Written Texts and the Performance of Materiality

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Quantitative and qualitative methodologies

Unlike archaeologists, or art or architectural historians, historians of material culture tend to begin with written documents that describe objects rather than the objects themselves. Historians might be seen as starting from a position of absence then – the things on which they work are ‘on the other side’ of language, embodied and mediated by historical subjects’ sense of the appropriate words in which to describe them. But whereas the object might be absent, the document writer’s choices give access to contemporary processes of evaluation and interpretation. Historians may not have things, but they are able to access evidence of attitudes towards them, feelings about them and, therefore, their social and cultural meanings and functions. Such evidence is not easy to interpret. If historians are to do justice to linguistic subtleties, they need to be savvy about how language works and how it might relate to experience, of which materiality is such a crucial aspect. Some assistance might come from literary scholars, who often analyse how things work in a fictional context – how objects are deployed within narrative structures and what work they do there. Those ideas are useful as they draw attention to the crafted nature of all written documents, but historians need to extend that kind of analysis to investigate the point where language and the people who use it come together: at the moments when documents are written and read.

In broad and crude terms, historical study of material culture has been influenced by two central methods, the quantitative and the qualitative. Social science offers a method for quantitative engagement with materiality. The 2004 book Production and Consumption in English Households 1600–1750 by Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, for instance, charts the development of consumption practices by ‘approaching an old problem, the development of capitalism, through the economic activities of the household’, analysing probate inventories with the aid of a sophisticated database. This allows them to give a framework for analysis of change over time and differences between geographical areas. They are able to demonstrate, for instance, that in Cornwall ‘Less than 5 per cent of inventoried households in the county had specialised service rooms in the early eighteenth century, compared with more than 70 per cent in Kent’.1 We get a clear sense from this kind of analysis of how individual choices and experiences might have fitted into a wider picture of the contemporary appreciation of material possibilities – of supply and demand, and of a comparative awareness of one’s neighbours’ consumption choices. What we do not get close to is material experience – to the actual choices individuals made and how they responded to them – or to consumption in terms of, as Sara Pennell has put it, ‘what consumers did with the goods they consumed’.2 We cannot understand individuals’ interaction with their material environment, and it is into this gap that literary analysis can step.

A qualitative investigation has its roots in literary studies’ micro-­analysis of language. This kind of analysis usually takes place at the level of the individual document, as it aims to account for the choices that men and women made in respect of material culture. It begins by taking into consideration the purpose for which the document was written and the prescriptions and practices that shape and surround that purpose. It is only by understanding the role that the details of linguistic choice and their ordering might play in the aims of the writer that we will be able to evaluate the access language gives to material attitudes with any degree of accuracy.

The language of inventories

A probate inventory is a list of goods owned by the deceased at the time of their death. The appraisers who drew up the document were responsible for pricing the goods in relation to their value on the second hand market, and the descriptions they give of them are therefore intended to account for the price they have put on them, and also to some extent to distinguish between similar objects owned by the same person. We can use this detail to read backwards to the material qualities of the objects they describe. In high-­status inventories it is fairly easy for us to see how descriptive language justifies value by helping the reader of the document to visualize the objects in question. The 1643 inventory of Warwick Castle, for instance (Figure 3.1), lists the magnificent goods of the recently-­deceased ‘right honorable Robert Lord Brooke’. Items include ‘a large yellowe quilt of China satten stitcht and bordered about with Crimson China satin lynd with golde colord sarcenett with an edging fringe about it red and yellow 8li’, or ‘foure peeces of fresh and lively hangings of the story of the Wooer belonging to the silver bedd chamber’, valued at a staggering £80, and ‘six large peeces of old hangings of the story of Meleager . . . belonging to the greate chamber’ valued with other pieces at £40.3 It is not only condition that determines price here: the imagery on the tapestry, the patterning of yellow and crimson satin on the quilt and its fringing, and the mention of fabrics from China, all bring pictures to the mind’s eye that support the valuation.

**FIGURE 3.1** *‘An inventory taken at Warwick the twoe and twentith daye of January 1643 of all and singular the goodes chattels and credittes of the right honorable Robert Lord Brooke Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Courte in the Countie of Warwick’, Warwick County Record Offi ce CR 1886/ 2711, f. 1–1v.*

Inventories offer the historian more than simply lists of individual items, however. Lord Brooke’s Library contained £40 worth of books and the following objects:

A flat deske covered with greene blanckt velvet vs [5 shillings]

A Table of redwood with a standing frame xxs [20 shillings]

A fireshovell with brasses xviiid [13 pence]

A foote stoole of liver Collord velvet iis vid [2 shillings and 6 pence]

A lether cushion xiid and an old elbowe Chaire of red Cloth lacd and fringd vs [5 shillings]

A joynd stoole xiid [12 pence]

From the full description of objects in the same room, it is possible to begin to imagine how Lord Brooke might have used his library – an old red chair with arm rests, on which he might have sat at a redwood table with a green velvet-­covered desk on it to read his books, with a joined stool next to him perhaps for his secretary. In other words, attending in detail to the language used in these documents advisedly, sensitive to the way their writers employed it to reconstruct their impression of the value of the objects, makes it possible to begin to reconstruct peoples’ material environments – the connections between their things in space.

With lower-­status inventories, this process of reconstructing the material nature of goods and spaces from their descriptions might appear less rewarding – things are often described in less detail and appear to be less visually striking. For instance, the following items were listed as being in the parlour next to the hall of William Rogers, Sergeant-­at-Mace of Stratford-­upon-Avon, on his death in 1597:

Item a table boorde and one stoole and a carpett ijs [2 shillings]

Item a bench and ij coffers xviijd [18 pence]

Item a presse, a cubbord & ij joynde boxes xxs [20s]

Item a ioynde bedd with a trundle bedd xijs [12s]

Item ij coverleddes with a rugg and a paire   
of sheetes xs [10s]

Item a flockbedd, ij matteryses and iij bolsters xs [10s]

Item a matteryce, a flockbedd, ij bolsters and ij   
white blanquettes vjs viiid [6s 8d]

Item a paire of tables, a capcase & ij bottles iis [2s]

Item aquavite, ballme water & rosa solis vis viijd [6s 8d]

Item his wearinge apparrell xls [40s]

Item a greate stone pott ijs vjd [2s 6d]

Item ij peare of olde sheetes iijs iiijd [3s 4d]

Item course lynnen xiiijd [14d]

Item a pillowbyer and ij napkyns xd [10d]

Item the glasse in the parlor wyndowe xvjd [16d]

Item vij paire of sheetes xxxs [30s]

Item iiij table clothes viijs [8s]

Somma vijli xviijs4 [£7 18s]

How might we analyse a pragmatic, quotidian list like this? Attending carefully to linguistic hierarchies gives us a sense of the distinctions the appraisers thought significant. The adjectives used allow us to access the way the appraisers navigated around Rogers’ room: the boxes and the bed are ‘joined’, the stone pot is a ‘great’ one, two of the pairs of sheets are ‘old’, and some of the linen is ‘coarse’. They were interested in processes of manufacture – ‘joining’ wood with mortise and tenon joints was a superior form of making and goods produced in such a way were more durable, often more likely to be decorated and therefore worth more money. They were interested in the relative condition of goods, noting that some of them were old whereas others were not, and in their size, as a great stone pot would be worth more than a small one.

The language of the document, then, is the place to begin our understanding of contemporary perceptions of the relationships between different things as seen by the people who distinguished between them. But if our aim is to understand the full valence of both words and things, then we must consider going further and connecting linguistic analysis to surviving objects. For instance, let us consider what the ‘greate stone pott’ might have been like. The presence of a stone pot suggests that, in addition to apparently functioning as Rogers’ bed chamber (with his bed and clothing in it), the room had a range of other functions. It held both playing tables for entertainment and his medicinal distillations. At this time aqua vitae had, according to the contemporary writer Gervase Markham ‘infinite virtues’, including efficacy ‘against aches in the bones, the pox . . . all manner of cold sicknesses, and namely for the palsy or trembling joints, and stretching of the sinews; it is good against the cold gout; and it maketh an old man seem young’.5 Balm water was an aromatic resin mixed with oils distilled in water, and rosa solis was made using aqua vitae, in which the plant (ros solis or sundew) was steeped ‘in a glass or pewter pot of three or four pints’ for three days and three nights.6 So it is possible that the balm water and the rosa solis were kept in Rogers’ two bottles, and the great stone pot contained the aqua vitae, of which larger quantities were needed. Possession of these healing waters was a feature of elevated urban status; the greatness of this pot is linked to the quantity and significance of the goods it contains.

What might a great stone pot have looked like? Studying examples of stone pots helps us to understand how size, use and aesthetic qualities might combine in such a word as ‘great’. First of all, language might be misleading. These pots were not made of stone, but ‘stoneware’, a robust type of earthenware common in the early modern period. Pots like the one in Figure 3.2 were imported from the region around Cologne in large numbers in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries. At just under half a metre tall, this is a larger variety from Langerwehe, intended for storage as the stoneware reduces evaporation. They are sturdy and practical, but not without visual appeal, and although they are extremely familiar to archaeologists, for the majority of lower to middling status households they may well have been amongst the most visually remarkable objects owned. Rogers (a mercer who also kept an inn) had several other stoneware pots, but only three of his peers had such pots listed amongst their goods. Reading between language and objects allows us to refine our sense of the meaning of words. It suggests perhaps that ‘great’ here is not merely a description of size, but might mean distinguished, or pre-­eminent – not only the opposite of ‘small’ but also of ‘insignificant’ and ‘merely functional’.

This kind of careful attention to the detail of language which builds outwards from individual words can take us a long way towards understanding the dynamics of the objects and spaces of the past, especially when analysed in relation to other kinds of contemporary writing, quantitative analysis of runs of documents, and extant objects. Undertaking such work for groups of documents – for a whole village or an urban street perhaps – allows us to move beyond merely itemizing objects towards reconstructing wider ideas about the relationship between objects and status, perhaps even taste, not only for the elite but also amongst the middling to lower sorts.

The material culture of wills

If inventories give us access to the ways in which early modern appraisers assessed and categorized the goods of others, then wills give us some contact, however scribally mediated, with the language in which individuals described their own material environment: the ‘will’ as document had to represent the ‘will’ as intention of its author as precisely as possible, and that led to particular care in recording the dying person’s words. As the writer of the testament of Simon Spatcherst says, the testator ‘expressed his mynde to this deponent and desired this deponent to write the same’.7 When the will was read, it was said to be read ‘to the testator’ in the presence of witnesses, the echo of their words ensuring its accurate repetition of their wishes.

**FIGURE 3.2** *Large stoneware jug with incised and applied moulded decoration, Langerwehe, Germany, c. 1600. Height: 485 mm, Victoria and Albert Museum, C.132–1985 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

The first significant aspect of this necessity to transcribe intention exactly is that we hear the words of those without writing skills, in an era before mass literacy. Particularly in the case of women and those of lower social status, these records of their testamentary decisions are often the primary contact they had with written culture. In these circumstances, the documents themselves become significant objects, and an analysis of their physical forms, the ‘materiality of the text’, has been an important aspect of literary studies’ approach to material culture.8 For instance, the will and inventory which John Clerk of Sturry in Kent delivers to his overseer from his ‘great purse’, taken out of hiding for the occasion, are unreadable to both men, illegible because, as the court hears, neither were literate. As such they become symbols of Clerk’s wishes, of his trust and the executive capacity he is passing on.9 While both verbal self-­consciousness and significant material wealth were often the preserve of the elite in such a society, Clerk’s actions are resonant with perceived significance: his illiteracy renders the translation process between things and words a kind of encryption, making the literal into the symbolic. Taking account of both the significance of documents as objects and the physical forms that the writing of things takes within them helps us to understand our sources as part of their subjects’ material environment.

It took time and cost money to make a will, so the number of bequests given and the detail in which they are recorded show how important the testator thought it was to ensure the smooth transfer of their goods. Describing goods is no trivial matter. Their identification has legal consequence, and objects so identified can therefore be taken as being singled out, made significant by their presence in the document. We need to read them with equal care, in a period which has been seen as characterized by a ‘passion for specificity’.10 For instance, Thomas Trott of St Stephen’s parish in Hertfordshire, a yeoman, left to his son Roger ‘the tabell in the hall with   
the frame where it standeth and all the hanginges in the same hall, with ij joyned formes . . . a great ioyned chest and a playne bedstede and the deepest saltinge trough’. To his son William he gave ‘my ioyned beddstede, my   
great Chest that is bounde with iron, a pouldering trough which is in the old barne with a cover to it, one peare of flaxon sheetes & an other peare of towne.’ To his son Thomas he left a ‘playne bedsteed, the cubberd in the hall, a playne chest, the longe poulderinge trough, a peare of flaxon sheetes & a peare of towne sheetes, a bearinge sheete with a blacke seeme’, to his daughter Margery ‘ij peare of flaxon sheetes with a flaxon tabell cloth, a platter & a great candellstick’, and to his daughter Elizabeth another two flaxen sheets and a flaxen tablecloth, platter and candlestick (not great), and finally to his daughter Ellen two pairs of flaxen sheets, a pewter basin and a candlestick.11

Trott’s bequests show, like the lists of goods in inventories, subtle methods of discrimination between objects that include attention to their form and function, the processes by which they are made and the fabric of which they are constructed, their relative size and their location within the house. In addition, they indicate his sense of ownership and investment in them – ‘my’ joined bedstead, ‘my great Chest’. In the connections Trott underlines between objects and spaces there is a clear sense that he is dividing up a functioning domestic unit, and that he is reordering the ownership of different elements of it. In making this will, Trott is approaching his material environment as a store to be divided between his children. We can therefore think about his list of goods as a strategy, and analyse the relationship between the groups he gives to each of his children, noting, for instance, the way he seems to balance the joined bedstead to William with the plain bedstead to Thomas, or the deepest salting trough with the long pouldering trough. That strategy includes giving a range of objects practical for daily domestic and working life. As will be clear from the long lists of these goods I replicated above, studying such strategies means respecting the time and attention given by a document’s original authors (reflected in the written ‘space’ they take up), and using this as a way of assessing their priorities and their sense of the significance of their own material culture. Ignoring this detail means discounting primary evidence for contemporary attitudes towards materiality.

Wills are actively engaged in negotiating the personal relationships between the testator and their recipients, and we might also use this evidence to talk about affective relationships with goods. We might want to talk about Trott’s choices as indicative of his feelings towards his children – as symbolizing or embodying them – and the goods that he selects for each child as reflecting something more than his sense of their material needs. That is an argument that must be made solely from the patterns of his giving, as he does not directly comment on these matters. In some wills, the desire to make objects speak the language of affect is explicit. Joan Neale, for instance, transfers her possessions to a man called Nicholas Henden in language which, while it does not state the nature of their relationship, clearly demonstrates some kind of intimacy: ‘I give unto you Nicholas Henden all my clothes and my gown cloth and I desire you to make you a cloak of it and weare it for my sake’.12 The immediacy of her words seems to indicate passion and conviction (the will was orally delivered, and only written down after her death), but it is the conjunction of her use of the possessive and the injunction to use the object as a specific form of memorial that indicates the vital role objects could have in negotiating human relationships.

In an elite version of this tendency towards explicit testamentary expression of reciprocity, Katherine Scott, widow of Sir John Scott of Scotts Hall, leaves her ‘best silver saltseller to the owner of Scottshall, and pray him in the Lord to take good care to fasten itt uppon his successors heires and owners of that howse with as much Care of mee, as I shew kindnesse to him, that itt maye be theire abidinge as testimony of my infinite affection thereunto (if it may bee) so longe as the world standeth’.13 The length of the qualification – the logic and the reciprocity attendant upon her gift – and the language of affect (care, kindness, infinite affection and prayer) mediated through both the object of bequest and the house as a repository of family identity, are typical of elite material language. Attending to the language in which these bequests are expressed makes it possible to read them as sophisticated testaments to a particular kind of early modern emotional engagement where the durability of objects is used symbolically. As Howell puts it, objects ‘made social relationships concrete’.14

Such an approach is not without its dangers. In both cases quoted above, there is a specific reason for the explicitness of the language – one will repeats the patterns of speech as opposed to documentary form and the other articulates the concerns of elite status. But can we read such feelings back into less loquacious gifts such as those of Thomas Trott above? It appears that such sentiment does not naturally find a place within the generic constraints of the will. Lena Orlin cautions that ‘so foreign is it for us not to sentimentalise objects – this is a Victorian legacy – that it may not occur to us to ask whether it would have been equally foreign for early moderns to sentimentalise them’.15 Looking for evidence of the role of objects in early modern affect and interconnection is, however, a long way from seeing them as freighted with excessive, sentimentalized emotion around death. Relations need not be sentimental.

A combination of qualitative, linguistic analysis and quantitative assessment can help to guard against making immoderate assumptions. We can begin to assess how common bequeathal strategies are, both within and across communities: for instance, in a sample of 550 late-sixteenth-­century wills, three types of objects are most commonly described with the possessive pronoun by testators: beds, rings and items of clothing, especially gowns. We can appreciate these objects as the ones to which individuals felt most personally attached, and note their close connections to the body.16 They were all valuable objects, but whereas beds were only given within the family, jewellery and clothing were often also given outside the family and sometimes to executors or overseers of the will. This suggests a recognized strategy through which personal objects were given within the context of a patronage society that used a sophisticated material culture of allegiance. For instance Sheriff of Canterbury Leonard Bonner’s executors were to purchase a ring with a death’s head engraved upon it, and to meet together once a year, at an event where the rings could be formally worn – part of a ritual, public display of memory and association.17 The role of objects in expressing allegiance after death is a long way from sentimentality. Through such a combined linguistic and quantitative analysis we can begin to understand the meanings of gifts in historical and geographical perspective.

Things in literary sources

As we have seen, will-­making was a carefully scripted affair, the bequests given often intended to be displayed in public, in a show of relationship and allegiance, and this suggests the importance of notions of performance in early modern attitudes towards materiality. We have also seen how working across documents produced at different levels of society and by individuals with varying levels of literacy reveals the challenges posed by the degree of explicitness with which attitudes towards things are discussed. For these reasons, studying the way objects are deployed in literary sources can be a useful addition to other forms of evidence available to historians. Here, objects are the explicit focus of attention as they are held up for the audience’s scrutiny, self-­consciously playing their part in the development of narrative and the exploration of character. Again, the meaning of things in such contexts is not straightforward, rather it is often debated by the speaking subjects.

Pamela Hammons analyses the way poets ‘conceptualized relations among people and things, human and non-­human subjects and objects’, seeing how categories of object like love tokens and houses became implicated in the literary investigation of gender and property ownership. Her opening example is a poem written ‘On Vollanties day this 14 ffeb: 1665’ by a young London widow called Katherine Austen and addressed to an expensive jewel she had found near an old wall. Austen imagines herself talking to the stone:

Wellcome thou best of Vollanties

ffirmer to me then Lover’s twines

Allas they vanish byt this tye

A pledge, a suertie Annually.18

Austen uses the object as a way of exploring religious meditation, seeing in its sparkle God’s love for her: ‘in its materiality, she encounters the divine’, as Hammons puts it.19 The rich meaning which early modern men and women found in their material culture – the way they used things as aids to thought – combined with their interest in writing imaginatively about them, makes literary works concentrated sources of meaning about early modern materiality. Drawing connections between documentary sources about objects and these more self-­consciously expressive writings can help us to historicize the processes through which objects were cast in words – we can, for example, put this evidence alongside the bequests of rings explored above.

It is about the stage properties in early modern plays that the most coherent body of research has been produced, however.20 Plays are deeply invested in the cant of contemporary meaning and the in-­jokes about people and objects that appear so seldom in other types of evidence. They deal in the currency of the sharp social distinctions that can be drawn by the naming of things. In Middleton’s Women Beware Women, for instance, Bianca, having been ravished by the Duke, finds her old life somewhat beneath her. She articulates the change of perspective brought about by her adultery through domestic objects, implicitly comparing her husband’s house to the Duke’s:

Why is there not a cushion-­cloth of drawn-­work,

Or some fair cut-­work pinned up in my bedchamber,

A silver and gilt casting-­bottle hung by’t?21

These precisely described objects pinpoint clear contemporary distinctions between the households of the social elite and the upper-­middling sort, and in so doing they re-­animate the probate material with a sense of how status was mediated through objects. Understanding this process of discrimination gives a fuller picture of the significance of early modern materiality. It is a picture articulated through an attention to detail that is related to the distinctions of the inventories, and is based on the appreciation of the potential connections to the morality of goods on which archival sources are frequently silent.

Drama also has more conceptual things to tell us about the particular historicized relationship between material culture and language. The illusion of a material context for action in plays is formed from the interlocking, but also the explosive clash of things and language – a rich, sensory, electric connection between props, bodies and the spoken word. Perhaps the most famous prop on the early modern stage enters thus:

FIRST CLOWN: . . . Here’s a skull, now. This skull has lain in the earth three-­and-twenty years.

HAMLET: Whose was it?

FIRST CLOWN: A whoreson mad fellow’s it was. Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET: Nay, I know not.

FIRST CLOWN: A pestilence on him for a mad rogue – a poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once! This same skull, sir, was Yorick’s skull, the King’s jester.

HAMLET: This?

FIRST CLOWN: E’en that.

HAMLET: Let me see. [He takes the skull]

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio – a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred my imagination is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-­fallen? Now get you to my lady’s chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that.22

The scene combines early modern sensitivity to the meanings carried by objects with a metatheatricality that plays with how those things accrue meaning. Hamlet holds the skull in front of him, inviting the audience to compare it to his youthful head and to imagine a conversation between equals – providing a lively image of the memento mori, the visual reminder of what we will all become. It is this image that was so often found on early modern mourning rings. The skull Hamlet holds was once the head of a living and breathing court jester whose job was to entertain with words. And yet, of course, it was not. It is a prop in a play, in which a gravedigger first gives it a potentially spurious context within the fictional world of the graveyard – can he really tell whose skull is whose in this raked up holy ground? – and then the actor playing a prince plays with the idea that he can re-­enact a long-­lost conversation with the jester. The audience are momentarily invited to wonder from whence this prop was dug, outside the illusion of the play – it was assuredly not from a courtly graveyard!

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to indicate the various ways that historians can analyse how language conjures things into being. It has shown that a detailed analysis of words can investigate the role played by language as the medium in which information about objects is communicated. It has been argued here that reading about things always involves some kind of call to the imagination of the reader – obviously on the stage, but also in the archive. Yorick’s skull shows especially clearly that the imagination which is called upon is a sensory one – that material words always ask us to call to mind memories of sensory perception. We must do this if we are to appreciate the simultaneous lure and repulsion of the earthy skull, or the difference between a satin quilt and coarse linen sheets. In our perception of the significance of the relationship between words and things, reading is, it has been argued here, a kind of performance of objects in itself; a reanimation of the relationship between language, materiality and the imagination.

Notes

 1 M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean and A. Hann (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households 1600–1750. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 54–5 and 64.

 2 S. Pennell (1998), ‘ “Pots and pans history”: the material culture of the kitchen in early modern England’. Journal of Design History 11 (3), p. 202.

 3 Warwickshire County Record Office, Probate Documents: WRO CR 1886/2711.

 4 J. Jones (ed.) (2002–3), Stratford-­upon-Avon Inventories, Vols. I & II. Stratford-­upon-Avon: Dugdale Society Publications, p. 161.

 5 G. Markham (1986), The English Housewife, M. R. Best (ed.). Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, p. 127.

 6 Markham, English Housewife, p. 57.

 7 Kent History and Library Centre Probate Documents: PRC 39/2 f125v.

 8 See, as an introduction, Frances Maguire and Helen Smith, ‘Material Texts’, in Richardson, Hamling and Gaimster (eds.) (2016) *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Abgindon and New York: Routledge, pp. 206-16; H. Smith (2012), *‘Grossly Material Things’: Women and Book Production in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press,A. Smyth (2010), Autobiography in Early Modern England. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and foundational work by Henry Woudhuysen and William Sherman on manuscript culture and marginal annotation. H. Woudhuysen (1996), Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640. Oxford: Oxford University Press; W. Sherman (2007), Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

 9 Kent History and Library Centre Probate Documents: PRC 39/5 f112v.

10 M. C. Howell (1996), ‘Fixing movables: gifts by testament in late medieval Douai’, Past & Present 150 (1), p. 36.

11 Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Centre Probate Documents: 33 AW 25; M. Parker (ed.) (2004), All My Worldly Goods II: Wills and Probate Inventories of St Stephen’s Parish, St Albans 1418–1700. Hertfordshire: Bricket Wood Society, pp. 114–15.

12 Kent History and Library Centre Probate Documents: PRC 17/41, f337; for more on this will and the question of affect and memorialization more generally, see C. Richardson (2013), ‘ “Make you a cloak of it and weare it for my sake”: material culture and commemoration in early modern English towns’, in M. Penman (ed.) Monuments and Monumentality Across Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Donington: Shaun Tyas Ltd.

13 The National Archives: PCC 11/129/188.

14 Howell, ‘Fixing movables’, p. 44.

15 L. Orlin (2010), ‘Empty vessels’, in T. Hamling and C. Richardson (eds), Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings. Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 300.

16 The quantitative evidence underlying this analysis draws on just under 550 wills made for inhabitants of East Kent towns and villages between 1560 and 1600, for further analysis of which see C. Richardson (2006), Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

17 Kent History and Library Centre Probate Documents: PRC 17.51.1.

18 P. S. Hammons (2010), Gender, Sexuality, and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse. Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 1.

19 Hammons, Gender, Sexuality, and Material Objects, p. 2.

20 See, as an introduction, J. G. Harris and N. Korda (eds) (2006), Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

21 Thomas Middleton, *Women Beware Women* 3.1.19–21, in T. Middleton (2007), Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works and Companion*,* G. Taylor and J. Lavagnino (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1488–1541.

22 *Hamlet* 5.1.159–80 in W. Shakespeare (1997), The Norton Shakespeare, S. Greenblatt, A.G.W. Cohen, J. E. Howard and K.E. Maus (eds). New York: WW Norton and Co.

Further reading

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