as the Great Rebuilding. No inventory or will survives for Thomas Rogers senior, but the inventory belonging to his son sheds further light on Harvard House and the domestic investments made by such men.

do spaces such as corridors and entranceways. As Orlin observes, these spaces were commonly omitted from inventories as they rarely contained furnishings.[107] Two inventories mention 'maids' rooms: those of William Smith (1600), and Thomas Kirby (1614) suggesting the presence of live-in servants, or else the room's function as a bedchamber for the females of the household.[108] Great chambers are also absent from the Stratford inventories, yet many 'chambers' are listed alongside descriptors such as 'the chamber above', or accompanied by a name such as John Gibbs's 'Mr Palmer's chamber'. Inventories belonging to William Smith (1600) and Daniel Smith (1613) specifically mention two parlours, however a number of spaces listed in other inventories may have also been used as second parlours, such as 'the inner chamber' listed in Anne Rogers' inventory (1620).[109] Such observations tell us that some of the general trends seen through the study of new gentry probate materials, relating to the type and number of rooms, can be seen (albeit on a slightly different scale) in this small sample of documents from Stratford.

Preparation and production items

The Stratford inventories give a convincing impression of the type of goods on offer at this time, and significantly, how and where they might have been used. Many items related to production and food preparation are found in spaces like the kitchen, buttery and out buildings. In some earlier inventories, cooking implements are located in halls

[107] Orlin, 'Fictions', p. 57.
[108] Inventory of William Smith, 1600 (93) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 183-185; Inventory of Thomas Kirby,1614 (141) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1*, pp. 288-290.
[109] Inventory of William Smith, 1600, pp. 183-185; Inventory of Daniel Smith, 1613 (138) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1*, pp. 281-284; Inventory of Anne Rogers, 1620 (156) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1*, pp. 317-319.

alongside objects linked to a hearth. Yeoman Daniel Smith's inventory from 1613 lists in the hall 'v brasse pottes, ij brass pannes, iiij kettles and one chaferne', at £4, 'xxiij platters and porrengers, vij sawcers' at 20s, 'ij pewter cups, ij pewter saltes, iij dusson trenchers, j payre of andirons, one payre of bellowes' at 20s, 'kines, fire shoule and tounges' at 2s, as well as 'ij flitchins of bacon, j plate of beefe' at 13s 4d.[110] According to Buxton and Overton et al., such groups of goods hint at the preparation, production, cooking and storage of food.[111] There is less evidence of this sort of activity taking place in the halls of the new gentlemen discussed earlier in the chapter, reflecting the varied use and status of the hall in some Stratford properties at this time. For civic officials like John Gibbs, the hall seemed to function primarily as a symbolic space, with no cooking implements listed, only 'Item a bason and yore, fyer shovel & tounges, a grate and 2 handirons & 2 buckittes & linkes and iron barr' at 15s; objects we might expect to find alongside a fireplace used for heat rather than a hearth used in cooking.[112] Through such items, we observe the chronological, and social, differences that existed even within this small sample of inventories.

The production, trade and craft functions ubiquitous with urban elite houses are also evident in the inventories selected. Items such as tubs and barrels used in brewing, or looms used to produce cloth, can primarily be linked to the production of goods for the consumption of the household, rather than wider commercial enterprise.[113] Such objects are usually found in yards (or backsides), lofts or cellars. Most Stratford houses were used for commercial industry or trades such as tanning, gloving and butchery,

[110] Inventory of William Smith, 1600, pp. 183-185,
[111] Buxton, 'Chapter 3: Foodstuff Provisioning and Cooking', *Domestic Culture*, pp. 95-133; Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 130.
[112] Inventory of John Gibbs, 1625, pp. 348-351.
[113] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* p. 59.

and this too is reflected in many of objects itemised. Glover William Hobday's inventory (1601) provides an unusually detailed insight into the huge range of materials associated with his trade. The list includes many tools of production such as 'ij great lomes, a sope kever, ij barrels, a payle & ship bord wyth other smale thyngs' priced at 10s, as well as raw materials like the 'ij dosen of deres lether &xv Irish skyns' at £4 4s.[114] These items are among the most highly valued goods in the inventory, and it is clear that Hobday's wealth, and even credit, came from his extensive stock. In a community like Stratford, the ability to purchase, store and utilise such products was indicative of entrepreneurial success and status, contributing to the overall reputation of the testator. As King highlights, stock might be displayed in an area of the house that was visible to the public, playing a significant part in the performance of security and status within more 'provincial' urban communities like Stratford.[115] If a household was not involved in commercial trade, how then might they reflect their status and occupation in a town like Stratford? Here, interior furnishings – furniture, textiles, decoration - played a crucial role.

Bedsteads and other furniture

Beds with furnishings were some of the most expensive items in early modern homes.[116] Among the Stratford inventories, we find a variety of furniture relating to sleep. Standing beds, or bedsteads, were the grandest pieces. Their frames were usually assembled by a joiner (hence the term 'joint beds') and frequently decorated with 'testers of cloth or wainscot and curtains' (thus they were also referred to as 'tester

[114] Inventory of William Hobday, 1601 (103) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 193-197.
[115] King, *Houses and Society*, p. 98.
[116] Sharrett, 'The Hathaway Bed'*,* p. 59.

beds').[117] Truckle beds are also listed in many of these inventories, usually where there is also mention of a bedstead. These items were often rolled underneath standing beds during the day to preserve space, and pulled out when it was time to sleep (fig.38). Servants and children were most likely to occupy truckle beds, and one chamber might provide space and beds for multiple members of the household; privacy as we know it was not a concept readily available in the early modern home.[118] Bedsteads with truckle beds are listed in chambers such as Thomas Kirby's (1614) 'chamber over the hall' or in Thomas Hiccox's (1611) 'bedchamber'. Elsewhere, evidence of sleep is found without mention of a bed frame.[119] Beds were composed of various linens and other soft furnishings. Flock beds, wool beds and mattresses provide evidence of beds without standing furniture, but also give an indication of just how many householders and guests a household provided for. All 22 of the inventories selected for close analysis list at least one bedstead, but Jones notes that this was not the case for all Stratford residents. Between 1570 and 1630, 24 testators make no mention of bed frames, including those belonging to shepherds or labourers.[120]

[117] Jeanne Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England: Stratford-upon-Avon 1570-1630* (Gloucestershire, 1996), p. 66.
[118] An argument made throughout Orlin's text *Locating Privacy in Tudor England.*
[119] Inventory of Thomas Kirby, 1614, pp. 288-290; Inventory of Thomas Hiccox, 1611, pp. 251-253.
[120] Jones, *Family Life,* p. 67.

Table 3 Beds in parlours, from a small selection of Stratford inventories, 1590-1630s

Name	DoD	Bedsteads present
Ralph Shawe	1592	Yes
William Rogers	1597	Yes
Henry Rogers	1597	No
William Smith	1600	Yes
William Hobday	1601	-
Joyce Hobday	1602	Yes
John Marshall of Bishopton	1608	Yes
Thomas Hiccox	1611	Yes
Daniel Smith	1613	Yes
Thomas Kirbye	1614	Yes
Anne Lloyd	1616/17	-
Adrian Quiney	1617	-
Francis Boyce	1617	Yes
Alice Williams	1622	-
Richard Baker	1622	-
Bartholomew Hathaway of Shottery	1624	Yes
John Sadler	1625	Yes
Leonard Kempson	1625	-
John Gibbs	1625	Yes
Lewis Hiccox	1627	Yes
Ann Shawe	1630	-
Thomas Rogers	*1639*	*Yes*

Bedsteads were evidently linked to social standing and their location within a property seemed to enhance this performance of status. Table 3 shows that beds were listed in some Stratford parlours well into the 1620s, and even 1630s. Of the 22 inventories

selected, seven do not list parlours at all, and of those that do, fourteen list items relating to sleep in this space. Consequently, only one of the inventories from this sample does not mention a bed in the parlour (when listed). Although some of the individuals found among this sample may have belonged to the upper middling, rather than gentry, levels of early modern society, they were selected because they were in the same broad social circle as Shakespeare. They were the people among whom Shakespeare was constructing his status, the type of people who most likely visited his home on a somewhat frequent basis. As Maria Hayward suggests, trends in towns like Stratford tended to 'trickle round' and the best way to demonstrate taste, wealth and status was to follow the trends of other important townspeople.[121] From this sample, we observe that a cross-section of Stratford's leading citizens – prominent business owners, civic leaders, gentlemen and their widows – had beds in their parlours at the time of their death up to the 1630s.

In his sample of Thame inventories from 1600 to 1700, Buxton observes that 'there is limited evidence of bedsteads' in this room, perhaps indicating that beds located in parlours steadily declined in fashion.[122] Overton et al.'s study of Kent inventories suggests that between the years of 1600 and 1629, 61 per cent of inventories mention items relating to sleep within the parlour, but 'by the early sixteenth century beds had disappeared from parlours in the houses of the gentry, and they became eating and reception rooms only'.[123] These findings are not surprising given that Overton et al.'s study crosses a range of status groups in both rural and urban settings. Beds are indeed absent from the parlours of the new gentlemen considered in the first half of

[121] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), p. 44.
[122] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* p. 211.
[123] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, pp. 131-132.

this chapter. But a parlour bedstead may still be found in the 1625 inventory of Stratford gentleman John Sadler, and in the 1639 inventory of Thomas Rogers.[124] Of course, we do not know why these pieces of furniture were located in this space so late in the period; we might say that Stratford, as a relatively small market town, was behind the trend. Equally, the householder's bed may have been moved into the parlour from another location in the house when they fell ill or became infirm. However, it is clear that beds were frequently found in this space in Stratford houses at the time of the testator's death, regardless of wider national trends. This trend is significant because it demonstrates the importance of locality to patterns of domestic consumption and display. The fact that this fashion appeared to be followed by a cross-section of Stratford society raises interesting questions about the importance of regionality over social status: was following the trends of your town *or* your social group most successful in the construction and display of status? Perhaps, instead, self-fashioning at this level require a complex combination of both.

The final legacy in Shakespeare's will connecting us to his interiors is the 'second best bed' listed 'with furniture', bequeathed to his wife Anne Hathaway.[125] Much has been made of this entry, with scholars and enthusiasts alike interpreting it as a significant slight.[126] In truth, we cannot comment on the relationship between William and Anne, but we can say more about beds in general. As discussed, the very best bed was often not used by the head of the household. Instead, it was reserved for significant guests and often ostentatiously positioned in high status rooms such as the parlour or great

[124] Inventory of John Sadler, 1625 (169), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories,* pp. 341-343.
[125] Will of William Shakespeare, 1616.
[126] Bevan, 'Shakespeare's will', *TNA* (05.04.2016) https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/shakespeares-will-new-interpretation/ [Accessed 23.05.22].

chamber. As one of the highest value items in the home, the best bed was often gifted to an heir or the main beneficiary. This can be seen in the case of gentleman Thomas Combe, who left bedding for his wife in his will (1608), but gifted his 'best bed' to his son:

> my saied wife shall haue the vse and occupation of all Tables bedsteades and other standerdes nowe remayning in and abowte the sayed house during her Widdowhood (except the best Bedsteade which I will giue and bequeathe vnto my sayed sonne William with the best Bedd and best furniture thereunto belonging to haue to his owne vse.[127]

It is more likely that the 'second best bed' in an elite urban home was occupied by the mistress and master of a household.[128] This was likely the bed that William and Anne shared as a couple. The inclusion of 'the furniture' translates to the additional bedding that came with the bed frame, so Anne was bequeathed a full and complete bed. There was a custom within early modern probate for a husband to bequeath his wife specific items that she brought with her to the marriage. Sometimes this is made clear through the wording of the bequest, but often it is not. For instance, Daniel Baker, a wealthy mercer and member of Stratford's elite, left his wife a silver tankard and 'six of those silver spoones which shee brought with her'.[129] It may be that this bed belonged to Anne all along.

[127] Will of Thomas Combe, 1608, TNA PROB 11/113/130. Transcribed by Appleton, 'Women and Wills', p. 392.
[128] There are a number of examples among the Stratford wills of husbands leaving bedding to their wives. In some cases, these bequests specifically mention marriage beds. William Homes, for instance, left his wife bedding in his will (1590):

> ... I geve & bequeth vnto the same margery my Wyf all such howshold goodes that <she> I had With her at the day of our maryage Which goods are these one fetherbed one hillyng one boulster v pere of sheetes...

Will of William Homes, 1590, SBTRO BRU 15/6/63. Transcribed and quoted in Appleton, 'Women and Wills', p. 253.
[129] Will of Daniel Baker, 1641.

This legacy, however, suggests a number of points about Shakespeare's furnishing of New Place, most obviously that he had more than one bed. The 'first best bed' must have been included in his 'household stuffe' bequeathed to his eldest daughter, Susannah, and, if not sold, likely remained at New Place. But, perhaps most interestingly, the absent 'best bed' does not seem to have been used as the marriage bed. In leaving the 'second best bed' to Anne, Shakespeare is suggesting that his best bed was reserved for guests, and not regularly slept in. Like most of the Stratford elite at this time, this more expensive bed was surely exhibited in a prominent reception room, such as a parlour. Draped in all its finery, its frame carved with fantastical beasts and wild flowers, such an item would have been the showpiece of New Place. It may have even been the bed in which Shakespeare drew his last breath. Perhaps, therefore, Shakespeare followed the Stratford trend and displayed his most costly furnishing in his most public room.

Fig.39 is the sort of bed we might expect to find in the parlours of the Stratford elite. This four-poster bedstead primarily dates from the period spanning this study, as Elizabeth Sharrett tells us, 'the tester (canopy) dates from around 1650 while the headboard, posts and rails date from 1580 to 1630'.[130] It is decorated in the Flemish style and the carvings on the headboard represent mythical figures known as caryatids. The tester and bedposts are decorated with geometric patterns, alongside delicate floral designs. Great skill went into the adornment of this bedstead, and its carved decoration held symbolic as well as monetary value. Sharrett tells us that 'this kind of imagery was associated with fertility and regeneration, and might serve to symbolise the three major rites of passage – birth, marriage and death – each of which

[130] Sharrett, 'The Hathaway Bed', pp. 58-59.

took place in beds'.[131] Bedsteads were the showpieces of the early modern home, and it is not surprising that such items were located in high status spaces like the parlour. The 'Hathaway Bed', as it is known, was found in Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Shottery, when the property was purchased by the SBT in 1892, and has remained there ever since. Anne Hathaway lived in this property as a child, and her family remained there for generations after. This item, therefore, may be the same 'joyned bedsteed', priced with all its trappings at £3, in the 1624 inventory of Anne's brother, Bartholomew Hathaway.[132] Like those tester beds discussed in relation to the new gentry, the Hathaway Bed was a symbol of status and wealth.

Objects relating to sleep, especially those found in the parlour, are frequently the highest value items in the Stratford inventories. Thomas Kirby's 1614 inventory lists in the parlour 'one ioyned bed with the furniture therto belonging' valued at £5, a price considerably higher than any other item of furniture listed in the inventory.[133] When beds are recorded, all accessories – flock mattresses, bolsters, pillows and so forth – tend to be listed as well and included in the overall value, revealing all the different components that went into the structure of early modern beds. This combination of objects makes the activity of sleep and the room in which it took place relatively easy to identify.[134] But connecting certain items to specific domestic activities can be misleading. Beds in the parlour, for instance, were regularly not used for sleep, instead they were often items of display. It is therefore difficult to say how often this room was actually used for sleeping.

[131] Sharrett, 'The Hathaway Bed', pp. 58-59.
[132] Inventory of Bartholomew Hathaway, 1624 (165), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 345-346.
[133] Inventory of Thomas Kirby, 1614, pp. 288-290.
[134] Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, p. 178.

Furniture relating to seating and dining also features heavily in these documents. The most common objects were stools, followed by benches earlier in the period, and then chairs later on. A variety of tables are also present, most frequently table boards with forms listed separately, but also long, joined, little, round and square tables. Most table boards are found in halls or parlours with an array of seating. In the hall of gentleman Leonard Kempson, we find 'one table, ij forms, one little table, iij cheres, xiiij stooles' totalling £1.[135] These long tables could be compared to the piece now located in East Riddlesden Hall (fig.28), possibly simpler in design, they served a similar function in the halls of the Stratford elite. Unlike in the new gentry probate materials, there is little in the way of upholstered furniture mentioned in these documents. Instead, the type of chairs most likely present in properties belonging to these Stratford residents were wooden wainscot or joined armchairs, reminiscent of the item illustrated in fig.40. This early seventeenth century chair is skilfully constructed and handsomely decorated with carvings. Such chairs were often accompanied by cushions to provide further embellishment and comfort. Stools also came in a number of forms; from the plainest of objects to the surprisingly ornate. The joint-stool (c.1600) belonging to the SBT (fig.41) is one of a pair also dating from the early seventeenth-century, and is on the more elaborate end of the scale.[136] With its turned legs and carved panels set below the seat, it would have sat nicely alongside the panel-back armchair in SBT's collections (fig.40). Unlike the large armchair, these items were light-weight and easily transportable. They could be carried from room to room and, should the need arise, they might be furnished with a decorated cushion to add an extra degree of comfort.

[135] Inventory of Leonard Kempson, 1625 (170), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 345-346.
[136] Elizabeth Sharrett, 'Joint-stool' in Garratt and Hamling (eds.) *Shakespeare and the Stuff of Life*, pp. 70-71.

We might expect to find such stools in the houses of the Stratford elite, who likely had sizeable households or entertained large gatherings.

A number of interesting storage items can be found throughout the Stratford inventories, no doubt required to accommodate the increasing number of domestic goods permeating the domestic environment throughout the period.[137] Popular items such as chests, trunks and boxes are itemised in almost all of the Stratford documents, usually accompanying extensive lists of napkins, tablecloths, bed sheets and other linens. Cupboards and shelves in particular are mentioned with goods related to food and drink. Gentleman John Gibbs's 1625 inventory, for instance, lists together '8 vessells for beare, an ould cubboard, certyane shealfes, cuppes, glasses, potts, trenchers and odd implements' priced at £1 10s in the buttery.[138] Like the inventories belonging to new gentlemen, these documents suggest that many of the town's elite also displayed their most prized possessions using increasingly innovative modes of storage.

Richard Baker, Leonard Kempson, Ann Shawe and Thomas Rogers are among those possessing court cupboards. These objects seem to have been located in spaces of status, such as Baker's (1622) 'new chamber' or Rogers' (1639) 'joyne chamber' situated on the first-floor at the front of his property, Harvard House, on the High Street. Shelves could be found in a variety of places and, like court cupboards, seemed to grow in popularity.[139] They accompany a plurality of objects, ranging from the cooking

[137] Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, pp. 105-111.
[138] Inventory of John Gibbs, 1615, pp. 348-351.
[139] Inventory of Richard Baker, 1622 (159), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 321-324; Inventory of Thomas Rogers, 1639 (209), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.2*, pp. 72-75.

implements noted in Daniel Smith's (1613) kitchen, to the bow and arrow listed in clerk John Marshall's parlour. Also mentioned in Marshall's inventory (1608) are 'three booke shelfes' priced at 4s, found in the same room as his impressive collection of 271 books.[140] Displayed on open shelves, this unique compilation would have been visible to all who entered his 'bedchamber above'. As well as offering a practical solution to storing the increasing amount of goods entering the homes of Stratford, these pieces created the opportunity to display those items most readily associated with credit and status.

Dining

Most goods relating to eating and drinking were recorded in halls, butteries or kitchens, with some also mentioned in unspecified chambers.[141] Buxton comments that 'unlike furniture, eating vessels – being highly movable objects – were not necessarily listed in the inventories where they were employed, but where they were stored ready for use'.[142] A break-down of the kind of items found in these inventories provides further insight into the dining and hosting habits of the Stratford elite. Larger vessels such as chargers – four of which are listed in the hall of William Hobday's 1601 inventory – 'were employed to convey large portions of cooked meat to the table', and would have been used for larger gatherings.[143] The 1592 inventory of Ralph Shawe lists two chafing dishes, employed to keep food warm, and the same item can be found in a

[140] Inventory of John Marshall, 1608 (126), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 255-264.
[141] For a detailed insight into material culture associated with food, production, cooking and dining in the early modern period see Sara Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1600-1850* (London, 2016).
[142] Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, p. 157; Inventory of William Hobday*,* 1601, pp. 193-197.
[143] Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, p. 161.

number of other documents.[144] Such items show 'the problems of keeping food at a palatable temperature', especially when cooking moved from the open hearth to external kitchens, meaning that food was increasingly not prepared in the room in which it was eaten.[145] Plates, dishes and platters - 'broad flat vessels of various sizes' - are mentioned in the highest volume.[146] Francis Boyce's 1617 inventory mentions nine pewter platters, and John Sadler's inventory of 1625 lists thirteen.[147] Basins, bowls, saucers and porringers, used for both dry and wet foodstuffs, can also be found with regularity, whilst cups, tankards, pots and bowls used for the storage and consumption of liquids are also present in the inventories. Spoons are the most common form of cutlery itemised, followed by some mention of knives, with no evidence of forks. Salts feature in the majority of inventories selected, and were items that played a prominent role in the communication of hierarchy at the dinner table. Traditionally, the salt was placed in the middle of the table, those that sat 'above the salt' were deemed to be of higher status, and those that sat 'below' the salt viewed as 'lower'. Yet, these items also served to connect those present, encouraging interaction and commensality among guests as they were passed around the table.[148] The presence of large collections of goods relating to eating and drinking, often listed together, implies the regularity at which these testators were dining and hosting, an activity that was extremely significant to urban elite status.

[144] Inventory of Ralph Shawe, 1592 (65), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories,* pp. 114-115; Inventory of Alice Williams, 1622 (160), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories*, pp. 324-326.
[145] Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, pp. 162-163.
[146] *Ibid.,* pp. 161.
[147] Inventory of Francis Boyce, 1617 (149), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories,* pp. 304-307; Inventory of John Sadler, 1625, pp. 341-343.
[148] Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, pp. 164-165.

Businessmen, government officials and members of the gentry were expected to entertain frequently.[149] Their tableware needed to reflect their social seniority among guests. Listed in the buttery of four times bailiff John Gibbs, we find a collection of items associated with dining:

> Item a warming panne, a flagon, 2 pewter candlesticks, 3 peeces of pewter of the bigger sorte, 10 of the next, 18 of the next, 12 pewter dishes, 3 basons, 6 pewter plates, 6 other dishes, 11 of an other sorte, 2 pewter drinkine cuppes, 14 sawcers, 4 saltes, 3 chamber pottes £4 9s
>
> Item 8 vessells for beare, an ould cuuboard, certayne shealfes, cuppes, glasses, potts, trenchers and odd implementes £1 10s

From this list, we get a sense of the gentleman's hosting responsibilities. Jones estimates that Gibbs had a total of five extra people living in his household upon his death in 1625.[150] Having no children of his own, this indicates that three of these householders were servants or wards. Thus, the vast amount of (predominantly pewter) tableware was used in the hosting of large numbers, as well as a form of financial security.

Chapter two outlined changes in heating and therefore cooking, brought about by transformations associated with Great Rebuilding. With these changes came profound developments in 'modes of eating and drinking', as well as the materials used to make them.[151] In addition to the type and number of objects found within an inventory, what these items were made from also provides an indication of status. Starting with the introduction of pewter in the sixteenth century, markets moved to favour German stoneware, pottery and then delicate glass in the seventeenth century.[152] The ownership of such tableware was social as well as cyclical. Wooden items are rarely

[149] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry,* pp. 282-309.
[150] Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England*, pp. 16-17.
[151] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 102.
[152] *Ibid.*, pp. 102-106.

mentioned with specificity in the Stratford inventories, although it can be assumed that the majority of items listed without mention of the material from which they were created, 'trenchers' and 'spoons' for instance, were actually made of wood. The most common material specified in relation to tableware is pewter, followed by brass. But a significant amount of silver can also be found among the Stratford inventories. This chapter began with a discussion of the silverware listed in John Gibbs's inventory - 'a faire silver and guilte bole & salte with a dossen of Apostle spones' at £14 - but he was not alone in this investment.[153] Ten of the 22 inventories selected mention silverware, all dating from the seventeenth century. The most common item described in relation to silver is spoons; often part of a set, they were gifted as christening presents then passed down the generations.

In fact, silver goods are most frequently bequeathed to close family members in wills belonging to members of the urban elite. Bowls of silver and gilt are also found in the 1630 inventory of Anne Shawe, daughter-in-law to Ralph Shawe: '1 silver bole, 1 gilt bole &10 spoones' priced at £7.[154] Shakespeare bequeathed 'my broad silver gilt bole' to his youngest daughter, the rest of his plate he distributed to his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall, and his daughter Susannah.[155] This 'broad bowl' was likely a large item, used to serve hot or cold liquids. It would have been placed in the middle of the table, or else on a court cupboard or similar item of furniture during the course of the meal.[156] The silver gilt drinking bowl dating from between 1530 to 1560, now owned by the SBT (fig.42), is indicative of the type of vessels listed in the Stratford records. The bowl is

[153] Inventory of John Gibbs*,* 1625, pp. 348-351.
[154] Inventory of Anne Shawe, 1630 (187), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. 2,* pp. 31-34.
[155] Will of William Shakespeare, 1616.
[156] 'Standing Bowl', *V&A* https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O156616/standing-bowl-unknown/ [Accessed 05.01.22].

attractively decorated. The base of the vessel is embossed with a feathered design and the stand is illuminated with overlapping scales, perhaps belonging to a dragon or some other fantastical beast. The outer edges of the bowl are decorated with an engraved frieze, or band, which runs around the circumference of the object. This band contains panels featuring floral arrangements and mythical creatures. It is an impressive piece, but it would not have looked out of place in the homes of men such as John Gibbs, Daniel Baker or William Shakespeare.

Linens and soft furnishings

According to Overton et al. 'household linen, consisting of towels, tablecloths, napkins, sheets and pillowcases, was one of the most important categories of domestic goods'.[157] Usually associated with bedding, linen was also used in dining. The 1639 inventory of Thomas Rogers itemises a vast list of linens, revealing the range of items that fall under this category: 48 napkins, thirteen pillows, 'a dozen paire of sheetes', tablecloths, towels, coverlets and blankets, to name a few.[158] As Jones notes, while some in Stratford 'owned only one pair of sheets, a bolster and a blanket, others had a vast amount of bed linen'.[159] Gentleman John Sadler stored his collection of bedding in a room referred to as 'the inner chamber'.[160] With around seven bed frames, Sadler also owned 'sixty pairs of sheets, four feather beds and ten flock beds, eleven bolsters, eight pillows with nine pairs of pillowbears, eight blankets and eight coverings'.[161] He and his wife, Isobel, kept a relatively large household with four children and a handful

[157] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 108.
[158] Inventory of Thomas Rogers, 1639, pp. 72-75.
[159] Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England*, p. 69.
[160] Inventory of John Sadler, 1625, pp. 341-344.
[161] *Ibid.*

of servants, even so, this is an impressive collection. Buxton comments that 'comfort was a desirable feature of bedding, and associated with status'.[162] In his study of inventories from Thame he finds that gentlemen, clerics and yeomen (in that order) owned the largest numbers of sheets, with gentlemen also possessing the highest number of feather pillows.[163] The collection of better-quality linen, and in greater quantities, began in the sixteenth century and is a trend in which the urban elite of Stratford participated.[164]

Textiles most obviously connected to status are those that were, first and foremost, decorative in function. Cushions, carpets, rugs, curtains and painted cloths appear across various Stratford inventories. Not only were they used to embellish the home, they afforded their owners significant opportunity to manipulate the domestic environment through design and colour. As discussed, decorative textiles were illustrated with a variety of patterns and narratives. Embroidered, embellished or dyed, these items could brighten the early modern home whilst providing higher levels of comfort. Some objects, such as wall hangings (painted cloths), were cyclical and went out of mode as the seventeenth century progressed. Of the 22 records considered, six of the Stratford elite inventories list wall hangings in the hall and/or parlour, and sometimes in other chambers. By the 1620s they all but disappear from the records, with John Sadler's inventory of 1625 the last of this sample to mention painted cloths.

Curtains, on the other hand, are seen with increasing frequency throughout the period, regularly alongside 'curtain rods'. Often part of the bed furniture, they hung from the

[162] Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, p. 189.
[163] *Ibid.,* pp. 189-191.
[164] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 109.

frame's four posts, providing some warmth and privacy to occupiers whilst also injecting colour into a chamber's interior. But some curtains are listed in rooms without beds, and from the 1590s onwards window curtains begin to appear in the Stratford inventories. From a full sample of records taken in Stratford between 1590 and 1630, Jones calculates a total of nine inventories mention these textiles in relation to glazing.[165] Ralphe Shawe's 1592 inventory specifically references 'a curtayne for a wydowe' in his parlour.[166] It is not always so easy to distinguish between bed and window curtains, but it is clear that some members of the Stratford community were following new innovations. As wealthy home owners chose to insert glazing into their homes, the need for curtains also grew.

As with the new gentry records discussed earlier in the chapter, some Stratford inventories provide clues as to the appearance of textiles. Soft furnishings ranged from simple pieces to objects of intricate design and lavish material. Most of the descriptions that appear in the Stratford inventories relate to colour or embroidery. In the 1597 inventory of Sergeant-at-Mace, William Rogers, 'iij red blanquettes and ij whyte' appear in his 'chamber over the little parlor', while in John Gibbs's inventory (1625) a 'blewe rugg' is listed among other soft furnishings in his parlour.[167] Widow Anne Shawe's 1630 inventory provides a number of illuminating entries, including 'vj turkey cushiens', 'a greene carpett', 'one greene rug', '5 greene curtens', 'a hiling, red & blew', and 'a greene curten frill, cupboard cloth', all located in the chamber over the hall.[168] Given the number and range of textiles that appear in this inventory, it is clear that

[165] Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England*, p. 72.
[166] Inventory of Ralph Shawe, 1592, pp. 114-115.
[167] Inventory of William Rogers, 1597 (85), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1*, pp. 160-166; Inventory of John Gibbs, 1625, pp. 348-351.
[168] Inventory of Ann Shawe, 1630, pp. 31-34.

these labels were used as differentiators rather than comments on the aesthetic quality of the object. Yet, they give us some sense of the vibrancy of the early modern domestic interior. We learn that textiles of different designs and techniques decorated Anne Shawe's chamber, from embroidered Turkey cushions, to the 'curten frill' found on her cupboard. Red and blue, popular colours at this time, appear on hillings (bed coverings), but green is the overwhelming choice for most of the objects listed. The significance of colour and coherent design is considered in more detail in the next chapter, but it is important to note that these inventories also provide evidence of conscious decisions made in relation to style, design and overall impression.

Fixed Furnishings and Miscellaneous Items

As expected, there is no mention of permanent fittings such as wall paintings, plasterwork, friezes, fireplaces, overmantels, or heraldry in these inventories.[169] Out of the 22 inventories considered, six documents reference glass or window curtains, and four inventories mention wainscot panelling, always in the hall. The significance and value of glazing, especially at the start of this period, meant that it was more likely to be relocated, safely stored and then either sold or bequeathed after the owner's death. John Sadler's will of 1625 actually mentions 'all the wainscot & painted clothes rwnd & in the parlour', giving us a unique insight into the decoration of this room.[170] But during the period of this study, these furnishings transitioned from moveable items to fixtures.[171] Panelling, in the form of wainscot, is last seen in the 1622 inventory of

[169] These fittings were viewed as 'permanent' features belonging to the house, whereas inventories listed movable goods that might easily be sold.
[170] Will of John Sadler, 1625, pp. 341-343.
[171] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household,* p. 87.

widow Alice Williams.[172] For the civic officials of Stratford, it is last mentioned in the 1614 probate of capital burgess, Thomas Kirby.[173] Wood panelling may have vanished from these records, but not from the homes of the Stratford elite. It in fact grew in popularity as the seventeenth century progressed, becoming a more permanent feature in the early modern home. It might envelop entire walls, or only cover half, leaving room for painted decoration above.[174] Assembled using the same technique as joined furniture, wood panelling provided insulation and ornamentation as it was often embellished with carvings and mouldings, and could be brightly painted (fig.43). It was also most likely to be found in the inventories of the middling sort or the gentry, likely distinguished through quality of materials, application and decoration; details we cannot learn from inventories.

Although the Stratford inventories overall contain significantly less wealth than those from merchant cities, they are rich in material and list a variety of objects not regularly found in inventories at the start of the sixteenth century.[175] These somewhat 'unusual' objects provide a snapshot of Stratford's participation in the consumption of new types of goods; goods that Overton el al. claim 'involved completely new behaviour'.[176] Items such as mirrors, or looking glasses, are described by Buxton as 'luxury', but rarely appear in the Thame inventories and are first listed in the Oxfordshire town in 1625. Conversely, they appear as early as 1616 in the small sample of Stratford inventories, in the inventory of widow Anne Lloyd.[177] Alice Williams, Richard Baker, Ann Shawe

[172] Inventory of Alice Williams, 1622, pp. 324-326.
[173] Inventory of Thomas Kirkby, 1614, pp. 288-195.
[174] Kathryn Davies, *Artisan Art: Vernacular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marches ,1550-1650* (Herefordshire, 2008), pp. 5-6.
[175] Jones, *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1*, p. viiii.
[176] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 111.
[177] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* p. 204; Inventory of Anne Lloyd, 1616/17 (146), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 297-299.

and Thomas Rogers were also owners of looking glasses. These mirrors came in all shapes and sizes, and their quality varied as much as their design. Some were found in parlours, others in small chambers and a few were listed in 'the little chamber'. As Overton et al. write, these objects served two main purposes: 'The first was to enhance the power of artificial lighting; the second was to view the self in the surroundings of the home'.[178] Looking glasses provided a visual connection between a householder and their interior environment. Owners were able to see the result of their self-fashioning reflected back at them, as well as how they themselves fit into the backdrop they had constructed. The presence of these mirrors in the Stratford inventories tell us a number of things: first, that inhabitants of the town were able and willing to participate in the latest trends; and second, that appearances mattered.

Other 'unusual' objects are recorded in the Stratford inventories. Richard Baker, for instance, owned 'j glasse case, bookes & other ymplementes', as well as 'j childs chaire' located in the hall (fig.44).[179] This is one of the only references to childhood objects found within this small sample. Among the full sample of inventories from Stratford between 1570 and 1630, nine mention weapons. Tailor, Francis Boyce (1617), owned a sword and dagger, located in his hall; John Marshall (1608) records a bow and arrow; and gentleman Leonard Kempson (1625) had 'a birding piece & calliver' in his buttery.[180] Some weapons are instead listed in wills only; as personal items, they were more likely to be bequeathed to sons or kinsmen. In his will, Shakespeare left his sword to the 27-year-old Thomas Combe. The Combe family

[178] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 112.
[179] Inventory of Richard Baker, 1622, pp. 321-323.
[180] Inventory of Francis Boyce, 1617 (149), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories*, *Vol.1,* pp. 304-306; Inventory of John Marshall, 1608, pp. 255-263; Inventory of Leonard Kempson, 1625, pp. 345-345.

were prominent members of the Warwickshire gentry and several connections are recorded between this family and Shakespeare throughout his life.[181] Just one other gentleman from the smaller sample of Stratford inventories mentions a sword in their probate records and that is Leonard Kempson.[182] In fact, only nine inventories in total from the period 1570 to 1630 list swords at all.[183] More members of the Stratford elite may have also retained such weaponry, but the idea that Shakespeare owned this item suggests that he certainly wished his newfound status to be public knowledge. As indicated, weaponry of this kind would often be displayed in the halls of men with civic responsibilities or a role in the local militia. There is no evidence of Shakespeare's involvement in either, but his retention of a sword may demonstrate that he wished to convey a similar level of authority. According to sumptuary legislation only men with the title of gentleman possessed the right to wear a sword about their person, but Jones notes that of the nine Stratford men who did own this type of weapon, five could not claim this title.[184] Owning and displaying a sword *suggested,* rather than confirmed, gentry status, and was just another way in which personal possessions could be used to craft a desired image.

Musical instruments appear in widow Anne Lloyd's records, and in the 1625 inventory of gentleman Leonard Kempson we find 'one payre virginalles, vj cushins, two vialles, one case, one citterne, one recorder & flute & musick books', valued at £1 10s.[185] Kempson, it seems, held significant regard for music, and we would be hard-pressed to find such a collection among other gentry inventories. Musical instruments are some

[181] Stanley Wells, 'A close family connection: the Combes', in Edmondson and Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle*, pp. 149-160.
[182] Inventory of Leonard Kempson, 1625, pp. 345-345.
[183] Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England*, p. 64.
[184] *Ibid*.
[185] Inventory of Anne Lloyd, 1616/17, pp. 297-299; Inventory of Leonard Kempson, 1625, pp. 345-345.

of the only objects we can distinctly link to 'leisure', but a number of documents do mention books, mainly of a religious nature. Richard Baker's father, Daniel, earned his reputation as a Puritan, in part, because of the books he bequeathed in his will of 1641.[186] He left 'my booke of Master Greenhams' to the Church, likely a reference to a 1599 publication titled the *Workes* - a collection of sermons and writings of the infamous Puritan clergyman, Richard Greenham.[187] In many inventories, however, books are listed simply as 'books', grouped together as an indistinct collection of goods.

According to Buxton, the total number of books listed across the Thame households was 54, but a total of 271 books are itemised in John Marshall's inventory of 1608.[188] With these texts, we find 'one deske, lock, key and hinges' priced at 20s.[189] Such an entry is perhaps not surprising given Marshall's profession as a clerk. His occupation would have demanded extensive reading and writing, most likely performed at a desk box similar to the item considered earlier in the chapter (fig.33). But the size, and range, of his collection is startling. Religious texts, classical sagas, books on history and mathematics, and household manuals all emerge from the pages of his inventory, printed in a variety of English, Greek and Latin. Marshall gifted the majority of these books to his three sons, to be divided 'according to their interests', but he left 'Babington on Genesis' to his 'kinsman' Francis Hiccox, with the legacy also noted in the inventory.[190] Together, Marshall's will and inventory tell us that his passion for literature went beyond professional interest. In leaving a specific book to his friend,

[186] Will of Daniel Baker, 1641.
[187] Richard Greenham, *The Workes of the Reuerend … Richard Greenham* (third edition: London, 1601), British Library, Shelfmark: General Reference Collection Mic.A.706(14.).
[188] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* p. 174.
[189] Inventory of John Marshall, 1608, pp. 255-263.
[190] Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England*, p. 66.

Francis, we might also assume that this text held some significance to their relationship – perhaps he had borrowed the book before, or they had debated its content prior to his death. It suggests that some kind of literary culture did exist among the more elite members of Stratford society, and at the time that Shakespeare was living at New Place.

Conclusion

Together, the inventories belonging to the new gentry and the Stratford elite analysed in this chapter tell us what was possible and probable when it came to Shakespeare's furnishing of New Place. These documents also reveal the complex relationship between domestic consumption and status in early modern England. Men looking to elevate, consolidate and display their status may have invested more in their homes, but the form these investments took was not necessarily obvious or linear. Records belonging to Suckling and Wylde reveal some of the national trends new gentlemen were expected to follow – symbolic halls, adaptable parlours and sumptuous great chambers – while the Stratford inventories reveal patterns and constraints relating to locality. Members of the new gentry had more to display than most: they needed to reflect their entrepreneurship, credit and reputation, but they also needed to align themselves with the gentry by furnishing a house to accommodate the lifestyle that came with this status. Although inventories and wills do not provide a complete picture, they do offer a snapshot of those furnishings most readily used to carefully craft new gentry status. This identity was then moulded further through the fixed decoration adorning the walls and ceilings of these urban homes.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIXED DECORATION

This chapter delves deeper into new gentry houses by considering the final element of domestic interiors: fixed decoration.[1] In what follows, the relationship between interior decoration and the status of new gentlemen is explored by bringing together a range of 'vernacular' decoration from early modern properties. As in previous chapters, these extant examples reveal what was possible and probable for individuals like Shakespeare when it came to the ornamentation of their homes. Alongside architecture and furnishings, the further adornment of townhouses through fixed decoration played a vital role in the performance and display of new gentry status. Employing a combination of plaster, paint and carving, Shakespeare's identity could be fixed to the very walls of his home.

*

From 5 to 14 November 1602, Stratford bailiff Richard Quiney visited London with fellow alderman Henry Wilson. Journeying home to Stratford-upon-Avon, they spent one night in Oxford, amassing expenses of 6s 8p.[2] The city offered a variety of accommodation for weary travellers, but none so prestigious as the Golden Cross, an inn located at the heart of Oxford. A number of guest chambers surrounded the inn's courtyard, but perhaps the most sumptuous among them was the impressively titled Prince's Chamber. Upon entering this room, guests Quiney and Wilson would have

[1] In this context, fixed decoration refers to ornamentation not regularly included in probate inventories i.e. non-movable furnishings. This includes wall paintings, decorative plasterwork, and stone and wood carvings such as those found on panelling, overmantels and staircases.

[2] Expenses recorded by Richard Quiney and Henry Wilson on their visit to London, 5-14 November 1601. SBT SCLA, BRU 15/1.146. The record shows: 'Thatt daie & night (…) We Spent at Oxon (…) vi s viii d'. Transcribed in Robert Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and other records, Vol. 6*, *1599-1609* (Dugdale Society, 2011), p. 185.

found themselves surrounded by warm oak panelling, a popular form of adornment for this time. Above the panelling was a vibrant painted frieze with patterns of exotic fruit and colourful flowers covering every beam. The frieze was commissioned by innkeeper Pearse Underhill sometime before his death in 1604.[3] He left a lasting reminder of his presence through the lover's knot painted above the fireplace (fig.45), entwining his initials like the vines in his frieze with that of his wife's, Anne (P V A).

Had the Stratford men arrived some years earlier, they would have encountered decoration of a rather different kind. Instead of panelling, they would have been presented with black and white paintings of grotesque faces, half-dressed mythical creatures, and highly decorated architectural columns (fig.46). This scheme was commissioned by the inn's previous occupier, William Hough, who ran the Golden Cross from the mid-to-late sixteenth century.[4] The design Hough selected would have been familiar to many of his guests, for they were taken from the pages of popular printed texts. Such imagery could be found in houses across various parts of the country, including a set of paintings discovered in a merchant's house in Gloucester (fig.47), somewhat closer to Stratford.[5] These skilfully painted Renaissance patterns, once traversing the walls and ceiling of the Prince's Chamber, were then covered by

[3] The 1594 inventory of William Hough records 'Item the wainscot about the same being xlviij yards at two s the yard' in the Prince's Chamber. In the adjoining Great Chamber wainscoting is also mentioned, as well as 'painted borders' which likely refer to the painting friezes. The panelling can therefore be dated to a period before Hough's death in 1594, but likely not long before given the style of decoration. We then know that Pearse Underhill occupied the property from 1594 to 1604, so, given the initials painted into the overmantel decoration, the colourful frieze can be dated to his occupancy. The complete 1594 inventory of William Hough is transcribed and printed, along with other inventories relating to the property, in W. A. Pantin, and E. C. Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 20 (1955), pp. 46-89.

[4] For more information on Hough's occupation of the Golden Cross, see Pantin and Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford'.

[5] Sections of Renaissance work wall paintings survive in 99-101 Westgate Street, Gloucester, now The Folk of Gloucester Museum. Kathryn Davies dates these paintings 1575-1600, *Artisan Art: Vernacular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marches ,1550-1650* (Herefordshire, 2008), p. 128. More information on the house itself can be found via the museum website: 'History: A Tudor Merchant's House', *The Folk of Gloucester* https://thefolkofgloucester.co.uk/history/ [Accessed 23.05.22].

Hough in the 'modern' oak panels described above.[6] These layers of paintings and panelling created a palimpsest of decoration, providing historians today with clues as to the changing fashions and tastes of early modern patrons.

From documentary sources, we know that the Golden Cross was operating as an inn during the sixteenth century, and that the room containing this decoration was referred to as the Prince's Chamber. Inventories also tell us who ran the inn and when.[7] Yet from the small fragments of extant wall paintings, we can uncover much more. The black and white grotesque work on the earlier paintings stand in stark contrast to the elegant floral patterns of the slightly later decoration. The tastes of each of the patrons clearly differed, yet the styles of the time also shifted rapidly. From both sets of paintings, we gain a sense of the status of the room and the owners. Grotesque patterns could be found on the pages of a number of Renaissance texts, perhaps most famously in John Shute's 1563 publication *The First and Chief Groundes of Architecture*.[8] Patterns regularly jumped from page to wall, used by patrons to demonstrate their education, knowledge and taste. This was especially true for members of the new gentry, looking for a means of displaying their hard-won status. Yet, the design and choice of decoration in this chamber hints at the type of guests expected to view and stay in this space. The skilful, not to mention expensive, execution and quality of these schemes, imply that this was the premier suite of the Golden Cross Inn. It is therefore the sort of decoration geographically (and socially)

[6] As mentioned above, Hough's inventory references wainscoting in this room, indicating that he himself commissioned the panelling. But the lover's knot, featuring the initials 'P V A', painted above the fireplace in the later set of wall paintings suggests that the colourful frieze was commissioned above the panelling by the inn's next owner, Pearse Underhill. Inventory of William Hough, 1594, in Pantin and Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford', pp. 46-89.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] John Shute, *The First and Chief Groundes of Architecture* (London, 1563).

mobile men like Quiney and Shakespeare were exposed to while conducting their journeys across the country, perhaps the type of ornamentation they may have chosen to adorn their own homes.

How, then, would a man such as Shakespeare have used interior decoration to display his new gentry identity? How was he able to follow gentry convention whilst putting his own personality into his schemes? What would have been available to him and what would have informed his choices? In answering these questions, I reveal how interior decoration was utilised within the domestic environment by the new gentry in an attempt to demonstrate a sense of group, as well as individual identity. This chapter begins with a consideration of context as I discuss scholarship surrounding early modern wall paintings to highlight the main patterns, trends and issues concerning fixed decoration and the sources inspiring them. I then apply this context to a study of extant examples, indicating what we might expect to find adorning the walls of new gentry houses like New Place.

Early Modern Interior Decoration

Approaches

Scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries viewed early modern interior decoration as more of a 'curiosity' than a serious form of art.[9] Antiquarian studies of

[9] Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven, 2010), p. 8. This attitude is exemplified by architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Buildings of England*. In the *Warwickshire* volume of this work, the plasterwork overmantel found on the first floor of Harvard House, Stratford-upon-Avon (discussed below) is labelled 'very elementary', p. 419. He describes the narrative wall paintings depicting the story of Tobit on the ground floor of the White Swan in Stratford-upon-Avon (also discussed below) as 'all very rustic'. Nikolaus Pevsner and

vernacular art forms described extant examples of sixteenth and seventeenth century decoration in a detailed but highly romanticised manner.[10] This approach continued throughout much of the twentieth century, with early modern vernacular decoration described in this antiquarian fashion.[11] Wall paintings with possible links to Shakespeare were viewed with even more fascination as scholars were keen to locate schemes that the playwright may have encountered during his lifetime. P. M. Johnston's focus on mural paintings from Oxford and Stratford provides one such study, but is by no means unique.[12] As Cathryn Enis and Tara Hamling demonstrate, the romantic viewpoint from which antiquarian scholars perceived both Shakespeare's domestic life and popular forms of decoration from his lifetime remains to this day.[13] Indeed, the subjective nature of such studies makes vernacular decoration challenging to access and utilise.

Alexandra Wedgwood, *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire* (London, 1966), p. 420. See also Andrea Kirkham, 'Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Wall Paintings in Suffolk', unpublished PhD thesis, submitted for University of East Anglia (2010), p. 18.

[10] Hamling discusses this in relation to a lost plasterwork overmantel depicting David and Goliath allegedly taken from Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon, whilst Shakespeare was leasing the property to Lewis Hiccox. The plasterwork was copied by two Shakespeare scholars (first by Samuel Ireland and then Robert Bell Wheler) and is presented by both as appearing in roundel form, executed in a classic style. A photograph since discovered and thought to be of this original plasterwork overmantel is not quite so stylistic nor does it appear in roundel form, but is in fact cut to shape the position of the slanted chimney piece. For images and more information see Tara Hamling, 'Decorating the Godly Household: Postscript (1): A Forgotten Shakespeare Relic', *Material Histories (website)*, (15.03.13) https://materialhistories.wordpress.com/2013/03/15/decorating-the-godly-household-postscript-1/ [Accessed 13.06.19].

[11] 'Traditional', regional studies of wall paintings include: E. T. Leeds, 'A Second Elizabethan Mural Painting in No.3 Cornmarket Street, Oxford', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 1 (1936), pp. 144-150; W. A. Pantin and E. C. Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 20 (1955), pp. 46-89; E. C. Rouse, 'Some 16th and 17th Century Domestic Paintings in Oxford', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 37 (1972), pp. 198-207; E. C. Rouse, 'Domestic Wall and Panel Paintings in Domestic Hertfordshire', *Archaeological Journal,* Vol. 146 (1989), pp. 423-450; E. Lewis and R. Turle, 'Early Domestic Wall Paintings in Hampshire', *Proc. Hampshire Field Club Archaeol. Soc.,* Vol. 61 (2006), pp. 200-217.

[12] P.M. Johnston, 'Mural Paintings in Houses: with special reference to recent discoveries at Stratford-upon-Avon and Oxford', *Journal of The British Archaeology Association,* Vol. 37 (1931), p. 90.

[13] Cathryn Enis and Tara Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity: Material Responses to Absence in Stratford-upon-Avon, *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 70 (2019), pp. 52-83.

Fortunately, Anthony Wells-Cole's extensive survey of surviving Elizabethan and Jacobean decorative schemes demonstrates that domestic decoration should, in fact, be approached as a serious form of art to be studied and analysed in its own right.[14] By tracing the original continental print sources for extant examples of domestic wall paintings, tapestries, painted cloths, and decorative plasterwork, Wells-Cole was able to analyse the meaning of decorative schemes to the people commissioning them, rather than simply assessing decoration based on modern aesthetic values. A number of studies have since emerged to reveal the nature and function of decorative schemes in the context of the early modern domestic environment.[15] Such scholarship considers decorative schemes in their entirety, from print sources to location within the home. As Tara Hamling notes, such a focus 'draws attention to this context for the making and display of art and craft and to make connections with patterns of daily life'.[16] Through it, we are able to see how individuals and specific groups, like the new gentry, used art 'outside the church and court' to craft their identities as well as their national affiliations.[17]

The previous chapters of this study taught us that individual homes and their owners should not be considered in isolation. Both the new gentlemen and the properties they altered existed under wider social, political, and regional influences. This is reflected in current scholarship relating to vernacular decoration. Most historians today are concerned with trends and patterns in decoration to reveal the impact this had on

[14] Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Influence of Continental Prints* (New Haven, 1997).
[15] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household;* Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2017).
[16] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, p. 8.
[17] *Ibid.*

selection and availability rather than the aesthetic quality of decorative schemes.[18] A regional focus on wall paintings, for instance, highlights important differences in style and execution of decorative schemes between areas.[19] These geographical studies demonstrate that materials, colour, sources and type of decoration varied depending on geographical location.[20]

These same studies suggest that the availability of craftsmen and labour also had a significant impact on choice of decoration, as did the date assigned to a decorative scheme.[21] Most extant examples of wall paintings date between 1575 to 1625, a period that falls under the Great Rebuilding. As established, this was a time of significant material transition, including the decoration people used to fill their homes.[22] This is reflected through the shifting fashions of the time, starting with the popularity of painted cloths in the first half of the sixteenth century, which gave way to the demand for wall paintings in the second half of the sixteenth century, and then to decorative plasterwork at the start of the seventeenth century. These fashions spread at different times and in different ways across the country, but there is a consensus amongst scholarship that this shift occurred over a relatively short period, even within the narrow timeframe of Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place (1597-1616).

[18] Davies, *Artisan Art;* Kirkham, 'Wall Paintings in Suffolk', Claire Gapper, 'Plasterers and Plasterwork in City, Court and Country c.1530-c.1660', PhD thesis, submitted to Courtauld Institute of Art (1998), p. 272. This study has also consulted the revised, online version of this thesis available via http://www.clairegapper.info [Accessed 16.05.22].

[9] M. Carrick, *Essex Domestic Wall Paintings 14th-18th century* (exhibition catalogue, 1993); Rouse, 'Domestic Wall and Panel Paintings', pp. 423-450; Lewis and Turle, 'Early Domestic Wall Paintings', pp. 200-217; Kirkham, 'Wall Paintings in Suffolk'; Davies, *Artisan Art.*

[20] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 198.

[21] Davies, *Artisan Art,* p .61.

[22] Most extant examples of decorative schemes discovered in recent years date between 1575 to 1625, a period that falls under the Great Rebuilding. This phase saw a shift from medieval, hierarchical decorative displays, towards the more 'ordered restrained and classically correct' 'Renaissance' houses of the late seventeenth century. Kathryn Davies characterises the period in-between as one of distinct display: 'flamboyant, riotous, ostentatious, showy and swaggering are some of the adjectives that might best convey the more undisciplined approach to decoration'. Davies, *Artisan Art,* pp. 30-32. See also Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 10-12 for discussion of 'transitional material culture'.

Given the significance of credit to the status of new gentlemen, this chapter demonstrates how Maria Hayward's 'trickle round' model (discussed in the introduction to this thesis) was especially visible among leading citizens in towns like Stratford-upon-Avon.[23] This model links early modern fashions to an individual's immediate community or social circle. A leading townsperson, for instance, might influenced by the trends followed by other leading citizens, perhaps more so than the fashions of the gentry or aristocracy. Occasionally similar, if not identical schemes, are found in the same town, revealing a sense of shared social identity but also of association and reputation.[24] Ideas of social emulation, 'trickle round', and replication as compliment are all part of the wider process of self-fashioning. Shakespeare's identity as a new gentleman was complex, therefore the process of self-fashioning for him and others like him would have been equally as intricate. He may well have wished to emulate the elite decorative schemes found in London where he worked, but this may not have been possible or indeed worthwhile at New Place. This property sat in the local community of Stratford-upon-Avon, and it is within this community that Shakespeare chose to cement and display his newly acquired gentry status. Thus, following the fashions of other prominent townsmen and women might have proved more successful in consolidating this status amongst the local community.

As with studies of early modern buildings and probate documents, a focus on patterns and trends provides the context in which individuals were altering and improving their homes. It acknowledges that early modern patrons were not simply selecting

[23] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), p. 44.
[24] The same designs and biblical scenes were being replicated in plasterwork across various houses in the town of Barnstaple, Devon. Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 119-200.

decoration based on aesthetics, but that it was part of a wider visual culture driven by social, political and religious influences. As before, this chapter takes into account the wider factors and trends impacting choices at this time. While drawing heavily from existing work such as Hamling and Richardson's *A Day at Home* and Kathryn Davies's *Artisan Art*, this study assesses fast-shifting fashions and issues of regionality specifically in relation to the new gentry in a given timeframe (1590-1620).[25] It therefore nuances and applies existing studies to a very specific context. Men like Shakespeare belonged to a number of different groups – social, regional, occupational, civic and familial. By taking a closer look at individual owners, their homes and their furnishings, we can translate the meaning and significance of decoration in relation to specific members of the new gentry. So, what was available to new gentlemen in terms of style and design, and what were their sources of inspiration?

Engagement with early modern print sources

Wells-Cole's influential work demonstrates that continental prints were among the most exclusive sources directly employed in early modern decoration, particularly favoured by the gentry. He attests that members of the elite actually played a key role in the selection of continental prints that were then used to inspire decorative schemes within their homes.[26] But the collection, selection and ownership of prints and printed texts was not simply a courtly endeavour, it was also a pursuit followed by lower

[25] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home;* Davies, *Artisan Art.*
[26] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration,* p. 9; p. 299. Also discussed in Natalie Mears, 'Location? Location? Location?: place, patronage and meaning of the wall painting of 'Jonah and the whale' at Waltham Abbey', *Essex Archaeology and History,* Vol. 38 (2007), pp. 136-147.

ranking, or new, members of the gentry.[27] There was a significant increase in the influence and popularity of prints from France, Italy and the Netherlands throughout the second half of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century.[28] Gradually, 'demonstrating awareness of continental fashion in a riot of architectural ornament' as inspired by continental prints became a useful way of reinforcing status and education for members of the aristocracy and gentry.[29] Such men might procure texts directly from the continent, but could also obtain prints through London booksellers. These booksellers operated in the capital around the area of St Paul's and Blackfriars so would have been easily accessible for men who lived or regularly conducted business in the City, including theatre professionals such as Shakespeare.

Some of the most popular prints came from the Netherlands and included designs by artists and engravers such as Jan Vredemen des Vries (1527-1607), Marten de Vos (1503-1603) and Crispin Van de Passe the Elder (1589-1536).[30] De Vos was a 'prolific draftsmen' and produced designs for multiple engravers, including Van de Passe the Elder who continued to use these images well into the seventeenth century.[31] De Vos was one of the major contributors to the popular picture Bible, Gerard de Jode's 1585 *Thesaurus veteris et novi Testamenti* which is known to have inspired a number of decorative schemes following its publication.[32] Many of these designs and others like

[27] Although Wells-Cole does acknowledge that decoration inspired by continental prints can be found outside the houses of the elite, he argues that 'it must remain uncertain how often relatively costly foreign prints actually influenced contemporary popular culture' as there is less evidence of book, sculpture and painting ownership outside of the aristocracy at this time. Thus, the main focus of his book is elite decoration, yet the print sources he discusses can also be found in decorative schemes of lesser gentry/middling houses. Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration,* p. 299.
[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-47; p. 95.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 12.
[30] *Ibid.*, 'Chapter Five: The Influence of Netherlandish Prints I Ornament Prints', pp. 43-93 and 'Chapter 6: The Influence of Netherlandish Prints II Subject Prints', pp. 95-123.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 103. Wells-Cole notes that 'approaching fifteen hundred prints were issued after designs by de Vos: most of the examples belonged to the period from the early 1570s to the 1590s'.
[32] Gerard de Jode, *Thesaurus veteris et novi Testamenti* (1585). A copy of this text is held in The Met Museum collections, accession number: 53.601.335

them found their way to tapestries, painted cloths, plasterwork and wall paintings, including a painted scheme of Jonah and the Whale discovered in a middling house at Waltham Abbey, Essex.[33]

The use of continental prints in domestic decoration is especially evident in narrative, or figurative, designs. Biblical images could be copied from devotional manuals, printed prayer books and picture Bibles like de Iode's *Thesaurus,* reflecting the promotion of Protestant piety within the domestic context in the wake of the English Reformation.[34] Hamling attests that such displays were used by homeowners to project the image of a 'Godly' household. These displays were part of the wider self-fashioning of the homeowner, but narrative images might also be used more intimately, as 'guides to godliness', serving to aid and instruct the household on spiritual practices and personal piety.[35] Far from the 'iconophobia' traditionally associated with this period, early modern homes were filled with religious imagery, often inspired by continental designs.[36]

The Protestant Reformation and spread of humanism did, however, see a rise in the popularity of classical and allegorical imagery.[37] Nicholas Cooper and Wells-Cole

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/352226?who=Jode%2c+Gerard+de%24Gerard+de+Jode&ao=on&ft=*&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=9 [Accessed 29.05.22].

[33] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 104.

[34] Alexandra Hewitt, 'An analysis of the meaning and significance of the decoration in the Great Chamber at Chastleton House, Oxfordshire', unpublished MA dissertation, submitted to the University of Birmingham (2014), pp. 47-48.

[35] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, p. 112.

[36] Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988). For information on the use of religious imagery during the Reformation and debates surrounding iconoclasm see Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, pp. 25-66; Tara Hamling and Richard Williams (eds.), *Art Re-formed: Re-assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Newcastle, 2007); Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts, Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford, 1988); William Dryness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* (New York, 2004).

[37] Andrew Morrall discusses the use of classical figures in Christianity in 'The Reformation of the Virtues in Sixteenth-Century German Art and Decoration', in Tara Hamling and Richard Williams, *Art Re-*

suggest that classical designs were used by the gentry to construct and display an image of education, civility and manners, all key characteristics of gentry status (as seen in chapter one).[38] The more allegorical the narrative, the more education and knowledge was supposedly needed to understand it. Complex schemes were employed in the houses of the elite, but classical subjects could also be found in the houses of the lesser gentry and urban elite. [39] The Nine Worthies are a collection of religious and mythical heroes who together represent honour, chivalry and civility. A mural painting depicting these famous figures remains in an upper-floor chamber at 56 (formerly 61) High Street at Amersham, formerly the home of a prosperous merchant.[40] Horst Schroeder traces the Amersham Worthies to the same printed source as those copied by Thomas Trevelyon in his 1608 'Miscellany'.[41] Wells-Cole and Heather Wolfe identify this source as Dutch publisher Philip Galle's *The Nine Worthies of the World*.[42] Their appearance in Trevelyon's 'Miscellany' and in the house of a member of the upper middling sort shows that these designs were relatively widespread. Figures matching those illustrated by Trevelyon can also be found in decorative plasterwork adorning the great chamber at Aston Hall, Birmingham, in a

formed: Re-assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts (Newcastle, 2007), pp. 105-117; See also Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, pp. 298-299.

[38] Nicholas Cooper, 'Rank, Manners and Display: The Gentlemanly House, 1500–1750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 12 (2002), pp. 291-310; Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, pp. 298-299.

[39] Numerous examples of elite, classical decoration can be found in Wells-Cole, see especially the frieze in the Great Chamber at Hardwick House which depicts the Greek Goddess Diana amidst a lively hunting scene, a figure often evoked by Elizabeth I. Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 269-275.

[40] Horst Schroeder, 'The Mural Paintings of The Nine Worthies at Amersham', *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 138 (1981), p. 242. This scheme is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

[41] Schroeder, 'The Mural Paintings of the Nine Worthies', pp. 241-247. Little is known about Thomas Trevelyon but three commonplace manuscripts have been attributed to him. These manuscripts are extremely significant to the study of early modern visual culture as they include images ranging from kings and queens of England, to popular embroidery patterns. The Folger have undertaken extensive research on Trevelyon, suggesting it was possible he was a professional drawer of patternwork and that he hailed from Cornwall. 'Word and Image: The Trevelyon 'Miscellany' of 1608', *Folgerpedia* (online), https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Word_%26_Image:_The_Trevelyon_Miscellany_of_1608 [Accessed 08.01.2021].

[42] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 115; p. 299; Heather Wolfe, 'Trevelyon's Sources', in Thomas Trevelyon, *The Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608: A Fascimile of Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.b.332* (Washington, 2007), p. 19.

painted cloth at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, and on a carved frieze at Burton Agnes in east Yorkshire.[43] As demonstrated, the Nine Worthies were just one in a series of sets of portraits filling the walls of early modern homes. On the surface, such imagery was intended 'to inspire the viewer to emulate their virtues'.[44] But this kind of display also served the self-fashioning of the patron. A series such as the Nine Worthies combined religious, historical and mythological subject-matter, ultimately revealing the civility of the collector. These are all characteristics new gentlemen like Shakespeare were keen to construct and communicate through their homes.

The combination of classical and religious figurative imagery was popular as it projected a clear image of piety and classical education. Emblem books, in particular, provided source material that allowed a patron to combine this imagery.[45] Emblems were allegorical or symbolic images often accompanied by educational inscriptions. They were popular towards the end of the sixteenth century and could be extremely complex, requiring a certain degree of education was needed to fully appreciate their message. Davies notes that 'the devising of emblems was considered to be one of the accomplishments of a gentlemen', and as such they would have been widely traded amongst this peer group.[46] Emblems were used across a variety of decorative media, from embroidery patterns to plasterwork. The decorative plasterwork found in a ceiling from Blickling Hall, Norfolk, for example, can be traced back to Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britannia* (1612).

[43] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration,* p. 115.
[44] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household,* p. 180.
[45] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 87; Michael Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2003); Hugh Adlington, David Griffith and Tara Hamling, 'Beyond the Page: Quarles's Emblemes, Wall-Paintings, and Godly Interiors in Seventeenth-Century York', *Huntington Library Quarterly,* Vol. 78 (2015), pp. 521-551.
[46] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 87.

Emblem books were also used as source material for painted decoration such as cloths and murals. Many of the emblem books inspiring such decoration were continental in origin. Francis Quarles's *Emblemes* (1635) has been identified as the source material for a frieze found in an upper room at 42 Micklegate in York, believed to have been owned by a wealthy merchant.[47] Interestingly, many of the surviving images found in emblematic paintings do not appear in the same order as the original emblem book. The careful selection of seemingly random emblems and the simplifying of the accompanying text may have been a conscious decision to highlight the emblems most significant to the owner.[48] The emblem number was likely purposefully included to indicate the source upon which the emblem was taken, thus revealing the education and taste of the patron.[49] Depending on the selection, location and execution of the decoration as well as the situation of the viewer, an emblematic scheme might be regarded passively, 'to aid the general cultivation of piety', or interpreted as serious prompts of meditation, reflection and entertainment.[50] Emblematic schemes were found in the houses of the gentry and in the homes of the urban elite, yet perhaps more than any source considered thus far, their allegorical and symbolic nature intrinsically connects them to education and civility.

But how likely was a new gentleman such as Shakespeare to select and commission such imagery? How available was this type of source material? There is evidence of

[47] Adlington, Griffith and Hamling, 'Beyond the Page', p. 528. Extensive work by Michael Bath has revealed numerous painted schemes based on emblematic material across Britain, particularly in Scotland. Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting;* Michael Bath and Malcom Jones, 'Emblems from Thomas Combe in Wall Paintings at Bury St. Edmunds', *Emblematica,* Vol. 10 (1996), pp. 195-203.
[48] Adlington, Griffith and Hamling, 'Beyond the Page, pp. 541-550.
[49] Bath and Jones, 'Emblems from Thomas Combe', p. 203.
[50] Adlington, Griffith and Hamling, 'Beyond the Page', p. 550.

the ownership of religious and classical texts in and around Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon at this time. Chapter three analysed the 1608 inventory of John Marshall, clerk of Bishopton (near Stratford), which lists his collection of around 271 books or prints.[51] Although none of the continental prints discussed so far can be found among Marshall's collection, several books may have possessed images and designs with continental origins. Listed among his collection is 'Acolasts de filio prodigo' (priced at ij d), most likely in reference to the parable play by Dutch writer Wilhem Gnapheus (1529).[52] Tessa Watt has demonstrated that the parable of the Prodigal Son was particularly favoured for domestic decoration.[53] It adorned textiles, plasterwork and wall paintings in all levels of properties.[54] Paintings found in a first-floor chamber at Knightsland Farm, South Mimms, Hertfordshire, depict the full story of the Prodigal, divided into five narrative sections in the form of a frieze.[55] The scene is rich with imagery and colour. It follows the story of the Prodigal who feasts, womanises, and then leaves his father's house, before falling into decline (fig.48). Learning the error of his ways, he returns home and is forgiven by his father.[56] Watt highlights that the particular popularity of this narrative comes from its flexibility. Whilst providing gripping subject-matter, it also combined moral warnings against excessive living with lessons of filial piety, alongside the example of God's forgiveness. Although we cannot know

[51] Inventory of John Marshall, 1608 (126), transcribed in Jeanne Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699, Vol. 1,* (The Dugdale Society in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2002), p. 263.
[52] Jan Bloemendal, 'Book Review: The Allegory of Acolastus. Biblical Allegoresis and its Literary Reflex in G'apheus's Acolastus (1529) by Peter G. Macardle, *Church History and Religious Culture* Vol. 89 (2009), pp. 369-374.
[53] Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 201.
[54] An image of this valance can be found in Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration,* pp. 274.
[55] The Knightsland Farm wall paintings have been replicated on painted cloths and are currently displayed in the Black and White House Museum (fig.49), Hereford. For more information see Charles Kightly, *The Black and White House Museum: Guidebook* (Hereford, 2017), pp. 44-45.
[56] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, p. 155.

if Shakespeare would have viewed, or indeed owned prints dealing with this subject-matter, we do know that he was aware of their use in domestic decoration.[57]

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), Falstaff's chamber at the Garter Inn is described as 'painted about with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new' (Act 4, Scene 5, 8). Hamling observes that this painted decoration is 'highly appropriate' for Falstaff whose character was 'overspending on the joys of loose living'.[58] In writing this, Shakespeare would have been aware of the use of this subject-matter in painted decoration, but also its meaning and significance within the domestic context. Shakespeare's ownership of a variety of printed sources, therefore, would not have seemed unusual for a man of his level and profession. But the sources inspiring such decoration could be gathered from diverse media, beyond the continental prints described above. Cheaply printed broadside ballads, for instance, might be bought by a gentry collector or copied into a commonplace book, but they also might be sung in a tavern, or plastered onto the wall of a husbandman's cottage.[59] The same Old Testament stories told through these ballads could also be found on the walls of great, or even royal, houses in the form of rich tapestries or painted friezes. They crossed regional and sometimes national boundaries; brought over by merchants, sold at markets or passed around alehouses; they could be found in towns and countryside.[60] The way in which this 'popular' media was utilised, and the means through which it was transferred, differed depending on status. New gentlemen like Shakespeare, in possession of their own properties, sought to use the imagery and subject-matter of

[57] Watt, *Cheap Print,* pp. 203-204.
[58] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, p. 155.
[59] Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 3.
[60] *Ibid.*, pp .178-216.

ballads as inspiration for more permanent, fixed and elaborate decoration.[61] They might choose the piece of imagery or text that they most wanted transferring into decoration, however this popular and affordable form of print meant that they could be used as a cheap source for craftsmen to purchase themselves.[62]

Inspiration also came from existing buildings and their interiors. Traditional panelling, architecture, church interiors, textiles and embroidery all served as stimulus for wall painting and plasterwork.[63] Danae Tankard, for instance, highlights the comparisons between wall decoration and embroidered 'black work' patterns.[64] She argues that the wall paintings found in Ivy House in Fittleworth, West Sussex (c.1580-1600), are reminiscent of popular black work embroidery designs circulating at the time. Tankard notes that these same designs 'could have also been used for other decorative work including, lace work, plasterwork, metalwork, woodwork, garden design and wall painting', demonstrating the popularity and scope of this one form of imagery.[65] As Watt states, 'these media […] must be seen together. Not only did they decorate the same rooms, they shared the same themes.'[66] This 'shared' media demonstrates that decoration was not meant to be displayed or experienced in isolation. It was part of a wider popular, allied visual culture. It was this interplay of media that men like Shakespeare embraced in their construction of identity.

[61] See especially Watt, 'Chapter 5: Stories for Walls' in *Cheap Print*, pp. 178-216.
[62] *Ibid.,* p. 192; Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 102.
[63] For full a discussion on the variety of printed source material used for decorative schemes see Davies, 'Chapter 7: Sources of Design' in *Artisan Art*, pp. 81-102; and Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration.*
[64] Black silk embroidered onto white linen. Trevelyon's 'Miscellany' of 1608 features a selection of blackwork patterns alongside his more figurative designs.
[65] Danae Tankard, 'Late 16th-century domestic wall painting: an example from Fittlewoth, West Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. 154 (2016), p. 8.
[66] Watt, *Cheap Print,* p. 193.

Collectors of print and paint

The collection of noteworthy figures was an activity pursued by members of society with interests and backgrounds similar to those of Shakespeare.[67] Subject prints were notably more expensive than patterned, thus the collection and display of figurative designs gave the impression of taste, wealth and status.[68] Noteworthy figures included historic, mythical, allegorical or significant contemporary individuals. They could be purchased as sets and were often depicted as a series. An extensive collection of noteworthy figures can be found in Thomas Trevelyon's manuscripts. The source material from which these figures were copied is diverse and many have been traced back to continental sources.[69] The twelve Sibyls depicted in Trevelyon's 'Great Book' have been identified by Michael Bath as reworked copies of Crispijn de Passe the Elder's *XII sibyllarum icones elegantissimi* (c.1601), inspiring the famous engravings by Martin Droeshout entitled *XII Sibylla Icones: Prophecies of the Twelve Sibyls* (c.1620-25).[70] These popular figures were copied directly into domestic decoration, and can be found in Walter Jones's Great Chamber at Chastleton House, Oxfordshire. The frieze depicts the twelve Sibyls with their various props in roundel form, sitting alongside twelve Old Testament figures (fig.50).[71] Their appearance in Trevelyon's manuscript and on the walls of Chastleton House suggests that they were collectable figures for both print and paint.

[67] Hewitt, 'Chastleton House', p. 58.
[68] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 95.
[69] Wolfe, 'Trevelyon's Sources', in Thomas Trevelyon, *The Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608*, pp. 16-20.
[70] Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting*, pp. 190-196; Hewitt, 'Chastleton House', p. 59.
[71] Hewitt, 'Chastleton House', pp. 42-62.

Wolfe draws attention to a fascinating element of Trevelyon's work: the process of transformation that these images underwent, from their original, individual print source to part of a collection. She writes:

> […] almost all of the texts and images[…]are copied, adapted or excerpted from printed sources[…]but transformed in the process by Trevelyon's thoughtful pairings, enlargements, and colouring into something entirely original.[72]

Having access to and indeed owning the print source revealed a collector's humanist education, whilst the arrangement and display of these collections demonstrated taste and creativity. Combined, they worked together to demonstrate the gentility of the owner. Men such as Walter Jones were creating their own, personalised series of noteworthy figures by combining existing printed sets.[73] His set of Sibyls and Old Testament figures, with their prophetic links to the 'coming of Christ', combine an understanding of classical texts with the display of Protestant piety.[74] If we take these examples as an indicator of Elizabethan/Jacobean fashions and tastes, it seems collecting and combining certain prints to form one's own 'series' was a relatively popular pastime. Jones provides an example of a man who, new to the ranks of the gentry, was collecting and displaying sets of noteworthy figures around the time of Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place.

The collection and display of noteworthy figures was also a pursuit followed by individuals from Shakespeare's own theatre circle. Edward Alleyn's improvement, furnishing and decoration of his various properties at Dulwich was recorded in a set of

[72] Heather Wolfe, 'A third manuscript by Thomas Trevelyon/Trevilian', *The Collation; The Folger Library* (07.12.2012) http://collation.folger.edu/2012/12/a-third-manuscript-by-thomas-trevelyontrevelian/ [Accessed 23.05.22].
[73] Wolfe, 'A third manuscript'.
[74] Classical and Old Testament figures such as these were deemed 'relatively unproblematic in Protestant image theory', Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p. 158. Furthermore, the prophecies of both the Sibyls and the Old Testament Prophets were linked to the 'coming of Christ'. For a more detailed explanation of the 'anticipation of Christ', and its significance in Protestant belief and imagery see Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p. 233.

diaries from 1617 to 1622.[75] These diaries reveal that, like Jones, Alleyn was purchasing his own collection of important figures. In 1618 and again in 1620 he amassed a collection of 26 portraits: a set of English Queens and Kings, twelve Sibyls (nine of which survive), twelve Apostles, Christ and the Virgin (now lost). Susan Foister notes that many of the royal portraits surviving today appear to have been hastily painted [76] Differences in facial features on the later sets of royal portraits, compared to those purchased earlier, also reveal that the portraits were painted by different people.[77] Alleyn does not attach a name to these royal sets, however a Mr Gibkyn is mentioned alongside the twelve sibyls (fig.51) on 3 October 1620 with the sum of £2. A few days later, on 10 October, Alleyn notes that he purchased '14 Heads of Christ ou La: & ye 12 apostles att noble a peec' from this same man.[78] Whether Mr Gibkyn was a painter or a trader, the idea that Alleyn was personally selecting and commissioning his own collection of portraits is significant, and follows the same pattern seen by Trevelyon and Jones, though on a somewhat grander scale.

A variety of sources can be identified in relation to Alleyn's collection of paintings.[79] A number of his royal portraits can be linked to a series of printed portraits in *Baziliwlogia* by Henry Holland, with engravings by Renold Elstrack. *Baziliwlogia* was published in 1618, the same year Allyen began to purchase his series of portraits.[80] Although no source has been attributed to his set of Sibyls, we know from Jones's frieze that the Sibyls were popular figures at this time. Indeed, Alleyn's entry recording the purchase

[75] Susan Foister, 'Edward Alleyn's Collection of Paintings', in A. Reid and R. Maniura, *Edward Alleyn: Elizabethan Actor, Jacobean Gentleman* (Suffolk, 1994), pp. 33-61. A full transcription of these accounts can be found in William Young, *The History of Dulwich College*, *Vols.1 & 2* (London, 1889).
[76] Foister, 'Edward Alleyn's Collection', p. 40.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[78] Young, 'Edward Alleyn's Diary', p. 193.
[79] Foister, 'Edward Alleyn's Collection', p. 40.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

of his Sibyls states ‘chyngd my 12 owld sybyles for 12 new’, implying his old set had worn or become damaged, or that he had come across a newer version of the famous figures in print.[81] Importantly, this entry reveals that men such as Alleyn were attempting to keep up with the newest trends and current sources.

It is clear that ‘emerging’ men like Trevelyon, Alleyn and Jones were investing their time and money in compiling sets of significant figures.[82] Through the reconstructions presented in chapter five, I argue that Shakespeare would have also participated in this pursuit. The collection of printed sources was meaningful as it indicated the culture, education and connections of the owners to this new print world. The fact that many of these prints were continental in origin added yet another air of prestige to this source material. The subsequent careful selection of individuals to form a personalised decorative ‘series’ or ‘set’ demonstrates an attempt at displaying individuality within the conventionality of collecting. Many of the same figures could be found across different collections. Yet, the arrangement and display of figures on the wall is what made these schemes meaningful, significant and personal to the individuals commissioning them.

[81] Young, ‘Edward Alleyn’s Diary’, p. 193.
[82] Another interesting example of this sort of collection (although outside of the domestic environment), is the frieze in the Upper-Reading Room of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, commissioned by English diplomat, Thomas Bodley, in 1598. The frieze, completed after his death in 1616/17, contains 201 roundel portraits of various important religious and academic figures. For more information see M. R. A. Bullard, '*Talking Heads*: The Bodleian Frieze, its Inspiration, Sources, Designer and Significance', Bodleian Library Record, Vol.19 (1994), pp. 461-500.

Availability and Extant Examples: Wall Paintings

A variety of patterns and designs were popular and affordable for people like Shakespeare in early modern England. These could be executed in a range of media, but most surviving examples can be found in wall paintings. This section considers extant examples of the types of painted schemes we might expect to have found in the new gentry houses considered in this study. The evidence discussed below has been collected from extensive fieldwork. This material was gathered across two phases, the first including scoping and context, and the second, a process of selecting cognate evidence for Shakespeare's New Place (appx.1). As a result, the extant source material used to study new gentry decoration is far-reaching, demonstrating the diversity of styles, subject-matter and design open to this socially fluid collection of people. Ultimately, I am interested in what was available, popular and possible for a new gentleman living in a market town such as Stratford. This calls for a focus on status, but also region.

Beyond London

Kathryn Davies notes that 'the only identifiable body of craftsmen specialising in painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England was the Painter-Stainers' Company who controlled the profession in London'.[83] Wall paintings, however, were widespread, meaning that other craftspeople were available and able to carry out the work in the provinces. There is evidence of specialist painters operating in some towns and cities, yet there are no traces of painters' guilds outside

[83] Davies, *Artisan Art,* p. 67.

of London.[84] Often these specialist decorators were members of other craft-related guilds, like the Sadlers' Company in Shrewsbury.[85] The separation and specialisation of crafts seen in large towns was somewhat obscured in smaller locations. There is sparse evidence of specialist painters living in Stratford-upon-Avon during Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place.[86] In his inventory of 1624, Abraham Allaway (b.1574) is identified as a 'painter', although very little additional information is offered. His inventory does list a number of items that would have proved useful to his occupation such as pots, tubs, and boards, but many Stratford inventories contain such items.[87] Work carried out by Davies and Andrea Kirkham reveals that carpentry, plastering, bricklaying, tiling, glazing and painting were often carried out by one craftsman, or a group of craftsmen.[88] Even if men like Shakespeare did have the means with which to afford elaborated schemes, they may not have had access to the expertise needed to execute it within their hometowns and these skills were likely drawn from elsewhere.

In the southern county of Kent, wall paintings surviving in Calico House reveal that bright and elaborate decoration was not simply reserved for the capital's elite or those with access to the Painter-Stainer's Company.[89] Calico House in the rural town of

[84] According to the Shrewsbury tax and muster lists, there were 'three painters [listed] in 1524, three in 1569 and four in 1587'. In Oxford, where a significant amount of extant wall decoration remains, eight wills survive for men described as painters from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, five of which have accompanying inventories, Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 67; p. 70.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 67
[86] There is some mention of decorative crafts in the Corporation's *Minutes and Accounts*, in relation to work and repairs to public buildings. The account from 12 January 1599 lists a number of payments made to various people for repairs to the bridge, Guild Chapel and Guild Hall, including 'Paid to Edward Ange for a locke from the gelde hall doore', 4s, and 'Paid to Peter Joyner for mending the bell whell', 10d. SBT SCLA BRU 4/1. Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts, Vol. 6*, *1599-1609*, pp. 54-55.
[87] Inventory of Abraham Allaway, 1624 (164), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. 1*, pp. 330-331.
[88] Davies, *Artisan Art,* p. 69.
[89] Rupert Austin and Sheila Sweetinburgh, 'My painted chamber' and other rooms: Stephen Hulkes and the History of Calico House, Newnham', *Archaeological Cantiana*, Vol.130 (2010), pp. 105-144.

Newham was renovated by the wealthy yeoman, Stephen Hulkes, in the early seventeenth century and is not dissimilar in form to Shakespeare's New Place.[90] As part of Hulkes's renovations, a first-floor chamber was decorated with imitation panelling in warm terracotta, reds and greens, with a frieze containing text above. The paintings that survive here are colourful and bright and, significantly, they were commissioned by a man of similar status to many of the urban elite in Stratford-upon-Avon. With its close proximity to London, Kent was a wealthy county in the early modern period.[91] The skilful execution and detailed design of the Calico House paintings might, therefore, be more regional in nature, however it is also possible that Hulkes hired specialists from outside this rural town to complete this scheme. Significantly, the existence of this ornate fictive panelling at Calico House suggests that it was possible and desirable for men of a middling level, in a context similar to New Place, to commission elaborated patterned schemes.

A number of separate painted schemes were discovered in a sixteenth century property formerly known as Bosworth House in Wendover, Buckinghamshire.[92] Bosworth House (now split into two dwellings) was middling in size and followed the layout of a two-storeyed, single range property with attics and cellar. The wall paintings date between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and were found in the east side of the property (now 2 High Street) in a ground-floor chamber, an upper chamber and what was once a small passage-way connecting the east and west sides of the building. The prominent location of the house on the High Street and the

[90] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 47.
[91] Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 11.
[92] Francis Reader, 'Wall-paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries recently discovered in Bosworth House, Wendover, Bucks'*, Archaeological Journal,* Vol. 87 (1930), pp. 71-97.

elaborate nature of the wall paintings suggest that the owner was a man of means and status within the local community.

Similar to Calico House, the wall paintings in both the upper and lower chambers were designed to imitate wood panelling. These paintings are no longer visible, but were illustrated by Francis Reader in 1930.[93] The passage next to the upper chamber displayed a 'woodland scheme' containing intricate depictions of animals such as deer and owls surrounded by sweeping foliate and floral designs. However, given their style, these schemes were most likely painted later than those found in the larger second floor room. Fictive panelling and ornate friezes from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century were also discovered in the lower chamber of this property. Although different in style to those found in the room above, they are described by Reader as equally elaborate, and seem to have had much the same effect. Together, the existence of the Bosworth paintings suggests that mock panelling and detailed pattern-work were fashionable in the smaller market-towns beyond the wealthier counties of the south.

It is clear that wealthy members of the middling sort in towns like Stratford followed and commissioned the latest decorative fashions. Although the sources inspiring the Bosworth House paintings have not yet been identified, the survival of schemes such as the Jonah and the Whale in a cottage in Waltham Abbey, Essex, and the Ivy House black-work paintings in Fittleworth, Sussex, further demonstrates that access to sources and craftsmen to execute such elaborate schemes, was possible.[94] Significantly, the Bosworth House schemes demonstrate the extensive and

[93] Reader, 'Wall-paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries', pp. 71-97.
[94] Mears, 'Location? Location? Location?', pp. 136-147.

continuous nature of early modern decorative schemes. Elaborate designs, sometimes inspired by other forms of visual media, could and were executed outside of London, and at the level of middling.[95] But, the counties of Essex, Sussex, Kent and Hampshire were relatively wealthy compared to the rest of the country.[96] Access to the latest prints, designs and quality craftsmen from the capital was within reach for the wealthier members of society from these areas. Given the regional differences in decoration, a consideration of what was available beyond these southern counties is essential when building an image of how Shakespeare might have decorated New Place.

Oxfordshire

Oxford lies between Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford and his place of work, London.[97] The city is believed to have been frequented by the playwright while he travelled to and from the capital.[98] Oxford appeared to have been a frequent stop for Stratford men travelling to and from London, as highlighted in the early seventeenth century expenses of the Corporation.[99] Not only is it possible that Shakespeare experienced some of the city's domestic interiors first-hand, Oxford has a relatively large selection of surviving wall paintings in situ today, providing a good representation

[95] The rich variety of surviving wall paintings in the county of Hampshire are identified and discussed in Lewis and Turle, 'Early Domestic Wall Paintings', pp. 200-217.
[96] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 11.
[97] Oxford is approximately 60 miles from the City of London, and 44 miles from Stratford-upon-Avon (on foot) according to Google Maps. https://www.google.com/maps/@51.9772961,-1.7631891,10z
[98] It is a long-held belief of many Shakespeare scholars that the playwright spent a significant amount of time in Oxford. This is discussed in P. M. Johnston, 'Mural Paintings in Houses', pp. 75-100. More recently, Shakespeare's life among the literary elite of Oxford University was discussed in a paper given by Lena Cown Orlin at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's Birthday Lecture entitled 'Shakespeare's Life Portrait in Holy Trinity', Zoom, 21.04.2021. The paper re-analysed Shakespeare's memorial bust in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, linking it to the same style and genre of memorial found on the tombs of Oxford scholars.
[99] See expenses referred to in the introduction – recorded by Richard Quiney and Henry Wilson on their visit and journey to London, 5-14 November 1601. SBT SCLA, BRU 15/1.146, p. 185.

of the type of decoration available in a bustling city, albeit a city built around a university. This chapter opened with a description of the painted decoration in the property of 5 Cornmarket Street, formerly the Golden Cross. The decoration may be visually striking, but it also reveals a significant amount about changes in type of decoration across a relatively short period of time. These two schemes, potentially separated by a period as short as 20 to 30 years, differ significantly in terms of style – one black and white Renaissance work, the other a vibrant floral pattern (fig.52).[100] This decorative palimpsest allows us to gain a better understanding of the rapidly changing tastes of the time, and in Oxford, a city Shakespeare is believed to have frequented. They represent a shift in taste before, and even during, the period Shakespeare lived at New Place. This change in fashion is further emphasised by the other decoration surviving in this early modern property.

Extant schemes from two periods were also found in the first floor 'Little Crown Chamber' of the Golden Cross.[101] The surviving decoration occupies the wall dividing the Little Crown Chamber and the larger Crown Chamber. It surrounds a stone fireplace, covering the entirety of this wall, and E C Rouse provides a detailed description of these paintings as they were found in the 1960s. The topmost (later) scheme included 'a representation of marble panels in cream, veined in black and grey, framed by uprights and horizontals in green, cream and white'.[102] This later decoration was removed, and only the earlier scheme survives in various states of conservation. This surviving decoration comprises strapwork and repeated geometrical patterns, filled with either a Tudor Rose or petalled flower. These patterns

[100] Pantin and Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford', p. 86.
[101] The 'Little Crown Chamber' is located between what was once the 'Great Chamber' and the 'Crown Chamber'.
[102] Rouse, 'Some 16th and 17th Century Domestic Paintings', p. 199.

were painted onto a vivid background of red, orange and brown. A black outline surrounds the geometrical patterns, an attempt at portraying relief. A patterned frieze running below the ceiling also survives as part of this scheme.

Rouse attests that the 'most remarkable' feature of the Crown Chamber decoration is its continuation in linen above the fireplace (fig.53). This feature, he writes, 'was used to make a level surface where the wall [...] was uneven and set back from the level of the rest of the walls in the room'.[103] Similarly, the areas between the timber studs, where the plaster had recessed, were also covered in linen which had been 'tucked in behind the edge of the plaster ceiling above the fireplace'.[104] Inventories from the Golden Cross mention painted cloths and the 1594 probate record in particular refers to 'Item, the painted borders there being xiiij yards at vjd. the yard' in the Crown Chamber.[105] Rouse suggests that the use of painted cloths or textiles 'for levelling off or covering uneven spaces' was a relatively common practice and is something we might find evidenced in both surviving inventories and extant schemes.[106]

The section of frieze above the fireplace also features an inscription in black letter:

> The ryche mans goods will him permitte, no quiet rest to take
> When nature would that he should slepe, cause him always to wake.

This is a metrical version of Ecclesiastes V 12, a fitting text for one of the best bedrooms in the property.[107] Similar paintings can be found nearby in 3 Cornmarket Street, Oxford.[108] The main body of this scheme is formed of elaborate, repeated

[103] Rouse, 'Some 16th and 17th Century Domestic Paintings', p. 199.
[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
[105] Inventory of William Hough, 1594, in Pantin and Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford', pp. 46-89.
[106] Rouse, 'Some 16th and 17th Century Domestic Paintings', p. 200.
[107] *Ibid.*
[108] John Tattleton lived in at 3 Cornmarket Street from 1560 to 1581, and is believed to have commissioned the paintings found here. John Tattleton was a tailor and local dignitary. Following his death, the property passed through a number of hands and came into the occupancy of the Houghs,

patterns, while the frieze contains religious, instructional text.[109] As Rouse notes, 'this practice of turning Biblical text into verse seems to have been popular'.[110] Hamling and Richardson further highlight the popularity of such instructional verses in decoration by drawing attention to the 'vogue for texts' often found painted into friezes or above fireplaces.[111] They cite Thomas Tusser's 1573 work, *Five Points of Good Husbandry*, in which he suggests relevant 'Posies' for specific use in domestic decoration. The posies were divided into those most appropriate for specific rooms: the Crown Chamber inscription would certainly fall under the category of 'one's own bed chamber'. These inscriptions were carefully selected depending upon the function and status of the room, as well the social identity of the home owner.

The Midlands

Numerous wall paintings remain in and around Oxford, revealing the popularity of this form of decoration outside London. As demonstrated, paintings varied from intricate patterns to architectural features and, assuming Shakespeare visited the city, he would have been exposed to this rich decoration. The execution of these schemes is

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the same family who owned the Golden Cross Inn (at 5 Cornmarket Street) and the attached 4 Cornmarket Street. William Hough's widow married John Davenant, a vintner, who then came to occupy the property. There is some dispute surrounding when 3 Cornmarket Street began to function as a tavern, yet if we are to believe Leeds's theory that the property had long-served as such, we might identify the larger painted room at the time of John Tattleton's occupancy as a potential guest chamber. Focus has also been placed on Davenant potential connection to Shakespeare. It is alleged that Shakespeare regularly stayed with the Davenants when passing through or staying in Oxford. Nonetheless, it remains unlikely that Shakespeare experienced the extant decoration in situ today as the paintings may have already been panelled over at this point. See E. T. Leeds, 'A Second Elizabethan Mural Painting in No. 3 Cornmarket Street, Oxford', *Oxoniensia,* Vol. 1 (1936), p. 144, and Johnston, 'Mural Paintings in Houses', pp. 94-95 for more information on the alleged connection between Shakespeare and John Davenant, including the story of Shakespeare being made Godfather to Davenant's son, William.

[109] Rouse dates the earlier Crown Chamber paintings to between 1570-1580, indicating that they were painted before the 1594 inventory of William Hough which refers to the 'painted cloths' and 'painted borders'. Rouse, 'Some 16th and 17th Century Domestic Paintings', p. 200.

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

[111] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 47.

of a high quality, perhaps unsurprising given the wealth and function of early modern Oxford as a university city. However, similar schemes can also be found elsewhere in the Midlands, closer to Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford. Fragments of extant decoration remain in Blakesley Hall, Yardley, located in the outskirts of Birmingham. The house (as discussed in chapter two) was built around 1590, not long before Shakespeare's purchase of New Place. Although Blakesley could not be considered as urban, its form and decoration make it a useful example of the way in which recently converted or constructed domestic properties could be used to display the identity of its owner.

The extant decoration at Blakesley is located in a first-floor chamber at the head of the staircase. Small sections of a painted scheme survive throughout the room, showing traces of repeated geometric patterns (fig.54) similar in style to the Middle Eastern designs often seen on tapestries labelled in inventories as 'turkeywork'. Red stars filled with fruit, foliage and yellow and white flowers stand on a dark green background (fig.55), with the remains of a large frieze containing a set of medallion-shaped cartouches above.[112] The figures inside the cartouches have long since disappeared, yet it is possible to trace the outline of a winged figure, potentially belonging to a cherub. Similar to the Crown Chamber paintings in Oxford, the frieze once contained an inscription. Now all that remains is a blank space inside an ornately decorated panel. The initials 'RES' are inscribed in one section of the frieze. These initials are thought to belong to the original builders, Richard and Elizabeth Smalbroke, or to their son Robert and his wife, Elizabeth.[113] Richard and Elizabeth were married just before

[112] These paintings were reconstructed as painted cloths and are now hanging in a first-floor bedchamber at Blakesley Hall (fig.56).
[113] Shena Mason, *Blakesley Hall: Guide* (West Bromwich, 2003), p. 10.

the completion of Blakesley Hall in 1589, and the decoration found in this first-floor chamber, with its symbols of fertility, would have been fitting for a design for the newlyweds.[114] The use of such decoration reveals the owners' attempts at following the latest trends whilst also stamping their own mark on their home.

A strikingly similar design remains in Herefordshire, at 1 Church Lane in Ledbury. The middle section of the painted first-floor chamber consists of interlocking quatrefoils and the black background is filled with red, yellow and white fruits (fig.57). The frieze running below the ceiling is similar in style to the Blakesley paintings. Panels filled with blackletter inscriptions feature prominently and include a passage following the Geneva Bible:

> Better is a dinner with greene hearbes/ where love is, then a fat oxe with hatred / therewith.

This selection of text indicates that the room was likely used for dining among other functions.[115] As with the inscriptions found in the Oxford painted frieze, this text has a moral and instructional undertone; reminding the household and guests to avoid greed. Again, we see the popularity of the combination of pattern-work and black letter inscriptions among middling patrons.

The Ledbury paintings also highlight the trend for combining different designs into one scheme. Imitation panelling painted in yellows and browns can be found below the middle quatrefoil design. Wall paintings at this time were usually divided into three sections: the lower, dado section; the middle, main section; and the upper frieze located below the ceiling.[116] Through these schemes, we see both conventionality and

[114] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 32.
[115] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[116] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 5.

individuality. The patron might follow convention by choosing designs from a pre-selected set of popular inscriptions, but there was individuality and consideration in their selection. Although the structure of pattern-work with black letter inscriptions appears to have been typical among the middling and urban elite, the selection of both the pattern design and instructional text reveals that patrons made choices to reflect their particular taste within a scheme.

Surviving subject, or narrative, schemes indicate that figurative designs were also favoured in this region during Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place. Subject schemes can be found in Hereford today, revealing a distinct trend towards this form of decoration in the city in the early seventeenth century. The wall paintings originating from 5 Widemarsh Street depict the Biblical story of Joseph.[117] The paintings, most likely positioned in a first-floor reception room (c.1600), originally formed a large frieze covering each wall. Only two scenes from the original scheme survive today (fig.58); Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream and Joseph presenting his father, Jacob, to Pharaoh. Painted as a complete set, this decoration told the dramatic story of Joseph: betrayal by his brothers, his trials as a slave, his seduction by Potiphar's wife, newfound fame and, finally, the forgiveness in his reunion with his father. This scheme was meant to entertain, but it also had a moral and religious message, especially within the domestic environment within which these paintings were set.[118]

Davies identifies the inspiration for the Widemarsh paintings as a collection of prints by Virgil Solis titled *Biblische Figuren des Alten (Neuwen) Testaments gantz kuntlisch*

[117] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 141, gazetteer entry 45; Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, pp. 157-158. These paintings are now on display in the Black and White House Museum (10) in Hereford.
[118] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, pp. 158.

gerissen, published in Nuremburg between 1562 and 1606.[119] Hamling and Richardson note that this collection presented a particularly vivid display, containing over 200 woodcut images of biblical stories, with one page dedicated to each illustration. Yet, Wells-Cole notes that evidence of this text in decorative form is extremely scarce.[120] Although little is known about the owner of 5 Widemarsh Street, judging by the location of the house in the town in addition to the existence and quality of the Joseph paintings, we might assume that they were wealthy yet middling. Hamling and Richardson assert that 'the close dependence of the wall paintings on this source raises the question of how widely available this book was to people of middling status'.[121]

Hereford was a thriving and prosperous city. By 1600, the owner of 5 Widemarsh Street may well have procured his own collection of Solis's *Biblische Figuren*. If not, he may have been able to access individual prints circulated in smaller sets. Significantly, if the owner of the property did purchase these prints himself, the drama of this narrative and the message it told would have been of interest to any prominent member of local society eager to demonstrate their piety and sophistication through the ownership of such prints and their display on the walls of key reception spaces. Although Stratford did not possess the same networks as a city like Hereford, its inhabitants were well travelled and it is possible that a number of Shakespeare's contemporaries, including the playwright himself, had access to such texts.[122] The

[119] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 112; Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 206.
[120] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration,* pp. 25-26
[121] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 206.
[122] The Accounts and Minutes of the Stratford Corporation (1593-1598) record numerous trips made by members of the civic elite. This includes journeys to nearby towns such as Coventry and Worcester, but also trips further afield to Oxford, Lincoln, Suffolk and Norfolk. One entry made on 15 October 1594 (SBT BRU/2/2 p.7) records journeys to Wigan, Gloucester, Warwick, Northampton and Oxford within a short space of time. The extent of this travel can be explained by the efforts of the Corporation to raise funds for the town's restoration following a disastrous fire. Nonetheless, these records reveal just how

existence of narrative schemes in other Midlands towns and cities shows that access to craftsmanship was also possible for such men.

Biblical wall paintings (c.1600) can also be found in the Black Lion Pub on Bridge Street in Hereford, formerly a townhouse belonging to a wealthy merchant.[123] The paintings are located in a first-floor chamber and, like the Widemarsh scheme, they form part of a large frieze (fig.59). Inscriptions in English from the Decalogue run above painted scenes from the Old Testament. These scenes represent the breaking of the Ten Commandments, with the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh still surviving on the north wall, and the ninth and tenth on the south wall. Sadly, the rest of the scheme was destroyed, however we can assume that all ten scenes were depicted in total. Jacob's harrowing murder of Amasa (2 Samuel 20:9) is still visible today and can be found underneath the text 'Thou shalt doo noe Murder'.[124] Despite its faded state, these paintings send a powerful message. Murder and adultery are depicted in panorama, made to leave a lasting impression. According to Watt, such scenes arose from the Reformation adaption of medieval 'morality' paintings warning against ungodly behaviour.[125]

The head of the early modern home was expected to act as a moral compass for the rest of the household, guiding its members through prayer and morality, and maintaining discipline and order. This imagery, therefore, served to reinforce the

geographically mobile these men were. The records also indicate that representatives from the Corporation were hosted by other civic individuals in the towns they were visiting, meaning that these Stratford men were constantly coming into contact with interior decoration and trends outside their hometown. Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts, Vol. 5*, *1593-1598*.

[123] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 134, gazetteer no. 26.

[124] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, pp. 109.

[125] Watt, *Cheap Print,* p. 211.

authority of the patron. Hamling writes that ‘it is impossible not to imagine the householder using these images as part of his daily instructions to remind his family of the dire consequences of sin and disobedience’.[126] This role as spiritual guide was vital for a ‘good’ and ‘godly’ household, but it was also a key requirement of gentry status. It was not enough to conduct these actions within the confines of the home, gentry householders needed to be seen to be executing these spiritual and authoritative roles. Through his work on credit and capital in early modern England, Keith Wrightson highlights the significance that family reputation and outward displays of piety had on social and economic capital. He observes that ‘in an environment fraught with risk the most immediate strategy of security was the maintenance of a well-ordered household, one exhibiting 'good rule', 'family order', or 'right living’.[127] For some, the maintenance of this impression was essential for daily survival, however for socially upward members of society, a well-maintained household and godly reputation were key in the construction of status.

Stratford-upon-Avon

Few extant examples of decoration remain in Stratford today. This lack of survival is not unusual for urban buildings, but enough decoration does survive to tell us that a choice in wall paintings (in terms of sources and style) was available around the time of Shakespeare’s occupancy of New Place. The White Swan (known in the 1560s as the King’s House or Hall) was an inn owned by alderman, Robert Perot and run by his

[126] Hamling, *Decorating the ‘Godly’ Household*, pp. 109.
[127] Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2000), p. 296.

brother, William.[128] Three scenes from the Apocryphal book of Tobit remain in-situ, traditionally dated between 1555 and 1565.[129] Yet, given the nature of the scheme, the Tobit paintings were more likely to have been completed between 1570 and 1580 by whoever took over and potentially renovated the property following William's death.[130] A handful of subject schemes from the mid-sixteenth century appear in the Midlands and Welsh Marches at this time, but most biblical designs encountered by this study date from the final quarter of the sixteenth century or the start of the seventeenth century.[131] Costumes, or the original print source from which the design derives, can be deceptive; often there was a delay between the production of the print and its application to the wall, which has historically led to the slightly earlier dating of schemes.[132]

Three scenes span one wall in a ground-floor, street-facing chamber (fig.60), which would have formed part of a complete painted scheme telling the story of Tobit. The first depicts Tobit and his wife, Anna, leaving their son Tobias and the disguised Angel Raphael; all portrayed in vivid, contemporary costumes. Above is the blackletter inscription 'here tobit tobyas sent, to sitte (city) of rages for mone (money) that was (lent)'.[133] The second surviving scene is that of a city, with an imposing skyline of towers and turrets. Johnston believes that this cityscape may have provided the

[128] As described in 'The Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon: Introduction and architectural description', VCH (1945), pp. 221-234 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol3/pp221-234 [Accessed 23.05.22]; Davies, *Artisan Art,* p. 101.
[129] Johnston dates the paintings to the period from 1555 to 1565 in his article 'Mural Paintings in Houses', p. 90.
[130] Watt dates this scheme c.1570-1580, *Cheap Print*, p. 209, following on from the dating provided by Francis Reader in 'Tudor Domestic Wall Paintings: Part 2', *Archaeological Journal* Vol. 93 (1936), pl. XXI.
[131] Davies, *Artisan Art*, pp. 8-10.
[132] *Ibid.*, p .22.
[133] As transcribed by Johnston in 'Mural Paintings in Houses', p. 91.

background to a scene now lost, of Tobit and the angel.[134] The inscription above these designs reads 'when they came to tykres, (Tigris) them sellues to washe yn theare…' – then, continuing onto the panel above the third extant scene - '…ate afysshe (a fish) that lookid greate. But raphael bade Tobias'. This final scene depicts another landscape, rural in nature, with trees, hills and the River Tigris running through it. Another city appears in the distance, and amongst this imagery we see Tobias handling a fish, alongside the angel Raphael who appears in a traveller's cloak.[135] Each scene is outlined in black, framed by architectural columns and mock-drapery, surrounded by fruit and foliate designs in bright greens and yellows.[136]

The bordering of figures by 'architectural openings' (pillars and arches for instance) can be found in many printed texts and wall decoration from this period, but the draperies are reminiscent of the stage.[137] Davies attests that there was likely some overlap between set painters and the craftsmen producing domestic decorative cloths and walls, as previously suggested in this study.[138] The White Swan paintings are located in a room that was most likely used as a hall or public space, viewed by all who entered or stayed at the inn. Although these paintings carried religious and moral messages, such as filial piety and prophecy, they also demonstrated a degree of pageantry and ceremony in this public, sociable setting. Watt notes that victualling houses in the early modern period were points of 'intersection between this nationwide network of communications and the local community'. As such, they provided a 'social

[134] Johnston, 'Mural Paintings in Houses', p. 92.
[135] *Ibid.*
[136] Watt observes that the bold outline used on so many narrative schemes reflects the outlining used on printed materials, revealing the original source material of the scheme. Watt, *Cheap Print,* p. 209.
[137] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 101. This idea is also put forward by Johnston in 'Mural Paintings in Houses', p. 90, and the architectural motifs have been commented on by Hamling in 'Beyond the Page', p. 526.
[138] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 101.

centre' for many members of the community and beyond.[139] These designs likely came from the same print sources used in domestic paintings, but, in the setting of an inn or tavern, their meaning and significance differed from the domestic environment. Nonetheless, their existence in Stratford during the latter part of the sixteenth century is significant. It tells us that it was possible to commission narrative schemes in and around the town during Shakespeare's lifetime. Clearly knowledge of appropriate source material and access to relevant craftsmen was possible for the residents of Stratford.

John Gibbs's house, Mason's Court on Rother Street, contains two surviving painted panels. The first (fig.61) is located above the fireplace in a ground-floor, street-facing chamber, likely the hall or parlour listed in Gibbs's inventory (1625), and the second (fig.62) survives on the corner wall towards the rear of the same space (fig.63). Both panels are in a state of disrepair, but the fireplace painting appears to have once displayed a roundel or cartouche. The second painting features a black and white geometric pattern; it is possible to discern an overlapping pattern of lattice-work, seemingly filled with a floral/foliate design. A small frieze is visible towards the top of this segment, featuring a repeated triangular pattern. It is difficult to gain a complete sense of this scheme and its overall impression within this space, but these fragments do suggest that Stratford residents engaged in commissioning a variety of designs and trends. The position of this scheme, which presumably covered every wall of this chamber, would have been visible from the street. Given the location of this space within the house, leading off from the entrance-passage, this chamber likely served as a reception space, and so, these wall paintings would have greeted guests upon

[139] Watt, *Cheap Print,* p. 195-196.

arrival. In this way, the choice and execution of this painted decoration were especially significant as this scheme gave guests their first impression of the self-proclaimed gentleman's home.

The scheme is similar in nature to those remaining in 1 Church Street, Ledbury, and Blakesley Hall in Yardley, although the Mason's Court paintings do not remain quite so vibrant. The main body of the scheme consisted of a repeated and overlapping pattern, similar in style to those adorning Middle Eastern textiles. This design is then complimented with a frieze of similar pattern-work, and, much like the Blakesley paintings, evidence of a roundel at frieze level (above the fireplace) remains. We might, therefore, date the Mason Court paintings to a similar period - to the late sixteenth century, during Gibbs's occupancy and ownership of the house. Gibbs served as bailiff twice in the 1590s, and his terms in office may well have coincided with this painted decoration.[140] Clearly, such pattern-work was deemed appropriate for civic men, chosen by town constable Richard Skull to adorn the walls of his great chamber in Ledbury.[141] But their appearance in Richard Smalbroke's chamber at Blakesley Hall shows that this design was also suitable for members of the new gentry residing in the countryside. Undoubtedly, a variety of designs were available to Stratford's elite, but the damaged appearance of the Mason's Court paintings makes it difficult to measure the level of skill used to execute them.

Harvard House, located on the High Street, provides another extant example of the type of patterned decoration that might be found in the town at the start of the

[140] 'The Mayor Civic History: Bailiffs: 16th/17th Century', Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council (website), https://www.stratford-tc.gov.uk/the-mayor/civic-history [Accessed 23.05.22]
[141] Lilian Sanders, *The 16th Century Painted Room Ledbury,* (tourist pamphlet: Ledbury, 1991).

seventeenth century.[142] The property was rebuilt by Thomas Rogers in 1596, who invested substantially in its modernisation at exactly the time Shakespeare purchased New Place. Usefully, extant decoration dating from the 1590s remains in two rooms of this urban property. [143] The second-floor, front chamber features a section of a trompe l'oeil wall painting in yellow and red imitating wall panelling (fig.64). It is not possible to identify this room on the property's only surviving inventory from 1639, but, as shown in chapter three, the most valuable items are listed in the 'joyne chamber' in the floor below.[144] Nonetheless, the existence of these wall paintings suggests that this room was valued and utilised for socialising of some description; its lack of higher status items meant that it served as a more 'intimate', family space.

These mock-panel patterns might cover an entire wall, or part of the wall in the form of a dado or alongside wainscoting.[145] Inspiration for such schemes came from traditional wood panelling, yet Kirkham observes that 'it is less clear whether architectural ornament provided a direct source of inspiration or whether it shared a common design source with wall paintings'.[146] Prints containing architectural motifs or books advising on architectural techniques were in circulation at this time, however for simple patterns such as the Harvard Houses paintings, inspiration could be drawn from a variety of 'popular' media. [147] A fragment of painted cloth from The Lockers in Hemel Hempstead is now part of the V&A's collections (fig.65). It depicts fictive panelling similar to those paintings found in Calico House in Kent, with bright jewels

[142] 'Harvard House', *Historic England* https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1298524 [Accessed 16.11.18]; Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 34-35.
[143] Inventory of Thomas Rogers, 1639 (209) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. 2,* pp. 72-74; 'Bailiffs: 16th/17th Century', Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council (website), https://www.stratford-tc.gov.uk/the-mayor/civic-history [Accessed 23.05.22].
[144] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 35.
[145] Davies, *Artisan Art*, p. 16.
[146] Kirkham, 'Wall Paintings in Suffolk', p. 113.
[147] Davies, *Artisan Art,* p. 87.

painted in the centre of each panel.[148] The difference in decoration between these paintings and the Harvard House scheme might be regional, but it is also possible that Rogers was forced to hire specialists from outside this rural town. This was not an uncommon practice for men of this status, and Davies has demonstrated that examples of this can be found in the Welsh Marches, closer to the region in which New Place was located.[149] Mock-panelling was a favoured design for painted cloths at the same time as, if not before, they were used in wall paintings. The popularity of fictive panelling may have coincided with the general decline of painted cloths at the turn of the seventeenth century. Their appearance as wall paintings at this time indicates a continuation of a popular form of imagery, inspired by traditional decorative techniques but executed in a 'modern' medium.

The example of Thomas Rogers's decoration shows that prominent townsmen in Stratford were improving their homes at the same time as Shakespeare's purchase of New Place. Following the fires of the 1590s, Stratford was surely a hive of building activity. Chapter two outlined evidence confirming that many in the town were taking the opportunity to rebuild and improve their homes. As suggested, Shakespeare may have taken advantage of the craftsmen in the area at this time to make improvements to his new home. Given the survival of wall paintings found in the Midlands and further afield from the period of Shakespeare's occupancy, there seems little doubt he would have chosen to adorn his walls with the latest patterns, popular subjects and

[148] Davies, *Artisan Art,* p. 87, p. 94.
[149] *Ibid.,* p. 67. As discussed, here Davies provides the example of Richard Adams, a painter from Ludlow, who was hired in 1590 to complete a heraldic pedigree for Richard Pryse 100 miles away in Cardiganshire, Wales. She also notes that painters were listed in the Shrewsbury muster tax and muster lists from the C16 - three in 1524, three in 1569 and four in 1587. She notes that 'no painters were found outside the main area of the town', implying that specialist painters clustered around important regional towns, and had to be hired in from towns outside these centres.

moralising texts. Through the medium of paint, we can also see the tension between tradition and novelty that many of the new gentlemen considered in this study faced. Tradition was a significant part of gentry and civic status, but novelty showed a new gentleman's taste, style and modernity in the fast-paced and competitive urban environment in which they lived and worked. Wall paintings were fixed yet fleeting. They could not be moved around the home like wall hangings, but this chapter demonstrates that they were regularly covered or painted over in favour of a more fashionable design. This made them appealing to new gentlemen such as Shakespeare, whose status sat between upper middling and gentry. Depending on the date, location and design of the scheme, wall paintings could be adopted to portray a specific element of new gentry identity based on the immediate concerns of the patron. Traditional elements such as panelling and religious imagery might be found alongside fashionable geometric patterns based on tapestries from the Middle East. Novelty and tradition could therefore be addressed in one scheme, or in multiple works spread across the home. But significantly, they could be adapted to suit the self-fashioning of the owner in the most striking of ways.

Availability and Extant Examples: Other Forms of Fixed Decoration

London and beyond

Alongside wall paintings, decorative plasterwork, stone and wood carvings were employed in the construction of new gentry identity. Civic symbols and heraldic motifs carved into wood or moulded into plaster could be found across the country. Chapter one introduced John Harvey and his son, Gabriel. Harvey's property in the Essex town

of Saffron Walden was located between Market Street and Common Hill. Once a large townhouse, it was owned by rope maker and Corporation treasurer, John Harvey, from the mid-sixteenth century until his death in 1593.[150] The similarities between the Harveys and the Shakespeares are clear. Both John Shakespeare and John Harvey were tradesmen and town officials living and working in similar sized market towns, their sons going on to become famous writers. The existence of a decorative overmantel (fig.66) in this property is therefore significant. It reveals an attempt at constructing and displaying status by celebrating Harvey's background in trade, business and civic office. Peter Daly and Bari Hooper date the overmantel to 1570, and attribute its inspiration and design to Harvey's son, Gabriel, due to its subject-matter, symbolism, and potential source (although there is little evidence to support this claim).[151] The upper section of the carved mantel is split into three scenes. The first represents a donkey carrying a heavy load below an inscription reading ALIIS NON NOBIS [for others not for us].[152] The second scene depicts a man spinning rope (fig.66) with the text ALIIS NEC NOBIS [neither for others nor ourselves]. And the final scene features bees surrounding a hive underneath the inscription ALIIS ET NOBIS [for others and for ourselves]. A gryphon and a cockatrice flank the three scenes, and, a repeated decorative pattern is carved into stone down either side of the fireplace.

[150] Peter M. Daly and Bari Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantle-piece (ca. 1570): An Early Instance of the Extra-Literary Use of Aliciato Emblems in England' in P. Daly (ed.), *Andrea Alicato and the emblem tradition: essays in honour of Virginia Woods Callahan* (New York, 1989), pp. 178-179.
[151] For the dating of the chimney-piece see Daly and Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantle-piece', p. 149. There is some debate over the date and design of this overmantel. Dating of the stone used on the overmantel puts it in the mid-sixteenth-century, however at this point Gabriel Harvey would still have been a child and thus unlikely to have designed this decorative piece. Daly and Hooper therefore place the chimney piece slightly later, in 1570, when Gabriel would have been a young man. Both Daly and Hooper believe that the overmantel was designed by the author rather than his father due to the subject-matter, the print source inspiring it and the mottoes found within. In 1581, a G.H. published a full list of grammar school texts which include the source of this mantel, Alicato's *Emblemata*. Daly and Hooper believe that this list was published by Gabriel Harvey, indicating that he was familiar with this text, perhaps even from his own grammar school years. However, no other proof indicating that Gabriel was the true designer is provided. Daly and Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantlepiece', pp. 186-188.
[152] All translations from Latin into English are taken from Daly and Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantle-piece', p. 193.

The source inspiring these three scenes has been identified as Andrea Alciato's 1531 *Emblemata*, a popular work reproduced numerous times throughout the sixteenth century. As with the emblematic wall paintings found in Micklegate, York, the emblems depicted in the Harvey mantel do not appear in the same order as the original source and have been adapted and personalised for the purpose of this particular decorative feature.[153] Together, the emblems denote a moralising tone relating to labour, selflessness and community. The choice of a rope-maker for the central scene strongly refers to John Harvey's trade. The overladen donkey working 'for the good of others' signals to charity or humility, or else serves as a reminder that no man works for the sake of others alone.[154] The final scene of bees in the hive works as a metaphor for the household and commonwealth, reminding the viewer that labour can work for the good of both the individual and the collective; an appropriate symbol for a Corporation man like Harvey.[155] The overall reading of the final motto displayed below these scenes reads (when translated into English) 'our cakes are our labour'. Daly and Hooper interpret this as 'our labour brings our own rewards', thus hard work will be recompensed.[156] This form of moral instruction was an appropriate commission for a man like John Harvey. His role as head of the household put him in charge of his family's spiritual and moral well-being; an important role for the civic and urban elite in towns like Saffron Walden.

[153] Daly and Hooper highlight that the emblems as they appear in Alciato's work represent greed (the donkey), economic peril (the rope scene), and the clemency of the prince (the bees). Daly and Hooper, 'John Harvey's Carved Mantle-piece', p. 194.
[154] *Ibid.*, p. 190.
[155] *Ibid.*, p. 191.
[156] *Ibid*., p. 193.

The room in which the overmantel was located was likely used for business and hosting, and we might imagine that a fireplace such as this, often the focal point of the room, was viewed by other members of the town's elite. Unlike John Shakespeare, Harvey did not acquire his own coat of arms. But he evidently took pride in his trade and position, literally carving these parts of his identity in stone. The print source from which these emblems were drawn further elevates this piece, as the scarcity of emblem books as inspiration for decorative schemes reveals the status of its design. If the mantel was indeed the work of Gabriel Harvey, it shows his pride in his father, his background and his own education, clearly a significant part of his own identity.

The Harvey fireplace highlights the fashion for displaying social identity in terms of occupation for members of the urban elite, and this was developed further with the introduction of decorative plasterwork. Just as there were shifts in designs and styles, the medium through which decorative schemes were displayed also came in and out of fashion. This is seen through the transition from painted cloths to wall paintings, but also through the increased use of plasterwork. This was the most 'modern' and stylish form of decoration during Shakespeare's occupancy of New Place, and if he was serious about displaying his status, he would have commissioned decorative elements in this medium. Decorative plasterwork was increasingly favoured by wealthy merchants and elite patrons in England during the first half of the seventeenth century. In her study of British Renaissance plasterwork, Claire Gapper states that 'the years between 1609 and 1620 witnessed a phenomenal growth in the number of plasterers from 176 to 287, an increase of 63%'.[157] In the sixteenth century, decorative plasterwork found its way from the Continent into the Royal Palaces of England. Given

[157] Gapper, 'Plasterers and Plasterwork in City', p. 272. This study has also consulted the revised, online version of this thesis, available via http://www.clairegapper.info

the wealth and access to expert artisans in the capital, London developed its own distinct style of plasterwork, as seen in extant ceilings and friezes.

Decorative plasterwork soon became more elaborate, encompassing a menagerie of designs and techniques, from enriched ribbing to drop pendants.[158] Many of these designs were executed using moulds, yet some might be hand carved after the plaster was applied. The extant plasterwork ceiling located in the Bromley-by-Bow Room (fig.67), now in the V&A, provides an example of the elaborate plasterwork used by the London elite to impress guests.[159] Given the size and decoration of the space, it was likely used as a parlour or hall. The room was originally located on the ground-floor of a house built in the east London district of Bromley-by-Bow, later referred to as 'The Old Palace'. An inscription carved onto the façade of the building revealed the date of 1606, possibly marking the completion or substantial renovation of the building. The decorative plasterwork found within matches this date, seemingly completed during the reign of James I (1603-1625).

This is a ceiling fit for a courtier or wealthy merchant; status, wealth and taste are evident in every inch of the plasterwork. The ornamentation is impressive, consisting of medallions, drop pendants and strapwork ribs moulded with trailing patterns of fruit and flowers. Arranged around a design of intersecting squares, the central section contains medallion representations of three of the Nine Worthies: Joshua, Hector and Alexander. The royal arms of James I are visible in the very centre of the enriched

[158] Gapper, 'Chapter V: The London Evidence' in 'Plasterers and Plasterwork in City', http://clairegapper.info/the-london-evidence.html [Accessed 23.05.22].
[159] 'The Old Palace at Bromley-by-Bow', *V&A Website* https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77495/the-old-palace-at-bromley-room-vredeman-de-vries/ [Accessed 11.05.22]

plasterwork, topped with a crown and flanked by the initials 'I.R.'. The ceiling looms above elegant panelling and an impressive wood-carved overmantel, featuring yet more royal symbolism. The combination of architectural, classical and royal designs found within this room suggest that the house was owned by someone of elite status. The Bromley-by-Bow ceiling highlights what was fashionable and available in elite London society during the period considered by this study, and it is also a style of decoration that quickly spread beyond the capital.[160]

The Midlands

Decorative plasterwork found in the Midlands and Welsh Marches towards the end of the sixteenth century varied hugely in design and execution, with some ceilings rivalling those found in London. The Feathers Hotel on Corve Street in Ludlow, Shropshire, retains a relief plasterwork ceiling in a first-floor chamber overlooking the street below.[161] The ceiling is divided into three sections by highly decorated cross-beams. The two end sections of the ceiling feature a geometrical ribbed pattern, creating sections of differing sizes containing a collection of fruit, foliage and Tudor Roses (fig.68). Like the Bromley-by-Bow ceiling, the middle section of this scheme contains a large, colourfully gilded cartouche bearing the Stuart arms. At this time, the Feathers Hotel was a domestic property and had a series of extremely influential owners. In 1619, Pembrokeshire attorney of the Welsh Marches, Rees Jones, purchased and then rebuilt the original townhouse.[162] Along with the boldly decorated

[160] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household,* p. 19.
[161] 'Feather's Hotel', *Historic England* https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1282026 [Accessed 12.12.18]
[162] Ludlow Historical Research Group, 'Corve Street' on 'Some Interesting Buildings of Ludlow', Ludlow Civic Society (website), http://www.ludlowcivicsociety.org/ludlow-civic-society---buildings-of-interest.html [Accessed 25.10.2019]

ceiling, enriched wood-carved overmantels depicting the Stuart arms can be found in both front chambers on the first floor. Demonstrating royal allegiance was a priority to whomever commissioned the decoration in both these rooms. Importantly, the existence of this decorative piece in a Midlands townhouse demonstrates that such excess designs were fashionable and available beyond the capital.

Given the position and wealth of a town such as Ludlow, the civic status of previous owners of the Feathers Hotel and the later date of the decoration discussed, it is perhaps unlikely that a ceiling of this calibre would be found in the townhouses of Stratford during Shakespeare's time at New Place. Closer to Stratford, however, in the city of Worcester, a restored decorative plasterwork ceiling remains in a first-floor chamber of the Tudor House Museum (38-42 Friar Street), close to The Greyfriars. This ceiling is distinctly less grand than the one found in the Feathers Hotel, but is of good quality and design. Built between 1500 and 1550, the property originally spanned four bays at the front but was divided into two dwellings early in the seventeenth century. At this time, weaver Edward Cotterill occupied number 42 where the plasterwork ceiling is located. On stylistic grounds, Hamling and Richardson date the plasterwork to Cotterill's occupancy, likely executed shortly before his death in 1622.[163] The ceiling is split into two sections, both containing a recurring circular design encompassing repeated symbols of lions, fleur-de-lis, Tudor Roses, and horses (fig.69). These motifs look to have been created using hand-crafted moulds, and although the ceiling is not overflowing with the pattern-work of the Feathers Hotel, it would have been a great source of pride for the patron.

[163] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 39.

Decorative plasterwork and elaborate carvings were not reserved for the London elite, but could be found in the chambers of the urban elite and the middling sort alike. Indeed, it is possible that plasterwork schemes such as those found in the cities of Worcester and Hereford were viewed by individuals from market towns such as Stratford. There are numerous instances of townsmen such as Richard Quiney travelling to Worcester on Corporation business.[164] This often included an overnight stay. As will be discussed, the 'trickling round' of certain styles and fashions was not uncommon among members of the civic elite, and the decoration found in one Midlands city could be transferred to smaller towns such as Stratford. Places such as Worcester were also more likely to possess the expertise and craftsmen needed to execute designs, and so these business trips could also be used to commission the relevant skills and materials.

Stratford-upon-Avon

Each of the trends and types of decoration considered so far could be seen, to a certain extent, in Shakespeare's hometown. The first example can be found in the first-floor, front chamber of Harvard House which likely served as a key reception space such as a parlour but was recorded as the 'joyned chamber' in a 1639 inventory.[165] Today, the room contains wall panelling believed to be sixteenth century in date

[164] Numerous accounts of the Stratford Corporation record journeys to and from Worcester in the later sixteenth/early seventeenth century. One such instance includes: 'More that I spent in rydinge to Hartleberrye with our charter to my Lorde Bushopp about our peculiar laye the first night att Bromsgrave, the nexte at Worcester &it cost me vi s x d'. Recorded in 'Richard Quiney's account for business undertaken on behalf of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation', 9 January 1601, SBT SCLA, BRU15/1/138. Bearman (ed.), *Minutes and Accounts, Vol. 6*, *1599-1609*, pp. 119-120.

[165] As discussed in chapter three, the 1639 inventory of Thomas Rogers (junior) lists the first-floor front chamber as the 'joyned chamber' and it appears to have housed a number of items relating to comfort and display, including carpets, cupboard cloths and six cushions. Inventory of Thomas Rogers*, 1639,* pp. 72-74.

(fig.70).[166] The panelling is simple in design, and includes a repeated sequence of plain, square wainscoting spread across each wall. A wood carved fluted frieze is located above the panelling, adding a decorative flourish.[167] Wainscoting could be found in the houses of the middling sort and elite, and has been identified in many of the houses (and inventories) considered in this study.[168] As highlighted through the Stratford inventories (1590 to 1530), wood panelling would be found in halls and parlours; spaces of socialising and hosting.[169] But it was also found in medieval halls, the form and decoration of which were often retained by early modern householders for their ceremonial and symbolic status.

Decorative plasterwork also survives in this first-floor chamber of Harvard House. Above the fireplace, a fleur-de-lis, lion rampant and Tudor rose are displayed in heraldic shields across the overmantel, surrounded by a strapwork border (fig.72). Wood moulds appear to have been utilised in the production of this decoration, meaning that the designs could be easily replicated across a variety of homes. Similar to the decoration in the Feathers Hotel, the choice of traditional wood panelling with royal heraldic motifs in the new medium of plasterwork implies civic duty. In this room, town bailiff Thomas Rogers might conduct business and political transactions, appropriately surrounded by traditional and symbolic imagery highlighting his status and office.

[166] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 35
[167] 'Harvard House', *Historic England.*
[168] Wood panelling remains in a ground-floor chamber at Mason's Court on Rother Street, the former home of John Gibbs (fig.71). The date and provenance of this wainscoting is unknown, but, judging from images of the room, it is the type of wainscoting we would expect to see in the first half of the seventeenth century.
[169] Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vols. 1&2.*

Abraham Sturely was another of Shakespeare's Stratford contemporaries making improvements to his home. Sturley's House (6 Wood Street) is believed to have formed an extensive property, not dissimilar in size to New Place.[170] A plasterwork overmantel survives in a first-floor chamber of this once impressive residence, containing emblems similar to those located at Harvard House (fig.73). This decoration was likely commissioned at a similar time to Rogers's overmantel; indeed, the same moulds appear to have been used in both designs, suggesting that the same craftsmen were commissioned by both patrons. The Sturley overmantel contains six symbols outlined by an enriched repeating foliate pattern continuing down each side of the fireplace. This border appears to be an exact replica of the pattern surrounding the royal motifs displayed in the Harvard House overmantel. The symbols on the Sturley overmantel appear in the following order: lion, Tudor Rose, lion, oak leaf, lion and a Tudor Rose (also alluding to royal allegiance). The oak leaf located in the middle of the scheme provides a further clue as to the date of decoration, as it is an ancient badge of the Stuart dynasty. In line with other decoration found in the same property, the overmantel was likely commissioned to coincide with the accession of a new Stuart monarch, installed by Sturley as a sign of his allegiance.

A simple yet elegant decorative plasterwork ceiling remains in the same property, dating from the start of the seventeenth century (fig.74). The scheme is separated into four sections, divided by cross-beams. Each compartment contains hexagonal, square and diamond patterns. Just below the ceiling is a narrow plasterwork frieze of a repeated triangular design. On one wall the initials 'J R' appear on either side of a crown (now painted gold); a royal emblem symbolising loyalty to King James, dating

[170] 'The Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon: introduction and architectural description', VCH, *Warwick*, Vol. 3, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol3/pp221-234 [Accessed 07.06.19].

the plasterwork to some point after 1603. Given the royal subject-matter and the medium of both the plasterwork frieze and the overmantel in the room above, we might assume that both pieces of decoration were installed at the same time. The plasterwork ceiling is positioned in a ground-floor, front chamber looking out onto the street. The type and style of decoration located in this room suggests that it was a room of status and display. This room has been identified as a 'fore parlour': built on the ground-floor, as tradition dictated, but given the architectural restrictions of towns and cities, it was positioned in the street range rather than set further back from the property.[171]

The ceiling in Sturley's 'fore parlour' might not be described as grand, but it is an excellent example of the earlier, simpler designs favoured by the middling and wealthy urban elite.[172] Its appearance in Stratford at this time suggests that Sturley was a man of fashion and wealth. The insertion of plasterwork ceilings at this time was a trend that originated in London, yet it was one that certain Stratford residents were clearly able to keep up with. As Kirkham suggests, the simple, geometrical design chosen for decoration may also be consistent with the tastes and values of the urban elite, favoured above the complex patterns found elsewhere.[173] The inclusion of royal

[171] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 183.
[172] As discussed in chapter two, the role and function of the parlour was shifting during the period known as the Great Rebuilding, nonetheless they were still spaces of power and status. Chris King has demonstrated that there was a tendency for members of the urban elite to locate the rooms with the most status along the street, so these fine rooms and their decoration could be seen by all. As Hamling and Richardson note, rather than providing an intimate room for withdrawal and private business transactions located off the more public space of the hall, as in the traditional manorial layout, their 'new' situation overlooking the street 'suggests a more outward-looking perspective, in which the occupants of the house are engaged with the wider community'. These functions can readily be applied to Abraham Sturley's parlour. As town bailiff, he would have dealt with the business and politics of the town, not to mention hosting many important guests under this role. The royal emblems displayed on the frieze in the parlour and over the fireplace in a chamber above displays loyalty to his new king and his duty in the town of Stratford. Chris King, 'The Interpretation of Urban Buildings: Power, Memory and Appropriation in Norwich Merchants' Houses, C. 1400-1660', *World Archaeology*, Vol. 41 (2009), p. 483; Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 185.
[173] Kirkham, 'Wall Paintings in Suffolk', p. 227; p. 256.

symbols in the frieze, in addition to the plasterwork overmantel in the room above, was also a fashion followed by many in the capital at this time. Sturley may have seen such a ceiling in the house of a neighbour, or whilst away on business. He may have even been the first in the town to commission such decoration. If we follow Hayward's 'trickle round' model, other leading citizens, perhaps even Shakespeare himself, were likely to follow his example.[174] Indeed, if Shakespeare was a 'direct associate' of Sturley's, as has been suggested, he presumably experienced this decoration first-hand.[175] The similarities in design, date and execution between the Sturley and Harvard House overmantels suggest that decoration was indeed 'trickling round' the Stratford elite, down to the employment of the same craftsmen, perhaps even the use of the same moulds.

In addition to the overmantels located at Sturley's and Harvard House, a plasterwork panel containing heraldic symbols is now displayed over a fireplace in Packwood House, Warwickshire. The overmantel was taken from 35 High Street in Stratford-upon-Avon.[176] It follows the familiar theme of a fleur-de-lis, lion rampart and cartouche containing the initials of the owners, John and Margaret Smith, and their son Ralph (fig.75).[177] John was a vintner and town bailiff (1598-1599), and his trade is represented on the overmantel through the symbol of a wine barrel located near the top of panel.[178] Similarly, the profession and authority of rope-maker John Harvey was

[174] Hayward, *Rich Apparel*, p. 44.
[175] Stanley Wells, 'A close family connection: the Combes', Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells (eds.), *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 149.
[176] Tara Hamling, 'Chapter 5: Visual Culture', in A. Hadfield, M. Dimmock and A. Shinn (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2016), pp. 86-87.
[177] Margaret Smith's inventory, 1625 (168), survives and has been transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. 1,* pp. 339-341. Under this transcription, Jones also provides biographical information relating to John Smith and the properties the couple occupied.
[178] 'Bailiffs: 16th/17th Century', Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council (website), https://www.stratford-tc.gov.uk/the-mayor/civic-history. [Accessed 07.06.19].

reflected in his stone carved overmantel in Saffron Walden, showing that this specific type of self-fashioning and display was seen in other parts of the country at this time. The design and theme of this decoration is significant and reflective of local, civic status. As Hamling observes, 'the badges depicted in the Stratford overmantels are representative of a more general appropriation of para-heraldic imagery in domestic decoration.'[179] These men served as town bailiff at one time or another, and the use of royal symbols in decoration not only displayed loyalty to the crown, but also indicated that the patron saw themselves as a local representative of the monarch. Indeed, it was this 'royal service' through magistracy which was key to John Shakespeare's petition for arms.[180] Each of the overmantels presented here are unique in style and/or arrangement but they put forward the same image; that of civic authority, royal connection and familial lineage - all essential qualities for any leading citizen in a town such as Stratford. The importance of lineage and the use of heraldic devices was of even more significance to a gentry patron, whose status was often confirmed through such symbols. Of course, Shakespeare could include his own family arms in any plasterwork he might have commissioned, elevating the scheme to gentry status.

Hamling and Richardson have discussed a final, somewhat curious, plasterwork panel depicting a scene from the story of David and Goliath (c.1606), rumoured to have come from a first-floor chamber in the Birthplace property on Henley Street.[181] The plasterwork panel was supposedly situated on the inner side of a chimneystack that

[179] Hamling, 'Visual Culture', p .87.
[180] Raymond Carter Sutherland, 'The Grant of Arms to Shakespeare's Father' in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 4 (1963), pp. 379-385.
[181] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* pp. 208-210; Hamling, 'Decorating the Godly Household: Postscript (1)'.

once existed on the east side of the building.[182] At the start of the seventeenth century, the house was owned by Shakespeare but leased to Lewis Hiccox, a farmer and innkeeper.[183] The insertion of this plasterwork panel around 1606 is characteristic of middling and lesser gentry identity construction at this time.[184] The subject-matter and the medium through which it was illustrated further added to the self-fashioning of its patron. It is true that decorative plasterwork in all forms trickled its way around the urban elite of Stratford, but its use in the display of a narrative scheme is unusual. Yet, as fashions shifted once again during this period, the decorative plasterwork appears to have begun to replace figurative wall paintings in the houses of the wealthy middling.[185]

The existence of such a panel in Stratford reveals the fashionable tastes of the occupier, and their potential wealth. Depictions of David and Goliath were often employed as Protestant propaganda, providing examples of God acting through chosen intermediaries. As a result, they were frequently utilised by local officials to symbolise their authority.[186] Depictions of this story could be found in numerous print sources, such as the 1585 *Thesaurus*, as well as Thomas Trevelyon's 1608 'Miscellany'.[187] We do not know if Hiccox commissioned this specific design himself, or whether it would have been selected by the craftsman who executed it, however its potential existence, location and its subject-matter would have been enough to suggest the owner was a man of piety, authority and taste. The narrative on this panel

[182] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 19.
[183] Inventory of Lewis Hiccox, 1627 (178), Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. 2,* pp. 13-17.
[184] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home,* p. 210.
[185] Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household,* p. 19.
[186] *Ibid.*
[187] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 105.

may have been well-known, but its execution in decorative plasterwork was more unusual and can be seen as a distinct demonstration of modernity and taste on the part of the occupier. Fixed decoration that we might expect to find in prosperous cities – figurative plasterwork and wall paintings, for instance – also appeared in this bustling market town. This meant that a man such as Shakespeare could be both creative and selective in his decorative choices.

Conclusion

The extant decoration found in Stratford-upon-Avon and beyond indicates that 'chief inhabitants' used decoration to improve their properties.[188] Simple patterns played a key role in the 'modernisation' of the early modern home in towns like Stratford, yet more elaborate designs and subject schemes also appeared. The decoration that does remain demonstrates that prominent townspeople were able to keep up with the latest trends and fashions of the early seventeenth century. Clearly, access to the craftsmen needed to execute such decoration was available and in demand during Shakespeare's time at New Place. As a gentleman, Shakespeare could go even further in his display of status. As a writer, he would have had both the creativity and inspiration needed to commission more elaborate schemes. The extant decoration found in Stratford and similar sized homes in other regions demonstrates that neither biblical schemes nor extravagant heraldic displays would have looked especially out of place. Indeed, it could be argued that such demonstrations would have been expected of a man like Shakespeare. Although we have seen that there was individuality in the selection of medium, design, source material and subject-matter of

[188] Henry R. French, 'The Search for the 'Middle Sort of People' In England, 1600-1800 ' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43 (2000), pp. 284-286.

the decoration chosen, there was nonetheless a conventionality to most of the schemes. The examples considered in this chapter demonstrate that it was possible for members of the new gentry to express their identity through fixed decoration, no matter the size of their town or their 'new' position within the gentry. A unifying characteristic of these new gentlemen was their mobility – both social and geographic. Their work often saw them travel, giving them access to different source material, fashions and craftsmen. New gentlemen were well-placed to follow both national and local trends.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECONSTRUCTING SHAKESPEARE'S NEW PLACE

This project culminates in the reconstruction of William Shakespeare's domestic interiors. These reconstructions are presented as a series of illustrations produced by artist Phil Watson. Watson was uniquely placed to undertake the reconstructions of Shakespeare's interiors, having previously produced illustrations based on archaeological evidence to go alongside the publication *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*.[1] His prior understanding of the New Place site and its history were thus important to the visualisations presented here, helping to ensure that each graphic production was grounded in knowledge.[2] Of course, the use of artistic, or illustrative, reconstructions comes with its limitations - namely around what is and is not possible to reproduce in this format – and the parameters surrounding this type of artistic interpretation are discussed in more detail throughout this chapter. Nonetheless, the very process of reconstruction forces us to think carefully and critically about how material culture made its way into the home; where it was produced; how it would have been displayed or stored; who would have seen or used it; and what it might have meant to owners. The various forms, furnishings and decoration of the homes presented throughout this thesis are combined into three illustrations to offer a plausible interpretation of the interior spaces in Shakespeare's lost home, New Place. These elements are usually analysed in isolation, split among the fields of archaeology, social history, art history and country house studies. But by combining

[1] Phil Watson's illustrations of the exterior of New Place can be found in Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls, and William Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 160-165.

[2] Initial discussions took place in early 2020, and proposals went through various stages of development, adapting to COVID-19 restrictions where possible. At the start of October 2020, work began on the graphics in earnest, taking a total of four months.

this material evidence into one (imaginary) space, it is possible to see the extent of this emerging group's investment in the domestic sphere.[3] By visualising these rooms in their entirety, I demonstrate how architecture, furnishings and fittings worked together to fashion the identities of their new gentry owners in an urban setting.

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In 2000, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) re-presented the interiors of Shakespeare's Birthplace on Henley Street. Consultants and staff from across the SBT worked together to produce a complete redisplay of the house in which William Shakespeare began his life and spent his youth.[4] Through this presentation, the museum attempted to display Shakespeare's first home 'as it would have been' in the mid-sixteenth century, around the time of his birth and childhood. Rooms were reworked and spaces refilled. A parlour, hall, entranceway and glove-maker's workshop were organised on the ground floor, with a series of bedchambers and an exhibition room presented on the floor above. This layout remains today, as do many of the domestic goods, furniture and wall hangings displayed in 2000 to evoke a sense of sixteenth-century domesticity and 'everyday life' (fig.76).[5]

Each of the historic sites once occupied by Shakespeare and his family in Stratford-upon-Avon fall under the care of SBT. The museum's presentation of these early modern properties brings together many of the material elements considered in this

[3] As discussed in chapter three, Alexandra Shepard's study *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2015) revealed that people in the early modern period not only calculated their own wealth and status through material possessions, but that people were also adept at appraising and calculating the material wealth of others, creating a 'culture of appraisal', p. 2; p. 36.

[4] 'Acknowledgments' section of an information pamphlet on the 2000 redisplay of Shakespeare's Birthplace, author unknown. The pamphlet is used by the SBT collections team for reference, but it is not a part of their collections. Rosalyn Sklar, Interim Head of Collections, shared the pamphlet as part of my placement with SBT.

[5] Cathryn Enis and Tara Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity: Material Responses to Absence in Stratford-upon-Avon, *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 70 (2019), pp. 52-83.

study - architecture, furnishings and fixed decoration. Given the significance of their sites and their connection to the world-famous playwright, the SBT must factor emotional connection into their material displays, while also addressing a number of challenges.[6] Many of the furnishings selected for presentation in these homes date from different eras, social levels or regions, making the pursuit of 'authenticity' somewhat difficult to achieve. This is not through lack of effort. Organisations like the SBT must work within the confines of their own collections.[7] Indeed, many of the objects most likely to have been found in the correct place and at the right time either no longer survive or are in private hands. In this way, the critical and physical approach taken by this heritage organisation hints at both the obstacles and benefits for the sort of comprehensive reconstructions that are of interest to this project.

In this final chapter, the evidence presented throughout this thesis is brought together for my own reconstruction of Shakespeare's interiors. As will be shown, this reconstruction differs in nature from projects such as the Birthplace redisplay, not least because it is presented as a series of illustrations by artist Phil Watson, but also in its purpose and aims. These graphics offer a visual interpretation of key spaces at New Place - the hall, parlour and great chamber - just before Shakespeare's death in 1616. As important reception spaces, these rooms were especially significant in the communication of status to Shakespeare's immediate and wider community. Consequently, the majority of this chapter is dedicated to the presentation and

[6] As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, emotional responses to the loss of Shakespeare's domesticity have often taken a material form. See Enis and Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity', pp. 52-83.

[7] In the years approaching the redisplay, Victor Chinnery acquired a number of items on behalf of the SBT. Many of these pieces were sixteenth or seventeenth century oak items of furniture. Chinnery's careful selections and attention to provenance show that date and regionality were important in achieving accuracy. 'Acknowledgments' section of the pamphlet on 2000 redisplay of Shakespeare's Birthplace.

explanation of these graphics. I detail the approach taken to create the reconstructions, the choices made as part of this process, and the evidence that informed their design. These vivid visualisations are driven by a specific set of research questions. These questions focus on the social mobility of new gentlemen, and are used to demonstrate the way in which men like Shakespeare, who moved from middling to gentry status, manipulated the domestic environment for the purpose of their own self-fashioning.

Approaches to Historical Reconstruction

Few studies have attempted to visualise an entire room from a sixteenth or seventeenth century urban property. In their studies of houses in Thame and Stoneleigh, Anthony Buxton and Nat Alcock (respectively) provide graphic representations of various interior spaces based solely on items listed in inventories.[8] Yet the style, design and quality of the domestic goods displayed is not evident in these monochrome diagrams, nor are other furnishings or the fixed decoration (not mentioned in the inventories). Consequently, we are only offered a one-dimensional representation of the room, with key elements of the interior environment omitted. Somewhat uniquely, the illustrations offered in this thesis combine form, furnishings and fixed decoration from this period, demonstrating the often-overlooked richness and material complexity of the early modern domestic environment as a consciously designed space, rather than an assemblage of goods.

[8] Anthony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 243-265; N. W. Alcock, *People At Home: Living in a Warwickshire Village 1500-1800* (Chichester, 1993), pp. 200-210.

The majority of comprehensive *material* reconstructions are found within the heritage sector. The parlour at St Nicholas Priory, Exeter, provides a recent example of a project in which fixed decoration and furnishings were combined to recreate an entire interior from c.1602 (fig.77).[9] The motivations behind this form of reconstruction vary depending on the institution and their collections, but education, visitor experience and fundraising are often at the heart of such projects. The visualisations offered in this study naturally differ from this sort of reconstruction and thus, some of the challenges identified through the Birthplace reconstruction can be avoided. First and foremost, the reconstructions introduced in this chapter are illustrative rather than material, offering wider flexibility when it comes to the selection and presentation of items. This provides the opportunity to locate items and decoration from a variety of extant buildings and collections. The New Place illustrations draw on a number of valuable collections including the SBT, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met), the National Trust (NT) and local authority collections such as the Museum of London and Hereford Museum Service. Private collections and auction houses such as Bonhams also provide a wealth of information, and, when brought together, the material evidence informing the New Place graphics create a new database of domestic furnishings (see appx. 3). Throughout this selection process, significant attention was paid to chronology and, where possible, to status and region. Complete accuracy in this regard is impossible, but the careful selection of items used to fill Shakespeare's home is important in answering the research

[9] Restoration made to St Nicholas Priory in Exeter provide a recent example of this kind of early modern reconstruction. The former medieval monastery in the heart of the city has been presented as an early seventeenth century townhouse in which re-enactments from this period take place. Of particular interest is the reconstruction of the parlour, which combines (mostly replica) fixed decoration and furnishings from about 1602 to create a striking impression of this space in the early modern period. For more information about this property and its various renovation projects, see 'About', St Nicholas Priory https://www.nicholaspriory.com [Accessed 05.01.21]; Anita Merritt, 'Access all areas inside Devon's oldest building', *DevonLive* (31.11.2019) https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/access-areas-inside-devons-oldest-3463713 [Accessed 05.01.21]

questions posed in this study. Attention to detail is also important when attempting to evoke a sense of space and, importantly, the *use* of the domestic environment in the process of self-fashioning.

In his 1989 essay 'Interpreting the Historic Scene', Bruce Craig observed that, for many heritage professionals, the chief aim of interpretation is to provoke feeling, emotion and imagination whilst, at the same time, striving for 'historical truth'.[10] This, he noted, is a difficult balance to achieve and often the pull towards 'historical accuracy' tips the scales. 'Curators of historic house museums', Craig wrote, 'strive to re-create historic interiors so that they appear 'as it actually was'; and historians pore over primary sources and archival material to discover 'what really happened in history'.[11] Craig therefore questioned the pursuit of accuracy when 'our view of historical reality' is already so 'fragmentary'.[12] For heritage institutions, he felt that it is better to let visitors 'create their own sense of time past and fill in huge gaps that exist in our understanding of the past'. This might seem rather unachievable, but the point Craig was trying to make is that 'interpreters should be concerned more with historical plausibility than with accuracy'.[13]

While debates over authenticity and visitor experience are as relevant today as they were in the 1980s, the nature of those arguments has shifted as visitor engagement is increasingly centred around the digital environment. This can be seen through the rise of the 'Virtual Museum' (VM), which, according to Sara Perry et al., includes

[10] Bruce Craig, 'Interpreting the Historic Scene: The Power of Imagination in Creating a Sense of Historic Place' in David Uzzell (ed.) *Heritage Interpretation Vol. 1: The Natural & Built Environment* (London, 1989), pp. 107-112.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[13] *Ibid.*

'anything, from online digital libraries of cultural content […] to 3D reconstructions showcased as pre-rendered films or as part of real-time virtual reality installations, mobile guides tours, and in-gallery interactives'.[14] VM technologies have been especially embraced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Perry et al. believe that digital reconstructions in the heritage sector have a long way to go in terms of accessibility and engagement. [15] Such projects are foregrounded in traditional curatorial practices: object-based and 'solitary', there is little opportunity for visitor interaction, participation and interpretation beyond what is presented by curators. For digital reconstructions to have wider social and cultural value, they need to connect to visitors in 'a measurably emotional, participatory, interactive and social fashion'.[16] This is especially true for 'lost' heritage.[17] 'Human connection' and emotion drive interaction with historic sites, but this response can be difficult to achieve when the surviving materiality is fragmentary or simply absent. For Perry, 'intangible heritage, by its very name, is also often elusive or abstract, hence difficult to pin down in typical museological fashion'.[18] Thus, an equilibrium between research, 'accuracy' and

[14] Sara Perry, Maria Rousou, Maria Economou, Hilary Young, and Laia Pujol, 'Moving Beyond the Virtual Museum: Engaging Visitors Emotionally', *23rd International Conference on Virtual Systems & Multimedia (VSMM),* Dublin (2017), pp. 1-8.

[15] For more information on the use of digital technologies in museums during the COVID-19 pandemic see: Geraldine Kendall Adams, 'V&A launches platform to revolutionise digital access to its collections', *Museums Journal: Online* (09.02.21) https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2021/02/va-launches-platform-to-revolutionise-digital-access-to-its-collections/ [Accessed 03.05.22]; A. Ward, 'Turning physical exhibitions into digital ones', *Museums Journal: Online* (01.10.20) https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/in-practice/2020/09/turning-physical-exhibitions-into-digital-ones/ [Accessed 05.01.21]; R. Atkinson, 'How can digital platforms help museums connect to audiences during Covid-19 emergency?' *Museums Journal: Online* (18.03.20) https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2020/03/19032020-how-digital-platforms-be-used-to-support-musems-during-covid-19-crisis/ [Accessed 03.05.22].

[16] Perry et al., *Moving Beyond the Virtual Museum,* p. 1.

[17] Di Lou, 'Object in focus 19: The Lost Heritage of China: Dismantling Beijing, digitizing Beijing' in Anne Gerristen and Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Writing Material Culture* (London, 2021), pp. 305-312.
Di Lou's focus on the lost heritage of Beijing demonstrates the political, social and emotional significance and impact that reconstructions of historical architecture (both physical and digital) can have on a society. Their case study may differ from the reconstruction of New Place, but the same caution, and understanding of the potential impact of such reconstructions, is needed when approaching any study of lost heritage.

[18] Perry et al., 'Moving Beyond the Virtual Museum', p. 3.

human connection needs to be reached for reconstructions of heritage sites to have any significant impact beyond the academy. Such considerations are important for any heritage reconstruction, as the purpose or goal of such projects – be it accuracy or engagement - informs every aspect and decision, from concept to dissemination, including the illustrations offered in this thesis.

Aside from approach, the most significant difference in the nature of my reconstructions lies in their purpose and use. Graphic representations of historic sites give the impression of authenticity and accuracy, especially when the research and approach underpinning them is not directly accessible to the viewer. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the visualisations of Shakespeare's interiors presented in this chapter only offer an interpretation. They are meant to be suggestive and indicative rather than definitive – a tool for thinking and for discussion, not the final word. This plausibility is based on carefully selected comparable evidence relating to certain individuals and/or their properties. Most importantly, these graphics are the result of a specific set of research questions surrounding how individuals who became new gentlemen presented their status and identity materially. These visualisations respond to questions about the construction and communication of early modern social identity, whilst also providing a framework for further reconstruction, interpretation and engagement. They offer a means through which academic research can be presented, accessed and absorbed, as well as a visual method of connecting wider audiences to the significance of Shakespeare's home as evidence for historical study.

Questions of ethics and critical approaches to historic reconstructions are a key consideration in digital archaeology projects.[19] An example of this is the 3D model, created by researchers at the University of York, of the interiors of the Guild Chapel in Stratford-upon-Avon as it appeared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Originally, the project hoped to move away from 'the traditional use of digital models as virtual reconstructions of past buildings', instead using the model as 'a research tool through which the user can explore and validate the evidence for the scheme directly'.[20] Rather than presenting the paintings 'as they would have been' at the time of their creation, the digital model explores the various ways the scheme was interpreted and visualised when recorded centuries later. 'This is achieved', write the team, 'through the creation of a palimpsest of antiquarian drawings of the paintings, made as they were revealed during the restoration works in the 19th and 20th centuries, and set within their 3-dimensional architectural context'.[21] The user can select the version of the paintings they wish to see projected onto the model, and are able to move between the various perspectives.[22] As Perry et al. observe, this type of approach gives the user control over their own experience, encouraging more meaningful engagement and interaction.[23] Rather than offering their own 'definitive' presentation of the paintings, the Guild Chapel team provide a portal through which the viewer can witness how others have studied, reconstructed and connected with this significant scheme. In this way, they encourage others to do the same.

[19] See Kate Giles, Anthony Masinton and Geoff Arnott, 'Visualising the Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon: digital models as research tools in buildings archaeology', *Internet Archaeology.* Vol, 32 (2012) https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue32/1/toc.html [Accessed 06.11.20].
[20] Giles, Masinton and Arnott, 'Summary' in 'Visualising the Guild Chapel' https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue32/1/index.html [Accessed 06.11.20].
[21] Giles, Masinton and Arnott, 'Summary' in 'Visualising the Guild Chapel'.
[22] 'The digital model of the Guild Chapel' by Anthony Masinton, based on the original model created by Geoff Arnott. https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue32/1/guild-chapel/index.html [Accessed 06.11.20].
[23] Perry et al., 'Moving Beyond the Virtual Museum', pp. 1-8.

The illustrations presented in this chapter are not digital and their artistic design makes them more evocative than 'realistic'. But a number of important lessons can be drawn from the critical approach taken by projects like the Guild Chapel model. The original goal of the project was 'largely to provide an aesthetically pleasing computer graphical reconstruction of the original scheme', mirroring many such 'archaeological applications of virtual technologies'.[24] But with issues raised in the field of digital heritage surrounding the use of 3D models in a 'rather uncritical way', transparency became key to the Guild Hall reconstruction. Virtual models have the propensity to screen the 'gap' between the historical site and the reconstruction itself: the space between evidence and scholarly interpretation (especially if, like New Place, the building is lost). While visually engaging, this method of presenting research often separates the reconstruction from critical academic discussion, leading members of the public to consume the graphics without the evidence.[25] In response to these concerns, the 'London Charter for the computer-based visualisation of cultural heritage' was formed to promote transparency in digital modelling, especially around the aims, methods and outcomes of digital projects.[26]

With transparency in mind, the Guild Chapel project is accompanied by extensive 'paradata': information outlining the approach, analysis and context of the visualisations.[27] The Guild Chapel paradata is presented in the form of an online publication supplementing the digital model, and, together, they offer a useful insight into the value of reconstructions to academia and interested members of the public.

[24] Giles, Masinton and Arnott, 'Digital Heritage Debates' in 'Visualising the Guild Chapel' https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue32/1/3.2.html [Accessed 06.11.20].
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] London Charter: for the computer-based visualisation of cultural heritage (2009, 2017) http://www.londoncharter.org [Accessed 24.05.22].
[27] Giles, Masinton and Arnott, 'Digital Heritage Debates' in 'Visualising the Guild Chapel'.

The team also use the model to demonstrate the historical significance of the wall paintings and their academic contributions to the field of archaeology:

> The project reveals the Guild Chapel at Stratford-upon-Avon to be one of the finest examples of mercantile and guild patronage of the period, shedding important light on the patronage of ecclesiastical art on the eve of the reformation, and revealing important connections between provincial guild architecture of Warwickshire and internationally significant schemes in London and Paris.[28]

Here, important research questions are addressed, leading to a heightened understanding of the historical site that is being reconstructed. This process forces the researcher to consider the original context, meaning and significance of the wall paintings in their immediate surroundings, as well as the impact this had on their own approach to reconstruction. As the team note, paradata acquired during the process of reconstruction is often lost, and the focus becomes centred on the graphics themselves.[29] This is something the Guild Chapel project carefully avoided, ensuring that the context, understanding and methodology acquired through their research would feed into the user's exploration of the 3D model.

The evidence informing the New Place reconstructions has been presented throughout this thesis. Social identity, the form of the building, furnishings and fixed decoration have all been considered separately, their individual contexts and significance evidenced by numerous extant examples. But, in reality, these elements did not exist as distinct or separate pockets of early modern domestic life. Through the illustrations presented here, this information is finally brought together and we can begin to understand the impact of all these elements when they are united within one space. In this way, reconstruction offers a tool for interdisciplinary study. It pulls

[28] Giles, Masinton and Arnott, 'Summary' in 'Visualising the Guild Chapel'.
[29] Giles, Masinton and Arnott, 'Digital Heritage Debates' in 'Visualising the Guild Chapel'.

together the scholarship, analysis and evidence of traditionally distinct fields of study – namely social history, archaeology, art history and country house studies - to produce a more holistic understanding of domestic life and self-fashioning at the previously uncategorised social level of new gentry. The value, therefore, of the New Place illustrations is not simply in their visually engaging presentation, but in the interdisciplinary process of researching, collating and combining the information required to create this sort of reconstruction. Unlike the greyscale drawings of Alcock and Buxton, my illustrations bring together evidence gathered from a variety of disciplines to create a colourful, comprehensive interpretation of an entire interior scene from the 1610s.

Shakespeare's New Place

Façade

In 1737 engraver George Vertue completed a sketch of the frontage of Shakespeare's New Place (fig.1) allegedly based on the memory of the playwright's then elderly great-great-nephew, Shakespeare Hart.[30] Buildings archaeologist, Nicholas Molyneux, believes that the frontage depicted by Vertue dates to the mid-to-late sixteenth century, and Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls and William Mitchell go one step further by dating the style to Shakespeare's occupancy. The frontage depicted on Vertue's drawing is not the same façade that Hugh Clopton presumably commissioned in the

[30] George Vertue's sketch was produced after a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1737 with the Earl of Oxford, when they visited a number of sites associated with Shakespeare, including his old family home on Henley Street (now the Birthplace), where Shakespeare Hart was residing. Vertue makes a detailed (if slightly muddled) note of Hart and his connection to William Shakespeare in his notebook, on the page following his sketch. Further details and analysis of this sketch and its authenticity can be found in Paul Edmondson, Kevin Colls, and William Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 141-145.

later fifteenth century. According to New Place archaeologist William Mitchell, 'corroborative evidence, then, supports the likelihood that the frontage as sketched by Vertue represents Shakespeare's own home-improvement'. [31] The authenticity of this sketch, as with much evidence linked to Shakespeare, can of course be questioned, nonetheless this is the type of façade we would expect to see on a house like New Place in a town like Stratford.

Whether accurate or imaginery, Vertue's façade is a good starting point for a discussion of Shakespeare's home renovations. The frontage presented in Vertue's sketch is indicative of what you might expect to see on a sixteenth-century remodelled home, and is similar to those fronting Tudor House in Southampton (fig.78) and Greyfriars in Worcester (fig.20). The sketch features a symmetrical five-bayed, three-storeyed façade. Timber framing is evident across the entire frontage, and the first upper two storeys appear to be slightly jettied. Glazing features heavily, as five large mullioned windows appear on the first floor and a further five windows on the gabled-ended dormers positioned on the attic level. Only two windows, however are evident on the ground floor. A similar frontage can be found on the Shakespeare Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon (fig.79). Despite its origins as two separate buildings, this property has a number of similarities to Vertue's sketch. It has three storeys, each level symmetrically decorated in close studding. The upper two storeys are jettied, and the attic level is constructed around five gable-ended dormers, each with its own window.[32] This façade not only gives us an impression of the potential scale and

[31] Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 145.
[32] As described in 'The Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon: Introduction and architectural description', VCH (1945), pp. 221-234 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol3/pp221-234 [Accessed 24.05.22].; further description given in 'Figure 5.2' in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 144.

imposition of New Place on the street, but it also provides a good idea of the type of remodelling Shakespeare may have commissioned at New Place. This would have allowed Shakespeare to retain the medieval form of his impressive home, whilst demonstrating his modernity. A new façade, to rival those built at Harvard House and Shakespeare Hotel, would have been a clear statement of status to all inhabitants of Stratford.

Ground floor

Chapter two contained a brief discussion of the courtyard form of New Place, but its layout and arrangement of rooms is considered in more detail through the process of reconstruction. It is clear that a number of chambers formed the street frontage of this property (plan 1). Originally, these ground floor chambers are likely to have housed shops or other commercial spaces, with buildings located at the rear of the property reserved for domestic use. Like Tudor House in Southampton (fig.78), Shakespeare likely converted these spaces for his own practical use, assuming they had not been converted by previous owners.[33] The chambers in the northern half of the New Place frontage may have been used for storage or they may have housed lodgers such as town clerk Thomas Greene and his family, who are thought to have lived at New Place from about 1603 to as late as 1611.[34] A total of ten hearths were listed as taxable in

[33] Chris King notes that, archaeologically speaking, the frontage is 'often the most vulnerable part of an urban building', regularly falling victim to reconstruction and refurbishment in the decades to follow, 'so it can be difficult to assess their original functions'. Chris King, *Houses and Society in Norwich, 1350-1610: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (Suffolk, 2020), p. 116.
[34] Robert Bearman, 'Thomas Greene: Stratford-upon-Avon's town clerk and Shakespeare's lodger', in Peter Holland (ed.) *Shakespeare Survey,* Vol. 65, (Cambridge, 2012), p. 291.

the 1670 hearth tax of Stratford-upon-Avon, so it is probable that this part of the building offered heating via a chimney[35]

A large passageway stood in the middle of this substantial frontage, connecting Chapel Street to the first and largest of the New Place courtyards. The entrance to this passageway was likely comparable to the one found at Shrieve's House on Sheep Street, around the corner from New Place (fig.80). Given the original size and function of New Place, this entrance would have been large enough to allow the passage of a small cart, and may well have been decorated with carvings and/or heraldry. Like the Street family of Greyfriars, the Shakespeares could display their own coats of arms as well as those belonging to other influential local families if they so desired.[36] The space to the right of this passageway (at the southern end of the frontage) is a good candidate for Shakespeare's main parlour, or 'fore parlour': a ground floor, street facing chamber, much like those found at Tudor House, Southampton, Suckling House in Norwich (fig.81), and, more locally, Abraham Sturley's townhouse on Wood Street.[37] At this level, it would have been lit by one or two windows, and may well have been heated by another fireplace (fig.82). In such a space, Shakespeare could have conducted his business and hosted his associates and leading townsmen Sturley, Richard Quiney and Daniel Baker. This space would have been finely furnished and decorated, and, significantly, it would have been visible from the street outside. But the position of this room was practical as well as ostentatious. It was situated straight

[35] The 1670 hearth tax returns for Stratford list only one property on Chapel Street as having 10 taxable, and 3 non-taxable hearths. This property appears alongside the name 'Mr Oldfield', a tenant of New Place at that time. Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 135; for published copies of the hearth tax returns see Tom Arkell (ed.) with Nat Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax Returns: Michaelmas 1670* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2010), p. 217.
[36] Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and gentry communities in Shakespeare's England' in Nigel Ramsay (ed.), *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington, 2014), pp. 190-203.
[37] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 183.

off the entryway, and could thus be accessed from the street outside and the courtyard beyond. It was also the closest point in the property to the Guild Chapel across the way on Chapel Lane, and the Guild Hall beyond that. Shakespeare could watch the comings and goings of Corporation members from his space of work, catching the attention of aldermen with whom he had important business, and vice-versa.[38]

I suggest that the first space Shakespeare likely encountered upon leaving his parlour was a chamber dedicated to a new and impressive staircase. Such dedicated stair spaces were often found in newly built country houses, such as Chastleton House in Oxfordshire. These staircases were wide and grand, often made of oak, they represented the hierarchical flow of the gentry houses in which they were situated.[39] A similarly designated space featuring a newel staircase can be found in Tudor House Southampton (fig.83). These stairs appear in an area at the end of the property's frontage, set back from the street, and located just beyond a chamber believed to have once served as a parlour. If Shakespeare was serious about converting New Place into a new gentry home, he may well have sought to follow one of the most fashionable transformations of the Great Rebuilding: the insertion of bespoke staircases.

According to archaeological evidence, another entrance-passage separated the space dubbed here as the 'stair chamber' from a service range beyond. This passageway provided access from Chapel Lane to the property and its first courtyard. The kitchen

[38] For a detailed account of Shakespeare's business dealings with the Stratford community, see 'Chapter 4: Consolidation' and 'Chapter 5: Retrenchment', Robert Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money: How much did he make and what did this mean?* (Oxford 2016), pp. 67-130; pp. 131-145. This includes information on Shakespeare's dealings with Richard Quiney, Abraham Sturley and Thomas Greene; his various property investments, as well as his involvement in the Stratford tithes.
[39] See Nicholas Cooper's section on 'Stairs' in *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680* (London, 1999), pp.310-316.

and pantry were the first spaces situated east of this passageway - a large service area, which archaeologists believe was adapted during Shakespeare's time there.[40] Mitchell mentions that the bricks found in this extended section of the kitchen present evidence of a stairwell, connecting the service spaces to the chambers above. This stairwell was located just beyond a screens passage which separated the service rooms from the grand hall beyond.[41] Smaller staircases located in this position were not uncommon in larger properties such as New Place. Not only would they have connected the kitchen with rooms above, but they linked the hall with other first floor domestic accommodation.

Archaeological investigations also confirmed that a large hall block was set at the heart of the property, running parallel to Chapel Street. The hall at New Place was single-ended. Like the medieval hall at Tudor House, Southampton, the only chambers leading from this impressive space were service rooms, potentially separated by a movable screen. This arrangement runs somewhat contrary to the tripartite layout of the hall-house form (service space, hall, parlour) seen repeatedly in this study, while also demonstrating the compromises in terms of space of layout necessary for urban buildings. Such layouts were remnants of late medieval building, but they were maintained well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for their hierarchical symbolism, as well as their functionality. Indeed, the absence of a parlour at the northern end of the New Place hall would not have detracted from its grandeur or significance. The hall block measured an impressive 16 m x 8.5-9 m (including service

[40] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 157.
[41] *Ibid.*

rooms), compared to the hall at Suckling House, Norwich, spanning 9 m x 6.4 m.[42] A section of stone foundation discovered by archaeologists may, as Mitchell observes, have formed 'the foundations of a full-height bay window in the western elevation of the hall'.[43] While the exact state of Shakespeare's hall remains unclear, archaeologists suggest this space would have been left open to the roof as late as Shakespeare's occupancy.[44] Significantly, there is no archaeological evidence to suggest the hall was reduced in size, or divided, a common feature of the Great Rebuilding.[45] As we have seen, a number of merchants and civic officials chose to maintain their medieval, open halls, yet many members of the gentry opted to construct smaller, ceiled halls, or sub-divide existing open ones by inserting chambers above.[46]

Fragmentary evidence does suggest that Shakespeare made a few, small changes to his hall, typical of the kind of alterations witnessed in chapter two.[47] The Commandery in Worcester and Suckling House in Norwich suggest that retention and redevelopment of these spaces went hand-in-hand. Part of a brick floor was uncovered in the north-eastern section of the New Place hall block. This surface appears on the exterior side of the hall's original foundations, suggesting that a structure was attached to the outside of this room and further evidence suggests that it was used as some kind of hearth or fireplace. As Mitchell notes, 'this was the only in situ sixteenth-to-seventeenth-century surface surviving in New Place'. Given the years of neglect befalling the property in the sixteenth century (see introduction), the hall's traditional

[42] Dimensions of New Place hall from Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 42; the measurements of the Suckling House Hall were taken from King, *House and Society in Norwich*, p. 86.
[43] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 45.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 43; for the work on the 'closure' of the open hall during the Great Rebuilding in country houses, see Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 275-289.
[46] King, *Houses and Society in Norwich,* p. 167.
[47] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 155.

central hearth was replaced by a fixed, fireplace under Shakespeare's occupancy: a common transformation of the Great Rebuilding.[48]

First floor

Archaeological evidence does not stretch beyond the ground floor of New Place but a note written by George Vertue alongside his famous sketch of New Place mentions 'a long gallery &c for servants'. Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell suggest that this gallery would have been located on the first floor, along the frontage of New Place.[49] Throughout the sixteenth century and at the start of the seventeenth century, spacious galleries in gentry homes were used to display art or other visual media, such as maps or tapestries.[50] It is, however, unlikely that so much space would have been given over to a gallery in a house like New Place, and there is little evidence of such an addition in similar urban properties.[51] The mention of 'a long gallery &c for servants' in Vertue's sketch might instead be interpreted as 'a long gallery [i.e. attic space] etc. for servants'. In a townhouse like New Place, it is more likely that the 'gallery' to which Vertue refers was in fact a long attic space on the second, not first floor, occupied by servants.

[48] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 154.
[49] George Vertue's sketch, 1737, discussed in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, pp. 141-145.
[50] For information on the history of galleries in gentry houses and some examples, see Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 300-5.
[51] Edmondson, Colls and Mitchell compare Shakespeare's rumoured gallery to the first-floor corridor at Blakesley Hall, Yardley, and the large, second-floor gallery at Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire. While the Blakesley corridor is more of a likely fit for a gallery at New Place, both Blakesley Hall and Little Moreton Hall are considerably different to New Place in form and location, both being rural houses. This study therefore argues that New Place was unlikely to have possessed a 'gallery', with its traditional functions, given its requirements as an urban, courtyard property. Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place,* pp. 147-151.

I suggest that it is in fact more likely that, like Tudor House, Southampton, a series of connected chambers lined the first floor of New Place's front range, including a great chamber positioned above the parlour (plan 2). Great chambers were usually found on the first floors of rural gentry houses, either above the hall or parlour (see chapter two). In this context, Mark Girouard argues, the great chamber replaced many of the functions of the hall which had reduced in size and status.[52] Great chambers in country houses were often accessed via a grand staircase and marked the start of a full sequence of rooms, which became progressively 'intimate' as you passed through them. But great chambers were also found on the first floor of townhouses. This can be seen at Churche's Mansion in Nantwich and at Suckling House in Norwich (fig.84). Such an arrangement created a gentry-level sequence of reception rooms. Starting in the large ground-floor parlour, guests could then be taken up the grand staircase before being shown into the great chamber for food and festivities. From there, the family and a few selected guests might retire to a second smaller chamber, or a similarly intimate space located beyond the great chamber. As discussed, this sequence of first-floor chambers was frequently used by members of the urban elite looking to demonstrate their taste and gentry connections.[53]

Here, we can see how the potential layout of New Place reflected and facilitated Shakespeare's accession into the ranks of new gentry. Individuals like the Sucklings adapted medieval homes like New Place to follow the gentry trends while maintaining their urban function. These men regularly interacted with and hosted the local landed gentry, and the adoption of gentry architectural modes was necessary to

[52] See Mark Girouard, *Living in the English Country House* (London, 1978), pp. 40-54 for the development, position and function of the great chamber in country houses.
[53] Cooper, 'Chamber Sequences and Apartments' in *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 294-299.

accommodate these social obligations. New Place operated on a similar level. It was constructed as the grand residence of Hugh Clopton, an established member of the gentry. Shakespeare then purchased the property after a potential period of neglect, presenting him with the opportunity to make a number of alterations. Shakespeare's occupation and lack of civic office set him apart from the likes of the Sucklings and Sturleys, but there is evidence that he was on relatively good terms with a number of local, landed families.[54] And, like the urban elites of Norwich and Worcester, he may well have been expected to host and accommodate other gentlemen.

The position and function of certain spaces therefore reveals a significant amount about the status of the household, but the decoration and furnishings found within reveal the subtler nuances of self-fashioning. Nothing remains of Shakespeare's interiors at New Place, so instead this study has considered how others like him filled and decorated their homes. This cognate evidence can be used to build a possible picture of Shakespeare's interiors, allowing us to further examine the methods used by members of the new gentry in the performance of status. The hall, parlour and great chamber have been selected for this reconstruction, as the function and position of these rooms were closely associated with gentry status.

[54] For evidence of Shakespeare's connections to local gentry families such as the Combes, see Stanley Wells, 'A close family connection: the Combes', in Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 249-260.

Visualising Shakespeare's New Place

The furnishings and fittings selected for this reconstruction of Shakespeare's interiors have been steered by material evidence, but are backed up by documentary sources, such as probate records, as well as secondary scholarship. The wider selections, and rationale for those choices are outlined in appendix 3, allowing for a more focused analysis of specific choices in the following section. The design and style of these items were chosen carefully according to social level and, where possible, date and region. As discussed, locating domestic goods that fulfil each of these criteria is not straightforward.[55] Instead, the items chosen for reconstruction have been selected because they are suggestive of the type of item that might be found in that particular space and at the correct social level. Despite these challenges, the overall purpose and impact of the graphics successfully evokes the nature of these furnished spaces. I want to demonstrate the type of objects that may have been found in urban homes like New Place, as well as the range of approaches and choices available to new gentlemen wishing to express their identity.

[55] For a range of reasons, most surviving examples of sixteenth and seventeenth century household objects are elite in status. This is reflected in museum collections, but also in auction houses and antique dealerships. As considered in chapter four, surviving examples of fixed decoration are equally difficult to trace due to lack of survival or identification. This has meant that, in some cases, the selected objects stray from the region or date of Shakespeare's occupancy at New Place.
Sara Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should small things be forgotten?: Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale' in Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture: Second Edition* (Oxon, 2018), pp 221-239.



Plate 1. The hall at New Place c.1616, a reconstruction © Phil Watson and Alexandra Hewitt

The Hall

Archaeological evidence tells us that Sir Hugh Clopton built the hall at New Place in a similar fashion to those found in the great courtyard properties of thriving cities like Norwich, Worcester and Southampton. As established, there is no evidence to suggest that Shakespeare made substantial changes to this space, instead, it has been implied that he chose to retain the hall as it was built some one hundred years earlier.[56] The extant halls of The Commandery and Suckling House have inspired the features seen in this reconstruction. They were built and developed by a series of wealthy members of the urban elite, and New Place was no different. Indeed, much of what is seen in this illustration is Clopton's great hall, with some early modern updates: tell-tale signs of Shakespeare's participation in the Great Rebuilding.[57]

As at Strangers Hall (fig.85), the expanse of timber forming the high, open ceiling would have been the hall's most distinctive feature (plate 1). The reconstruction of Shakespeare's hall also presents a large bay window on the west side of the space as indicated by the stone foundations discovered by archaeologists. These elements were likely medieval in origin, retained for their symbolism and the cost of replacing them, but men such as Shakespeare also made their own adjustments. A large fireplace appears in the north-eastern corner of the hall, the second permanent fixture to be uncovered through archaeological exploration. Leech notes that most medieval halls were unheated and remained so well into the seventeenth century.[58] As a

[56] Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*, p. 155; William Mitchell, 'William Shakespeare's New Place: investing in, or inheriting a legacy?', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* Vol. 53 (2019), pp. 66-87.
[57] See W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640', *Past and Present,* Vol. 4 (1953), pp. 44-59.
[58] Roger Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall: Historical Context and Merchant Culture in the Early Modern City', *Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 31 (2000), p. 3.

predominantly ceremonial space, the late sixteenth-century hall in large urban buildings was not in regular use. Corner fireplaces, such as the one found at New Place, were rare but not unheard of, as the hall at Tudor House in Southampton suggests. Rather than selecting an elegantly decorated surround, the simple stonework of the Tudor House chimney matches the authority and functionality of the hall at New Place. If decoration was to be found in this space, it was usually in the form of heraldry. The Tudor House fireplace features some decorative stone carving in each of its spandrels (top corners), featuring two empty heraldic shields (fig.86). For the fireplace at New Place, Shakespeare's arms have been added to signify his gentry status. If Shakespeare himself did indeed commission the installation of a chimney in this section of his hall, it seems probable that he would have taken the opportunity to display the arms.

Panelling features heavily in this illustration of Shakespeare's hall. As movable items, wood panels were often removed from one building and rehomed in another. The wood panelling in the hall at Little Moreton Hall is a somewhat rare survival, believed to be original to the house and dating to the early sixteenth century. As an inheritance from Clopton's ownership, Shakespeare's hall may well have featured linenfold panelling, an especially popular form of wainscoting in the late medieval period and into the sixteenth century.[59] Whereas this panelling may have appeared outdated in any other room, in the hall it was yet another symbolic reminder of the space's medieval origins, adding to the lineage of the property.[60] Shakespeare, therefore, may well have decided to keep this piece of the house's ancestry, rather than remove or

[59] Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2017), p. 182.
[60] See William Mitchell, 'William Shakespeare's New Place', pp. 66-87.

fully cover it. The retention of extensive panelling was also a practical decision; this sort of fixed decoration provided significant insulation and was expensive to replace or refurbish.

Wall hangings provided gentlemen like Shakespeare with the opportunity to retain traditional decorative elements such as panelling, while displaying more contemporary styles. Painted cloths were found in halls of all shapes and sizes in both rural and urban settings. As moveable objects, they appear in the inventories from Stratford-upon-Avon between 1590 and 1630, with five out of the 22 inventories selected for further analysis listing hangings in the hall, as well as those belonging to members of the urban elite such as Robert Suckling of Suckling House, Norwich, and Robert Wylde of the Commandery, Worcester.[61] Painted cloths were declining in fashion in urban centres just as Shakespeare took up residency at New Place, but they remained a common form of decoration in towns like Stratford.[62] The painted cloth depicted in Shakespeare's hall is based on the striking paintings found in the Council Offices in Ledbury, Herefordshire, (fig.87) dated between 1575 and 1600.[63] Set onto a black background, flowers of red, white and yellow sprout from the scene, enclosed by a maze of interlocking quatrefoils. In design, style and chronology they are not dissimilar to those paintings located on the first floor of Blakesley Hall, Yardley, although the choice of colour is strikingly different. Chapter four demonstrates the wide variety of source material that might inspire such paintings. Woven textiles, ballad sheets, engravings from frontispieces of popular printed books and continental prints all

[61] Inventory of Robert Wylde, 1607, WAAS, Inventories and Wills, 008.7, fol.45. Transcribed by Stephanie Appleton; Inventory of Robert Suckling, 1589, transcribed and published by F. R. Beecheno, 'The Sucklings' House at Norwich (II)', *Norfolk Archaeology*, Vol. 20 (1921), pp. 166-177.
[62] For discussion on the decline of painted cloths, see Kathryn Davies, *Artisan Art: Vernacular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marches ,1550-1650* (Herefordshire, 2008), pp. 32-34.
[63] *Ibid.,* p. 140.

offered visual prompts for early modern decorators.[64] Given his occupation and employment in London, Shakespeare had more access than most to the array of visual culture circulating in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. His time in the capital also offered him greater access to skilled craftsmen. As a theatre professional, Shakespeare was surrounded by a steady stream of craftsmen working on sets, props and building maintenance.[65]

Painted cloths were among the few forms of decoration that could be transported from London to his hometown of Stratford with relative ease. In his work*, Henry IV Part 2* (c.1598)*,* Shakespeare hints at the decline in popularity of wall hangings through the character of Falstaff, contemplating his lodgings at the Boar's Head tavern:

> Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking, and for thy walls, a pretty slight of drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in waterwork, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings and fly-bitten tapestries.[66]

Falstaff laments the decoration of his chamber, perhaps longing for the more fashionable mode of wall painting, which he finally acquires in Act 4, Scene 5, 8 of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602). Despite this, painted cloths appear a number of times in Shakespeare's work. Not only does this demonstrate his awareness of this form of decoration, but these references suggest that painted cloths were still widely recognised as a form of decoration at this time, even if they were viewed as somewhat outdated. Indeed, it seems probable that Shakespeare would have utilised the skilled

[64] For the variety of sources inspiring painted decoration at this time see Davies, *Artisan Art*, pp. 81-102; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1540-1640* (Cambridge, 1991) and Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Influence of Continental Prints* (New Haven, 1997).
[65] For more information on the craftsmen involved in the theatre profession see Edward Gieskes, 'Chapter 4: The Revels, Civic Drama and the Theatre Profession' in *Representing the Professions: Administration, Law, and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Newark, 2006), pp. 162-214.
[66] *Henry IV, Part II* (Act II, Scene I), referenced in Watt, *Cheap Print,* p. 203.

men at his disposal to embellish his new gentry home and painted cloths in the traditional space of the hall seemed to be the most accessible means of achieving this.

Portraits were another form of painted decoration found in the halls of urban gentlemen. For this space, a portrait of James I was chosen to hang above the fireplace. The decision was based on actor Edward Alleyn's collection of royal portraits, which included a likeness of the Stuart monarch (fig.88).[67] Alleyn's portrait of James I, now in Dulwich Picture Gallery, is believed to have been copied from a life-sized painting of the monarch by John de Critz the Elder, painted in about 1606.[68] Copies and variations of official portraits such as this were found across the country, used as a means of displaying loyalty to the new monarch and their family.[69] Robert Wylde's 1607 inventory records a 'kinge Iames picture' alongside his 'hanginges' (presumably painted cloths) in his hall at The Commandery.[70] Placed within the symbolic vastness of the hall, royal portraits and painted cloths created the opportunity for displays of authority, tradition, novelty and civic responsibility to converge within one space. For Shakespeare, demonstrating allegiance to James I was of even greater significance. Shakespeare was 'A King's Man' – in direct royal service of King James from 1603 and given official rank of 'Groom of the Chamber'.[71] This personal royal service (even if only nominal) was comparable and arguably superior to most of

[67] 'James I and VI' after John de Critz the elder, c.1606-1626, Dulwich Picture Gallery: Collections accession no. DPG384 https://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/explore-the-collection/351-400/james-i-and-vi/ [Accessed 19.11.20].
[68] 'James VI and I', attributed to John de Critz the elder, c.1606, Dulwich Picture Gallery: Collections accession no. DPG548 https://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/explore-the-collection/501-550/james-vi-and-i/ [Accessed 19.11.20].
[69] Tarnya Cooper, 'The Enchantment of the Familiar Face: Portraits as Domestic Objects in Elizabethan and Jacobean England' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds), *Everyday objects: medieval and early modern material culture and its meanings* (London, 2016), pp. 158- 177.
[70] Inventory of Robert Wylde, 1607.
[71] For more information on Shakespeare's role as a 'servant of James I', see Park Honan, 'Chapter 15: The King's Servants', *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 395-317.

the Stratford elite who served as a mayor or Justice of the Peace (JP) of the town – a role which provided the basis of his father's grant of arms. It allowed Shakespeare to claim (at least) equal status and arguably greater status to these civic men of Stratford.

Another striking feature of the hall at New Place is its sparseness. Here, a conscious effort was made to exhibit the change in the role of the hall. Although medieval halls were often retained in houses such as New Place, their functions shifted.[72] Instead of spaces of dining and hospitality, Leech demonstrates that great halls in merchant houses became places of ceremony, ritual and pageantry.[73] The significance of the hall may not have diminished, but it certainly saw less use. This is reflected in the items used to furnish it. Large pieces of oak furniture fill this depiction of Shakespeare's hall. Long benches and joint stools, based on surviving examples in the SBT collections, make up the majority of seating. A fine oak armchair stands between the fireplace and the table, reserved for the head of the household, or the guest of highest status. Large gatherings, formal meals and special events still took place in these open spaces. This is demonstrated through the inclusion of a press, based on the 1577 Churche's Mansion cupboard, which would have been used to store linens and display dining ware. Yet, the absence of soft furnishings, including cushions and table carpets, sits in stark contrast to the other two spaces represented here, indicative of a lack of comfort and therefore (habitual) use.

[72] Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London, 1997), especially 'Chapter 4: The later medieval hall', pp. 89-120.
[73] Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall', pp. 1-10.

The long table situated at the 'high end' of the hall is one of the most imposing items depicted in this illustration.[74] As the most significant piece of furniture in the hall, it is situated close to the fireplace, bay window and painted cloths: key features of the room. This long table is late sixteenth century in date and is currently located in the Master's Chamber above the Guild Hall in Stratford, a stone's throw from New Place (fig.89). The table is rumoured to have been gifted to the King Edward VI Grammar School (custodians of the building) around the time of New Place's demolition, and is therefore said to have belonged to Shakespeare himself.[75] True or not, this table does provide a useful example of a table most likely to be found in a great hall. The similarities between this example and the long table remaining in situ at Blakesley Hall (fig.90) are evident. Unlike the trestle tables of the late medieval period, these late sixteenth and early seventeenth century examples were fixed, with the table-tops permanently attached to the frame. Although forms and frames could be found in inventories well into the seventeenth century, fixed tables were more likely to be located in gentry spaces like Blakesley and Chastleton House, Oxfordshire, and reflected the permanent symbolic arrangement of the hall: an investment in the symbolic associations of the hall as the traditional dining space.

Through this collection of furnishings, I suggest that Shakespeare chose to maintain this medieval space, but why? Shakespeare did not hold the civic responsibility of hosting, nor did he have connections to the local militia that, as Leech suggests, were often displayed in such hierarchical spaces.[76] Instead, Shakespeare's gentry home

[74] For the symbolic significance of tables, including the example from Blakesley Hall, see Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 124-125.
[75] This rumour of Shakespeare's long table is promoted by Shakespeare's Schoolroom and Guildhall, the current custodians of the Master's Chamber. https://www.shakespearesschoolroom.org/masters-chamber [Accessed 24.05.22].
[76] Leech, 'The Symbolic Hall', pp. 7-8

would have contained alternative spaces for entertaining and hosting such as the large parlour and great chamber reconstructed in this study. Yet, it has been argued that Shakespeare's maintenance of the medieval hall was part of his purposeful retention of the medieval form of New Place. It was his link to the original gentry lineage of Hugh Clopton's courtyard property. Historically, the hall was connected to the authority, patriarchy and status of its owners.[77] Although Shakespeare was neither merchant or civic official, he was an entrepreneur, investor and a 'King's Man'. He would have received some income through rental payments from the properties he owned, such as his childhood home on Henley Street. And through his involvement in the Welcombe land enclosure and other such transactions, we know that he was heavily involved in the affairs of the town, despite never actually holding any office.[78] Shakespeare could, therefore, have used his hall to strike a similar impression of authority as those urban elites like Suckling and Robert Wylde.

[77] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 111-120.
[78] For detailed information on Shakespeare's business dealings and investments in Stratford, including the Welcombe enclosure, see 'Chapter 5: Retrenchment' in Bearman, *Shakespeare's Money,* pp. 131-145.



Plate 2. The parlour at New Place c.1616, a reconstruction © Phil Watson and Alexandra Hewitt

The Parlour

The visualisation of Shakespeare's parlour is distinctly more crowded than the hall and the collection of furnishings depicted in plate 2. This reflects the multi-functionality of urban 'fore parlours'.[79] The most striking item selected for this space is the oak tester bed visible towards the rear of the room. It is based on an example from a first-floor chamber in Greyfriars, Worcester, dating from about 1600 (fig.91). The bedframe features elegantly turned posts, classically carved headboards and a tester also decorated with intricate carvings. As established in chapter three, it was not unusual to find beds in parlours at this time in Stratford-upon-Avon.[80] Most traditional rural parlours were used to host relatively intimate formal gatherings. But in urban households, they functioned as the main reception space and as such parlours were also the chief areas of display. Tester beds, like the piece depicted here, were among the most expensive furnishings in the early modern home.[81] It therefore seems right that they would be made visible in the most public space in the house. They were showpieces. Rarely used for sleep, we might think of the parlour bedstead as more of a symbolic item to be displayed in the most prominent, or public, space in the house.

Just as the parlour's furnishings were multi-facetted, so too were its functions. At the forefront of this illustration is a draw-leaf table, surrounded by various forms of seating. An extendable leaf juts from one end, hinting at the table's ability to accommodate larger gatherings. The form (bench), situated below the window on the west wall, is ready to be pulled towards the table should the occasion arise. Extendable surfaces,

[79] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 183.
[80] Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Abingdon, 2004), pp. 131-132.
[81] See 'chapter three: furnishings' of this thesis for an in-depth discussion of tester beds.

such as the National Trust 'credence'-type table depicted below the bookshelves (fig.92), were purposefully selected to demonstrate the adaptability of the room and the fluidity of its functions as a space of both reception and withdrawal.[82] Pewter plates, chargers, a silver salt and a gilt bowl are displayed on the early seventeenth century court cupboard inspired by a piece from SBT's collections. Much of this silverware chosen for this depiction was located among the elite collections of the V&A and the Met. The silver and gilt bowl, however, is based on a vessel from the SBT. Discussed in detail in chapter three, this wine bowl is of the correct date and social level to make it a plausible addition to Shakespeare's parlour.[83]

The public performance of status extends to the depiction of the parlour's fixed decoration, including the plasterwork ceiling modelled on an extant example from Abraham Sturley's house on Wood Street. This decoration survives in what was originally a fore parlour (fig.93). It is suggestive of the type of decoration Shakespeare might have chosen to demonstrate his taste and refinement in New Place. As previously discussed, decorative plasterwork inspired many members of the elite and aristocracy in the mid-to-late sixteenth century. Claire Gapper has demonstrated that plasterwork patterns, figures and dropped pendants could be seen across the great houses of London, and it was not long before this form of decoration extended beyond the capital.[84] The West Country embraced plasterwork with the most vigour, but by c.1600-1610, this mode of decoration could also be found in Midlands towns like

[82] For a discussion on 'the multi-functional parlour' see Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 185-189.
[83] This specific selection of dining ware is based on an entry from the 1625 inventory of John Gibbs discussed earlier in this thesis (chapter three). Inventory of John Gibbs, 1625 (172), transcribed in Jeanne Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699, Vol. 1,* (The Dugdale Society in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2002), pp. 348-351.
[84] Claire Gapper, 'Plasterers and Plasterwork in City, Court and Country c.1530-c.1660', PhD thesis, submitted to The Courtauld Institute of Art (1998), p. 272. This study has also consulted the revised, online version of this thesis, available via http://www.clairegapper.info [Accessed 24.05.22].

Worcester and Hereford.[85] The hexagonal patterns segmenting the ceiling of Shakespeare's parlour are an elegant yet simple example of the type of decorative plasterwork available to the leading citizens of Stratford.

Shakespeare's taste and wealth could also be performed through the painted panelling chosen for this illustration, which is based on surviving wainscoting from Harvington Hall near Kidderminster, 1600 to 1625 (fig.94).[86] This house is grander than New Place, but the painted panelling found in a first-floor chamber is reminiscent of the type of decoration that was especially popular during Shakespeare's occupancy of his townhouse.[87] Set against a honey-coloured background, the diamonds painted in the centre of each panel add a touch of refinement.[88] Although wall paintings were growing in popularity, wainscoting remained the more expensive and elite form of decoration. As indicated in this illustration, painting and panelling could be brought together to combine traditional decorative forms (wood panelling) with more contemporary designs (mock panelling), as indicated by the extant schemes at Harvard House and Calico House, Kent. Here, the most fashionable modes of the day are on full display.

The painted text visible below the plasterwork frieze provided men like Shakespeare with another opportunity to display their status. Painted inscriptions, usually executed in black letter to mimic printed text, often contained secular or religious messages.

[85] Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven, 2010), p. 19.
[86] Davies, *Artisan Art,* p. 183.
[87] See Andrea Kirkham's discussion of the popularity of 'simple' patterns and panelling among the mercantile elite in early C17 Suffolk and Norfolk. Andrea Kirkham, 'Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Wall Paintings in Suffolk', unpublished PhD thesis, submitted for University of East Anglia (October, 2010).
[88] Davies, *Artisan Art*, pp. 16-17.

Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson suggest that, as well as places of hosting and dining, central domestic spaces like the parlour were locations of communal family worship.[89] Biblical inscriptions served to encourage the household to attend to their devotional practice. As the head of the household, Shakespeare was responsible for the religiosity of his family and would have been expected to instruct and guide them on devotional matters. Outward displays of piety and moral wisdom were also an expected element of gentry status.[90] Text painted within a frieze acted as a prompt for such piety, but more often than not, the inscription also hinted at the main function of that space. At 1 Church Lane in Ledbury, a text following the Geneva Bible, taken from Proverbs, appears on a frieze in a first-floor chamber:

> Better is a dinner with greene hearbes / where love is, then a fat oxe aand hatred / therewith.[91]

Many biblical inscriptions painted on the walls of parlours or similar spaces contained warnings against greed and gluttony. Although we do not know Shakespeare's precise religious beliefs, Hamling and Richardson note that 'a combination of biblical texts and royalist symbolism was fairly common in decorative schemes'.[92] Moralising text running alongside a royal motif, such as King James I's symbol, acted as a public display of loyalty to both the state and church. This would have been especially apt for the fore parlour at New Place, given its close proximity to the Guild Chapel and Hall in Stratford. As suggested, this room served as the space in which Shakespeare hosted members of Stratford's civic elite, many of whom acted as representatives of the commonwealth in one way or another.[93]

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[89] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 51-52.
[90] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Eastbourne, 1994), pp. 346-374.
[91] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, pp. 120-122.
[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
[93] See Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge, 2015) for consideration of Shakespeare's social circle in and around Stratford-upon-Avon.

Among the other furnishings selected, storage items - the livery cupboard and the plain wall shelves - reflect the day-to-day functions of the parlour. The livery cupboard visible here is modelled on a sixteenth century piece now in SBT's collections (fig.95). Its early date and simple design make it an especially plausible addition to this room, demonstrating the juxtaposition of older items with new. It is unlikely that Shakespeare filled his home with completely new furnishings. Used domestic goods entered houses like New Place in a variety of ways, sometimes inherited or purchased second-hand. An object's history or lineage might well add to its status, and an item described as 'old' in a will or inventory may still have contained significant monetary, if not sentimental, value.[94] New modes of storage, like the court cupboard also depicted in this parlour, did not immediately replace more traditional storage solutions; instead they appeared together in the same space. Livery cupboards safely stored delicate items such as linens, while the court cupboard displayed more conspicuous possessions of wealth like plate.[95] Both roles were essential to the function of the parlour, demonstrating the space between novelty and tradition, functionality and display.

Fore parlours could also be used as places of work and administration, and this is demonstrated through the desk box chosen for this reconstruction. This portable item could be transferred from its position atop the side table, onto the surface of the larger draw-leaf table. The box's sloping lid and butterfly book rest could be used to support

[94] Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Empty Vessels' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday objects: medieval and early modern material culture and its meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 299-308. For the sentimental value of 'old' or inherited material culture, see Sara Pennell, 'Material Culture in Seventeenth-Century 'Britain': The Matter of Domestic Consumption' in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford, 2012), p. 79.
[95] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* pp. 90-91.

reading and writing material, such as the books positioned on the shelves above. This combination of items – of shelves, books and a desk box – is inspired by the inventory of Stratford clerk, John Marshall. His vast collection of printed books far exceeded the number of books recorded in any other Stratford inventory. With his long list of books, we also find reference to 'one deske, lock, key & hinges' at 20 d, as well as 'three booke shelfes' priced at 4 d.[96] It is unusual for the function of shelves to be so clearly outlined in an inventory, and its appearance provides a rare insight into how these precious possessions were stored. Desk boxes appear in other Stratford inventories, such as the cupboard 'with a desk on it' listed in the 1617 inventory of Francis Boyce.[97] When not in use, these boxes could be stored on cupboard shelves or other such surfaces, as well as transported to other spaces in the house as required. Such items therefore demonstrate the transitional nature of many spaces found within the urban home.

As the evening drew in, Shakespeare's parlour would have become a space of leisure and dining for the whole family.[98] For a new gentleman, the performance of such pastimes was important to the construction and maintenance of status.[99] Comfort and leisure could most readily be evoked through soft furnishings. In addition to the textiles adorning the bedstead, cushions and carpets are scattered throughout this scene. An assortment of materials, techniques and patterns decorate these soft furnishings. The long cushion depicted on the bench below the window, dates sometime between 1603 and 1625 (fig.96). The arms of James I take centre stage on this piece of embroidery,

[96] Inventory of John Marshall, 1608 (126), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 255-263.
[97] Inventory of Francis Boyce, 1617 (149), transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol.1,* pp. 304-307.
[98] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, p. 177.
[99] Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry,* pp. 282-297.

providing yet another declaration of service and loyalty to the crown. We know that Shakespeare produced and performed work specifically created for the Stuart monarch.[100] As discussed, although Shakespeare did not hold public office in the traditional sense, he was one of the 'King's Men' in the service of James Stuart. As the V&A note, the volume of metal thread used to embroider this cover suggests that it represents 'professional rather [than] domestic work'.[101] Again, Shakespeare could commission or purchase this type of furnishing in London, and then easily transport it home to Stratford. In this way, we see how trends from the capital might spread to towns like Stratford. New Place was the environment in which Shakespeare's various identities could collide. In many ways, Shakespeare had more of a claim to royal service than civic office-holders like Richard Quiney or Abraham Sturely. His connections and networks at court meant he was familiar with the Royal Household, which was more than most could say in a town like Stratford. As the main hosting space, the fore parlour was the obvious location for such displays, reminding leading figures in the town of Shakespeare's royal connections. This was essential to his recognition as a new gentleman.

Turkeywork, an embroidery style from the Middle East, also features in this representation of Shakespeare's parlour. From about 1516 to 1700, 'lotto' carpets, similar to the textile chosen to adorn the table in Shakespeare's parlour (fig.97), were woven in commercial workshops in western Turkey, and then exported to central and western Europe.[102] Labelled 'lotto' in Western culture after the Italian artist Lorenzo

[100] For more information on Shakespeare's service to James I and the King's Men see Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford, 1999) – especially chapter 15: 'The King's Servants', pp. 295-317.
[101] 'Cushion Cover', 1603-25, Victoria and Albert Museum: Collections, Museum number: 816-1893 http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O317802/cushion-cover-unknown/ [Accessed 24.05.22].
[102] 'Carpet', 1550-1600, Victoria and Albert Museum: Collections, Museum number: 903-1897 http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O11051/carpet-unknown/ [Accessed 24.05.22].

Lotto who depicted many such textiles in his paintings, these vibrant designs were favoured across the continent.[103] As highlighted, evidence of their popularity in early modern England appears in wills and inventories spanning the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Robert Suckling and Robert Wylde's inventories both mention turkeywork in relation to soft furnishings, and among the Stratford documents, Anne Shawe's inventory of 1630 lists six cushions of turkeywork.[104] These textiles came in a variety of sizes, colours and patterns. The carpet chosen for Shakespeare's parlour, made between 1550 and 1600, was a typical example of the type of textile used to furnish a large table.[105] As well as embellishing tables, carpets were used to furnish other surfaces, such as cupboards and sometimes floors.[106] It is evident from the objects and decoration chosen for the reconstruction of Shakespeare's parlour that this was a space of display as much as functionality. It was the room in which Shakespeare demonstrated his wealth, profession, taste, and, significantly his connections to the royal court. Through its street-facing position and view of the Guild Chapel, this was also the space in which Shakespeare might convince other important members of the Stratford community of his own rank and prestige.

[103] This information was gathered from Lauren McKay, 'Woven Treasures from the East in the Tudor Royal Court', an online talk delivered for the Textile Museum Associates of Southern California & The Textile Museum (13.11.2021).
[104] Inventory of Robert Suckling 1587, transcribed and published by F. R. Beecheno, 'The Sucklings' house at Norwich', pp. 166-177; Inventory of Robert Wylde, 1607.
[105] This carpet measures an impressive 178.2 cm long and 106 cm wide, but would have only just fit the drawleaf table when closed.
[106] McKay, 'Woven Treasures from the East in the Tudor Royal Court'



Plate 3. The great chamber at New Place c.1616, a reconstruction © Phil Watson and Alexandra Hewitt

The Great Chamber

No Stratford inventories from this period (other than those relating to inns) mention a great chamber, and it is only in the will of wealthy draper, Daniel Baker, that we find reference to such a space among the probate records.[107] Beyond the town, only the largest urban courtyard properties contained such spaces. As such, the inclusion of a great chamber at New Place is particularly indicative of Shakespeare's new gentry status. At New Place, guests might be taken from the parlour, up the broad staircase and into the intimacy of the great chamber, so completing the ceremonial procession synonymous with stately homes.[108] At first, the differences in furnishings between Shakespeare's great chamber and his parlour appear subtle. Indeed, in the urban context, the parlour and great chamber served similar functions, but they were far from identical.

The walls of Shakespeare's great chamber are painted with figurative decoration, which creates a striking impression when situated alongside the elegant plasterwork ceiling (fig.98). Combined, these forms of fixed furnishing demonstrate how a man like Shakespeare might display his social identity at the same time as adhering to local trends. Real wood panelling was chosen to surround the parlour below, but here deep greens and reds are set against a canary-yellow background to create the illusion of wainscoting. Mock panelling, as demonstrated in chapter four, was especially popular

[107] Daniel Baker leaves his wife 'the bedstead With the Vallance and Curtaines nowe standing in the great Chamber'. Will of Daniel Baker, 1641, TNA PROB 11/186/579. Transcribed in Stephanie Appleton, 'Women and Wills in Early Modern England: The Community of Stratford-upon-Avon 1537 – 1649', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2016, pp. 348-356.

[108] According to Mark Girouard, 'the ceremonial route to the great chamber remained as important as ever' in the country houses of the seventeenth century and, where possible, this stately ascension was recreated in courtyard properties belonging to the urban elite, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 93.

throughout Shakespeare's time at New Place, and variations of the design depicted here could be found across the country. The second floor, front chamber of Harvard House on the High Street contains remnants of similar fictive panelling. In row houses like Harvard House the first and second floor front chambers were often the main reception spaces in the property, taking on some of the roles of the parlour and great chamber.

Five finely cut figures span the rear wall on this visualisation of Shakespeare's great chamber. They represent the legendary Nine Worthies: Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar; Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus; Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon. These particular paintings are modelled on the set of Worthies displayed in 56 (formerly 61) High Street in the market town of Amersham, Buckinghamshire. Six out of the original Nine Worthies remain on two walls in a chamber on the first floor, towards the front of a property which Horst Schroeder suggests once belonged to 'some prosperous merchant' (fig.99).[109] The space between the Worthies is filled with scenes of trailing foliage, ensuring no section of the wall remains blank. Each figure is depicted with an identifying prop such as a banner, shield or staff and is clad in armour demonstrating a readiness to engage in their next heroic pursuit. Romanesque cloaks billow behind them, projecting the image of a modern-day super hero. The Worthies were the embodiment of chivalry and civility, traits that a new gentleman such as Shakespeare would have been keen to display.

[109] Horst Schroeder, 'The Mural Paintings of the Nine Worthies at Amersham', *Archaeological Journal,* Vol. 136 (1981), p. 241. The six Worthies still visible on two walls in a first-floor chamber have been identified by Schroeder as: Julius Caesar (panel 1); Joshua (panel 2); King David (panel 3); Judas Maccabeus (panel 4); Charlemagne (panel 7); Godfrey of Bouillon (panel 9). Panels 5, 6 and 8 therefore must have portrayed Hector, Alexander the Great and King Arthur pp. 242-244.

Most recent studies agree that the Amersham scheme was completed in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.[110] The figures featured in these paintings are strikingly similar, if not identical, to those depicted in Thomas Trevelyon's commonplace book of 1608.[111] Both sets appear to have been copied from the same source, *The Nine Worthies of the World* designed by the famous Antwerp publisher, Philip Galle (1537-1612).[112] The precise date of publication is unknown, but Galle's most famous work - a suite of 43 allegorical figures titled *Prosopographia* - was published between 1585 and 1603, so we might assume his series of the Nine Worthies fits into a similar timeframe. We know that a high degree of fluidity existed between print and decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, forming part of a rich, cohesive visual culture. Wells-Cole believes that sets of engravings like Galle's Worthies were not simply used to decorate printed texts, but may have been produced for patrons of interior decoration to pass on to their workmen.[113] As discussed in chapter four, this goes some way to explaining the appearance of the Worthies in different parts of the country.

The Nine Worthies were a particularly popular subject for domestic decoration, and this is just one of the reasons behind their selection for this reconstruction. We also know that Shakespeare was aware of the significance and popularity of this specific set of figures through his comedic take on the mask of the Worthies in *Love's Labour's Lost* (c.1594-1595)*:*

> Sir, you shall present before her the Nine Worthies.

[110] For a summary of the various studies undertaken on the Amersham Worthies and debates over their chronology see Schroeder, 'The Mural Paintings of the Nine Worthies', p. 245.
[111] Thomas Trevelyon, *Miscellany* (1608), digitised by The Folger Shakespeare Library https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGERCM1~6~6~112904~107463?qvq=q%3Acd_title%3D%22Trevelyon%20Miscellany%20of%201608%22&mi=0&trs=602 [Accessed 24.05.22].
[112] Heather Wolfe, 'Introduction' in Thomas Trevelyon, *The Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608: A Fascimile of Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.b.332* (Washington, 2007), p. 38.
[113] Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration*, p. 119.

> Sir, as concerning some entertainment of time, some show in the posterior of this day, to be rendered by our assistance, at the king's command, and this most gallant, illustrate, and learned gentleman, before the princess; I say none so fit as to present the Nine Worthies.[114]

Here, the character Holofernes suggests a pageant of the Nine Worthies as a suitable form of royal entertainment, so revealing the role and recognition of these figures in the performance of status. Narrative displays continue in this reconstruction of Shakespeare's great chamber with a cushion positioned upon an oak armchair. It depicts a scene from the biblical tale of Susanna and the Elders (fig.100). Hamling notes that 'the story – about a woman who stalwartly refused the sexual advances of powerful men, even when faced with the prospect of losing her own reputation and life – was a popular theme throughout Europe during the Renaissance period'.[115] Such subject matter also 'served as an excuse for erotic depictions of the female nude', and this is particularly evident in the Met cushion chosen for this reconstruction. This imagery also sent important messages to viewers 'about gender roles, sexual desire and restraints, judgement, punishment and death'.[116] With two daughters of his own, this tale of modesty would have been especially appealing to a man like Shakespeare. Cushion covers of this nature might be produced in a workshop, or completed at home by a female member of the household. The meticulous task of creating such a design would have allowed for further contemplation on its moral subject-matter. Alongside the paintings of the Worthies, biblical narratives helped to ensure that each surface communicated virtue and humility. As highlighted in chapter four, religious and classical imagery were often combined to impart such messages, as well as to demonstrate the personal qualities of the commissioner. Through these subject

[114] *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act V, Scene I).
[115] Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household,* p. 135.
[116] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

selections, Shakespeare's great chamber provided the stage on which morality, civility and drama could be performed.

The inclusion of moulded plasterwork motifs in Shakespeare's great chamber hints at the 'trickle round' trends of Stratford's leading citizens.[117] Easily replicated through the use of wooden moulds, the symbols adorning the ceiling and overmantel in Shakespeare's great chamber may well have appeared in the homes of men like John Gibbs, Richard Quiney or Daniel Baker. We know that certain motifs did indeed make their way around this group of men as similar symbolism is visible above the fireplaces in first-floor chambers at both Harvard House (fig.101) and Abraham Sturley's House (fig.102), indeed, the motifs themselves appear to have been created from the same set of moulds. This is a significant discovery as, not only does it suggest that the great and good of Stratford were employing the same craftsmen, they were also following the same styles. This is reflected in the three plasterwork shields decorating the overmantel in this reconstruction. A Tudor Rose, Shakespeare's coat of arms and an oak leaf fill these heraldic devices. The rose was a common motif used in interior decoration, and can be found in both Harvard House and Sturley's House. The oak leaf, surviving in Sturley's House only, was the symbol used by the Stuart monarchy. Displayed alongside the Rose, it indicated service to monarchs past and present. As this illustration suggests, Shakespeare was also able to include his arms among this royal symbolism. The meaning and significance of this display has already been noted, but in this context, Shakespeare's heraldry serves to elevate the overmantel and the room in which it was located.

[117] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), p. 44.

The civility of the fixed decoration interacts with the furnishings filling this illustration, creating a room of comfort and leisure. Very few examples of upholstered seating survive at Shakespeare's social level. Most, such as the velvet and gilded armchair depicted here, are elite in style and cost. But the appearance of such furniture in the homes of urban gentlemen and members of the civic elite was not unheard of. In Robert Suckling's great chamber, we find 'a chayre of greene clothe imbroydered' priced at 10 s and in Robert Wylde's great parlour 'three chairs one of them of leather, the second of Ta-pistrys' (tapestry) are also to be found.[118] Using the style and form of the V&A chair selected for this illustration (fig.29), the armchair situated by the fireplace in Shakespeare's great chamber is indicative of those chairs referenced in the inventories mentioned above. Often the frame of such seating is all that survives today, with upholstery frequently victim to wear and tear over the centuries. The upholstered entries in Wylde's and Suckling's probate documents hint at the variety of textile furniture available at this time, but also at the scarcity and significance of such objects. Although plenty of soft furnishings in the form of cushions and carpets are listed among the Stratford inventories, none mention upholstered furniture. This level of comfort was evidently beyond the reach of many members of the middling sort: it is the kind of object that distinguished new gentlemen from other Stratford residents.

The tables in this illustration are different in nature to those in the hall and parlour. Most of the inventories consulted in this study do not reference long tables or boards in great chambers. Instead, square tables and side (or small) tables appear in almost all. The folding table and the court cupboard positioned against the rear wall provided additional surfaces from which to serve food or drink, but the square centre table hints

[118] Inventory of Robert Suckling, 1589; Inventory of Robert Wylde, 1607/8.

at the great chamber's function as an exclusive space for dining. Virginals are listed in both Suckling's (in the little parlour) and Wylde's inventories (in the great parlour), as well as the 1625 Stratford inventory of Leonard Kempson.[119] Virginals could be simple in design and structure. The example picked for this reconstruction of Shakespeare's great chamber is Italian in origin and dates to about 1610 (fig.103). The instrument itself features little in the way of carved decoration, but is expertly constructed and displays a scenic painting on the inside lid. Again, we return to the detail of Shakespeare's time in London and his ability to procure these more unusual items from overseas. Few virginals produced in England survive from this time, so if Shakespeare did indeed own such an instrument, it was likely imported from the continent.[120] In this depiction of Shakespeare's great chamber, the virginal is stored on the bottom shelf of a livery cupboard, ready to be carried over to the table or other such surface for an impromptu performance. Surrounded by heroic figures, vivid mock panelling, and segmented plasterwork, users of this great chamber would be entertained by the visual delights that sprang from every surface; a prelude to the leisurely activities in which they were about to engage.

In country houses, great chambers were distinctly gentry in nature, fulfilling many of the functions so far discussed.[121] But, in the urban context, they frequently served as the main living and sleeping spaces.[122] This is demonstrated through a number of items visible in this reconstruction. A subtle increase in storage furniture between

[119] Inventory of Robert Suckling, 1589; Inventory of Robert Wylde, 1607/8; Inventory of Leonard Kempson, 1625 (170) transcribed in Jones (ed.), *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. 1,* pp. 345-345.
[120] Howard Schott, 'Introduction', in *Catalogue of Musical Instruments in the Victorian and Albert Museum: Part I Keyboard Instruments* (London, 1981), p. 9. See rest of catalogue for further explanation and example of virginals at this time.
[121] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp. 93-94.
[122] As demonstrated in the Will of Daniel Baker, 1641.

Shakespeare's great chamber and his parlour indicates its function as the primary living space.[123] Clothes, bed sheets, napkins, and any other item that might facilitate comfort would be stored in the chests and cupboards positioned about Shakespeare's great chamber.[124] The chest depicted in the south-west corner of the room is the most traditional piece of furniture. Originally portable, the example portrayed in this graphic represents something more permanent, and so is ornately decorated to match its lavish surroundings. The livery cupboard is another item with traditional associations, but it does show the transition to more modern systems of storage. Unlike chests, livery cupboards could be accessed via cupboard doors rather than lids, so their surfaces could be used for additional storage and display. The most modern piece in this illustration of Shakespeare's great chamber is the court cupboard. This final storage item links to the great chamber's use as a space of dining and entertaining. Although a distinctly high-status room, the great chamber was not quite the public exhibition space of the parlour. Given the number of storage items listed in great chambers across various inventories, precious items were securely stowed away in cupboards or chests rather than out on display.

This illustration of Shakespeare's great chamber also contains a large tester bedstead complete with soft furnishings. Much like the item Shakespeare bequeathed to Anne Hathaway in his will of 1616, this may have been the second-best bed in the house: the bed that the couple slept in.[125] This particular piece is based on the 'Hathaway

[123] For data relating to objects stored and utilised in chambers, see Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, pp. 133-135; Buxton, *Domestic Culture*, pp. 221-224.
[124] For data relating to linen found in Kent and Cornish inventories, see Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, pp. 108-111.
[125] See Shakespeare's will of 1616 for the reference 'Itm I gybe vnto my wife my second best bed with furniture'. Will of William Shakespeare, 1616, TNA PROB 1/4. Transcribed and published in E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock (eds.), *Playhouse wills 1558-1642* (Manchester 1993), pp. 105-109.

Bed' in SBT's collections (fig.104). The carved headboards and elaborate bed posts date sometime between 1580 and 1630, while the tester was added later in about 1650.[126] By including it in the illustration provided here (plate 3), I suggest that Shakespeare's great chamber also functioned as the master bedroom. The trundle bed, visible beneath the bedstead, further indicates the chamber's more frequent function as a space for sleep – made up in its current state for a servant, child or guest. Both inventories of urban gentlemen Robert Wylde (1607) and Robert Suckling (1589) list beds in their great chambers.[127] It was, however, unusual to find bedsteads in the great chambers of country houses.[128] Through such furnishings, we see the functional differences between these rural and urban gentry great chambers, as well as the different social ranks they represent. Despite these urban associations, the uniquely gentry status of the great chamber in the context of New Place cannot be denied. Its primary functions as a place of hosting, entertainment and leisure, providing a more intimate setting for social encounter beyond the more public and formal hall and parlour, speak of a distinctly genteel lifestyle that could only be afforded by those belonging to the upper echelons of local society.

[126] The SBT purchased the bed with Anne Hathaway's cottage in 1892, but it is believed to have been in the house long before this. Indeed, this tester bed may have belonged to Shakespeare's brother-in-law, Bartholomew Hathaway, who lived in the cottage until his death in 1624. Given its embellishment, it was most likely used by the head of the household or his esteemed guests. 'About Anne Hathaway's Cottage', *The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust* (website). https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/anne-hathaways-cottage/about-anne-hathaways-cottage/ [Accessed 24.05.22].

[127] Wylde had not one but two bedsteads in his, complete with 'wainscotting', like the headboard on the Hathaway Bed.

[128] The great chamber of Hardwick Hall, built in the 1590s by noblewoman Elizabeth Cavendish, contained no sleep related items, nor did the great chamber at Chastleton House, built some years later by new gentleman Walter Jones. The function of great chambers in country houses is discussed in more detail in Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp. 40-54.

Summary

Each of the spaces chosen for reconstruction represent the different characteristics of new gentry status. The hall, with its symbolic ties to civic office and tradition speak to the authority of the householder. The transitional space of the parlour could be most readily connected to professional identity and royal service: a space in which dining, business and networking were conducted and where the items most readily linked to these characteristics were so publically presented. Finally, Shakespeare's great chamber was used to accommodate and promote his urban gentry lifestyle. Householders and guests were expected to interact with their surroundings. To contemplate the Nine Worthies lining the walls, delight in the mock panelling, relax among the soft furnishings and perhaps enjoy a performance on the virginal. The utilitarian functions of this chamber – as a space of sleep and storage – do not detract from its high status. If anything, this fusion of functions perfectly reflects the multifaceted identity of the new gentleman. Hovering between upper middling and lesser gentry, these men possessed their own distinct set of social connections and cultural expressions, which, when translated into their interiors, led to the creation of a specific set of domestic requirements.

Reflections

Only when these furnishings and fittings are displayed within one space are we truly able to appreciate the extent to which domestic interior spaces were utilised in the construction and performance of social identity. This was especially true for those men who, like Shakespeare, successfully altered their position in society from middling to

gentry within a lifetime. For these individuals, the domestic environment proved a vital tool in the display of status. Given Shakespeare's background and social level, he would have been no different. And so, these reconstructions offer a plausible presentation of how the playwright might have demonstrated his own status through the interiors of three main reception spaces at his gentry home, New Place.

Phil Watson was commissioned to produce the illustrated reconstructions of Shakespeare's interiors due, in part, to his prior knowledge of the New Place site which he developed through the production of a series of illustrations to go alongside the publication *Finding Shakespeare's New Place*.[129] Collaboration with Watson allowed me to consider my own research in a new light: to see how various elements of early modern interior decoration worked together and what practical decisions may have impacted the presentation of spaces in houses like New Place. As well as informing the main body of this thesis, the case studies and evidence presented in previous chapters were used to inform each illustration. Every element incorporated into each illustration – from the wall paintings to the furnishings - is based on a tangible, extant example. This evidence was compiled over three years of research, then translated into a design brief (appx.2). This brief included a list of all furnishings and decoration to feature in each room, as well as details as to how they might have been displayed based on surviving documentary and material evidence (see appx. 2 & 3). The graphics then went through various stages of production. Drafts and proofs were sketched in pencil (fig.105.), and decisions about style, perspective and positioning then taken at various stages before the final illustrations were produced in line and colour. Ultimately the proofing stage demanded the most time as it included what

[129] Phil Watson's illustrations of the exterior of New Place can be found in Edmondson, Colls, and Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New*, pp. 160-165.

Claire Reed and Kate Smith describe as ‘‘emotion work’ - regular emails, phone calls, reciprocated invitations and meetings’.[130] For this type of work, collaboration is key as you begin to encounter the challenges and limits of such a project.

Through the various discussions that arose from this process, I was better able to make informed choices about what we might have plausibly found at New Place. Fig.106 shows an early proof of Shakespeare’s Hall. In this version, Watson incorporated all the items laid out in the design brief with the accompanying original object selection spreadsheet and photographic prompts. However, there are a number of differences between the initial sketch and the final illustration (fig.106). Various architectural elements, for instance, were reworked between drafts. The window was changed from the stone example taken from The Commandery, to a wooden construction of a similar design, keeping it in line with the social level of New Place which was of lower status to the grand Worcestershire property. It was only when the first proofs of the hall were completed that I was able to see that this space seemed too ‘full’. On paper, the list of objects and fittings compiled for the design brief did not seem especially extensive, but, when illustrated, the space appeared too ‘lived in’. This impression ran contrary to the argument that the hall was a symbolic yet infrequently used space. Both myself and the artist had given way to the temptation to fill this vast, empty space with additional items such as soft furnishings (cushions) and dining ware. Yet, the evidence from inventories relating to houses similar to New Place was that these halls were minimally furnished. Almost none mentioned textiles, aside from wall hangings, and the main pieces of furniture referenced were forms (benches),

[130] Claire Reed and Kate Smith, ‘Collaborating across Heritage and Higher Education to Reveal the Global History of Osterley Park House’ in Margot Finn and Kate Smith (eds.), *New Paths to Public History* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 49.

long tables and perhaps a chair. Thus, the illustration was pared back and the result was striking. To the modern eye, the final version presented in this chapter appears sparse. These are some of the modern preconceptions that many of us bring to our understanding of the past, even when these studies are rooted in tangible evidence.

Changes and omissions were also made out of practical necessity. Watson was given the challenging task of recreating specific extant examples within an equally specific, yet absent, set of spaces. Fragments of wall paintings were transformed into full schemes; textile panels became bed hangings; and plasterwork was adapted to conform to the irregular dimensions of Shakespeare's home. Fig.107 demonstrates the precision and labour that went into each decorative element. The technical knowledge required to reconstruct the plasterwork ceiling (fig.108) in the parlour prompted a series of conversations relating to the skill necessary to actually execute such a design in the early modern period. These practical perspectives, revealed through this process of collaborative working, add to an increased appreciation of early modern practices. Through these reconstructions, I was able to 'test' the theories and assumptions laid out in this thesis: to not only think about how Shakespeare would have theoretically used his interiors to construct status, but also the practicalities and obstacles that would have influenced the presentation of these spaces. These illustrations allowed me to turn my research into something tangible and visual; providing another means of access and engagement which will hopefully be of use to heritage organisations such as the SBT, the current custodians of the New Place site.

Collaboration, or 'co-production' between university-based researchers and heritage organisations is not new, but as Reed and Smith note, it has 'grown at pace' in recent

years.[131] As well as immersing visitors in a specific time and place, heritage interpretation is increasingly used to tell stories previously untold, to present diverse and previously overlooked histories. Now, organisations are not only expected to both preserve and recreate lost materiality and heritage sites, but also lost experiences. It is these questions of accuracy, or 'truth', that have most recently impacted heritage presentation and are changing the way we approach representations of the past.[132] Perhaps now, more than ever, *how* we interpret heritage is increasingly brought into focus and questioned. The importance of this critical approach is emphasised by Margot Finn and Kate Smith:

> Historic houses and landscapes need to be interpreted through global frames that attempt to navigate the complex factors that have shaped the history of a particular site over many centuries. Domestic spaces are not removed from global economic, cultural, social and political forces. Rather, they are set within and shaped by them.[133]

Within this, university-based researchers play an increasing role. Public history projects such as the East India Project at Home, a collaboration between the NT and University College London, and more recently the Colonial Countryside project between the University of Leicester and the NT, demonstrate the way in which historians can facilitate new, more inclusive interpretations of heritage sites and collections that are routed in research.[134] It is my hope that the methodology presented in this thesis can be used to study other absent buildings and lost heritage, while

[131] Reed and Smith, 'Collaborating across Heritage', p. 2; p. 49. For previous examples of collaboration projects between university-based researchers and historic houses, see pp. 49-52.
[132] H. Black, 'Interpreting Islamic collections', Museums Journal (01.04.2019) https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/features/2019/04/01042019-interpreting-islamic-collections/ [Accessed 24.05.22].
[133] Finn and Smith, 'Introduction' in *New Paths to Public History*, p. 11.
[134] For detailed information on the East India Company at Home project, see Finn and Smith, *New Paths to Public History*; and for details of the Colonial Countryside project, see 'Colonial Countryside project', National Trust (website) https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/colonial-countryside-project [Accessed 07.01.21].

emphasising the value in shared knowledge and expertise between researchers and practitioners.

Conclusion

The reconstructions presented in this chapter not only offer insight into Shakespeare's interiors, but the interiors of new gentry houses more generally. For the first time, this domestic environment has been imagined and presented within one (imagined) space. This project has developed a series of case studies – of urban domestic buildings and their owners – that reveal the self-fashioning and motivations of the new gentry as a whole. The value of these reconstructions is two-fold: they can be used as a tool of historical research, prompting a series of questions about a somewhat overlooked social group. But they are also culturally significant. They pertain to a major heritage site and offer new understandings relating to one of the world's most famous writers. The re-presentation of lost heritage is a significant undertaking, and it is important that the evidence and process used in reconstruction is transparent and open to critical analysis. It is therefore the hope of this project that these reconstructions might be used as a spring-board for future interpretation, debate and engagement with Shakespeare's lost home. Shakespeare was part of an important social group, representing a new collection of individuals who were using their profession and creativity to influence their social mobility. By reconstructing his home, we are prompted to consider how this worked in practice, taking us a little closer to Shakespeare the 'new gentleman' as well as Shakespeare the celebrated writer.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the 'new gentry' in early modern England, asking who belonged to this social group, what was significant about them, and how did they use their homes to construct their status. It identified William Shakespeare, among others, as a member of this group and used a study of his property, New Place, as a means of understanding more about the self-fashioning of this relatively overlooked section of early modern society. New Place was demolished centuries ago, and little trace of the medieval courtyard property remains. But the very process of reconstructing this lost building through comparison has demonstrated the way in which different members of the new gentry used their homes to construct and communicate their social identity. Through a series of case studies, I have shown that members of the new gentry invested heavily in their domestic properties. From the form of a building, to its furnishings and decoration, each element of the home could be used in the construction of status. This study has demonstrated that this material investment was critical for new gentlemen. These men traversed social boundaries, moving from middling to gentry within their lifetime. Their status as gentlemen was often precarious and relied on a fluid set of attributes; from reputation to occupation, wealth to regional location. I have argued, along with Mark Girouard, Nicholas Cooper, Tara Hamling and Chris King, that investment in domestic buildings was important, if not key, to truly being recognised as a gentleman in early modern England.[1] Having fulfilled much of the criteria deemed necessary to be considered new gentlemen, the men of this study sought to set this status in stone, paint and plaster.

[1] Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Yale, 1978); Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, (London, 1999); Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven, 2010); Chris King, *House and Society in Norwich, 1350-1660: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (Woodbridge, 2020).

Throughout this thesis, I have treated the new gentry as a social group with its own set of characteristics and, for the first time, their urban homes have been studied as evidence of specifically new gentry self-fashioning. The new gentry was a distinct yet diverse group, containing a range of identities with members drawn from a variety of backgrounds and occupations. Individuals within this group may have shared certain characteristics with both the established gentry and the upper middling sort, but they also followed their own trends. There was (with some exceptions) an urban quality to this social group. Many of its members held leadership roles among civic communities such as town corporations or guilds, and most conducted business or trade within the urban environment. This meant that many of the networks or associations built between members of this group were urban *and* local in nature. Throughout this study, I have argued that members of this group were united by the idea that they were considered gentlemen within their local community but not necessarily on a county or national level. This, in itself, raises some interesting questions. What, for instance, might location mean in terms of the nature of new gentry status and how individuals might construct/fashion it? Might being understood as a gentleman be something different to being understood as a member of the gentry? Did these men pull on other levers to consolidate these social identities? And how important were networks, relationships and hospitality to the construction of new gentry status? This thesis has begun to answer some of these important, wider questions through an analysis of the homes that these individuals owned, built and/or adapted. But, importantly, this study has set the scene for further debate surrounding who precisely were the new gentry and the different methods they employed to construct this status.

Given the complex nature of the new gentry as a social group, I have argued throughout this thesis that most of its members used their homes to help construct and display their status. Unlike large country houses, urban properties such as Greyfriars in Worcester and Suckling House in Norwich functioned as places of work and business alongside spaces of domestic living. New gentlemen worked this multi-functionality to their advantage, using their occupation and wealth to elevate their status, and utilising their homes to both form and perform this part of their identity. But, these urban homes also had to fulfil certain gentry requirements. Hosting and leisure could be catered for in the layout and furnishings of the home, while civility and education might be reflected in its interior decoration. The tension between urban functionality and gentility was achieved through a careful balance of invention and tradition. Many members of the new gentry living in urban courtyard properties chose to retain the form and decoration of their medieval halls as a symbolic gesture of authority and tradition. But 'modern' adaptions, commonly associated with the 'Great Rebuilding of England', were made elsewhere in the home: through the extension of properties, the insertion of staircases and chimneys, or new styles of decoration such as plasterwork.

The exact nature of these alterations was of course impacted by the availability of skills and materials. But locality also influenced styles and I have argued that, although certain men might be considered gentry within their local community, they might not be afforded the same status beyond their immediate surroundings. As such, it is among this local community that men like Shakespeare constructed their identity. In an economy built on credit, the amount and type of goods people owned directly

impacted their status among their peers.[2] This culture of appraisal is what made domestic building and decoration so effective in the process of self-fashioning. The most useful way of asserting status was by following the same trends as others in your social group or locality.[3] This 'trickle round' effect can be seen through the homes of men like Thomas Rogers and Abraham Sturley, where very similar if not identical decoration remains in their former homes. It is this combination of locality, function, tradition and invention that specifically impacted the urban homes of this study, allowing us to discern specifically new gentry patterns in consumption that have previously been overlooked.

In this way, this thesis has viewed urban domestic buildings and their interiors as a vital form of historical evidence. The architecture, layout, surviving decoration and furnishings of urban properties have been analysed together to understand more about the process of self-fashioning, as well as the lived experiences of people like William Shakespeare. Such a study requires an interdisciplinary approach, and this thesis has combined methodologies, evidence and questions from the disciplines of social history, archaeology, material culture studies and country house studies to take a holistic view of the urban domestic environment at the level of new gentry. The remains of buildings, surviving wall paintings and plasterwork, and museum collections have been used alongside probate documents and other written sources to uncover more about these early modern properties and their use in new gentry self-fashioning. But this thesis also makes a case for the study of lost materiality. Lost or absent material culture is a real problem when studying people or buildings below the

[2] Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2015); Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998).
[3] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: clothing and the law in Henry VIII's England* (Surrey, 2009), p. 44.

level of the elite. Issues relating to lack of provenance, loss, destruction and dispersal are all challenges to the study of materiality, but are especially acute for urban buildings due to continual use and adaptation. Through a combined study of those buildings, objects and written material that do survive, we can bridge some of the gaps in both scholarship and heritage collections alike, setting the context for what no longer remains.[4]

This thesis began with a consideration of the approach taken by Lena Cowen Orlin in her 2014 article 'Anne by Indirection', in which she argues that by 'searching for cognates' we can reconstruct the lives of people for whom there is little direct evidence.[5] My project has adopted a parallel, material methodology in its reconstruction of New Place. Through a process of extensive fieldwork (documented in appx.1), with the careful selection of cognate buildings, decoration, furnishings (appx.3) and surviving documents, this thesis has presented its own interdisciplinary methodology for the study of absent buildings. The diverse empirical research presented throughout the thesis has been used to inform the illustration of the three interior spaces most readily attached to gentry status - the hall, the parlour and the great chamber. Through my study of 'New Place by indirection', I was able to shed light on the self-fashioning of people like Shakespeare; men who were not established or upper gentry, but who occupied a distinct status from the middling ranks below them. These reconstructions, and the evidence underpinning them, also challenge our existing views of this socially ambiguous group by demonstrating their geographical, as well as their social mobility; their awareness of both local and national trends; their

[4] Cathryn Enis and Tara Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity: Material Responses to Absence in Stratford-upon-Avon, *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 70 (2019), pp. 52-83.
[5] Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 65 (2014), p. 424.

knowledge of and engagement in printed sources; as well as the quantity and quality of the furnishings and decoration adorning their homes.

But it is also important to note that William Shakespeare did not live alone at New Place. His children Susannah and Judith, servants, parents, the Greene family, and the mistress of the household, Anne, all resided in this large townhouse at one time or another.[6] The experiences and identities of these residents are not fully represented in this thesis. Locating the social identity of women in early modern England can be challenging, especially below the level of elite. Women performed vital economic roles in early modern society and this is especially highlighted in the AHRC-funded projects such as 'Forms of Labour: Gender, Freedom and Work in the Pre-Industrial Economy' and 'The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort'.[7] Given this increased interest in the contribution of women to the household economy, we might assume that they also played a part in domestic material culture, in the arrangement and decoration of the home. The choices that they no doubt made regarding their domestic interiors likely reflected elements of their identity as it did for male householders. But female social identity and the construction of status differed from the male experience, and little material and documentary evidence remains for female influence over the fabric of the urban gentry home. Given the comparative nature of this thesis, I have predominantly

[6] In 1595, the Quiney household was listed as numbering sixteen people, many of whom would have been servants and household staff. It is likely that the Shakespeares had a similar-sized household (although with less children), given the scale of New Place. Further investigation into the nature of service in Stratford at this time – the ratio between live-in and day servants for instance – would make for an interesting read. Germain Greer, *Shakespeare's Wife*, (London, 2007).

[7] Jane Whittle (principle investigator) and Mark Hailwood (co-investigator), 'Forms of Labour: Gender, Freedom and Work in the Pre-Industrial Economy', funded by the European Research Council at the University of Exeter (2019-2024) http://formsoflabour.exeter.ac.uk [Accessed 20.05.22]; Catherine Richardson (principal investigator), Tara Hamling (co-investigator) and Graeme Earl (co-investigator), 'The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort, Writing and Material Culture, 1560-1660', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the University of Kent, University of Birmingham and Kings College London (2019-2022) https://middlingculture.com/about/ [Accessed 20.05.22].

focused on men who held similar status and property to Shakespeare and for whom there existed some form of evidence. Yet, by using the methodology of this study, it may be possible to develop a project on the women of New Place and their use of the house. Studies such as Orlin's article 'Anne by Indirection' demonstrate how the experiences of women in the early modern domestic and economic landscape can be recovered, researched and reconstructed using cognate evidence.[8] Although not the focus of this thesis, other members of the Shakespeare household present an interesting opportunity for future, comparative study.

Like the homes under the care of the National Trust, Shakespeare's New Place is a site of cultural significance. Beyond the field of early modern history, these reconstructions can help us to understand more about the lived experiences of a world-famous playwright: a person who we actually know relatively little about. As suggested at the start of this thesis, these new illustrations of the interiors of New Place form part of a wider tradition of reconstructing Shakespeare's lost domesticity.[9] Emotional responses to the loss of knowledge, materiality and buildings relating to Shakespeare's adult life in Stratford are reflected across the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's collections. But none represent this loss as starkly as the New Place site. The reconstructions offered in this study are rooted in tangible evidence, rather than the romantic image of Shakespeare's home-life and gentry status so often reflected in Victorian paintings and souvenirs.[10] This evidence is presented throughout the thesis,

[8] Orlin, 'Anne by Indirection', pp. 421–454.
Katherine West Scheil has considered the various ways in which Anne Hathaway has been imagined in the centuries following her death, providing an interesting insight into the way in which we attempt to reconstruct the image and life of famous women for whom little evidence survives. Katharine West Scheil, *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife: The Afterlife of Anne Hathaway* (Cambridge, 2018).
[9] Enis and Hamling, 'Shakespeare's Lost Domesticity'.
[10] *Ibid.*

and the illustrative form of the resulting reconstructions allows, invites even, further interpretations. This study of absent materiality, of houses 'by indirection', reminds us that we can uncover the material lives of others for whom relatively little evidence remains. By taking new approaches to the way we present the past, as well as who we involve in that process, we can expand our scope of research beyond documentary or tangible evidence.

This thesis has examined a relatively overlooked section of society in early modern England. Through a series of case studies, it has demonstrated that the 'new gentry' should be considered as their own distinct status group, separate from the established gentry and the upper middling sort that have traditionally been the focus of historical scholarship. This study has considered some of the criteria and characteristics of this group, demonstrating that the domestic environment – through building, furnishings and decoration – was essential to new gentry status. Using a cognate reconstruction of Shakespeare's New Place, this thesis has produced three original reconstructions, each suggesting the complexity of the urban environment at this time and how it could be used in the construction of social identity. For the first time, each element of the new gentry home has been brought together to consider the lived experiences of its owners. In this way, this thesis contributes new understandings of early modern society, self-fashioning and the domestic environment, as well as proposing new approaches to the study of lost materiality and heritage reconstruction.

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