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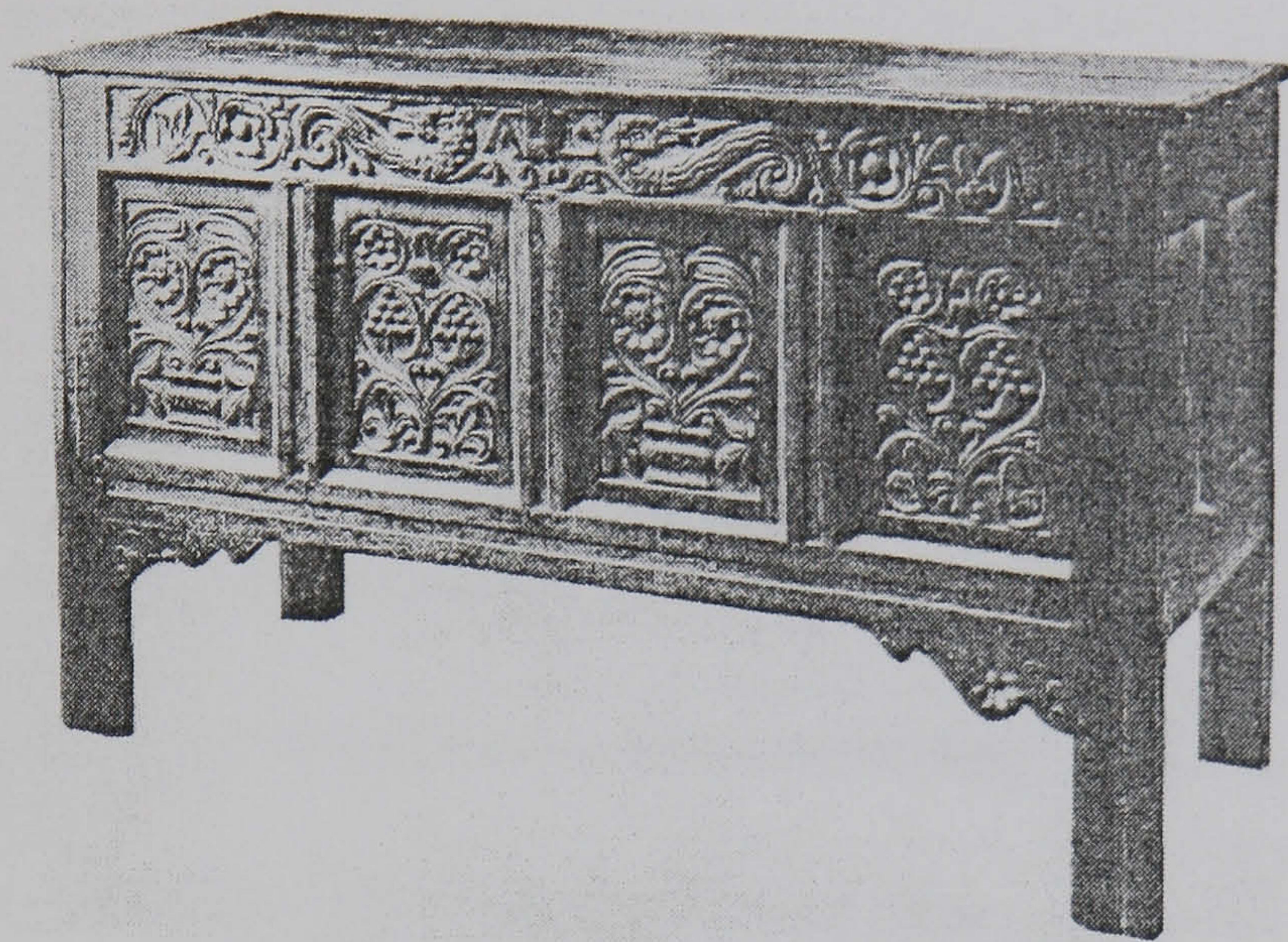
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**The Meanings of Space in Society and Drama:
perceptions of domestic life and domestic tragedy
c. 1550-1600**



Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD.
in Medieval and Tudor Studies

September 1999

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Supervised by Andrew Butcher and Marion O'Connor

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Abstract

This thesis has two intimately related aims. It investigates socially-distinct perceptions of domestic life in a provincial society closely linked to London in the second half of the sixteenth century. It then demonstrates the difference which those perceptions make to individuals' responses to representations, specifically of households in the genre of domestic tragedy.

The method is interdisciplinary: close analysis of testamentary and judicial sources is used to imaginatively construct the perceptions of theatre audiences. Wills and inventories are used in Chapter 2 to analyse the material composition of domestic space, and these sources make possible an understanding of domestic process, of the formation of identity, and of the expression of social distinction through the objects which were kept in each room of the house. Chapter 3 uses ecclesiastical court depositions to show how space was moralised in contemporary life, and how it formed a part of the strategic discourses of public morality through which individuals understood their actions. The coherence of this evidence, for the provincial centres of Kent, makes it possible to understand the *relative* meanings of objects and spaces, and therefore the internal logic of provincial society.

Chapter 4 investigates the consumption of representations of domestic life, using the evidence for socially-distinct perceptions to construct different responses to the plays. It explores the mechanics of such representations, focusing on the meanings of stage properties, and upon audience members' conceptions of the moralised relationship between house and community.

This analysis prioritises contemporary perceptions of dramatic productions, and insists upon a consideration of the divergent responses of heterogeneous audiences. It challenges less carefully historicised approaches to representations by demonstrating that it is only through an examination of the evidential context of historical sources that an understanding of the internal logic of societies (and therefore their perceptions and representations) can be reached.

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There are many people whose expertise and love has helped me to write this thesis. Firstly I was fortunate to have, in Andrew Butcher and Marion O'Connor, two enthusiastic and supportive supervisors. Discussing the project with them has given it shape and purpose, and they have constantly revived flagging spirits.

The staff at Canterbury Cathedral Archive have been overwhelmingly helpful, friendly, interested and concerned, and visiting other archives has made me realise the importance of such a supportive working environment. Sarah Pearson has shown infinite patience in explaining the nature and importance of extant buildings to me, and the owners of the houses have kindly agreed to allow me to crawl in their roof spaces.

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Personally, I want to thank my family for giving me so many different kinds of support while I have been working on this thesis. Spending time with them has prevented me from losing a sense of proportion. My parents taught me to look carefully and to ask questions many years ago, and they should know how important their love has been. Over the past years there have been times when Felicity, Mark and Andrew have helped in more important ways than they will ever know. Finally, Justin Richardson has made me think long and hard about the importance of domestic experience, and, especially over the last year, has made a home for me to work in without which I could not have written what follows.

Abbreviations

<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary
PRC	Ecclesiastical records for the Canterbury Diocese. The bibliography gives a complete list of the archives holding the documents.

Notes: Proper names have been given in their modern spellings.
Punctuation has been added to the quotations from documentary sources, and the use of i and j, u and v has been standardised.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is interdisciplinary in approach. Its primary goal is to consider the construction of audiences' perceptions of early modern plays by means of a historical analysis of perceptions in provincial society. It does so in a period of contemporary awareness of the novelty of the integration between London and the provinces. My principal focus is upon the representation of the domestic interior in the dramatic genre of domestic tragedy. The investigation of the evidence for perceptions of such interiors simultaneously elucidates the nature of the perception and the nature of the representation of the household in provincial society.

Three different types of evidence are considered in the following chapters: testamentary, judicial and dramatic. Each is investigated in a separate chapter, and the implications of the sections are intended to be cumulative. The categories of evidence have been treated individually in order to assess the position and importance of information about space within them. The significance of the quantitative information and the qualitative details is initially considered within the discourses from which they are taken. In this way the integrity of the sources is preserved, and material is less likely to be taken out of context and used to serve the purposes of an externally imposed, overarching evidential structure. This has been an important part of the interdisciplinary method of the thesis, and it should be seen as an explicit response to criticisms of the New Historicist approach.¹

Recent work on domestic tragedy has tended to be interdisciplinary in approach, a response motivated by the generic insistence of the plays upon their contemporary relevance and their relationship to historical events. In 1983, Kate McLuskie argued for a rethinking of the relationship between literary and historical enquiry, stating that "Evidence from literature has been conspicuously absent from recent writing on the social history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." Her initial suggestion is that "It is the relationship between subject matters and the implied audience which merits

¹ See for instance Anne Barton's review of Stephen Greenblatt's *Learning to Curse: Essays in Modern Culture*, where she stresses that texts "have internal as well as external 'resonances.' Their parts respond to one another, are conditioned by their immediate as well as by their social and historical surroundings, in ways which he is willing to ignore", in *The New York Review of Books*, March 28th 1991, pp. 51-4.

attention, rather than the truth or otherwise of the subject matter itself’, and that this will give access to the “ideological project” which lies behind the deceptively “simple ‘reflection’ of...life” which domestic tragedy presents.²

Since then, the genre has been ‘explained’ by reference to many different kinds of contemporary sources. Laura Bromley has seen *A Woman Killed With Kindness* as a dramatic version of the conduct books of gentlemanly behaviour;³ Garret Sullivan and James Keller have identified the importance of changing attitudes towards land ownership in the wake of the Reformation in *Arden of Faversham*;⁴ and several writers have explored the relationship of the plays to political theories of patriarchal control.⁵ These treatments of the plays, while usefully situating them in relation to other cultural preoccupations, fail to address McLuskie’s call for an analysis of the relationship between text and audience.

Viviana Comensoli’s recent book *Household Business* does consider a contemporary engagement with the plays in performance.⁶ Her chapter on ‘Domestic Tragedy and Private Life’ brings considerable and varied source material about the operation of the early modern house to bear upon the texts, and the analysis which this permits is very fruitful.⁷ The one area which she does not investigate is the audience’s means of access to knowledge of the domestic interior.⁸ As a result, there are points where she

² Kate McLuskie, “‘Tis but a woman’s jar’: Family and Kinship in Elizabethan Domestic Drama’, *Literature and History* 9, 1983, pp. 228, 232.

³ Laura G. Bromley, ‘Domestic Conduct in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*’, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1986, pp. 259-276.

⁴ Garrett A. Sullivan, “‘Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground’: surveying, land, and *Arden of Faversham*’, *English Literary History*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 1994, pp. 231-252; and James R. Keller, ‘Arden’s Land Acquisitions and the Dissolution of the Monasteries’, *English Language Notes*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1993, pp. 20-24.

⁵ See, for instance, Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, chapter 2; Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars, Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, *passim*.

⁶ Viviana Comensoli, *Household Business*, *Domestic Plays of Early Modern England*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. See for instance, “Heywood’s audience would recognise that Anne’s punishment...is psychologically more effective than outright physical violence”, p. 81, although they would be unlikely to appreciate the issue in terms of psychology.

⁷ See chapter 3. Orlin does similar work in her analysis of the study in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, *Private Matters*, pp. 182-9, but her conclusion about consumerism in *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is insufficiently periodized, moving dizzyingly between four inventories from Oxfordshire from the 1550-60s and the 1580s; Victor Skipp’s quantitative inventory data from “the Arden region...during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”; Harrison’s *Description of England* from the 1580s; and the visual and descriptive cornucopia of Holme’s *Academy of Armory*, published in 1688, 83 years after the play was published.

⁸ She does not, for instance, make any distinction between the social significance of a bed, owned by the majority of an audience, and a lute, which very few would ever have possessed, p. 83.

too reads the texts from a privileged critical position which offers little help in understanding the range of contemporary perception.⁹ A historicised approach to the meanings available to an audience is what this thesis attempts, aware at all times that it is an exercise in probability and imaginative reconstruction.

Domestic space as a subject of historical enquiry is related to the concerns of many other types of study, for instance by literary critics and philosophers. It is a subject which is of interest to historians of art, architecture, furniture, privacy, towns, and modes of production; but as a consideration of rooms and the objects with which they are filled, it is also related to theories of property, of consumption, and of the symbolic value of objects.

Much of the work of cultural historians touches only tangentially on evidence for the composition of household interiors, as it aims to chart changing attitudes to everyday life over large periods of time.¹⁰ And while there are many editions of published inventories, there are few interpretive studies of the physical household for the early modern period.¹¹ Work on the houses themselves, studied as extant buildings, is footnoted as contextual material in the following chapter, and the findings of the thesis as regards the provisioning of rooms will provide a much needed, detailed analogue to work of this kind.

Studies of the provincial society in which such houses were situated, despite concentrating on social and economic change, and the relationship between different social groups, do not consider contemporary perception. Peter Clark's wide-ranging analysis of Kentish society in the early modern period makes no attempt to suggest the experience of the members of that society, the way in which they perceived their relationship to their neighbours, or the discourses in which they represented their understanding of provincial life. This thesis approaches such ideas through the objects with which people filled their houses, and in which their social status was made manifest.

⁹ See for instance, p. 94, "Like Alice Arden, Anne comes to realise that a public self is unavailable to a married woman beyond her identity as someone's wife".

¹⁰ See for instance Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life, Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, Vol. I, New York: Harper and Row, 1981, Ch. 4; Roger Chartier ed., *Passions of the Renaissance*, in the series *A History of Private Life*, general eds., Philippe Aries and Georges Duby, Cambridge Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1989, *passim.*, but especially chs. 2&3.

The growing number of works on the study of property has raised many issues of consideration for this thesis. The essays in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* mainly treat the relationship between the individual and the state, as they address the issue of ‘private ownership’.¹² Topics such as political theory, legal ideology, and literary property are addressed, but the consideration of property “in the context of the family”, as mediating the status of individuals within the same household, is of central interest in the following chapters. Also vital to what follows is the assertion that “the ownership of different kinds of property [is] apt to produce different sorts of people”, and the use of property in the ‘construction of a self’ is particularly pertinent to notions of the sixteenth-century house.¹³

The study of possessions which has most greatly influenced this thesis, however, is *The Social Life of Things*, because of the attention which it focuses upon the meanings inherent in the individual object. All the essays in the collection, but Igor Kopytoff’s in particular, focus attention upon the form, the uses, and the perceived value of objects; and upon the places and situations in which they can be viewed as exchangeable commodities.¹⁴

Studies of consumption and consumer culture are also relevant to the material of this thesis, although they, like works about property, rarely consider the contribution of the sixteenth century, focusing instead on the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries as the beginning of the ‘modern’ era.¹⁵ Nevertheless the questions raised by these works, about the cultural value placed upon particular objects and the relevance of their practical value in the household, provide useful analytical tools with which to approach sixteenth-century documents.¹⁶ Bourdieu’s *Distinction* makes the theoretical

¹¹ For details of published inventories and works which use them see the introduction to Chapter 2 below.

¹² John Brewer, and Susan Staves eds., *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, London: Routledge, 1995, Part III. Amy Louise Erickson’s *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, London: Routledge, 1993 lists the legal position with regards to women’s rights over property, and contrasts this with actual practice.

¹³ Brewer ed., *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, Part IV.

¹⁴ Igor Kopytoff, ‘The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process’, in Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things, Cultural Commodities in Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 64-91.

¹⁵ See, for instance, John Brewer, and Roy Porter eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London: Routledge, 1993; Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760*, London: Routledge, 1988; Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects, The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

¹⁶ See Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images, Patterns of Modern Materialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, New York, 1983, who does date materialist tendencies to the sixteenth century.

link between the desire for objects and the definition of social status. He seeks, in “the structure of the social classes the basis of the systems of classification which structure perception of the social world and designate the objects of aesthetic enjoyment.”¹⁷

Philosophical texts about space have dealt mainly with urban environments as contexts for daily life. Henri Lefebvre’s 1974 *The Production of Space*, and Michel de Certeau’s 1984 *The Practice of Everyday Life* both deal with the political potential of spaces. The former considers the construction of towns as representations of a dominant capitalist ideology, and the latter, more pertinent to this thesis, the relationship between social status and use of space.¹⁸ The approach these books suggest to buildings, as a language of power which is read instinctively by those within a community, and to the spaces of the town as sites of negotiation between different social groups, can be seen to be directly applicable to the hierarchised and yet physically integrated society of the sixteenth-century town.

Gaston Bachelard’s early philosophy of ‘intimate places’, *The Poetics of Space*, considers the importance of protective, bounded spaces in everyday life. He maps out an experience of domestic space which considers it both as a physical context and as an emotive, affective image in the mind. “I shall prove”, he says “that imagination augments the values of reality”.¹⁹ This thesis gauges the possible resonances of individuals’ notions of their houses which can be extrapolated from sixteenth-century sources.

Certain fundamental ideas about domesticity underlie the following analysis. Firstly, the household is understood as a physical entity, and as a group of people. These two forms are seen to be interdependent, and the links between them are explored. Secondly, the house is seen to be a meeting place between the personal and the cultural. The objects with which it is filled have been ‘produced’, their meanings and definitions are culturally constructed (suitable/unsuitable; luxurious/frugal); but they also have a very personal significance as particular instances of generic objects. This

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction, A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Trans. Richard Nice, London: Routledge, 1984pp. xiii-xiv.

¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, first published in English, Trans. Donald Nicholson Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

¹⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans., Marion Jolas, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. p. 3, first published in French in 1958.

conjunction of cultural (general) and particular meanings is taken to define the individual's place within society. Social status may be expressed and understood by individuals through the physical nature of their domestic environment. Of contemporary relevance and of twentieth-century interest is not only the nomenclature of status, but the experience of it: what it means in practical terms to be a gentleman or a wage-labourer.

A vast amount of sources are potentially pertinent to a study of the nature and implications of domesticity in this period, but few bear directly upon the reconstruction of the experience of it. The second chapter of the thesis uses the wills and inventories of Kentish men and women to define the interior of the late sixteenth-century house, through an investigation of the nature and significance of household possessions. It reconstructs experiential differences between the rich and the poor, between urban and rural households, as they were made manifest in their domestic spaces. In this task the thesis replicates the contemporary comprehension of the particular in terms of the general: the awareness an individual has of her or his own house in relation to her or his experience of the houses of others.

The evidence for the furniture and furnishings of domestic interiors provided by inventories is unique. They usually list all the goods of which a person was possessed at the time of their death, in room order, giving each a price. No other documents permit the description of the domestic interior, and the ones for Kent survive in substantial numbers. Although not without problems of interpretation, it is the only source which allows rooms to be reconstructed in terms of the objects which they contain.²⁰ As furniture is suggestive of use, it is possible to suggest the activities which may have taken place within different parts of the house, and the perceived nature and importance of the rooms in relation to one another.

Will evidence modifies the aggregative nature of the quantitative evidence provided by the inventories. Revealing the significance of domestic objects as bequests between individuals, it is used in this thesis to provide information about the possible affective and mnemonic significance of household commodities. As items are bequeathed from one generation to the next, or from brother to sister, husband to wife,

²⁰ For the particular nature of the methodological problems inherent in each type of evidence, see the introduction to individual chapters.

those objects which rooms are more likely to contain can be seen to provide an intricate and personal form of self-definition.

The third chapter of the thesis investigates the ways in which space was understood as it was used: the moral implications of actions performed within the domestic environment. It uses the testimony given by deponents in the ecclesiastical courts of Canterbury in the second half of the sixteenth century. These depositions are drawn from the same broad range of social groups as the testamentary evidence, and the cases are generated by the same communities. The discourse of depositions is one which was culturally high-profile (the whole community was aware of both the particular cases and the significance of the rhetoric in which they were conducted), but not socially distinct. A consideration of this evidence for individuals' attitudes towards spatial practice, instead of that of conduct books and advice manuals for 'correct behaviour', is preferable because it can be shown to be a key part of the everyday perceptions of the majority of the population. It brings us much closer to an understanding of the way in which popular morality is constructed, as it simultaneously represents the moral position of the church and the constraints of popular culture.

The final section of Chapter 3 considers how individual experience might be approached by the historian. Although the depositions provide access to the perceived moral implications of actions, they do not reveal individual perceptions, as they (in common with all representations) modify memories of experience in the light of the particular demands of their generic form. However, by focusing on three very different cases, it is possible to suggest the nature of experience of the domestic spaces which are represented within them by considering the physical constitution of those rooms alongside the moral significance of the events within them. Experience is seen to be recoverable in the combination of physical and moral conceptions of space, in the fusion of its personal and its cultural significance.

The next chapter uses this information as evidence for a historically located perception of dramatic representations. Chapter 2 demonstrates distinctions between the composition of the urban and rural, rich and poor interiors, and suggests the consequent differences in the domestic activities and routines which might take place within them. Chapter 3 suggests that any given room will have different meanings for

the person observing it, ones which place an individual's own status in relation to that which the domestic displays. Chapter 4 considers the effect which such diverse perceptions have upon an understanding of representations of domestic life on the stage.

London in the late sixteenth century was a volatile population of new immigrants from the provinces, all trying to re-establish their particular definitions of social status in a new town.²¹ The knowledge which they brought with them of the representation of social groups was based upon the essentials of domestic organisation and behaviour. While the specificities were different for individuals from Kent and those from Essex (as they were for those from Canterbury and those from Sandwich), these were distinctions of degree rather than kind. The audience for those domestic tragedies played in London had their minds explicitly focussed upon ways of defining status within communities by their experience as immigrants, and the coherence of the evidence for Kentish perception makes it possible to understand the internal, relational workings of such systems.

Chapter 4 attempts to imagine the way in which domestic tragedies would have been understood by such people, with their particular comprehension of the domestic, and in a period when its meanings were being redefined. Initially, the use of stage properties in the construction of an image of domesticity is examined, and their methods of operation in conjunction with the imagination of the audience are considered. The interaction between rhetorical constructions of house and household and their physical manifestation on the stage are then explored as a context for the individual stage properties. Finally, the understanding of moralised social relations gained from Chapter 3 is applied to the wider concerns of these plays, with their particularly problematic uses of social space, and conclusions are drawn about the role of the drama in the renegotiation of the meanings of the domestic.

The conclusions which such an analysis invites are both in terms of the individual types of evidence considered (the importance of the particularity of domestic interiors and the significance of the moral relations between individuals), and in terms of the

²¹ A.L. Beier and Roger Finlay state that "Almost everyone was a migrant", *London 1500-1700, The Making of the Metropolis*, New York: Longman, 1986, p. 20; see also Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

consequences of such an interdisciplinary approach. They bear upon the specific nature of sixteenth-century Kentish society, and upon the general enterprise of cultural studies.

Chapter 2: Imagining Domestic Interiors From Testamentary Records

“Things are not outside of us, in measurable external space, like neutral objects...rather, they open us to the original place solely from which the experience of measurable external space becomes possible”. Giorgio Agamben *Stanzas, Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans., Ronald L. Martinez, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 59.

2.i. Introduction

2.i.a. Sources

This chapter examines the nature and function of the living space within the late sixteenth-century house. In order to do so, 1430 probate inventories have been analysed from the Archdeaconry and Consistory courts of Canterbury.¹ These represent all extant sixteenth-century inventories for the towns of Canterbury, Tenterden, Faversham and Sandwich, and for the villages of Bethersden and Woodnesborough.² The earliest inventories were made in the 1560s, when the registers begin, and they have been analysed up to the year 1600.³ These places have been chosen in order to elucidate the distinctions between rural and urban domestic interiors. Canterbury was the largest Kentish town in the period, with the closest links to the capital; Faversham, just off the main London road, was growing prodigiously in the second half of the sixteenth century as a result of thriving trade with the capital through its port; Sandwich and Tenterden, in two very different agrarian regions, had distinct economies: a fishing port on the coast and a Wealden clothmaking town on the edge of Romney Marsh respectively. The two villages lie close to them, but are separate enough to retain a rural identity.⁴

The largest number of documents survives for Canterbury, followed by Sandwich.

¹ See Bibliography for full details of the register books.

² The documents are divided as follows: Bethersden 128; Canterbury 582; Faversham 215; Sandwich 288; Tenterden 173; Woodnesborough 44. The goods of households headed by women are listed in 286 of these documents: just under 22% of the total.

³ In practice, this has meant stopping at the end of PRC 10.28, as the registers are not organised by year. Details of each item as listed in Table 1.1 have been recorded for each inventory in a relational database using Microsoft Access 97.

⁴ Other criteria used in the selection process were numbers of extant wills and inventories, which are considerable for all six places, and remarkably high for Bethersden relative to the size of its population;

These two towns have therefore been chosen for the analysis of different status groups. The broad trends in the domestic environments of these groups are explored to provide a range of disparate perceptions of the household. These distinct urban experiences are then used to examine the perceptions of groups of audience members in Chapter 4.

If the inventories are to be used to make claims about representative interiors, it is important to know how typical the houses they represent are likely to be. Inventories survive in smaller numbers than wills in this period, legally required only if a person died intestate, or if the executor was either unwilling or unable to undertake her or his duties.⁵ The documents which form this study, seen in the light of the will of the deceased in question, suggest, however, that practice was more variously motivated than the law stipulated. There were some discernible patterns of giving shared by the inventory makers as a whole. 12% wanted the residue of their estate, or all their household goods, to be divided between family members, and an additional 5.5% specifically asked for their household goods to be sold. These two categories are clearly related to a large degree, as the division of items must often have been achieved in monetary terms through their prior sale.

In addition, 8% (43) of the wills were nuncupative, providing very generalised accounts of the wishes of the deceased, usually in terms of the devolution of the entire estate to the wife. This appears to be linked to the above-mentioned legal requirement for an inventory to be produced for those who die intestate, and indeed some documents state at the start that they represent the 'goods of the intestate'.⁶ A further 4% (27) of testators were in service and were making their wills within the house of their master who often acted as overseer of the document.

The wishes of the inventoried testators are concerned with precise division of property, and elucidate the ways in which this had to be achieved by a weighing of the

surviving churchwardens' accounts and parish registers; the extent of available secondary research; extant early modern buildings; and instances of deposition material relating to the places.

⁵ The 1529 act 'What fees ought to be taken for probate of testaments' is detailed in Nancy and Jeff Cox, 'Probate inventories: the legal background, Part I', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1984, pp. 133-145; and 'Part II', Vol. 16, No. 4, 1984, pp. 217-228. Michael Zell, 'The social parameters of probate records in the sixteenth century' in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LVII, 1984, pp. 107-113, estimates that about half of the adult male population of Staplehurst were "noticed by the probate courts" in some form, hereafter 'Parameters of probate records'.

⁶ See for example PRC 10.19 f.74, 1560.

pros of one object against the cons of another. This suggests that it is their family circumstances and their attitude to inheritance, rather than their domestic interiors, which unite them as a group. The nuncupative wills and those made by servants indicate a need for a documented clarity of process, one which screens those present at the death from suspicion of impropriety with regard to the deceased's possessions, and legitimises their actions.

A typical inventory opens with a statement of the name, parish, and occasionally occupation, of the deceased, followed by a list of the names of those who have priced the goods they possessed at the time of their death. These goods are then listed, sometimes by room, sometimes by 'type', but sometimes without discernible pattern,⁷ and either given an individual value, or priced as part of a group with other items. The goods listed are those which belonged to the deceased, as opposed to those which were to be found in his or her house. Items which are either in other houses owned by the deceased, or in the use of other people at the time of their death (some of whom are clearly tenants in their properties), are also included.⁸ In some cases a total valuation is given for each room, but this is rare. In most instances there will be a total at the end of the document, but a significant number of the inventories lack even this final addition of the worth of the goods.

The instances where goods are grouped by type are very significant as they allow an insight into contemporary perceptions of the relationship between household items: plate, brass, pewter, linen and apparel, for instance, are frequently found as overarching descriptive categories. These generic classifications have in common both their economic value and the fact that they are frequently found 'in store'. Part of the reason for their separation from the rooms in which they must have been kept is that they are to be found in cupboards and chests, reserved and set apart as items which are not used every day. I have recorded the positioning of such 'stock' within the house where this is stated, in order to identify those areas thought suitable for the storing of valuable, infrequently used items.

⁷ Such random lists may represent the perambulations of the appraisers through the house, often implicitly being listed by room.

⁸ The document is, in other words, not always a record of a single house's furnishings, especially further up the scale of wealth. For this reason the analysis of rooms has used only these items explicitly listed in the named rooms, and discarded those in other places.

Apparel	Ladder
Armour ⁹	Lantern
Bed	Linen (general)
Bedding	Looking glass
Bedstead	Loom
Bench	Money ¹⁰
Book	Painted cloths
Carpet	Pewter
Chair	Picture
Chest	Plate (silver and gilt)
Cloth (unmade up)	Press
Close stool	Purse
Coffer	Settle
Cupboard	Shelf
Cupboard Cloth	Sideboard
Curtain	Spoon (silver)
Curtain (window)	Stool
Cushion	Storage ¹¹
Cushion (window)	Stuff (raw materials)
Desk	Table
Featherbed	Tablecloth
Flockbed	Tables (playing)
Fire equipment ¹²	Tester (for a bed)
Fittings ¹³	Tools (working)
Form	Trendle
Gear (equipment)	Trucklebed
Hangings	Wheel (spinning)
Instrument (musical)	Wool
Jewellery ¹⁴	Yarn
Kitchen equipment	

Table 2.1: Items recorded from inventory sample.

In addition, I have recorded all instances of furniture for seating, sleeping, and storing goods and all tables. This seems vital in order to gauge the relative function of rooms in terms of their provision of surfaces and spaces for the use of people and other goods. Fixtures and fittings have been recorded for the information they give about

⁹ Including all armour and weapons.

¹⁰ Including ready money, debts, and 'money in the hands of others'.

¹¹ Any receptacle other than those already listed.

¹² As a measurement of the enclosure of hearths and the provision of heating in upper floor rooms, this has only been noted for rooms other than halls, which would definitely have had fires.

¹³ Including all windows and their glass, all doors and wainscot or furniture which is attached to the walls.

¹⁴ Including every type of personal trinket, such as whistles and toothpicks, in addition to rings, brooches and beads.

relative levels of warmth and comfort and about the work which has been done upon a house.

I have listed all embellishments to rooms, such as painted cloths, hangings and curtains, and all 'personal items' (those things which are not of use in provisioning the domestic routine of the household, but are owned, handled and used by its inhabitants). In order to identify those rooms in which leisure time was spent, playing tables, books, and musical instruments have been recorded.

In order to glean the greatest amount of information about the use, as opposed to the construction, of houses from inventories, I have also recorded instances of tools and equipment and of the raw materials necessary for other processes, which are contained within the houses.

This information has not been recorded for every room within the house, partly because of the specific nature of this investigation, and partly because of the constraints of time and space (the above represents 50,000 items). A tentative and somewhat artificial distinction has been made between those areas in which people sleep or spend leisure time, and those in which they work, or store goods. The bulk of the evidence, therefore, pertains to chambers, halls and parlours. Stables, work houses, shops, kitchens, barns and other outhouses have been recorded in name only, to indicate the relative size of houses, as have lofts solely for the storing of consumables. The furnishings of chambers, as the name refers to both a room to sleep in and a storage or production area, have been recorded only when the room contains a bed.

2.i.b. The relationship between document and space

The choice of which items to record is influenced by and has implications for the theoretical relationship between inventories and spatial analysis. By using such documents to describe the structure and operation of the domestic environment one is implicitly moving between the objects themselves and the spaces which they inhabit. The inventory as a process, in theory at least, achieves total clarity, although its presentation is a product of the perceptions and value judgements of the person making it. Unlike the experience of a room, its level of embodiment appears total and

its eye is all-seeing. There are no areas of a house which remain unexamined. Perhaps most importantly though, those things which are intentionally reserved from sight by the householder are revealed in the production of the document. All items kept in chests, in cupboards, in coffers or in trunks are taken out, examined, noted and priced. These are not goods which are hidden, nor things which have been forgotten, they form a part of the strategy for the organisation of space which each household embarks upon in order to protect and order their possessions. The inventory, therefore, reveals strategies for arrangement, containment and preservation which keep the house running smoothly. In doing so, it divulges a great deal of information about the relative worth of the items which are most carefully set apart, and about the rooms in which they are stored.

Such information encourages a way of viewing these documents in terms of their presentation of 'spaces within spaces', of a series of containments where volumes become smaller and smaller inside one another. The typical inventory moves outwards from the literal and metaphorical centre of the home, the hall, to the upper rooms, and then outside to the yard, outhouses, stables and barns. The furthest limits of its vision of property are the land holdings of the deceased, but its main descriptive energies are expended upon the house itself, situated at the metaphorical centre of the fields of the property. Within its outer shell the rooms are named; any additions to their walls such as panelling or painted hangings are listed. The furniture which they contain is then enumerated, under its coverings of carpets and cloths, and those items which are stored within the furniture, are catalogued.

The construction of the document immediately suggests a spatial organisation, and shows the importance of reversing the processes of exposure which the record has made necessary. The items which I have chosen for this study therefore represent those which adorn, those which contain, and those which are contained. This choice facilitates the identification of potential and actual 'volume' within the house by recording those things which paradoxically both take up and contain space simultaneously. To imagine a room from the description given of it in an inventory is to see too much, although it may not be to know too much. There can be no doubt that one is able to see more than would normally be seen, but one may also be uncovering a set of visual clues which identify the whereabouts of certain kinds of object, either

because they are always invisible behind the same kind of façade, or because their presence is signalled by the position or embellishment of their container. In either case the information which we have about these interiors will have been equally evident to a contemporary observer. The codes by which it was made manifest are visual ones which deal with the manipulation of the gaze, and in order to reconstruct them, it is necessary to reconstitute the distinction between those parts of the interior which must have appeared the most prominent to the eye, and those which consequently faded somewhat into the background. Such codes contain vital cultural information about attitudes towards the items themselves and to the display of wealth within late sixteenth-century society. They provide a language which can be articulated both in the courts and on the stage.

Decisions about the positioning of furniture within specific rooms and the decorations which those rooms receive also carry social data. Working from the premise that anything added to a space suggests a particular intention with regard to that space, we must read furniture not only as the provision of the tools for potential actions, but also as a division of space, a way of configuring it which in fact precludes certain behaviour from taking place unless the organisation of the room is actively altered. The kinds of objects contained within a room, the numbers of them, their relative size and relationship with each other all characterise a space as constructed with particular facilities in relation to other spaces within the house.

It is also necessary to ask what those things which are stored away have in common with one another, and how items which are apparently left on show differ from them? Several inventories shed further light on the question by distinguishing between the contents of chests and coffers and items of the same type which are not kept with them. Martin Barrell of Sandwich, for example, has 10 pairs of coarse sheets with other linen 'going about the house',¹⁵ and Mary Watelier of Canterbury has napkins and tablecloths 'used commonly in the house', in addition to more valuable ones kept with her fabric.¹⁶ There appears to be a distinction being made here between the 'everyday' and the 'extraordinary', and analogously between the 'actual' and the 'potential'. It is possible to extend this comparison further to include the 'normal' and the 'ritual', pairs which are expressed spatially through the positioning of items within

¹⁵ PRC 10.23 f.84, 1594.

particular rooms. By considering the equipment available for special occasions, the ways in which it is described and distinguished, and its relation to everyday items in use at all times, conclusions can be drawn about the nature of extraordinary events. Their relation to the everyday, and their mediation through, symbolism by, and organisation around the domestic object and its spatial context may be elucidated.

The nature of objects and spaces are of interest here because they give suggestions of the actions of people. Depositions in the ecclesiastical courts provide evidence of the effect of pragmatic considerations on spatial practice. For instance, the scribe attending a deathbed might ordinarily write upon a desk set up on a table, but within the cramped confines of the chamber, he is often forced to lean on a flat-topped chest, or even on the bed itself. While it would be perverse to consider the presence of a chest as an indication of the requirement for a writing surface, it is important to consider every surface as having such potential.

Touch must be just as important a sense to consider as sight for the relationship between people and objects. One of the main distinctions between rooms is the level of 'comfort' which they provide for their inhabitants, and this term, if it has any contemporary meaning at all, suggests a connection between the tactile qualities of the environment and physical contentment which makes time spent in the space more pleasurable.

In some ways, then, the nature of objects may be seen to mediate and control the relationship between people and spaces. Conversely and simultaneously, people alter spaces by filling them with objects. A study of inventories is therefore able to comment upon both individual acts of manipulation of space, and the wider social and cultural sets of meanings within which those acts function.

2.i.c. Problems with the source material

The probate inventory as a source for large-scale quantitative analysis was first utilised in the study of farming practices.¹⁷ Inventories have also been employed in

¹⁶ PRC 21.8 f.85, 1584.

¹⁷ Michael Zell, 'The social parameters of probate records in the sixteenth century' in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LVII, 1984, p.108; see, as examples of such a use, the work of Mark Overton: 'English probate inventories and the measurement of agricultural change' in Van der Woude, Ad and Anton Schuurman eds., *Probate Inventories, A new source for the historical study of wealth*,

increasing numbers by historians of both urban and rural society who have found them an important source for the study of employment and by-employment.¹⁸ More recently they have also become central to the investigation of an emergent consumer culture, the boundaries of which are being pushed back to the end of the sixteenth century as a result of increasing data about the possession of different kinds of household objects.¹⁹

Each of these areas of research relies upon the purported claim of the inventory to list all of the goods of which the deceased was possessed. But there are clearly question marks hanging over the comprehensiveness of the documents, and these must be explicitly addressed by every study which makes claims based on quantified inventory data.

Legally, the inventory must list the moveable goods which have been devolved to the administrator or executor of the estate.²⁰ Those items not considered moveable,²¹ and those distributed via the will, may not, therefore, have been included. In either case, the resultant document is incomplete, and it therefore seems safer to argue solely from the *presence* of goods in the inventory, rather than their absence, an impression reinforced by the many possible reasons for a lack of rigour on the part of the appraisers. Margaret Spufford points out the possibility of an ironic approach to

material culture and agricultural development: Papers presented at the Leeuwenborch Conference (Wageningen, 5-7 May 1980), Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1980, pp. 205-216, and, more recently, Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England, The transformation of the agrarian economy 1500-1850*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. See also Victor Skipp, *Crisis and Development, an ecological case study of the Forest of Arden 1570-1674*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, Ch. 7.

¹⁸ See, for example, Graham Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* CCE University of Sussex, 1987, *passim*.; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640, the Growth of an English County Town*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975, especially Ch. 10; Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1973, especially Chs. 7-13; for rural society, see Michael Zell, *Industry in the Countryside, Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, *passim*, hereafter *Industry in the Countryside*.

¹⁹ See Jean-Christophe Agnew's useful assessment of the literature on this subject, which notes the recent attempts at reperiodization which push the origins of a consumer culture back to the early modern period; 'Coming up for air: consumer culture in historical perspective', in John Brewer and Roy Porter eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp 19-39; and Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images, patterns of modern materialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, New York. For the seventeenth century see Lorna Weatherill *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760*, London: Routledge, 1988.

²⁰ Margaret Spufford, 'The limitations of the probate inventory', in John Chartres and David Hey eds., *English Rural Society 1500-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.142; hereafter 'Limitations of the probate inventory'.

²¹ See Nancy and Jeff Cox, 'Probate inventories: the legal background, Part I', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1984, pp. 133-145, and 'Part II', Vol. 16, No. 4, 1984, pp. 217-228, for a fuller discussion of such exclusions.

negative evidence in the case of a ubiquitous item whose presence may have been assumed: “An increased rarity of comment thus perversely argues a spread of usage”.²² Add to this the probable failure to list items of little financial worth, and the frequent ‘silent inclusion’ of items such as bedding, featherbed and bedstead within a term such as ‘bed’, and the wisdom of concentrating upon those objects which are present, elucidated by the available qualitative material, becomes clear.

The other main area of concern is caused by the frequent exclusion of debts owed by or owing to the deceased.²³ This, combined with the fact that not all property is not included in the documents, makes the final totals very misleading as a measure of total wealth. Spufford’s comparison of inventories for three status groups with other documentation about their wealth uncovers discrepancies between the value of their moveables and their total estate. But this deficit highlights the positive value of a study of household goods. The divergence of wealth, named status and domestic comfort, while frustrating precise economic comparison, clearly suggests a contemporary distinction based on self-presentation which can be observed, rather than money owned, which cannot.²⁴

In order to investigate these differences, we must be clear about the nature of the comparisons between items which are being made. Nancy and Jeff Cox’s work demonstrates that the values given to items by appraisers “reflect variations in quality and market forces rather than random appraisal”.²⁵ However, while this might allay fears about the precision of the values, it also highlights the most essential problem faced when describing the relative nature of interiors: that of comparing like with like. If a common item can have an enormous range of values, then what we are looking at is evidence for an equally broad range of items, distinguishable to the contemporary eye by material, colour, and applied work, but still accurately represented by the generic heading ‘chair’.

²² Spufford, ‘Limitations of the probate inventory’, p.150

²³ Debts due to the deceased are often only listed when they have been paid; see Cox, ‘Probate inventories: the legal background’, II, p. 223.

²⁴ See also Zell’s problem with the distinction between ‘householder’ and ‘poor householder’ in the parish registers, and his conclusions about the social parameters of probate records: “It would seem that an informal but commonly understood calculus of wealth and social status determined whether a man would or would not be noticed by the probate courts”, ‘Parameters of probate records’, p. 112.

²⁵ N and J Cox, ‘Valuations in probate inventories: Part II’, *The Local Historian*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1986, p. 472

The best solution to this problem is the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The vagaries of practice of different appraisers then become a blessing, as their interest in particular items, and the increased detail of description which results from it, allows a fragmentary picture of the relationship between value and form to be built up. Working analogously from values to descriptions with values, it is possible to suggest the range of features which might increase or decrease the price given to an item.

2.ii. Model Rooms

2.ii.a. Introduction

This section examines the main rooms within the late sixteenth-century house, in order to determine their average composition. Pragmatically this is necessary in order to establish the particularities of urban and rural, higher- and lower-status interiors, by comparing them against a ‘typical’ model. The evidence for this section has been taken from all six of the places under consideration and spans the whole time period of the study in order to give it the broadest possible base. The total number of rooms under consideration amounts to 2338 chambers, 833 halls, and 467 parlours.²⁶ As said above, the total value given in inventories is highly problematic as a definition of wealth. However, for the purposes of this study it provides an approximate guide to which to attach the evidence for levels of domestic provision, and elucidates some broad divisions of economic status. Of the 1230 documents with totals given, the highest total in this data set is £1227 12s 6d,²⁷ and the lowest 13s 2d.²⁸ The median average inventory value is £26 16s 10d, and the mean £67 11s 6d. As this immediately suggests, and Table 2.2 demonstrates, the majority of estates are at the lower end of the scale, 68% valued at under £50.

²⁶ The generic ‘house’, both in external shape and internal organisation, had undergone a radical change within living memory. The houses to which this information refers may well not have been built in the sixteenth century, but are very likely to have been recently adapted to include a brick chimney stack and a ceiled hall. See Sarah Pearson, *The Medieval Houses of Kent: An Historical Analysis*, London: HMSO, 1994, hereafter *Medieval Houses of Kent*; Judith Roberts, ‘Tenterden Houses: A Study of the Domestic Buildings of a Kent Parish in their Social and Economic Environment’, PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1990, hereafter ‘Tenterden houses’.

²⁷ PRC 21.11 f.203, inventory of John Rose, alderman of Canterbury, 1591.

²⁸ PRC 10.18 f.246, inventory of the widow of John Hills of Canterbury, 1590.

Value of inventory totals in pounds	% of inventories (number)
0-9	23 (283)
10-19	19 (239)
20-29	12 (146)
30-39	8 (97)
40-49	6 (70)
50-59	4 (50)
60-69	3 (37)
70-79	2 (28)
80-89	3 (40)
90-99	2 (21)
100-109	2 (21)
110-119	2 (19)
120-129	1 (16)
130-139	1 (9)
140-149	1 (10)
150-199	4 (45)
200-399	1 (18)
400-499	1 (10)
500-999	2 (21)
1000+	0.2 (3)
	(1230 total)

Table 2.2: Value of inventory totals.

This section draws upon the full range of items recorded for all inventories. In order to focus upon the provision of particular facilities within each room, though, the general list²⁹ has been arranged into several initial categories: furniture (seating, storage and miscellaneous); bedding (beds, bedsteads and their fabric appurtenances); decorations (carpets, cushions and hangings); working gear; and household stores. Each of these will be dealt with in turn in the succeeding sections, building into an increasingly detailed picture of the three rooms.

2.ii.b. Furniture

As it is furniture which most significantly limits and divides room-space, it seems

²⁹ See the discussion above, p. 13.

logical to begin by describing the amounts accommodated within each of the rooms.³⁰ Table 2.3 demonstrates that the hall provided a greater percentage of each kind of seating than either of the other rooms, at between 40% and 50% of the total listed in each instance. The chamber and the parlour, however, are less easily characterised. The chamber has more benches, more forms, and is a room in which the more formal chair was prevalent, and where the smaller and lighter stool, more portable and informal, was scarcer. All this in contradistinction to the parlour. The hall has the

Item	Total no. of item appearing in chamber, hall or parlour	Item in chamber as % of total no. of item	Item in hall as % of total no. of item	Item in parlour as % of total no. of item
Bench	111	27.93 (31)	58.56 (65)	13.51 (15)
Stool	4279	21.55 (922)	45.43 (1944)	33.02 (1413)
Form	1740	34.83 (606)	45.00 (783)	20.17 (351)
Chair	2576	29.66 (764)	51.28 (1321)	19.06 (491)
Settle	466	28.54 (133)	46.14 (215)	25.32 (118)
Desk	148	35.14 (52)	33.11 (49)	31.76 (47)
Close stool	55	81.82 (45)	9.09 (5)	9.09 (5)
Shelf	102	46.08 (47)	53.92 (55)	0.00 (0)
Table	2611	36.50 (953)	42.40 (1107)	21.10 (551)
Coffer	182	75.82 (138)	8.24 (15)	15.93 (29)
Chest	4015	81.12 (3257)	4.73 (190)	14.15 (568)
Cupboard	1528	26.70 (408)	50.33 (769)	22.97 (351)
Press	332	52.11 (173)	32.53 (108)	15.36 (51)
Other Storage	465	69.89 (325)	18.49 (86)	11.61 (54)

Table 2.3: Items in each room as % of total no. appearing in chamber, parlour and hall.³¹

largest proportion of tables, more than one per room on average. This has implications for the desks, which were often placed upon tables. The actual numbers involved are fairly similar, but, proportional to the number of rooms, there are slightly more to be

³⁰ See Appendix 1 for generic images of sixteenth-century furniture. Each of these examples is specific to the status of its owner, and they are intended to give a rough guide only.

³¹ The total represented here is produced by the addition of all the items to be found in named chambers, parlours and halls, and the percentage is ascertained by dividing the number of items per room by this number. While this excludes some of the items present in the data set which are not within named rooms, it removes any anomalies which might be caused by counting items for which the room is not specified.

found in parlours. Shelves are only to be found in chambers and halls, and then more frequently in the latter. Finally, the close stool can be seen, as might be expected, to feature most prominently in the chamber.

The concentration of the various types of storage facility is similarly clearly weighted in favour of one room, this time the chamber. Only the cupboard is less prevalent there, appearing most frequently in the hall, where its ability to display items in a more open fashion was perhaps most desirable. Cupboards are, after halls, numerically more prevalent in chambers, but one would be found in three out of every four parlours, as opposed to under a fifth of the chambers in the sample. The press, most common in the chamber, is more common in the hall than the parlour, but coffers, chests and other storage facilities are statistically more likely to be found in the parlour than the hall. This presents a clear hierarchy for the maintenance of covered storage, firstly in the chamber, and then in the parlour, much less commonly in the hall; leaving only the cupboard with its different methods of storage more frequently found there.

Item	Total no. of item in chamber, hall or parlour	Item in chamber as % of total no. of item	Item in hall as % of total no. of item	Item in parlour as % of total no. of item
Linen	707	67.04 (474)	5.52 (39)	27.44 (194)
Tablecloth	3595	81.28 (2922)	3.56 (128)	15.16 (545)
Money	25	52.00 (13)	32.00 (8)	16.00 (4)
Jewellery	111	36.94 (41)	39.64 (15)	23.42 (26)
Plate	284	61.97 (176)	11.27 (32)	26.76 (76)
Purse	124	34.68 (43)	47.58 (59)	17.74 (22)
Pewter	317	43.85 (139)	43.53 (138)	12.62 (40)
Spoon (silver)	853	61.08 (521)	13.25 (113)	25.67 (219)
Brass	328	65.85 (216)	14.94 (49)	19.21 (63)

Table 2.4: Household stores in each room as % of total appearing in chamber, parlour or hall.

Table 2.4 shows the distribution of the range of items which might have been kept in the chests and cupboards in each room. There is a hierarchy here which sees the hall as the least likely place in which to keep valuable household items, followed by the parlour, leaving the chamber as the most commonly chosen room. This is especially clear with respect to the household stores of linen, epitomised by the tablecloth which

was virtually non-existent in the hall. Silver plate was divided between the rooms in a similar ratio to linen, very crudely 65:25:10, for chamber, parlour and hall respectively. The same can also be seen to be true of brass.³²

The hall supersedes the parlour in the case of money, the purse of the deceased, and pewter, but it is the least likely place to keep jewels and other personal silver items.³³ Pewter, however, is a very different matter, and its almost identical presence in the chamber and the hall, representing over 80% of the total between them, seems closely linked to methods of storage.³⁴ Within the hall it must either have been

Item	Total no. of item in chamber, hall or parlour	Item in chamber as % of total no. of item	Item in hall of total as % no. of item	Item in parlour as % of total no. of item
Bedstead	2826	85.70 (2422)	2.83 (80)	11.46 (324)
Bedding	920	81.96 (754)	3.26 (30)	14.78 (136)
Bed	391	85.93 (336)	3.32 (13)	10.74 (42)
Featherbed	2236	81.66 (1826)	2.91 (65)	15.43 (345)
Flockbed	1157	87.81 (1016)	3.20 (37)	8.99 (104)
Trucklebed	762	80.97 (617)	3.02 (23)	16.01 (122)
Tester	426	82.86 (353)	2.35 (10)	14.79 (63)
Valance	167	82.04 (137)	2.40 (4)	15.57 (26)
Total bedding per room	8885	83.97 (7461)	2.95 (262)	13.08 (1162)

Table 2.5: Bedding in each room as % of total appearing in chamber, parlour and hall.

‘on show’, placed upon one of the furniture surfaces, or within the cupboards which appear to have been so numerous there. In such a position, it is presumably both visible and therefore impressive, and also to hand should its use be required. Within the chamber it is clearly less accessible and less visible, and would appear to be kept

³² Lorna Weatherill compares East Kent inventories to those of London for the period 1675-1725, along with those for other parts of the country. Her analysis of the position of Kentish towns in relation to the urban areas of London shows the former exceeding the latter in possession of books, pictures, table linen and silverware, but having less looking glasses and window curtains. The comparison, although much later, is interesting in that it suggests that Kent towns at least kept pace with the capital, and exceeded other areas in almost every category, Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, Table 4.3, p. 80.

³³ The purse and its contents are invariably listed first in an inventory, and frequently under the initial heading ‘In primis, in the hall’, suggesting either that people actually kept their purse and girdle in the hall, which seems unlikely, or that after the death of the subject of the inventory, the purse was locked away, perhaps in the chest which contained the rest of his or her money. This might then be brought into the hall at the arrival of the appraisers, as the most financially significant collection of goods.

in chests.

The vast majority of the beds within the three rooms are found in the chamber, and the hall is a room with very little provision for sleeping. If we consider the number of beds on average per room, the results are startling. This has been calculated by adding the number of bedsteads to the number of 'beds', a term which seems to signify the whole unit of the bed. Not including trucklebeds, (a reckoning of the spatial volume of bedding, rather than an indication of the number of people who could sleep in each room) the results show 1.2 beds per chamber; 0.8 per parlour; and 0.1 per hall. If trucklebeds are taken into consideration too, an average sleeping capacity of 1.4 in each chamber; 1 in each parlour; and still 0.1 per hall is indicated. The change in the figures for parlour and chamber here suggest that the majority of servants were sleeping in these rooms, as they often used the lower-quality, moveable beds.

While the bias of these statistics is perhaps not surprising, the levels of provision are. When one considers that this sample includes really very small houses, and a number of inventories for those who live within the house of others, the nature of the hall as a place which is unsuitable for sleeping, and the division of use between the chamber and the parlour, often thought to be quite similar in this period, are particularly distinct.

Table 2.6 gives information about working practices, mainly in the chamber and the hall. The only category in which the parlour features significantly is that of the stores of finished cloth, either made within the house or bought as the raw materials with which to make clothing and furnishings. In all the other categories there are clear connections between the rooms in which stocks of raw and finished materials are kept and those places which house the tools of various trades. The occupations which are represented in detail here are those of the cloth industry, and such work was clearly being pursued in a certain kind of chamber, one which probably contained wool as well as a spinning wheel, but in which people also slept at night.

The 'gear' category refers to evidence of other occupations, and these are more prevalent in the hall. Included within this category would be brewing equipment, husbandry tools, cards for wool, tailors' gear and shoemakers' equipment.

³⁴ There are, of course, large additional concentrations of pewter in the buttery and the kitchen.

Parlours, then, are generally free of the tools and materials of manufacture. These are divided between halls and chambers, the latter represented by a certain kind of chamber in which work is carried on during the day, but which is used for sleeping at night.

Item	Total no. of item in chamber, hall or parlour	Item in chamber as % of total no. of item	Item in hall of total as % of total no. of item	Item in parlour as % of total no. of item
loom	11	63.64 (7)	36.36 (4)	0.00 (0)
gear	914	14.77 (135)	84.25 (770)	0.98 (9)
tools	17	70.59 (12)	17.65 (3)	11.76 (2)
trendle	81	51.85 (42)	41.98 (34)	6.17(5)
wheel	222	63.06 (140)	33.33 (74)	3.60 (8)
wool	41	82.93 (34)	9.76 (4)	7.32 (3)
yarn	55	76.36 (42)	14.55 (8)	9.09 (5)
cloth	218	62.84 (137)	16.51 (36)	20.64 (45)

Table 2.6: Working tools and stores per room as % of total appearing in chamber, parlour and hall.

Item	Total no. of item in chamber, hall or parlour	Item in chamber as % of total no. of item	Item in hall of total as % of total no. of item	Item in parlour as % of total no. of item
Book	489	31.90 (156)	47.65 (233)	20.45 (100)
Armour	898	50.11 (450)	38.98 (350)	10.91 (98)
Musical instruments	38	18.42 (7)	44.74 (17)	36.84 (14)
Playing tables	129	7.75 (10)	57.36 (74)	34.88 (45)
Looking glass	73	41.10 (30)	34.25 (25)	24.66 (18)
Lantern	29	68.97 (20)	27.59 (8)	3.45 (1)
Fire stuff	424	57.31 (243)	Not recorded	42.68 (181)
Apparel per room	3122	73.29 (2288)	7.14 (223)	19.57 (611)

Table 2.7: Miscellaneous items as % of total appearing in chamber, parlour and hall.

Table 2.7 lists several objects to be found within the rooms which do not sit easily in any of the other categories. Firstly, books are to be found in reasonable numbers in all three rooms.³⁵ The largest number are in the hall, followed by the chamber, and then the parlour, which suggests that all rooms could provide a suitable context either for reading or for display of the book-as-object.

³⁵ For a more detailed study of book ownership in Kent, see Peter Clark 'The ownership of books in England 1560-1640: the example of some Kentish townfolk' in Lawrence Stone ed. *Schooling and Society* John Hopkins University Press 1976, pp. 95-111.

Collective activities are suggested by the figures for musical instruments and playing tables. The ordering of the rooms is the same for both categories, with the greatest numbers being present in the hall, followed by the parlour. This suggests a related hierarchy of rooms in which groups of people might spend leisure time.

Looking glasses are to be found in all three rooms, but interestingly not in the same proportions as clothing is distributed. Whereas the latter is considerably more prevalent in the chamber, and comparatively insignificant in the hall, halls contain more looking glasses than parlours. Perhaps this suggests that they were used when leaving the house, rather than when dressing, and if this is the case, it sheds interesting light on the relationship between the house and the street outside.

The presence of lanterns in hall and chamber suggests a transition between, or movement out of, rooms. It indicates the times at which the hall might be vacated, perhaps in favour of the chamber. The presence of fire equipment in a tenth of chambers suggests the progress of alteration and the numbers of houses which have built-in chimneys with fireplaces on upper floors, or behind the main stack in the hall. Even considering the number of working and storage chambers, the percentage is small, indicating many small properties. Finally, the chamber also contains the largest concentration of weapons and armour, followed by the hall. It seems possible that, as has been suggested with so many other categories, this represents a division between weapons which might be needed with little notice, and armour or firearms which might only be used occasionally.

Having examined the furniture and objects with which the rooms were filled, the last category to be considered is that of the embellishments with which they were decorated.³⁶ If painted cloths and hangings are taken together, half the halls and almost half the chambers would have one, and 0.6% of the parlours would have its walls decorated with a hanging of some kind. This suggests a need for both the increased warmth and the ornamentation which such items provide in all rooms and the possibility of providing it in a percentage of the houses in the survey.

³⁶ The detailed information about *architectural* decoration provided in P.S. Barnwell and A.T. Adams, *The House Within, Interpreting Medieval Houses in Kent*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, London: HMSO, 1994, should be considered in conjunction with this evidence.

Item	Total no. of item in chamber, hall or parlour	Item in chamber as % of total no. of item	Item in hall of total as % of total no. of item	Item in parlour as % of total no. of item
Cupboard cloth	881	43.02 (379)	34.05 (300)	22.93 (202)
Cushion	4855	28.84 (1400)	41.28 (2004)	29.89 (1451)
Cushion (window)	91	53.85 (49)	17.58 (16)	28.57 (26)
Carpet	634	50.00 (317)	20.98 (133)	29.02 (184)
Curtain	1488	73.32 (1091)	3.23 (48)	23.45 (349)
Curtain (window)	201	45.77 (92)	14.93 (30)	39.30 (79)
Hangings	433	60.05 (260)	20.32 (88)	19.63 (85)
Painted cloths	1247	55.25 (689)	27.91 (348)	16.84 (210)
Picture	363	26.45 (96)	34.44 (125)	39.12 (142)
Total embellishments	10193	42.90 (4373)	30.33 (3092)	26.76 (2728)
% of rooms with embellishments		5.0	3.2	5.8

Table 2.8: Embellishments as % of total appearing in chamber, parlour and hall.

The comparatively small amount of curtains which we know to have hung at windows rather than around beds shows an altered hierarchy of rooms: in this case 0.16% of parlours would have had a fabric protection from light and cold, as opposed to 0.04% of chambers, barely more than halls. It seems likely that this is linked to the position of parlours on the ground floor, and therefore demonstrates a concern with privacy as much as light. The figures for window cushions are also intriguing, as they appear to have been most common in chambers in numerical terms. As a percentage of the number of rooms, however, they are more likely to be found in parlours (0.02:0.06). As they provide daytime seating close to the best source of light, they may indicate reading or other close work.

Curtains in general are most prevalent in chambers and parlours, where they surround the bedding already identified in these rooms. Similarly cushions are more common in halls where the numbers of seats have already been seen to be highest. Cupboard cloths are found in greatest numbers in the chambers, despite the fact that the largest concentration of cupboards is in the hall. This suggests that the majority of them are not in use there, but are being stored in chests and presses. Finally pictures, although

they are present in some numbers in every room, are especially prevalent in the parlour, a fact which is more strongly brought out as a percentage of the total number of rooms. One third of all parlours contained them, as opposed to just over a tenth of halls, and 0.04% of chambers.

Although many of the percentages in this Table are linked to the distribution of the furniture which the embellishments adorn, there are some discrepancies. Especially important is the relative significance of embellishment in the parlour, where the emphasis is less upon walls covered in cloth than upon the often more expensive pictures, carrying a statement of allegiance in terms of coats of arms, or a narrative of past events.

2.ii.c. The nature of the rooms

This section combines the conclusions drawn from the quantitative evidence for each room with the qualitative evidence available from detailed descriptions within the data set. This will enable the integration of the particular with the general, allowing connections to be made between objects within each room.

*THE HALL*³⁷

The hall is most clearly characterised by the visibility of the goods it contains. Its small amount of storage capacity meant that the objects which filled it are for the most part on show. This makes the evidence which the hall produces the easiest to read statistically: if it is there, then it is clear that it is being used, at least in the sense of being viewed, on a daily basis. The hall is a utilitarian room, where meanings are clear.

The stool and the cushion are particularly prevalent in the hall. In the chamber and the parlour, the cushion might have uses associated with a bed, but in the hall it is being used for only two things, the softening of the seating arrangements, and the decoration of the cupboard. The large number of stools suggests the scale of event which the hall is designed for, and, of course, the fact that those attending will be seated. The qualitative evidence, which is always sensitive to the grouping of objects and their

³⁷ The actual size of the rooms which contained this furniture is hard to determine accurately. Sarah Pearson states that houses in the south east were likely to be larger, with a total ground-floor area of between 60-80 sq. m., roughly half of which was made up of the hall in the later middle ages. *Medieval Houses of Kent*, pp. 71-2. See also the photographs of extant rooms in Appendix 2.

proper relationships to one another, lists stools and forms with tables. Such evidence is concerned with utility, with the service provided by furniture, and this is something which is only possible if all the constituent parts of a group of furniture come together: a table will be used in conjunction with stools and forms.

Although the hall contains many tables, it has very few tablecloths, and very few carpets. The table appears, therefore, to have remained for the most part unadorned. Cloths could be brought from other parts of the house should they be needed, but the habitual state of the table in the hall was bare, ready to be put to use.

In contrast to this unadorned potentiality, the cupboard head was well furnished. Once again the qualitative evidence provides frequent instances of grouping. The surface which the top of the standing cupboard provides is first covered with a cupboard cloth, or a cupboard carpet, their names demonstrating the evolution of pieces of cloth into a specific form which restricts it to use upon this particular piece of furniture.³⁸ They are most frequently made of linen or dornix, but sometimes of silk or crewel work. They can be fringed, and are most commonly coloured green. James Nethersole, an alderman of Canterbury, had his cupboard cloths layered, with a red fringed cloth 'lying under the white'.³⁹

On top of these cloths lies a cushion, sometimes of needlework, and similarly specifically named 'cupboard cushion'. Next comes a collection of significant objects, most commonly a pewter basin and ewer, sometimes pewter flower pots, or a desk with a book on it, or a desk containing glass vessels. Apart from the flower pots, all these items are suggestive of particular uses. The basin could be used for washing, perhaps in preparation for a meal, and the books and glasses are prominent and yet protected: both displayed and available. The cupboard clearly provided a focus for the room, its many-layered decoration drawing attention to it visually.

This is all the more obvious in the context of the other forms of decoration in the hall. There are overall far fewer window curtains, cushions and hangings. Those hangings for which there is qualitative detail are to be found over pieces of furniture: the benches and, of course the cupboards. However, before a false picture of the

³⁸ Cupboard cloths are also so called when found within chests and coffer, showing that it is their character, rather than their position, which is responsible for their designation.

³⁹ PRC 10.13 f.116, 1582.

splendour of the cupboard is built up, adorned with and set against costly cloths, it is important to note that the hall had the highest proportion of cupboard cloths which were said to be ‘old’ of any room.⁴⁰ Some care has gone into the organisation of the cupboard head, then, but it might not be renewed very often.

Cupboards are occasionally referred to as ‘lattice’ or ‘open’, and surviving illustrations of them show them to have pierced panels which allow the interior to be glimpsed, if dimly.⁴¹ There is little indication of what lies within the cupboards. The evidence there is, is for pewter, glasses, and other equipment of dining, suggesting that the table might be laid from the cupboard in the same room. This may either mean that those items kept within the cupboard are the ones which are used every day when meals are eaten in the hall, or that they are items related to dining, but ones used only on special occasions.

Hanging cupboards are also common, placed ‘over the chimney’, a phrase which presumably means ‘attached to the chimney breast’, where they were protected from the vermin which might enter them on the floor, and also kept dry by the adjacent, most constant, source of warmth in the room. The hall has the lowest proportion of furniture which is said to have locks and keys, something which is not surprising in the light of the small amount of storage furniture which it contains, and the rarity of valuable items within it. If any piece of furniture is said to be locked, however, it is these hanging cupboards, and the information for the storage of small amounts of silver within the hall places it here, secured up above.

The table, the stools and forms and the cupboard with its pewter all seem connected to dining activities in one way or another, and this is a function of the hall which the other rooms are less clearly equipped to provide, especially on a large scale. The productive activities which took place within the hall involve moveable equipment. Hidden within the term ‘gear’ in the data set are a large amount of stock cards for the carding of wool. These might just be being stored within the hall of course, but their separation from the spinning wheel, and indeed the wool itself, suggests that carding might have gone on in the hall as an activity which could easily be picked up or put down at a moment’s notice. Perhaps it is significant in this context that the hall

⁴⁰ See for example PRC 10.18 f.538, 1591; PRC 21.6 f.541v, 1582.

contains many more cradles than the parlour, and is second only to the chamber in this regard. While it seems unlikely that babies slept unaccompanied in the hall, it is possible that they were placed there in the daytime while the person looking after them undertook other activities.

The hall also contains working tools: those of tailors, carpenters and husbandmen, suggesting in the first case that its fire could be used for the heating of irons, and in the other cases that tools kept within it could be picked up and taken out of the house. Here the hall becomes a space which connects other spaces: lying between the shop and the rest of the house, and between the house and the yard or fields. Things needed in the outside world could be kept within it for easy access.

Access to goods and movement to and from other places, as well as large sedentary events, characterise the hall. And here it is worth mentioning the looking glasses again. A handful are said to be large, and some are priced with painted cloths and pictures, which might indicate that they are hung upon the wall.⁴² Such glasses would reflect the whole room back again, doubling its light. They would encourage all to glance into them, whereas the hand-held glass invites only those who deliberately walk up to it and pick it up. The majority of the latter are priced with either brushes or combs or with cupboard cloths and cushions. It seems quite possible that they might also be placed upon the top of the cupboards, fulfilling the same type of function as the basin and ewer. The grouping with the comb and the brush suggests a size suitable for viewing the face and hair only, and their position in the hall draws attention to the change which must take place before one leaves the house, the improvement upon the working self which is required before one enters a wider social context.

THE CHAMBER

The qualitative information for the chamber reveals distinctions within the categories discussed above. Beds specifically for servants and children are listed here as they are not in parlours.⁴³ Those who slept in chambers did so amongst the highest proportion of locked pieces of furniture. Taking into account the proportion of chambers which

⁴¹Herbert Cescinsky and Ernest R.Gribble, *Early English Furniture and Woodwork Vol. II*, London: Routledge, 1922, pp. 20-90.

⁴² For large glasses: PRC 10.13 f.349, undated; PRC 10.5 f.286, 1571. Priced with cloths and pictures: PRC 10.22 f.463, 1594; PRC 10.24 f.125, 1597.

were basically working chambers with a bed, the amount of storage facilities kept there is startling. Often on the first floor of houses, those items which were kept in the chamber were clearly not in frequent use. However, this need not mean that they were therefore of the highest status. The chamber is also unique in housing old clothing, working (i.e. everyday) clothing, pieces of apparel which have been ‘turned’, or reused, and parts of items, such as the fur of a gown, and the sides of a bed.⁴⁴

There is a sense in which what is in the chamber is ‘out of sight’. Those things which are not at the present moment fulfilling a function, either because they are only used occasionally or because they are at present ‘unmade’, are stored within these rooms. They are paradoxically spaces which hold both the most and the least valuable of the house’s resources. However, such a distinction is probably anachronistic, and it would be more helpful to think of them as possessing a store of household potential with different time scales for use. Should one need a tablecloth, one could have access to one with the turning of a key, the lifting of a lid, and the removal of the layers of the content until the required item was located. Should one need the fur to re-trim a gown, one would have to open the work basket and sort through the contents. In either case, when such an item is needed, thoughts turn to the remoter area of the chamber as its location.

Simultaneously, however, the chamber is very much a place where daily-used items are kept. Working clothes which are put on every day are kept here, perhaps unsurprisingly, when chambers hold the majority of the sleeping occupants of the house. The distinction between these two functions of the same room would seem to be the storage furniture. Those things which are reserved for later use are also withheld from sight, and the space which is used every day is therefore that which is left – the surfaces and floor area not already occupied.

There are several instances where the relationship between pieces of furniture is described in chambers: ‘by the bed’s feet’, ‘by the window’, ‘between the window and the cupboard’, ‘between the chimney and the door’, ‘between the chimney and

⁴³ The parlour is unlikely to be a space used by children and servants, although they may, of course, occupy the trucklebeds there.

⁴⁴ For example, old apparel: PRC 10.8 f.12v, 1574; working clothes: PRC 10.13 f.50v, 1582; turned apparel: PRC 21.13 f.250, 1594; gown fur: PRC 21.4 f.64v, 1579; bed sides: PRC 10.24 f.501, 1596.

the bed's head'.⁴⁵ These indicate the difficulty of distinguishing between different chests when there are so many of them in a room, but also the saturated nature of this space, tightly packed with furniture in every corner. In turn this suggests that chambers were, in daylight hours at least, occupied by smaller numbers of people, and that the activities of those people were fairly sedentary.

The most important piece of furniture, of course, was the bed. Many are said to have pillars or posts, indicating canopies and curtains. The descriptions of the fabric decorations of the room are of painted cloths, some for the bed and some for the walls, suggesting that there is a perceived unity, although not necessarily in terms of a decorative scheme. While there is an average of just over 1 standing bed in each chamber, there is only an average of 0.5 curtains per room, so clearly not every bed was curtained, as indeed we might expect to be the case with servants' beds. When they were both curtained and 'ceiled', though, the overwhelming visual impression of the chamber must have been of swathes of cloth on bed, walls and windows.

*THE PARLOUR*⁴⁶

The parlour is by far the hardest room of the three to characterise, having no distinct function that is not fulfilled by either of the other rooms. The parlour does not exceed both hall and chamber in *any* of the categories shown in the Tables above.

There *are* beds in parlours, but approximately a third of the number to be found in chambers, and with considerably fewer of the curtains which close off the expensive bedstead from the rest of the room: there are only a slightly larger number than in halls. There are also more storage facilities than are to be found in halls, except in the case of cupboards and presses, but again only just. The chests which are to be found there are more frequently capable of being locked, and this fits well with the higher levels of valuables which the parlour contains. The qualitative evidence also reveals a less frequent grouping of cupboard, cloth, cushion and garnish of pewter there than occurred in the hall. The heads of cupboards in the parlour seem less encumbered

⁴⁵ See for respective examples: PRC 10.18 f.524, undated; PRC 10.25 f.359, 1591; PRC 10.20 f.358, 1592 includes instances of all three of the final positions.

⁴⁶ Judith Roberts estimates that by the end of the sixteenth century the parlour was occupying 30-35% of the total ground-floor space. The chimney stacks which were being added to medieval buildings were often put in the cross passage, which had allowed entry and divided the hall from the service rooms. The "old service end" became "the new, heated parlour", a room which was now separate from

with items, suggesting that they did not function as display furniture as they did in the hall. Once again they contain glasses and pewter and also some brass, and there are also hanging cupboards against the chimney, in one instance containing ‘sugar and other spices’.⁴⁷

So the parlour is a room which is available for sleeping, but does not sleep as many people as the chamber, nor in such potential style. It is used for storing goods, mostly in locked chests and coffer rather than in the more open cupboards, but again it does not have the capacity to do so to the same extent as the chamber. More playing tables and musical instruments are kept within the parlour than in the chamber, which suggests that it has similarities with the hall in its provision of a space for groups of people to enjoy their leisure time. Indeed, in proportion to the smaller numbers of rooms involved, there is more likely to be an instrument, set of playing tables, or even a looking glass, in the parlour than any other room. And this is in contradistinction to its provision of working space, which is very limited indeed. There are fewer tools of every description in the parlour, suggesting that production is unlikely to have occurred there.

The items which are most common within the parlour are stools, forms and tables, which might indicate that the room could be used for dining should this be necessary, but that it did not offer the multi-functional space of the hall. In other words the parlour seems to provide a hybrid space, in many respects a less crowded chamber which allows smaller numbers of people to dine or otherwise spend their leisure time in more comfortable surroundings.

There are three possible reasons for this slightly hazy impression. Firstly it is possible that the function of the parlour was changing in this period, and that the use of the evidence from the whole of the latter half of the century is eliding different stages in its transformation.⁴⁸ Secondly, it is possible that the nature of the parlour might be altered in relation to the social and financial status of the householder;⁴⁹ and finally it might be that in different places the parlour was being used for different purposes:

and more private than the hall, and to which access had to be rethought; ‘Tenterden houses’, pp. 140, 144.

⁴⁷ PRC 10.7 f173, 1574.

⁴⁸ Pearson, *Medieval Houses of Kent*, pp. 96, 114-5; see below pp. 67-8 for such an analysis.

⁴⁹ See below pp. 47-57.

that certain characteristics of towns and villages led them to require distinct kinds of rooms.

2.iii. The differences between rural and urban houses

The following section identifies the general nature of urban constraints and demands by setting the inventories for towns against those for villages, using evidence for the latter from Woodnesborough and Bethersden, for the former from Tenterden, Sandwich, Canterbury and Faversham.⁵⁰

Table 2.9 shows the number of rooms indicated in rural and urban inventories. It suggests that urban houses are more likely to have anywhere between one and seven rooms, and that although the instances decline after eight, they are still significant up to as many as 16 rooms. In contrast the rural house is most likely to have between one and six rooms, with either end of that scale being the most common. Whereas the urban house may have as many as 33 separate areas, the highest number for the rural house is 16.⁵¹

The qualitative evidence shows a difference in the kind of houses recorded as having one and two rooms, however. Such town houses have a medium sized inventory where some of the room names appear to have been neglected, whereas village dwellings are likely to contain a small amount of household items, perhaps one bed, several chests with clothing and a few pieces of linen, a chair and a table: this comprises the whole dwelling.

⁵⁰ Of the 176 inventories which exist for Bethersden and Woodnesborough over the period, only 89, or just over 50%, list their information by room. By contrast there are 1254 urban inventories, of which 896, or 71%, specify rooms. With the rural sample only a tenth of the size of the urban this material will be treated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

⁵¹ The highest numbers here probably represent multiple properties. These tables are comparable with the data for Norwich between 1580-1604, where the grouping between 4 and 6 rooms was slightly more pronounced, Ursula Priestley, and P.J. Corfield 'Rooms and room use in Norwich housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16, 1982, p. 100; see also Roberts, 'Tenterden houses', p. 191, for more detail on that town.

No. of rooms	% of urban houses with no. of rooms (no.)	% of rural houses with no. of rooms (no.)
1	9 (79)	29 (26)
2	10 (91)	12 (11)
3	8 (73)	8 (7)
4	11 (95)	6 (5)
5	10 (89)	6 (5)
6	10 (89)	12 (11)
7	8 (75)	3 (3)
8	7 (65)	3 (3)
9	6 (51)	6 (5)
10	5 (41)	4 (4)
11	5 (41)	3 (3)
12	3 (23)	2 (2)
13	2 (14)	2 (2)
14	1 (12)	0
15	1 (12)	0
16	1 (12)	2 (2)
17	0.9 (8)	0
18	0.4 (4)	0
19	0.6 (5)	0
20	0.2 (2)	0
21	0.3 (3)	0
22	0.4 (4)	0
23	0.1 (1)	0
25	0.2 (2)	0
26	0.1 (1)	0
27	0.1 (1)	0
29	0.2 (2)	0
33	0.1 (1)	0
Total	100% (896)	100% (89)

Table 2.9: Numbers of rooms in rural and urban houses.

Those rural houses whose possessions are listed by room are most likely to have a hall. Table 2.10 shows them to contain a total of 151 chambers, of which 84 are said to be upper ones. In view of the instance of numbers of rooms in Table 2.9, we might see these upper rooms as belonging in some numbers to the houses with a larger amount of rooms, rather than being equally distributed between houses. Just under half of the houses have a parlour, and there is a clear emphasis on working rooms, barns, and to a lesser extent, storage rooms and stables. As the numbers recorded for

Rooms in rural houses	No.
Hall	71
Working room	47
Parlour	41
Chamber	37
Kitchen	35
Buttery	28
Barn	22
Loft	22
Chamber over parlour	21
Chamber over hall	15
Servants' chamber	15
Chamber over kitchen	11
Upper chamber	10
His/her chamber	9
Stable	9
Storage room	8
Shop	6
Backside	6
Chamber over buttery	5
Another chamber	3
Her chamber	3
Study	2
Cellar	2
Gallery	1
Larder	1
Closet	1
Entry	1

Table 2.10: Numbers of each type of room in the 89 rural inventories.

fireplace equipment within rooms are very low, with only four instances in chambers and two in parlours, even taking the small number of named rooms into account, this suggests that few properties had chimney stacks.

The qualitative information about the nature of the rooms in the sample reinforces the impressions given by the quantitative analysis. Of the few shops mentioned one is called old, indicating a majority of small properties, and yet there is a comparatively large number of servants' rooms in the sample. The range of working rooms which such people might have been employed to occupy is also relatively broad. There are boulting houses, malt houses, bake houses, querne houses, cheese houses, beer chambers, wool lofts, brew houses and a very considerable number of milk houses.

There are fewer numbers of rooms described as the 'middle chamber', or the 'third chamber', and a few inventories refer to lofts in the east and west ends of the house.⁵²

Rooms in urban houses	No.
Hall	772
Chamber	675
Parlour	523
Kitchen	509
Buttery	443
Chamber over hall	303
Shop ⁵³	291
Working room	270
Chamber over parlour	241
Storage room	200
Backside or yard	179
Garret or loft	147
Another chamber	146
Chamber over shop	145
Chamber over kitchen	116
Cellar	106
Servants' chamber	95
Upper chamber	94
Stable	76
Chamber over buttery	60
Named chamber	57
His or her chamber	53
Barn	49
Chamber over entry	46
Study	45
Gallery	40
Entry	28
Close or garden	23
Larder	19
Chamber over another chamber	17
Another buttery	12
Folks chamber	11
Guest chamber	10
Mill	8
Closet	8

Table 2.11: Numbers of each type of room in the 896 urban inventories

This would fit well with the design of a late medieval Wealden house.⁵⁴ However

⁵² PRC 10.7 f.224, 1574; PRC 10.3 f.127v, 1568.

⁵³ This may refer to a workshop, retail premises, or combination of the two.

⁵⁴ See Pearson, *Medieval Houses of Kent*, pp. 58-9.

there are instances of studies, galleries, closets and guest chambers, which support a numerical distinction between a majority of very small houses and a concentration of considerably larger ones. The largest of the rural properties, then, might resemble the upper range of urban ones in terms of the provision of rooms if not the objects within them. If one takes into account the fact that a number of inventories within the urban sample do not list the room in which they begin their account, then Table 2.11 shows the vast majority of urban houses to contain a hall.⁵⁵ The total amount of chambers allows for almost 2.5 per house of which 1.3 are said to be upper rooms.⁵⁶ A rough count of chambers stated to be over specific rooms suggests that half of those houses possessing halls, parlours, kitchens, butteries and shops were ceiled and had rooms above them. There are also chambers over chambers, which indicates the presence of three floors in the dwellings. What is immediately clear, however, is that there is no common structure to the urban house, as none of the other rooms is present in enough quantities to comprise a part of each property. Even the chamber is divided into so many different types, many of which suggest that they are within the same house ('another chamber' for example), that consistency of form seems unlikely.

Nearly a third of the sample possessed a shop, and a further 200 some storage space for consumables. Table 2.11 provides an important reminder of the nature of the urban environment and its close proximity to rural amenities with the numbers of stables, barns, closes and gardens belonging to the houses.

The qualitative information provides a complicated picture of convoluted spatial relationships between rooms. There are some constants, such as the buttery which is always at the back of the house, next to either the parlour, the kitchen or the hall; and the shop, which logic insists must be at the front in order to facilitate the passage of customers.⁵⁷ The ground floor hall was in the middle of the house, behind either the shop or an entry of some sort, or facing the street with other accommodation on either side of it. As such it is for the most part enclosed and set apart from the world outside.

⁵⁵ Priestley and Corfield, in 'Rooms and room use in Norwich housing', state that only 50% of Norwich houses in the same period had a hall, which they see as a move away from medieval building patterns, 'Norwich Houses', p. 104. Either their inventories failed to register the room name, or Kent is conservative in this respect. In contrast over 70% of their sample had parlours, which they concluded were the main rooms for serving meals.

⁵⁶ Schofield notes the expanding number of chambers in London from the fifteenth century, *Medieval London Houses*, Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 71.

⁵⁷ Unless, of course, it is only a workshop.

In two cases it is to be found on the first floor of the building, an organisation which was common in the commercial areas of London.⁵⁸

Parlours occupy one of two positions within the house. They are either at the back of the property (behind the hall, next to the backside or next to the kitchen) or they face the street. In this latter place, they are often described as the ‘fore’ parlour, and in the former as the ‘inner’ parlour, titles which suggest an interest in proximity to the edges of the house, and its relationship with the town which surrounds it.⁵⁹ Hard as it is to generalise the diversity of these houses, it is possible to say that from a front parlour or chamber one could see into the street, and window seats seem to have been provided in these rooms to make the most of their light.⁶⁰ From such a position, working and observing may be combined. The urban hall, if the house has its eaves facing the street, affords only aural access to the town, and even if the house is built lengthways to the road, the rooms behind the hall may be totally enclosed. The kitchens and butteries behind give access to the backsides of the houses, and to those of others too.⁶¹

The qualitative evidence of room names catalogues a considerable range of processes which took place within the household: there are beer butteries, beating shops, boulding houses, brushing chambers, cheese houses, distilling houses, hop yards, leather houses, milk butteries, querne houses, shearing shops, slaughter houses and tan houses. For the storage of goods either for sale or for consumption there are bean houses, lime houses, malt houses, wine cellars, hen houses, hay lofts, herring hangs, oast houses, meal lofts, oat chambers, podder barns, salt houses, wheat barns and wool lofts, apart from those areas set aside for purely domestic activities such as

⁵⁸ Frank E. Brown’s discussion of London building plans of houses built in the 1570s and 80s records instances of the shop underneath the hall, and the chambers on top, ‘Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space Organisation in Seventeenth-Century London’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1986, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 558-590, hereafter ‘Domestic Space Organisation in London’. Schofield states that London was probably the first town to witness such an upward shift of living accommodation, *Medieval London Houses*, p. 65. The two Canterbury houses which show this pattern: PRC 10.4 f.203v, c.1568 and PRC 10.24 f.393, 1596. Brown’s access theories make it possible to see the different positions as related through similar strategies of distancing rooms from the street.

⁵⁹ PRC 21.6 f.541v, 1582; PRC 21.11 f.111, 1591.

⁶⁰ The shop occupies the same position and therefore affords light in which to work.

⁶¹ Access theory seems to account inadequately for such visual and aural permeability. It is more helpful to balance spatial inaccessibility against the available sightlines through windows and doors. For the theory see Brown, ‘Domestic Space Organisation in London’, where he discusses its main proponents; Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 92-3.

larders and bake houses.

Many of these specialised rooms have other chambers above them, suggesting that whole structures were present within the household to serve the needs of its onsite production. It is unclear whether or not these structures were actually attached to the main house. Some certainly were not, and are specifically referred to as outbuildings, perhaps within the yard; some were possibly built separately and connected with a passageway. It is clear that the land on which the main house stood could, even within the restricted confines of the town, support comparatively large scale operations and enterprises.

Some of the chambers, parlours and halls referred to as 'new' and 'old' may also have been a part of different structures. Such descriptions as 'chamber of the new buildings' could refer to an extension, but 'chamber of the little house' suggests an additional building on the same site.⁶² Here the word 'house' appears to refer to a unit of rooms which are both related to and yet separate from the rest of the property, and may represent the old accommodation which has been demoted in favour of the new. There is an impression of expansion as circumstances change, and of one set of rooms superseding another. This reveals the urban house as a changing entity, made up of extensions and additions, rather than a solid edifice of inflexible proportions. Related to such radical changes to the size and quality of the domestic interior is the designation of rooms as 'best', or 'fairest', suggesting a perceived hierarchy of comparative splendour.

Even with the ubiquitous chamber this is the case. The 'chamber at the stairs head', for example, obviously describes its position, but it may also signal a range of constraints upon the use of the room which are dictated by its size and position in relation to the shape of that section of the house. The top of the stairs might not be a desirable place to sleep as it may be noisy; it may produce a small room under the eaves. For the most part, however, chambers are characterised by their position in relation to other chambers, and this is in itself an interesting source of information. The appraisers of the inventory move through the house, noting each room in relation to the last, and it seems possible that one would have to walk through one chamber to reach the next. The middle chamber, then, might be the most frequently traversed and,

if it was between the front and the back rooms, rather than the central chamber over the street frontage, it would be unlikely to get much light.

Evidence for this latter point is given by a ‘dark room behind the parlour’ and a ‘dark house next to the buttery’.⁶³ Both are clearly in the area at the back of the house where small service rooms fill the space between hall and backside. Presumably they do not have windows, and are therefore only entered during the daytime or with a candle. In contrast, the ‘light chamber’ immediately suggests a more inviting space made for habitation rather than storage.⁶⁴

There are a considerable number of spaces within other spaces, and of units of space which are smaller than the room. The least problematical of these smaller areas is the entrance, although its exact status is hard to determine. Only entries in the front of the house are listed as having rooms above them, suggesting the others were smaller in ground plan. But the word seems also to have referred to any space which was in some way transitional. There were, for instance, entries behind and next to halls, next to kitchens and into gardens.⁶⁵ Such spaces at the rear of the house seem to bridge the gap between house and backside, and might contain working tools such as ladders, or seating such as forms.

The other smaller areas are interior, and subdivide space rather than extending it. There is a chamber within the study, and an inner chamber of another chamber.⁶⁶ There are closets, butteries in halls, smaller chambers and withdrawing chambers within main chambers, and studies within chambers. There are also several half paces, or places at the doors of rooms, which the *OED* defines as “A step, raised floor or platform on which something is to be placed or erected”, and there is a ‘little place between the hall and the shop’.⁶⁷

The evidence also makes reference to areas designated for certain kinds of domestic goods: the brass house and the pewter house for instance.⁶⁸ Mainly for storage, one can imagine that these spaces are in fact more common than they appear, as the goods

⁶² PRC 10.18 f.505, 1591; PRC 10.11 f.221, 1580.

⁶³ PRC 21.11 f.203, 1591; PRC 10.27 f.143, 1598.

⁶⁴ PRC 21.8 f.50, 1586.

⁶⁵ PRC 10.13 f.116, 1582; PRC 10.20 f.151, 1592; PRC 28.2 f.29, 1567; PRC 21.12 f.470, 1596.

⁶⁶ PRC 10.17 f.260, undated; PRC 21.11 f.111, 1591.

⁶⁷ PRC 10.11 f.221, 1580.

they contain would be listed with the contents of the room as a whole. The inner division of rooms has taken over from the function of furniture such as the chest to subdivide space and demarcate areas of it for different purposes. There may be little difference in volume between cupboard and closet, but there is quite a large psychological change in terms of the permanence of the area in relation to the house as a whole.

Such spaces can also be miniature versions of the larger rooms which contain them: chambers with beds and chests within chambers with beds and chests. Put together with the focus the room names demonstrate on the edges of houses, the relationship between their spaces and the direction of light, there seems to be a concern with types of enclosure, and with the dichotomy between protection and permeability. There can be no doubt that a study beside a back room provides a very different environment to one in the front of the house. The suggestion is that the urban house works against its physical position in close proximity with the houses of others by subdividing and specialising, by creating spaces within spaces.

The urban house is a hybrid, metamorphosing collection of spaces which both suffers from and makes pragmatic use of the conditions of town life. Houses may contain several storeys, and there are a considerable number of working rooms which may or may not be physically linked to the main body of the house. All space must be used, even those areas which are awkward or unsuitable for human action. Tall buildings with small frontages make for spaces which are characterised by high or low levels of light, and activities within the house must be structured to take account of this.⁶⁹

2.iii.a. Urban and rural rooms compared

The urban chamber represents a large proportion of both the sleeping and the storage facilities of the model rooms.⁷⁰ In particular it has more presses and cupboards than the average, within which a high proportion of the plate and the tablecloths of the house, and most of the apparel is kept. Although it has equal levels of seating

⁶⁸ PRC 10.7 f.30v, 1572; PRC 10.18 f.4, 1591.

⁶⁹ Schofield states that the vast majority of London houses had their gable ends to the street, although the forms which they took were many and various; John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 27-60.

⁷⁰ Appendix 3 gives more detailed information about the furniture for these rooms. In this and all subsequent comparisons to the model it is, of course, the case that 'divergences from it' are in fact

provision to the parlour, in general terms, it has more chairs and forms and fewer stools, perhaps suggesting seating rather than dining. The chamber has the second highest numbers of tables, but the numbers in all three rooms are high. The majority of the working equipment in the urban house is to be found in the chamber, but it also has the most looking glasses, and the second largest concentration of books, although few other leisure items. The urban chamber is the most highly embellished of all the rooms, and this suggests that within the larger houses of the town there are two fairly distinct types of chamber, the working one, and the highly furnished bedchamber in which the head of the household sleeps.

The rural chamber contains a large amount of silver spoons, the greatest number of tablecloths and the second largest amount of wearing apparel. It is also second in the provision of tables and of working equipment, although it contains no items associated with leisure time. It too, however, can be a highly decorated room, with the majority of the hanging cloths and an equal number of cupboard cloths to the parlour. The rural chamber appears to provide a similar space to its urban counterpart, but on a smaller scale.

The urban hall is for the most part devoid of beds, but provides the largest amount of seating in the house. It has the highest proportion of tables of all the rooms, but this only amounts to just over 40%. It contains the majority of the working gear not to be found in the chamber, but also the largest number of playing tables, instruments and books. The hall stores a certain amount of plate and silver spoons, and is the second most highly decorated room after the chamber. It appears to be a room for eating, but also for leisure time and working – flexible and diverse in the ways in which it is used.

The rural hall has a larger share of the available beds and more storage than its equivalent in the town. Although it has more cupboards, it has a smaller number of cupboard cloths, and it too comes second to the chamber in its provision of hanging cloths. It houses the majority of the apparel, some of the tablecloths, but none of the silver plate or spoons. The hall has the majority of the seating, including the highest number of chairs and forms, and by far the largest percentage of tables at over 60%. It

'emphases within it': that this information formed a part of its averages and so should not be seen in relation to it, but rather as a trend within it.

has a certain amount of the leisure facilities, but the greatest number of spinning wheels. Such a room is used at all times of the day and night and for many different activities, but it is not a space for storage of valuable items.

The urban parlour has equal seating facilities to the chamber, but these comprise a larger number of easily manoeuvrable stools. It has the least number of tables, but the number is still significant, and it comes second only to the hall in its provision of leisure facilities. There are beds there of all kinds, but not in large numbers. Although it has a lower percentage of hangings than either of the other rooms, its share is quite close to that of the hall. However, the most striking feature of the urban parlour is the fact that it possesses the largest number of pictures of any room in the house. It would seem to be a room suited to eating and leisure activities, similar to the hall in many respects, but in a significant number of cases strikingly embellished.

The rural parlour has a larger share of the storage facilities than the urban, in which are kept more of the silverware and the tablecloths. It has a similarly small number of beds, but far fewer trucklebeds than the urban room, suggesting individual occupancy. It is devoid of working equipment, which runs against the tendency of the rural rooms to offer a diversity of facilities. However, although this suggests that it is a room reserved for special activities, the evidence for its embellishment is conflicting. It has an equal number of cupboard cloths to the chamber, but a very small proportion of the total hangings. There is some indication of leisure equipment, and the rural parlour is second only to the hall in the provision of seating.

Differences between the two environments are immediately apparent in the sharp divide between larger and smaller rural houses, a gap between a wealthy few and a lower-status majority which is filled with a variety of medium-sized properties in towns. In broad terms, some items may be differently stored within the rural environment, but others are simply not available: these houses contain no looking glasses and no pictures, either in named rooms or generally. The urban domestic space is more likely to be used for a narrower range of activities, and there is a clearer separation between areas used in the daytime and at night. In practice, this means that it is spatial relocation as opposed to the reorganisation of rooms which marks different parts of the daily routine and different activities. Clearly, the larger rural houses are not dissimilar to urban properties, and this suggests that considerations of

status combine with the different requirements of agrarian and urban lifestyles to produce the variations noted in this section. The next section therefore explicitly considers the domestic spaces of the town in terms of the status of the inhabitants within it.

2.iv. The quality of more prosperous households

This section takes the inventories of the civic office-holders of Sandwich and Canterbury, and examines the nature of the rooms in their houses. As they were in positions of respect and authority within the urban environment, the organisation of their domestic space might be expected to be of a different nature.⁷¹ However, civic office is not synonymous with wealth or social status, and this section will also consider the domestic interior as a definition of status independent from office or occupation.

2.iv.a. The civic office-holders of Sandwich

The relationship between the office-holders and the commonality of a town gives an indication of both their perceived difference from those they govern and their links with them. The commonality of Sandwich had, until the closing decades of the century, a greater level of participation in and interaction with their elected representatives than in many other oligarchic towns.⁷² The inner circle of mayor and jurats were elected by the common councillors, who were in turn elected by the whole of the freeman body of the town.⁷³ The number of freemen *pro rata* stood at 1/200 of the adult male population, and as “less than one-fifth of the freeman body of the town became members of the elite”, the latter comprised of as few as one in every 1000 inhabitants of Sandwich.⁷⁴ The election of jurats tended to be a case of re-approval rather than selection by the sixteenth century, however, and, following the 1595 elections at which there were disturbances over the alleged fraudulence of the town’s treasurer, the situation worsened. Eventually, “a small self-selecting ruling group”

⁷¹ Economic, political and commercial differences between the different places forming this study must interestingly affect the nature of the domestic interiors. Unfortunately there is not space in this thesis to make such variations explicit, although they do underlie the differences in the material for these two towns.

⁷² Zoe L. Ollerenshaw, ‘The civic elite of Sandwich, Kent, 1568-1640’, MPhil., University of Kent, 1990, p. 52, hereafter ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’.

⁷³ For the composition of the office-holders of Sandwich see Ollerenshaw ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’ pp. 37-80.

⁷⁴ Ollerenshaw, ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’, pp. 55, 100.

evolved, who “became the established government within the town”.⁷⁵

Over half of those who took office after 1569 “were related to former or existing members”, and some families continued within its ranks for three generations.⁷⁶

Setting this closing of the ranks against the migrant nature of Sandwich’s population puts office-holders in a position of temporal supremacy which must have considerably added to their social superiority. They were for the most part from long-established families who were *expected* to fulfil important roles within the local community.

Those who married into the families also took on such roles, often as a consequence of their new-found kin associations.⁷⁷

No. of rooms in inventories of Sandwich officers	No. of inventories
1	2
2	2
3	2
4	1
5	2
6	5
7	6
8	5
9	5
10	6
11	4
12	2
13	1
14	1
15	4
17	1
19	2

Table 2.12: Number of rooms per inventory for Sandwich office-holders.

The wealthiest inhabitants of Sandwich were, with a few exceptions, members of its office-holding community. However, not all officers were wealthy, with the broadest range of wealth to be found amongst the common councillors.⁷⁸ Ollerenshaw compares differences in wealth: “Of the non-elite nearly half (47.4 per cent) had

⁷⁵ Ollerenshaw, ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’, p.79.

⁷⁶ Ollerenshaw, ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’, p.179.

⁷⁷ Ollerenshaw, ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’, p.181.

⁷⁸ Ollerenshaw, ‘Civic Elite of Sandwich’, pp.132-3, 157.

inventory values of less than £20, and 85.8 per cent, (375) were worth less than £100 at the time of their death: the corresponding figure for members of the elite is just over a third (40, or 33.6 per cent).⁷⁹ However, at the upper end of the scale. “The majority of the elite had inventory values of between £100 and £599 19s, while only 13.3 per cent (58) of the non-elite had inventories of that amount”.⁸⁰

Rooms in houses of Sandwich officers	No. of rooms in all officers' inventories
Chamber	86
Upper chamber	72
Hall	44
Parlour	40
Kitchen	38
Buttery	35
Working room	29
Yard/backside	25
Storage room/stable/barn	22
Loft/garret	19
Shop	13
Cellar	13
Gallery	8
Study/counting house	5
Entry	3
Closet	1

Table 2.13: Number of each kind of room in Sandwich office-holders' inventories.

The 50 inventories which survive for Sandwich office-holders in the sixteenth century provide a useful indication of the quality of life which a member of such a social group could expect, and indeed would be expected to enjoy. Whereas the inventories for the town showed an average of between four and six rooms, for the officers the range is between six and ten.⁸¹ The houses which these inventories represent are considerably larger, and the kinds of rooms which they contain provide vital evidence about the distinct functions which such an increased number of rooms might fulfil. Table 2.13 shows the numbers of each kind of room to be found within such inventories.

⁷⁹ Ollerenshaw, 'Civic Elite of Sandwich', p.133.

⁸⁰ Ollerenshaw, 'Civic Elite of Sandwich', p.134.

⁸¹ See Appendix 4 for the distribution and nature of rooms in the town as a whole.

It can be seen that a large proportion of the additional rooms is actually made up of extra working or storage space, a feature which is consistent with the diversity of occupation noted by Ollerenshaw, with upper chambers providing more living space for the increased size of household which such operations would require. Whereas 69 middle band properties had 27 parlours between them, in Table 2.13, 50 officers' properties included 40 such rooms. In other words the office-holders' property is likely to have one of all the most common types of room. In addition, it will have increased working and storage space, and the possibility of some truly specialised and unusual spaces, such as the study and counting house, the gallery and the closet.⁸²

Comparison of the objects which fill the rooms of office-holders' houses and those which are used within the houses in the town as a whole shows considerable differences.⁸³ The hall is a room for display. Its large amounts of silverware of all kinds are either on show or partly revealed in cupboards, its armour ranges from bows and arrows to swords, guns, headpieces and breastplates, the majority of which must have been standing prominently within the room. The looking glasses it contains may well have been of the larger variety, and are more often priced as a part of the overall decorative scheme, reflecting the wealth of the room back into it. There are fewer painted cloths decorating the walls of the hall, but there are a greater number of curtains, bringing greater warmth to the room as a whole. The pictures mentioned include a story of Joseph, several portraits of kings and queens, and the arms of the baron of the Cinque Ports.⁸⁴ Prominent in the hall are the books which it contains, suggestive of communal reading or of display on one of its many available surfaces.

The parlour, like the hall, is almost devoid of beds and therefore has much more floor space which is available on a daily basis. It has a much larger amount of seating, both for individuals and for groups of people, and it is able to provide them with some level of comfort. It has a sizeable proportion of the cushions in the house, a greater number of hangings than is the case for the town as a whole, and a very high percentage of the window curtains. The majority of the objects for leisure time are kept within the parlour, and the combination of these few items and the seating

⁸² Schofield identifies the study and the closet as particularly sixteenth-century spatial innovations, *Medieval London Houses*, p. 81.

⁸³ See Appendix 5 for details of different types of objects within the town as a whole, and Appendix 6 for office-holders' houses.

⁸⁴ PRC 10.16 f.264, 1586; for example PRC 10.22 f.435, 1594; PRC 10.18 f.433, 1590.

arrangements suggests that this room is a flexible space for recreation.⁸⁵

The chamber in such houses contains much more furniture than the same room in the town as a whole. The vast majority of the beds of the office-holder's house are kept there, and a great deal of its storage facilities. Most of the reserved items of domestic routine are in the chamber, as is nearly all the apparel of those within the household. There is room within it for domestic production in terms of spinning, but such activities are most often carried on in more specialised spaces. The chamber, without its usual paraphernalia of working equipment, is considerably more highly embellished: it has more curtains, more carpets, and more pictures. The latter include a painted cloth of Saint George and a counterfeit of the owner.⁸⁶ This is a room of visual and textural luxury which both contains and is decorated with fine fabrics and rich stuffs.

In conclusion, then, the civic officers of Sandwich have the same kinds of items as those lower down the social scale. They differ chiefly in the clearer and more rigorous definition of their domestic space, and in setting aside different rooms for different purposes. This must lead to a greater uniformity in the use of a room at different times of the day and the year, as it is rarely in need of reorganisation for a variety of functions.

2.iv.b. The civic office-holders of Canterbury

The composition of the ruling body of the town of Canterbury was altered in the reign of Henry VII. In addition to confirming the privileges of the city, the king made ordinances to the effect that

Whereas hitherto the said city has had a mayor and six aldermen, there shall in future be a mayor and twelve aldermen, the six additional aldermen to be elected from the common council by the mayor and aldermen now existing; and that each of the said twelve aldermen and no others shall be eligible for the office of mayor... That wheras hitherto there have been thirty-six persons in

⁸⁵ Brown finds the parlour in London to be related to the hall, but with “much less evidence of everyday activity”, and that “there is no indication that [it] was ever used for sleeping”, ‘Domestic Space Organisation in London’, pp. 583, 588. Schofield finds that they are mainly “buried deep within the property”, often overlooking gardens, but that a growing sector of the wealthy had two parlours by the sixteenth century, one at the back and one by the street, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 66-7, 93.

⁸⁶ PRC 10.22 f.435, 1594; PRC 10.18 f.79, 1591.

the common council, the number shall in future be twenty-four.⁸⁷

In a town of Canterbury's size, however, this represented a smaller proportion of the total population than was the case in Sandwich, and the numbers of the city's wealthy inhabitants makes the diversity between office-holding, wealth and high social status much larger.⁸⁸

32 inventories survive during the period up to the end of the century for aldermen and common councillors,⁸⁹ of which 31 list their goods by room. Of the total number of inventories, 22 give a total of the value of the goods. With all the usual provisos, these give a rough guide to the economic status of the group. They range between £1227 12s 6d and 18li 2d. The median is £168 10s 4d and the mean is just over £314.

No. of rooms in houses of Canterbury officers	No. of houses
29	1
26	1
25	1
20	1
17	2
16	1
13	1
12	1
11	3
10	2
9	5
8	2
7	5
6	3
4	1
3	1

Table 2.14: Number of rooms in the houses of Canterbury officers.

Table 2.14 shows a wide range of house sizes. The main concentration, however, is between 6 and 11 rooms, and there is very little representation at the lower end of the

⁸⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry VII, 1494-1509*, Kew: HMSO, 1916, pp. 136-7.

⁸⁸ Clark estimates the population in the 1560s at 3,500-3,600, rising to over 6,000 by the mid-seventeenth century, 'The social economy of the Canterbury Suburbs', in Alec Detsicas and Nigel Yates eds., *Studies in Modern Kentish History*, Maidstone: Kent Archaeological Society, 1983, p. 66.

⁸⁹ I am grateful to Graham Durkin for identifying these men from the list of inventories for the town by comparing them with the complete lists of civic officers which he has compiled for his PhD thesis at Christchurch College.

scale, in contrast to the whole sample for Canterbury.⁹⁰

Rooms in houses of Canterbury officers	No.
Chamber	40
Parlour	32
Hall	31
Kitchen	26
Buttery	22
Working room	21
Yard or backside	20
Storage room	19
Shop	17
Chamber over hall	13
Cellar	13
Upper chamber	13
Servants' chamber	10
Barn/stable	10
Chamber over parlour	9
Chamber over shop	8
Another chamber	7
Chamber over kitchen	6
Entry	6
Gallery	6
Garret or loft	6
Larder	4
Mill	4
Out house	4
Chamber over another chamber	3
Named chamber	3
Study	3
Closet	2

Table 2.15: Numbers of types of room in Canterbury officers' houses.

Table 2.15 shows the distribution of different kinds of room within the sample of office-holders' inventories. Most noticeable is the very high number of parlours. Although the room is relatively uncommon in the data for the town as a whole, some officers appear to have had more than one. These houses can be seen to possess at least one of each of the three main rooms, and the majority of them also list a kitchen and a buttery. There are 118 chambers listed in total, of which 58 are known to be

⁹⁰ See Appendix 7 for the number and nature of rooms in Canterbury as a whole.

upper ones. This gives just under 2 (1.87) upper chambers per house, and an additional 1.94 whose position is unspecified. The size of the holdings of these men is indicated by the prominence of yards and backsides, barns and stables, outhouses and even mills within the sample. But an equally prominent position is taken by shops, storage rooms and cellars, suggesting that a substantial proportion of the officers were craftsmen or retailers of some description.

The office-holders' chamber in Canterbury has a large share of both the beds and storage facilities of the sample for the town as a whole.⁹¹ It has more tablecloths and apparel, but less silverware, despite still having the largest amounts of each in total. It is a room in which spinning activities are concentrated, but which has little place for leisure time, and it contains more chairs. It is less embellished than is the case for the town as a whole, and indeed it has no pictures at all. In these respects it appears to be a room for small groups of people, either for working or sleeping. In terms of its provision of furniture, it is very similar to the office-holder's chamber in Sandwich, but it is much less highly embellished.

The Canterbury officer's parlour has the same percentage of beds as that of the town as a whole, but less storage provision. However, it does have a larger number of cupboards, and this may be linked to the increased amount of silverware which it houses. There is no suggestion that the parlour was a working room in these houses, and the majority of the playing tables and instruments were to be found within it. It had a larger amount of the seating provision, especially the moveable stools, and a slightly higher percentage of the tables. It also had more decoration than the parlour in the town as a whole, with more hangings and pictures.⁹² Although such a parlour in Sandwich offered similar kinds of furniture, its Canterbury equivalent was more highly embellished, and as a result offered a more appealing environment in which to spend leisure time. In this respect it seems to be performing some functions of the Sandwich chamber.

The Canterbury hall offered no beds at all, and fewer storage facilities. There were consequently lower numbers of valuables to be found within it, suggesting that linen goods were removed to less frequently inhabited rooms, and metalware was displayed

⁹¹ See Appendix 8 for details of the rooms of the town as a whole, and Appendix 9 for office-holders' rooms.

in the parlour, leaving the hall devoid of both. There was less working equipment in the hall, and fewer seats of all kinds, especially chairs. There were slightly fewer tables, but, similarly to the hall in Sandwich, a large majority of the books in the house were kept here. Although there were fewer hangings, there were more pictures, and this too reflects the situation in Sandwich. Here there were said to be story cloths with frames and tables of arms.⁹³ The hall in such houses provided a clear and uncluttered space in which there was visual stimulation, but not a particularly high level of comfort, and fewer valuables on view. In these larger, more complex domestic spaces, it was clearly not a room in which the family spent much time, and appears to have provided a penetrable interface between office-holding occupants and the community they represented.

Four of the inventories give individual totals for each room, and these can be treated qualitatively to give some information about the relative importance of different spaces. There is a huge variation in the total value of parlours, from £5 3s 4d to 18s, reflecting the fact that at least two of the houses had two parlours. All three of the halls for which a total is given are valued at between £4 11s 2d and £4 16s 8d. However, the most useful information relates to the chambers. It shows a huge range of values, as one might expect given the very different functions which they are asked to fulfil, from a maid's chamber at 9s to a chamber over the shop at £19 3s 4d. In general, however, the upper rooms had the highest value, and one room in particular was worth a great deal more than all the others. This ranged from between 2% and 8% of the total inventory wealth.

Such figures give a sense of the concentration of expensive goods, especially meaningful as these wealthy inventories tend to list their valuables, such as plate, brass, pewter, linen, and apparel separately. When we are considering the function of a chamber, it is as well to keep in mind the fact that such description elides rooms which would be understood to perform very different functions.

2.iv.c. Conclusion

There are clearly qualitative differences between the domestic interiors of those who hold office within these towns and those who do not. Their houses have a larger

⁹² The pictures are mainly referred to as 'maps', although the meaning of this term is unclear.

⁹³ PRC 10.16 f.517, 1583; PRC 10.13 f.116, 1582.

number of rooms, and those rooms fulfil a wide variety of specialist functions; their chambers, parlours and halls are differently furnished.⁹⁴ It is equally clear, however, that the relationship between civic, and economic and social status is different in Canterbury and Sandwich. In Sandwich, the qualitative shift is to be found between office-holders and non-office holders. In Canterbury, however, the size of the town means that those with high economic and social status are not synonymous with the governing body, and the status which the domestic interior reflects and refines is too all-encompassing merely to apply to civic standing.

In order to indicate briefly the nature of high-status, as opposed to office-holding, domestic space in Canterbury, and to explicate the differentiation between different strata of wealth, Appendix 10 shows the distribution of key domestic items within four bands of inventory totals. These goods have been chosen as ones which were particularly prevalent in the inventories of the office-holders. They fall into two basic categories of non-essential household goods and interior furnishings and embellishments. The lower band represents 70% of the inventories in Canterbury, but the percentage of items within their houses nowhere near as high, at between 11% and 54% of the total number of goods. £0-49 documents list comparatively high numbers of books, tablecloths, instruments and painted cloths. The band between £50-99 possessed higher amounts of jewellery, plate, silver spoons, instruments, window curtains and pictures. Inventories between £100 and £499 had a larger share of jewellery, plate, playing tables, carpets, curtains and pictures, and the highest band had a large proportion of the jewellery, looking glasses, plate, spoons, and nearly every kind of embellishment, especially cushions and curtains for windows.

Although the lower section of the social hierarchy possessed all goods in some numbers, ownership of a range of 'luxury' items appears to characterise the more prosperous in Canterbury. Whereas those whose inventories were valued between £0-49 were consistently under-represented in every category, even those in the next bracket (£50-99) were, in every case, at least equally represented.

⁹⁴ Roberts, 'Tenterden houses', sees the difference between gentry houses and those of the more important yeomen as one of "increased service space balanced by increased domestic accommodation": at the beginning of the seventeenth century she also identifies a "group of houses beginning to break away from the majority and developing into much larger structures", with increased specialisation, not only of working rooms but also, for example, of specified 'guest rooms', pp. 117, 145-9, 184.

Appendix 11 demonstrates that those goods which are owned in smaller numbers lower down the scale are also of less financial worth. A few items appear to have a set price, which all instances roughly coincide with, for example playing tables and curtains. The majority, however, show a steady rise in both the range of values and the median value in each ascending category of total inventoried wealth. The painted cloths which were most prevalent in the lower band of inventories can be seen to be cheaper versions of those higher up the scale, worth a median of 2s, rising to 5s in the next band, then 6s 8d, and finally 10s in the highest bracket.

In some cases the change in value can be seen to be a result of a more or less expensive fabric.⁹⁵ The lowest band of inventories is well represented in its possession of chamblet, frise, fustian, russet and worsted, mostly cheap, sometimes homemade materials, and in those pieces of furniture said to be covered in mat or straw, or made of boards.⁹⁶ It has very small amounts of damask, mocado, satin, tapestry and velvet.⁹⁷ In the other sections there are large numbers of the more expensive cloths, but also considerable amounts of cheaper wares, showing that the houses to which the inventories refer provided high-status spaces alongside areas for servants.

If this information is viewed in terms of individual rooms, the most luxurious chamber in the highest-status house might have coverlets of tapestry and arras work on the bed, silk curtains around it in red, yellow, or green, and a fringed silk tester and valance above it. Its chairs might be covered with dornix, needlework, tapestry or velvet, as might its window seat. Its tables may have embroidered silk carpets on them, and its cupboards cloths of Bruges satin. Its chests might be leather with iron bindings. A chamber in the majority of inventories priced at under £50 would have less visible cloths altogether. If it too was the best in the house it may have curtains for the bed, but they are more likely to be of buckram or say, as are the cupboard cloths. The bed may have a coverlet (rather than the blanket of the lesser rooms), but

⁹⁵ See Appendix 12.

⁹⁶ All definitions from C.W.Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Sixteenth Century*, London: Faber and Faber, 1970, pp. 212-227: Chamblet: "Probably a kind of mohair...mixed with wool, silk and cotton, and having a watered appearance"; Frise: "A woollen cloth with a heavy nap on one side, typically for working dress", it is warm for the winter; Fustian: "A fabric of cotton and flax, or flax mixed with wool, and having a silky finish. Used as a substitute for velvet"; Russet: "A coarse woollen homespun"; Worsted: "A woollen textile made from well twisted yarn, smooth and strong".

⁹⁷ Damask: "A rich silk fabric with an elaborate design woven into the texture"; Mockado: "A piled cloth of silk and wool, or silk and linen...the pile being of a different colour from the ground". Many instances of these fabrics in the inventories refer to the clothing of the individuals concerned.

it will be of Boughton work⁹⁸ rather than tapestry. The chairs will be seated in straw and the chamber will be unlikely to have a cushioned seat, or a curtain, in the window. Two reasonably distinct sets of materials can, in other words, be distinguished.

The most prestigious hall, although offering a smaller variety of furnishings, would have cushions, carpets and cupboard cloths of similar fabrics: tapestry, silk and velvet, perhaps embroidered with images such as pomegranates or gold crosses. The hall more familiar to 70% of Canterbury's residents would once more have say and buckram cloths on cupboards and walls, and perhaps cushions made of lysts on its stools.⁹⁹ The high-status parlour would have a similar range of fabrics and colours in addition to the pictures on its walls, the lower a narrower range of items of embellishment. Changes between the living accommodation for the heads of these typical households are not only ones of the range of objects or colours, but also the *numbers* of items and the *type* and *quality* of the materials of which they are made. These spaces must be experienced as different with every sense.

Moreover, this evidence suggests that there are several qualitative shifts within the evidence which fall between the two extremes outlined above. While inventories valued at under £50 in Canterbury appear to share few characteristics with those in the other brackets, those from £50 upwards share aspects of the wealthiest estates while retaining an identity of their own. The office-holders, it will be noted, fall into every one of these brackets.

2.v. The differences in possession of objects over time

2.v.a. Introduction

So far, this chapter has considered its evidence spatially by room, geographically by type of community, and socially, by status group. Such analysis suggests ideas about peoples' perception of their houses in relation to those of their neighbours, or those of acquaintances living within different kinds of communities. It has been possible to

⁹⁸ Boughton work is hard to define despite its ubiquitousness. The *OED* suggests 'bought as opposed to home made' which would fit nicely with the first move towards a more elaborate provisioning of the room.

⁹⁹ Cunnington: Say: "A fine twilled fabric of wool, or silk and wool"; Buckram: "A coarse linen (or cotton) textile". Rosemary Milward, *A Glossary of Household, Farming and Trade Terms from*

consider how individuals might evaluate their own living space in terms of those of their contemporaries, but not in terms of the houses in which they grew up, which their parents or grandparents arranged and furnished. This section attempts such a vertical analysis, firstly by considering the instance of each kind of object within the inventories over the period, and then by considering the relative character of each room over time.

2.v.b. Quantities of each item possessed over time¹⁰⁰

The data for each object has been analysed in two different ways. This makes it possible to see, firstly, changes in the number of houses which contain a certain item. It is also important, however, to assess the number of such items which households owning them have, in order to demonstrate whether all households possess more items, or whether a percentage of the population are simply owning many more of them. Each item is also compared to the total number of inventories extant for that year, so that increases in the number of inventories may be separated from additional possessions. The graphs are examined in similar categories of object to those employed in the preceding analysis, in order to assess changes in items with a similar function.

The number of inventories which contain flockbeds rises more slowly than the total number of inventories, although the total number of such beds demonstrates a more similar rise. The number of inventories containing featherbeds rises slightly more steeply, and the total number of featherbeds is rising considerably faster than the number of inventories per year. Beds in total, represented here as a sum of the categories bed, bedstead and trucklebed, are also rising more steeply than the number of inventories.

The numbers of testers and valances are small, but there is a slight rise in the latter over the period, and the total numbers are growing faster than the numbers of inventories containing them. There is a consistently higher number of testers than inventories with testers, but neither value grows very significantly. As the century proceeds, then, a larger proportion of inventories are containing beds and bedding;

Probate Inventories, Derbyshire Record Society, Occasional Paper No. 1, 1977: Lysts: "selvage or border, or strips of cloth; a form of patchwork".

¹⁰⁰ For the graphs for this section, see Appendix 13.

those people who own beds are owning more of them by 1600, and they are tending to be the better quality, higher status featherbeds.

Storage facilities show a marked distinction between types. The number of inventories containing a cupboard climbs slightly more slowly than the total number of documents, but the number of cupboards rises more steeply. While almost every inventory contains a chest, the numbers in which they are owned rise fourfold over the century. Although there is a much smaller number of presses, they too show a rise over the period of both kinds, resulting in more inventories with the item, and slightly more per inventory by 1600. The number of documents listing a coffer, however, barely rises at all over the century, and the number of coffers per document actually falls.

At the turn of the century, houses are considerably more likely to contain higher numbers of cupboards and chests. They may be slightly more likely to contain a press, and if they do then it is possible that they will contain more than one. A small fraction more houses might contain coffers, but those which have them will have a smaller number, although this may, of course, be a question of nomenclature. Both the closed chest and the more open cupboard are available in considerably increased numbers, and must be required for the storage of a greater number of household goods.

Despite the differences in actual numbers, it is possible to see rises in the instances of both spoons and silver plate. In no way does the increased number of inventories containing each item correspond to the total rise in documents, but there is an increase, larger in the case of spoons, as the century continues. There is a more substantial rise in the total numbers of each item, in the case of plate less than the rise in inventories, but much steeper than the increase in inventories listing plate. Total numbers of spoons rise even more steeply in proportion to the number of documents in which they appear, suggesting that a slightly larger proportion of households own silver by the end of the century, but that those who do possess it in considerably larger numbers. This may well be linked to the perceived security of investing money in precious metal in times of high inflation.

People are also more likely to own jewellery at the end of the century. Once again, those who own it have more of it, and the graphs show a similar picture in relation to

cloth. The most spectacular rise in the whole section, however, is that of tablecloths. The numbers of inventories containing them rises only a little more slowly than the total number of documents, but the total numbers are much higher than either, even slightly exceeding the growth in the numbers of chests. Such items, signs of status in the sense that they allow a variety and alternation of functional household objects, are to be found in increasing numbers as the century continues, and it is this increase which presumably brings about the need for increased storage facilities. Particularly in the case of the very expensive silverware, large increases in numbers of household stores mainly show a small amount of people possessing a greater amount of goods.

The instance of trendles remains almost constant throughout the period, as does the number of inventories containing them. The number of wheels, however, rises quite considerably, and the number of documents listing them a little more slowly. There is little guidance to the differences between the two items. It seems plausible from the similarity in their description and the places in which they are kept that they are merely two words for the same object. Alternatively, the small numbers of trendles in higher-status households might suggest that they are simpler and cheaper versions of the spinning wheel.¹⁰¹ In either case, by the end of the century more houses contain wheels, and those which do contain more of them. The small-scale domestic production they represent was increasingly prevalent within Kentish society, and the size of the operations was growing, perhaps providing the surplus income to invest in additional household items.¹⁰²

Numbers of playing tables and musical instruments are small across the whole period. In the former case they do rise a little, but numbers per inventory remain the same. Instruments are even more sporadic, and the slight rise in instances per inventory may be the result of only one or two objects. There are larger numbers of books, which makes perceived changes over time more reliable. While those inventories in which books do occur rise more slowly than the numbers of documents, the total number of books rise faster than the inventories. Until the 1580s this is the result of a number of large and more detailed collections, but from the 80s onwards the numbers are more consistent. When the number of inventories which list 'his books' are taken into consideration (and these are most frequently the inventories with modest amounts of

¹⁰¹ The *OED* simply lists 'trendle' as a wheel-shaped object.

books) this rise is likely to considerably underestimate the situation. Appendix 10, which shows the lower-valued inventories containing a relatively high proportion of the total number of books over the period as a whole, might suggest that this was an increase which reached right down the scale of economic status, in contrast to that of plate and tablecloths.

The proportion of inventories containing looking glasses does rise over the period, but the numbers are very small. There is little difference between the two methods of analysis, suggesting that those households which possess such an object are unlikely to need more than one.

Instances of all types of seating are increasing during the period, especially stools. The number of inventories containing stools is almost the same as the total number of inventories, but the total number of objects rises at a similarly sharp rate to that of chests. The increase in numbers of inventories containing chairs is only slightly slower than that of the stools, although the numbers involved are smaller. The rate of increase of the total number of chairs is also slower, but it is still substantial. Numbers of inventories with forms do not rise so sharply, and the actual increase in numbers of forms is not so significant either, nevertheless the general trend is upwards. Settles and benches, much smaller categories from the start, also show more muted rises both in amounts of documents in which they occur, and in total numbers.

The house in 1600 is likely to provide considerably larger amounts of seating than its predecessor in the 1560s. The most considerable rises are in the portable stools and chairs, designed for the single individual rather than providing a seat for several people as benches and forms do. Presumably linked to this is the rise in the number of tables. The numbers of inventories which list them rise more slowly than the total amount of documents, but the rise in the total numbers is only a little less steep than that of stools. It is possible then that different types of table are being used in different places for different events, rather than the same one being cleared and then reused.

The embellishment of the sixteenth century house is an area where one might expect to see substantial changes over the period. The number of inventories which list curtains does not grow very spectacularly over the century, but the total number of

¹⁰² See Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, chapter 6, for the 'putting out' of work in the cloth trade.

curtains rises much more steeply. The number of window curtains, for which the sample is of course very small, sees growths in both numbers of documents and numbers of items as well. In the light of the increase in stools, we should not be surprised to see a steep rise in the numbers of cushions, although numbers of inventories containing cushions do not increase in line with the overall rise in documents. The small number of them stated to be in the window rises by both methods as well.

Hangings produce perhaps the most unexpected result, they actually fall, both in terms of inventories containing them and of total numbers over the period. By 1600 there are not only less inventories in which they occur, but less instances per inventory as well. This is the only household item which shows such a trend. Painted cloths, in contrast, rise in both ways over time. However, even if the decline in hangings was due to a change in nomenclature, there is certainly not a sufficient increase in painted cloths to suggest an overall growth in wall hangings. The increase in documents mentioning them does not keep pace with the number of inventories, and the expansion in overall numbers is only very gradual. It seems as though cloths as a whole were going out of fashion as wall-coverings, and that those which remained were patterned or covered with images, rather than being plain. Numbers of pictures, often closely linked to painted cloths as images hung on the walls, are small for the whole sample, but they do show a slight increase by both methods.

Of those decorative items which are placed upon pieces of furniture, the cupboard cloth becomes more prevalent more swiftly than the carpet. Numbers of inventories listing cupboard cloths do not keep pace with the growth in documents, but there is a continuous upwards trend, and the total amount of cloths rises more steeply, in line with the cupboards they adorn. Carpets increase more gradually in both cases, at roughly half of the rate of the cupboard cloth, suggesting that the extra tables present in many houses are frequently uncovered.

In addition the amounts of fire equipment rise slowly across the period, although numbers of fittings mentioned, admittedly a very diverse category, show a much slower increase.

The most striking rises in embellishments pertain to cupboards and to seating, then,

with less attention being paid to the decoration of walls. This would seem to suggest that as the ceiling over of lower rooms became more common, and upper rooms benefited from an enclosed chimney, it was less important to cover the walls as a way of keeping in the heat. The window, now more frequently glazed, was still cold, and there was a perceived need to control the levels of light. In addition the increased numbers of beds required larger numbers of curtains to keep out drafts and to give some privacy. Curtains, cushions and cupboard cloths, the fastest growing kinds of decoration within the sixteenth century house, all follow trends observed in the furniture with which the house was provided to a greater or lesser extent.

Wall hangings are the only category of item which does not increase over the period 1560-1600. However, this does not mean that all inhabitants of the towns and villages studied were more likely to own the other household goods. Beds, seating and storage facilities appear to show the most broadly-based rises in the period. With the addition of wheels and books, these items are increasingly likely to be found in a large percentage of the inventories of the sample as a whole. The majority of the rises in embellishments such as curtains, cushions and carpets, and in valuable household stores such as cupboard cloths and silverware, appear to be confined to the upper economic ranges of households. Interestingly, the wall hangings shown in Appendix 10 to be owned in very large numbers in inventories valued at under £50 are the one declining category. A change in domestic decoration which focuses attention away from walls and towards pieces of furniture which contain great worth, and are themselves highly valued, seems to be being led by the richest within Kentish society. It is to the distribution of these objects that we must now turn in order to see the rooms in which such additional items were being employed.

2.v.c. Differences in the composition of rooms over time¹⁰³

This section deals with those items whose position in the house is specified: in other words it deals with location rather than possession. Graph 2.1 shows the number of rooms listed within the inventories per year. Halls show approximately 15 instances at the start of the period and 30 by 1600, numbers of parlours are lower, starting at around 10 and only rising to just over 15, chambers, however, rise from just over 40 to 85 per year.

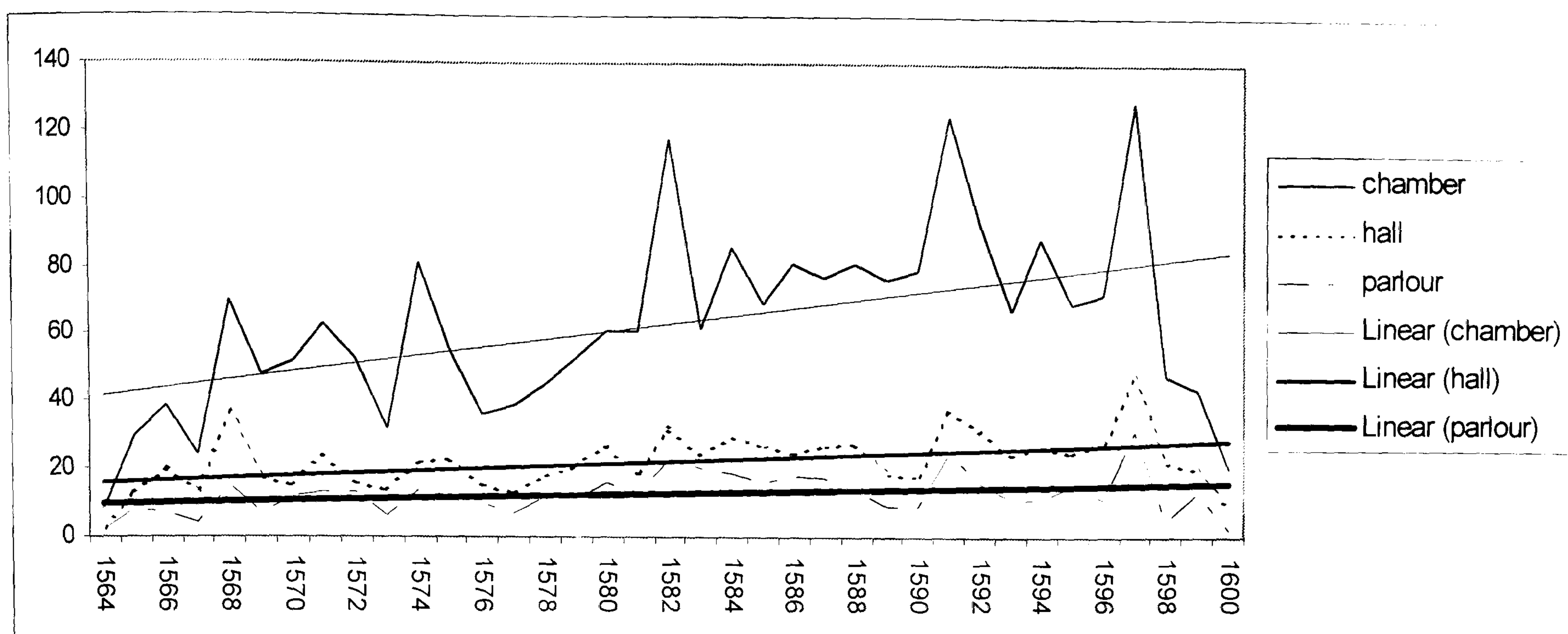
¹⁰³ See Appendix 14 for the graphs for this section.

Numbers of items can therefore be seen in relation to these figures in order to assess their relevance to a generic notion of room use. Those items which rise at a similar rate to the numbers of rooms but are present in smaller amounts will be a constant presence in a smaller percentage of the rooms in question. Items which are not present at the start of the period but do show later on can be seen as new introductions, and therefore indicative of changes in attitudes towards both the object and the room in which it is placed. They can also be seen as embodying the relations between a new object and the social condition of its owner. Those things which show an actual downturn in numbers over time were clearly becoming quite dramatically less popular in the room as the century continued.

THE HALL

There are very few beds in the hall over the whole period. The numbers of trucklebeds and unspecified beds appears to rise very slightly over time, but the amount of bedsteads is actually falling. The hall was of decreasing importance for sleeping, and presumably as house size increased there was less need to use rooms at night other than chambers.

The data for storage is more complicated. Numbers of chests remain almost static over time, whereas both presses and cupboards, the two most prevalent storage items in halls, do show a rise even if it is not a dramatic one. This suggests that there is a constant but relatively modest need for chests, perhaps serving a certain sector of society whose requirements are consistent. Such items are separate from those pieces of furniture for which demand is increasing, and which are therefore present in all houses as the sample size itself expands. In this case it is the larger pieces of 'display furniture' which characterise the needs of the room.



Graph 2.1: Total numbers of rooms per year from all inventories.

The graph showing valuables in the hall suggests that tablecloths were more likely to be kept in the chests, as their numbers do not alter noticeably over the period. A certain proportion of halls were always places where the house's items of domestic provision were kept; or alternatively the majority of halls had some tablecloths within them to be used for everyday dining. Silverware and silver spoons, numbers of which are growing, could be seen as being kept within the presses and cupboards which the hall was more likely to contain. The indication is that amounts of plate are growing at a slightly slower rate than pieces of storage furniture, and therefore that, as the last set of graphs suggested, a smaller percentage of the growing population of inventoried individuals own such items. Numbers of spoons, however, were increasing in the hall at a more rapid rate, as they were often purchased in sets rather than individually.

There are nearly three times as many stools on average in the hall by the end of the century as there were in the 1560s, and over twice as many chairs. There are therefore many more stools in each hall by the end of the century. Chairs, by the same token, were requisite in all halls at the start of the period, but become even more common as the century draws to a close. There are also more tables, although the rise is not so spectacular, only just keeping pace with the larger number of halls, despite the rising numbers of stools. It seems possible that those tables which are there are larger, and used exclusively for eating.

Analysis of the graph for trendles and wheels shows a decline in the former over time in the hall, although the numbers are small in each year, but a rise in the number of

wheels which were kept within the room. Small scale domestic production in the hall is clearly the preserve of a minority of those for whom inventories survive, but that minority is constantly represented by the sample. The numbers for musical instruments are too small to see any real change, but there is an increase in numbers of playing tables over the period, and a very sharp growth in the amount of books which are to be found in the room. The latter considerably outpaces the increase in number of rooms, suggesting that the hall becomes a more important place to keep such items throughout the latter half of the century.

Those embellishments which were applied to the walls in the hall follow the pattern noted above. The numbers of hanging cloths decrease to almost nothing as the century draws to a close, whereas painted cloths are slightly more common. The increase is nothing like as rapid as the overall growth in halls, however, suggesting that the number of rooms which contain wall hangings of any description is actually declining. Pictures do show a rather larger increase despite their small numbers, which might lead us to suspect that they are replacing the plain hangings in some cases. This could be a result of the ceiling over of the room, which must have changed its character considerably, or perhaps of the provision of alternative wall-coverings such as panelling. The third possibility is that the room was not perceived as requiring such a high level of embellishment by the end of the century, as its function had changed.

In line with the increase in cupboards, instances of cupboard cloths also rise, and their increase is more considerable. This suggests that a larger proportion of cupboards was topped with fabric towards the end of the century, drawing attention to it as a key piece of furniture within the hall. Apart from the stool, the cupboard is the item which rises most sharply in instance, and which is prolific enough in all years to be present in the majority of such rooms. Carpets, often placed on tables, increase slightly in numbers as do curtains, but the figures are fairly small.

THE PARLOUR

A slightly higher number of beds were to be found in Kentish parlours by the end of the century than in the 1560s, the most significant increase being that of the bedstead. The latter does show an increase which keeps pace with numbers of parlours as a whole, and this suggests that a significant majority of parlours at the end of the

century did contain beds, but that the percentage was not increasing. It seems possible that those which did offer such facilities were a very different kind of room altogether. The moveable trucklebed, which allowed greater numbers of people to sleep in a room by making use of floor space during the night, barely shows any increase at all, which is compatible with the kind of room where sleeping provision does not take precedence over other uses of space. In terms of the mattresses which were placed on these beds, the cheaper flockbed increases slightly more rapidly than the more expensive featherbed, but numbers of the latter are consistently higher.

The chest is virtually uniform in its instance in parlours throughout the period, suggesting a decline in real terms. Both the cupboard and the press rise slightly, reinforcing the notion that the parlour was not a room which was increasingly used for the storage of goods. The cupboard is prolific enough to be found in the majority of rooms throughout the period however, although this majority would be smaller by 1600. The numbers for cupboards are interestingly comparable with those for bedsteads, suggesting that those rooms which were used for sleeping might also be used for storage. Tablecloths, spoons and silverware all rise over the period, although none of them exceed the increase in numbers of parlours.

The number of forms within the Kentish parlour remains consistent throughout the century, and amounts of chairs only increase slightly. In real terms, this signifies a drop in rooms containing forms, although chairs appear to keep pace with rises in numbers of parlours almost exactly. There are sufficient stools for each parlour to contain two on average in the 1560s, rising to over three by the end of the century. There is a fairly large rise in tables across the 40 years, but it is not of the same order as that of the stools, suggesting that there were more stools available per table, and the room could accommodate larger social gatherings.

Instances of both trendles and wheels are so few and so sporadic as to be statistically insignificant. The numbers are also small for leisure equipment, instruments not even rising to an average of one per year, but if there is a discernible trend, then both they and playing tables are becoming more significant. Books can be seen to be rising a little more clearly, although the total expansion is only from just over two to just over three per year. With similar provisos, the instances of looking glasses also increase. The picture presented by these two graphs is one of a certain amount of parlours in

which leisure is an important function, and a smaller amount in which the same can be said of spinning wheels. Neither work nor leisure, however, characterises the room in general.

By 1600, the walls of the Kentish parlour were extremely unlikely to be decorated with hanging cloths, and only slightly more likely to be hung with the painted variety. The probability of there being a picture upon them, however, had increased almost three-fold. The same shift from cloths to pictures can be seen to be taking place here as in the hall, although the increase in the parlour is more striking. There was also a significant rise in the numbers of curtains the room contained, and a more modest expansion in the amount of carpets and cupboard cloths. By the end of the period, there are approximately a third more cushions there than there were at the start, and there has been a similar increase in the amount of parlours in which fire equipment is listed. The growing number of stools might be likely to be softened by a cushion in the parlour, then, and the curtains, which grow too rapidly only to be related to beds, must have been more common at the windows. With the room increasingly heated a percentage of parlours (again small) can be seen to be very comfortable, highly embellished rooms, across the period.

It is hard to see any features of this room as characterising it generically. The other kinds of analysis applied to the data have suggested different kinds of parlour: the high-status, the modest, the urban and the rural, and the emphasis indicated by this temporal examination has been upon diversity of content and practice. Of all the rooms the parlour seems most flexible when it comes to definition, but there is no clear evidence that this is because it is in a state of change from one function to another.

THE CHAMBER

The rise in numbers of all types of beds in the Kentish chamber is steady and significant. Trucklebeds and bedsteads increase at a faster rate than the general category in the chamber, and flockbeds double in number, while the more prolific featherbeds increase by over 100%. This is, of course, not surprising, but it does seem clear that the number of beds is not rising more swiftly than the number of chambers, and that the latter's levels of provision actually falls over the period. In the 1560s there are sufficient bedsteads to provide an average of over one per room, with just

under one by 1600. The greater number of chambers which houses contained at the end of the century do not seem to have provided individual sleeping areas for as many more people.

Numbers of presses stay constant over time in the chamber, but both numbers of cupboards and the considerably more common chests double. This confirms the generic investigation of the chamber, which indicated that the chest was the most important storage item within the room. However, it does suggest a distinction between the press, useful in a small amount of chambers, but not growing with the increase in inventories, and the cupboard, which slightly exceeds the multiplication of chambers. The general category of storage, including boxes and other smaller receptacles, grows particularly rapidly, showing that small-scale storage of individual items or groups of them was an increasingly important feature of the room. Little more silverware is kept in the chamber, but silver spoons nearly double in quantity as the century goes on. As numbers of inventories containing plate are growing over the period, this suggests that either the chamber was not the natural focus for its storage, or it is being listed separately, as a generic unit, as amounts owned increase. Instances of tablecloths rise extremely rapidly, demonstrating the fact that the chamber, in addition to its capacity for sleeping, was particularly important for the housing of linen and smaller valuable items, less susceptible to display.

As is the case in both of the other rooms, numbers of stools in the chamber rise steeply over time. In fact, although their numbers are not as great as those in the parlour and hall, they increase more sharply, suggesting that they are a more important feature of the room over time. Numbers of chairs are slightly smaller, trebling from the 1560s to 1600, and forms show a 50% rise. As numbers of all are so small at the start of the period, it appears that chambers do change in character over time, to offer much more in the way of seating. There are half as many tables again by the end of the century, and in all years this averages just over one per inventory. Seating, in other words, is growing faster than the provision of tables, and the chamber is either less likely to be used for eating purposes, or is seating more people around each one.

Numbers of trendles increase slightly, but there is a considerable rise in numbers of wheels, which are becoming more common as the century ends. While instances of

leisure goods are very patchy and erratic, an increase is perceivable in the amount of books per year in chambers. The chamber became more prevalent as a working room during the period then, but some rooms also begin to be seen as a suitable space for the storage of books in the mid 1570s, a function which they retain right up to 1600.

Hanging cloths decrease sharply in this room too, but this is almost compensated for by the rise in instances of painted cloths. Numbers of pictures, however, remain static in the chamber. This is the only room, therefore, where the trend is reversed, and hangings increase while pictures decrease. Such a development is partly explained by a lack of descriptive distinction between hangings on the walls and hangings over beds, but such confusion is less likely with painted cloths, and this still does not account for the static number of pictures over the period. The suggestion here is that the chamber walls are decreasingly likely to be embellished in any way over time.

Instances of both cupboard cloths and carpets increase, the latter more than doubling in numbers. As there is no concomitant rise in tables, it must be assumed that this increase in carpets represents a larger amount of items being stored in chests, and hence an increase in stored, as opposed to frequently used, possessions. It is this kind of change which one might expect to see in connection with the growing 'disposable' wealth of the inventory makers.

Curtains are more prevalent, from an average of approximately 15 per year in the 1560s they increase to just under 45 by 1600. In this they supersede even the ubiquitous cushion, which almost trebles over time, increasing from an average of one per room to approximately three. Both items can, of course, be linked to the increased number of beds in the sample, but this expansion is larger than that for all categories of sleeping facility. The stools which are increasingly common in the chamber will therefore have been more likely to have a cushion on them; windows must have had more curtains, and more beds must have been closed off with fabric 'walls' by 1600. While instances of the general category of fittings fall slightly, the mentions of fire equipment rise from around 2 to over 10 per year, a much sharper rise than was seen in the parlour. More parlours at the start of the period had fireplaces, but by the end of it they had been superseded by chambers.

By the end of the sixteenth century very few of the houses to which these inventories

refer were using their halls to sleep in. Instead, the room was used for meals, for keeping, if not reading, books, and for spinning. Some people slept in their parlours, generally on their own rather than with servants on trucklebeds, and the room was increasingly highly embellished. In all rooms, a few more tables had many more stools around them. More frequently heated than in the 1560s, the chamber had less physical need for embellishments on walls. Its spaces were softened, however, with more cushions, and its sleeping areas more likely to be divided off with curtains. But this room, more than either of the others, housed the increased numbers of stored items which people possessed.

2.v.d. Conclusion

These sections have demonstrated differences between the furnishings of the three main types of living space in the sixteenth-century house which are suggestive of distinct domestic activities. They have enabled the house to be visualised as a set of spaces which function in relation to one another. The organisation of the rooms has indicated contemporary practices for storing goods and dividing them into ‘everyday’ and ‘reserved’ items.

The division of the data into different groups has showed urban houses to be complex, multi-spaced properties with a higher degree of specialisation of room-use than their rural counterparts. This trend was seen to be even more pronounced in the data for the civic office-holders’ properties. However, in Canterbury, the most sophisticated and populous town, the evidence suggested that office-holding status was more complicated, fractured into many different levels of wealth. Between the rural and the urban and between those of high and low status there were seen to be considerable qualitative differences in domestic furnishings. In rural properties some goods were simply not available, and in lower-status urban houses their manufacture, both in terms of quality and fabric, was different.

Finally, the analysis of the data over time showed changes whose scale was in many ways surprising. Almost all categories of domestic goods were more prevalent by 1600 than they had been in the 1560s. They were also to be found in increasing numbers of inventories. While in many cases the overall expansion in estates being recorded would suggest that the growth in numbers of goods was not permeating very far down the social scale, in a few instances, notably beds, stools, chests, books and

spinning wheels, even the less well-off were owning larger numbers of them. All domestic spaces elucidated by these inventories were more crowded by 1600, and their rooms were more specialised, with sleeping in particular developing a space of its own.

2.vi. Domestic objects as bequests

2.vi.a. Introduction

This section is concerned with the significance and meaning of the physical nature of the domestic interior, identified above, for the individuals who constructed and inhabited it. It seeks to explicate the relationship between the history of an object and its emotive importance to those aware of this history; and the consequences which the affective properties of objects might have for the spaces in which they are kept.¹⁰⁴ In addition, will-makers' attempts to control their domestic space after their death are considered as vital information about the relative authority of men and women over the physical household.

546 wills which could be matched with reasonable certainty to the 1430 extant inventories analysed in the last sections have been used to assess these issues.¹⁰⁵ From these documents, information about the bequest of all kinds of objects examined in the inventories has been recorded, along with the relationship between testator and beneficiary where this is stated.

This section is intended to provide as wide a range as possible of responses to domestic objects and the rooms in which they are kept. As such, although the information is considered quantitatively in order to assess the prevalence of particular attitudes, the qualitative explanation given in a minority of more self-conscious documents is given equal weight. Traditional concerns about the under-representativeness of testamentary material, then, while tempering the results of this study in important ways, have effects which are different to those which plague the

¹⁰⁴ It can therefore be seen as trying to reconstruct 'cultural biographies' for objects as suggested by Igor Kopytoff, in 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things, cultural commodities in perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

¹⁰⁵ The criteria used were those of same name and a coincident and always anterior date. The wills, all from the Archdeaconry court, are divided as follows: Canterbury 157; Bethersden 104; Faversham 104; Sandwich 61; Tenterden 92; Woodnesborough 28.

investigation of, for example, pious provision.¹⁰⁶ This analysis is not concerned with the relationship between different types of bequest as overarching strategies of provision for the next generation. Its interest is in attitudes towards furniture and the spaces in which it is kept, rather than its position within patterns of inheritance. Neither is the nature and extent of scribal influence upon the will-maker likely to permeate down to the level of the dispersal of domestic goods.¹⁰⁷

The possible atypicality of testators is a more central concern. Women and those with little to leave are of course under-represented in the sample, and survival, even of those wills which were made by them, is bound to be incomplete.¹⁰⁸ The way in which the wills for this study have been chosen (their relationship with the inventory made of the testator's goods) may accentuate this problem: the following analysis inevitably concerns the wills of heads of households, who are mainly men, it being within their power to divide its material composition. We are therefore looking, not at a representative range of individual choices for all sectors of society, but at the dynamics which operate within households, and at the relationship between authority and ownership of the fabric of the house. Under-representation of women, of the poor, and of servants, reflects the reality of their association with moveable property and domestic space in this period, and this must in turn affect their attitude towards it. The fact that such people are rarely in a position to give household items, although they see and use them every day, underlines the different relation in which they stand to the physical household.¹⁰⁹

Additionally, in considering those at the top of the social scale (even though we may

¹⁰⁶ For detailed treatment of such concerns see Clive Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered' in Michael A. Hicks ed., *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, Gloucester: Sutton Publishing, 1990, p.27, hereafter 'Late Medieval Wills'; see also his "'By Quick and by Dead": wills and pious provision in late medieval Bristol', *Economic History Review*, CCCCX, October 1987, pp. 837.

¹⁰⁷ See for example Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p.15, for discussion of the possible scribal influences upon pious clauses and bequests.

¹⁰⁸ See Michael Zell, 'The social parameters of probate records in the sixteenth century' in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LVII, 1984. Rob Lutton sees his sample of 263 Tenterden wills over 85 years as representing just under a tenth of the adults who died over the period, Lutton 'Heterodox and Orthodox Piety in Tenterden, c. 1420-1540', PhD thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1997, p.17.

¹⁰⁹ This study may, however, be of use when considering those who possess small numbers of domestic items, and therefore avoid the attention of the probate courts. By identifying the objects which are seen as most important in the testamentary strategies of people with a wider range of possessions to choose from, and relating them to inventories of smaller properties, we can suggest those items which were

never be able to say what percentage of the population we are dealing with), we are looking at the decisions of those whose economic status makes them likely to be in a more stable position within their society. Such people are likely to have provided a model for others within their community of a level of domestic provision which could be aspired to, and a socially desirable exemplar for the division of goods.¹¹⁰ The former would become familiar to contemporaries through their dealings with the house-owner in life, and the latter would be stressed through testamentary practice, a process during which the possessions of the deceased were first verbally displayed and then physically relocated.

There are several possible provenances for domestic goods: they can be made within the home, bought from the manufacturer or a previous owner, or given either as gift or bequest. Items acquired in any of these ways may subsequently be given in the will of their owner. Testaments obviously provide our clearest access to information about the provenance of objects, and the only one which it is possible to treat statistically. But they also offer a very particular kind of context for the transmission of goods. Those objects given in wills are spoken by the deceased, written into the document, read to the witnesses, reread in the church or other public place, and discussed within the community as they are distributed by the executors. Those making an inventory of the deceased's goods are often made aware of their intended destination. Whereas all objects may be imbued with the memory of their acquisition, those self-consciously recorded in the document become part of the *ritualised*, as opposed to the informal, transfer of ownership. The items may not be of higher status, but their bequeathal forms a part of the symbolic process of personal summation which the will represents. Clearly testators do not devolve the full range of items available to be given, and domestic goods may well have been passed on in advance of the production of the document. Indeed, court depositions reveal the relatively common practice of a deed of gift of all goods, symbolised by the handing over of a single item, and legalised by a written record.¹¹¹ The self-consciousness of this latter action, and the attention it

seen as essential within the domestic environment, and were therefore most likely to be owned by individuals whose financial situation constricted them to a more limited range of goods.

¹¹⁰ For power to create aspiration wielded by wealthy testators, see P. Spufford, 'Mobility and Immobility' in M. Spufford ed., *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 331.

¹¹¹ See, for instance, the transfer of Stephen Ruck's estate to his son, at which he "delivered him a goblet or cup as part thereof in the name of the whole", PRC 39.18 f.116v, 1595.

focuses upon the item itself as symbolic of an estate, provides interesting parallels to the importance placed upon testamentary transfer.

Burgess sees wills as “shedding no reliable light...on the concerns with which individuals had been occupied during life”, coming as they often do in its very last moments.¹¹² For the study of the domestic interior the issue is slightly different, however, because that which is being assessed is a physical entity which cannot be changed as death approaches, only reinterpreted. The will as document, presenting one point in time, must be set within the series of events of its reiteration (with their different audiences) mentioned above, and the bequest of objects must be considered as a sequence of important contexts for the construction of responses to the domestic interior: the verbal, written, and finally the physical, transfer of possessions. These contexts for reinterpretation, which draw attention to goods and their meaning, have implications for the distinction between use and ownership. Items which are in the possession of, or being used by, another individual are still bequeathed in the will. They point up the very meaningful contemporary distinction between ownership and use, and the concomitant significance of the eventual transfer of title to the object in question.¹¹³

Domestic objects are also important in mediating between the past life of the testator and the future lives of the beneficiaries. Those items which are given can be seen to be part of a process of replication: of the reproduction of status through environment, and of social structures through emotional relationships. The domestic object as bequest is seen in what follows as transferring a sense of its old location as a memory of past space and spatial practice; as a metonym for the room which it once occupied, and for times spent within such a space. By implication it represents the connections between those people present, between testator and beneficiary.

2.vi.b. Bequests and their recipients

Table 2.16 lists items in order of the frequency of their bequeathal, without taking into consideration the relationship between giver and receiver. This information allows an identification of the limits of the possible: a description of every conceivable kind of

¹¹² Burgess, ‘Late Medieval Wills’, p.16.

gift within the data set. Although some pieces of clothing were more popular than others (from 109 gowns to a solitary night cap), if apparel is considered together, then

Type of bequest	Total no. of bequests	Type of bequest	Total no. of bequests
Total (apparel)	667	Curtain	14
Apparel (specified)¹¹⁴	536	Hangings	14
Chest	187	Fire stuff	13
Pewter	178	Settle	13
Featherbed	162	Painted cloths	12
Bedstead	142	Fittings	12
Spoon	139	Carpet	11
Apparel (general)	133	Press	11
Kitchen stuff	132	Storage (general)	11
Brass	119	Coffer	8
Jewels	108	Tools	7
Cupboard	97	Cupboard cloth	6
Linen	95	Tester	6
Plate	87	Loom	5
Bedding	84	Shelf	4
Table	84	Bench	3
Household (general)	83	Valance	3
Tablecloth	75	Desk	2
Flockbed	56	Fringe	2
Form	38	Ladder	2
Bed (unspecified)	32	Tester	2
Chair	31	Trendle	2
Stool	30	Wool	2
Armour	28	Lute	2
Book	24	Close stool	1
Cloth	21	Looking glass	1
Cushion	17	Wheel	1
Gear	16	Comb	1
Trucklebed	16		

Table 2.16: Numbers of each type of bequest in all wills.

it is by far the most frequent bequest.¹¹⁵ The second most prolific item is the chest, often given as a receptacle for the almost equally common pewter and for silver

¹¹³ For instance Alice Stace of Tenterden gives a flockbed to her aunt Mrs Joyle which is in the keeping of Margaret Stace, the testatrix's sister, PRC 17.27 f.93, 1550; see also PRC 17.40 f.170v, 1567.

¹¹⁴ Gown, 109; Petticoat 68; Cloak 53; Doublet 48; Kirtle 31; Hose 30; Hat 29; Coat 28; Cassock 28; Jacket 29; Breeches 17; Cap 11; Waistcoat 10; Gaskins 10; Shoes 8; Smock 6; Safeguard 6; Netherstocks 4; Sleeves 3; Boots 3; Purse 2; Stockings 2; Night Cap 1.

¹¹⁵ Clothing bequests deserve a thesis of their own, and there is no space here to do them justice. For a preliminary investigation of the social importance of clothing, see Catherine Richardson, 'An

spoons. This reflects the emphasis demonstrated in the inventories upon the organisation of domestic space. It suggests that it was desirable for items given as bequests to be kept together, forming a separate part of the household stores, and dividing ownerships within the same space. Bequests of beds and bedding are also common, as are those of brass and kitchen equipment, indicating that expensive, vital items are being bequeathed in order to facilitate the setting up of new households.

Relationship	No. of bequests	Relationship	No. of bequests
Son	685	Daughter in law	25
Daughter	659	Witness	23
Wife	336	Relative¹¹⁶	21
Brother	158	Other	10
Sister	102	Brother in law	8
Granddaughter	96	Overseer	8
Kin¹¹⁷	89	Sister in law	6
Nephew	55	Father	4
Grandson	55	Aunt	3
Goddaughter	51	Master	3
Son in law	51	Godson	2
Cousin¹¹⁸	47	Grandchild	2
Servant	41	Father in law	1
Executor	36	Friend	1
Niece	34	Mother in law	1
Relative of official	28		

Table 2.17: Numbers of bequests to each type of person.

Below 50 instances of bequests (just under 2% of the total), the item could be considered to be infrequently given, and most kinds of seating, and embellishments such as cushions, curtains and hanging cloths, fall into this category. Rarely owned specialist items such as looms, and objects apparently considered inappropriate as

Exploration of the Significance of Dressing in Sixteenth Century Canterbury', MA dissertation, University of Kent, 1995.

¹¹⁶ This category includes all those who shared a common surname with the testator, or who appeared to be related to them in some way (sharing a common name with their children from a previous marriage for example), but where the relationship was not made explicit.

¹¹⁷ This category refers to complex relationships which may have been understood in kin terms, such as the testator's cousin's son, or a son in law's daughter, as well as those specifically referred to as 'kinsman'.

¹¹⁸ Including both those said by the testator to be their cousins, and those who fulfil the technical definition of the term as we understand it. In many ways this is the least satisfactory of the categories, as the contemporary term applied to so many different relationships. However, it is rather the identification of an important connection between people than the specific nature of that connection which is important in the giving of bequests.

gifts, such as wheels and close stools, seem to belong to a different category, that of the rare exception at the farthest reaches of the possible.

Pragmatic considerations appear to be tempered by a conception of appropriateness which singles out substantial pieces of furniture which formed the focus of the rooms in which they were kept: beds, cupboards and tables are all popular, as are chests and the important items of dining equipment which fill them. There is no direct relationship between objects owned in large numbers and popular bequests (silverware is more frequently bequeathed than tables), and the probable over-representation of wealthier testators does not appear to make the passing on of items such as looking glasses and lutes any more likely.

In those instances where information about the relationship between the testator and the recipient of the bequest is recorded in the will, it refers to a wide range of kin and other relationships, as detailed in Table 2.17. Some of these are clearly more significant in terms of numbers of bequests than others, sons, daughters and wives receiving the largest number of gifts.

Of the 546 wills treated here, 363 give a clear indication of the generational structure of the testator's family. At least 44% of the wills mentioning such information were made by individuals who were of an age where it was possible for them to have young children. A minimum of 25% were of sufficient age for it to be possible for them to have grandchildren, and just over 3% of testators referred to children with a wide range of ages, suggesting that they were involved in at least one remarriage.¹¹⁹ The figures inevitably mask a considerably more complicated family organisation, and a third of the sample do not, in any case, make their situation clear. The data can nevertheless be said to relate to the wills of men and women who were not predominantly 'old', in the sense that they had not stopped producing children, and had therefore presumably not given up active work. Their domestic interiors were likely to be in a good state of repair, improved through continuing incomings. Minor

¹¹⁹ 82 will makers mentioned grandchildren, an additional 5 had both grandchildren and young children. 190 testators mentioned only minor children, 10 left bequests to possible unborn children, suggesting that they considered their wife still to be capable of producing children, and a further 12 mentioned both minor and married children. 38 wills made provision for married children but did not indicate the presence of grandchildren, and the remaining 25 wills were made by unmarried people who either identified themselves as servants or made reference to their parents.

Type of bequest	Total bequests to generation above ¹²⁰	Total bequests to same generation ¹²¹	Total bequests to generation below ¹²²	Total bequests to two generations below ¹²³
Bedstead		27	83	8
Bedding	1	17	47	6
Featherbed		30	95	7
Flock bed	1	9	30	4
Tester		3	3	
Valance		2	1	
Trucklebed		7	5	1
Bed unspecified		6	18	1
Armour		6	12	
Looking glass			1	
Book		7	7	
Cupboard		17	57	3
Coffer			3	3
Chest	1	28	111	7
Press		2	7	
Storage		6	2	1
Cupboard cloth		2	4	
Cushion		6	6	1
Carpet		3	5	
Curtain		5	5	1
Fittings			8	
Painted cloths			10	
Hangings		3	5	
Fire stuff		5	5	
Wainscot		2		
Desk			1	
Shelf			3	
Close stool			1	
Table		17	52	4
Bench			2	
Chair		8	15	
Stool		9	13	2
Form		4	28	3
Settle		4	6	1

¹²⁰ Including mothers and fathers, mothers in law and fathers in law, aunts and uncles

¹²¹ Including brothers, sisters, brothers in law, sisters in law, cousins and wives.

¹²² Including daughters, sons, daughters in law, sons in law, nieces and nephews.

¹²³ Including grandsons and granddaughters.

Household general		41	32	
Kitchen stuff		16	90	5
Stuff			3	1
Cloth	1	4	4	1
Jewellery	1	24	39	9
Linen		11	56	
Money		26	53	7
Plate		22	46	4
Pewter		21	99	14
Spoon		17	76	19
Tablecloth		11	44	3
Purse		1		
Brass		12	75	14
Total apparel	3	177	168	17
Gear		2	7	2
Tools		2	3	
Trendle		2		
Wheel				
Loom			3	

Table 2.18: Numbers of types of bequests to each generation.

children would be likely to be living at home, and would not, therefore, have taken household possessions with them, either as dowry, or into service.

Table 2.18 divides the data into bequests to each generation in order to assess the contribution which the items make to the recipients' future, and the changing nature of expectations of need and/or desirability at different stages in the life-cycle. It demonstrates both *which* items and which *kinds* of items were given to whom: whether objects were seen as generically appropriate as bequests, or were given only to certain people. Obviously it is hard to arrive at a contemporary definition of family as a term, and this must qualify the results of the analysis. However, Table 2.17 showed that individuals in an unequivocal nuclear relationship to the testator benefited from the greatest number of domestic bequests, suggesting that, in some way at least, they define a relationship as a familial one by disseminating well-known objects redolent of status and kin ties.

As might be expected, the main weight of the evidence (1509 bequests) is from one generation to the next. However, bequests within the same generation represent a

further 657 items, while those from grandparents to grandchildren total 153. The smallest category, not surprisingly, is that of bequests from children to their parents, or their aunts and uncles, which represents only 9 items.

Grandparents were likely to bequeath substantial pieces of furniture to their grandchildren, such as beds, storage items, tables and seating. The other area in which they concentrated their giving is that of high status reserved items: jewellery, pewter, silver spoons and brass are given in some numbers, and there are smaller amounts of silverware. We could see these testators as heading particularly stable families. The high status of the goods in itself suggests financial stability. Other testators may have had grandchildren, but might have felt that their own children needed the goods in the interim. Bequests which overlook generations indicate that these goods are to be put into storage or at least to be used in the knowledge of their ownership by the children of the householder, and the increased autonomy and sense of independent resources which this gave would alter the domestic hierarchy subtly. Although the father would presumably control the goods, they were present within the house as an indication of a possibly distant, but reasonably certain, future for his children.

Bequests to family members of the same generation as the testator, and of the generation below, show a wider spread across more of the categories. Parents are more likely to give beds and bedding (19.5%:16.3%), and furniture for storage (11.9%:8%), to their children than brothers and sisters are to one another. This bias can be seen most clearly in the case of the chest (7%:4%) making clear the need to separate groups of items and different ownership within the same house.

Chairs, stools and settles are more likely to form part of the items given within a generation, where they would represent additions to the domestic comfort of siblings, perhaps allowing more individuals within the house to be seated upon higher-status pieces of furniture. Bequests between generations in this category as a whole are actually more frequent, however, (4.2%:3.8%), partly because there are instances of the gift of all types of seating, and partly because of the large number of forms which are given. As tables also make up a greater percentage of the bequests between generations (3.5%:2.6%) some of them appear to constitute a unit of furniture with the forms. It seems plausible to suppose that children would be in more need of tables and forms, that basic unit of hall equipment, than relatives who were similarly placed to

the testator in terms of the establishment of their own households. Basic furniture is given first, then, from parents to children, and additional items expand the provision, and hence the status, of the household which these children establish after marriage, either purchased or given by a sibling. Status and comfort are here clearly linked to the vagaries of familial survival.

The gift of embellishments is slightly more common as a whole within the generations (3.9%:3.2%), although the numbers for individual types are small. Most commonly bequeathed are the more moveable cloths of which there is likely to be a store within the house. In other words their removal would not greatly alter the house, which may well be left separately to a son or daughter.

The differences between the bequests of general household and kitchen equipment also suggest alternative strategies related to generational issues. 6.2% of the bequests within a generation involved the wholesale transfer of the contents of the 'household', in other words its moveable furniture, to another party, usually the wife. This is much less common between generations (2.1%), suggesting that bequests to children are likely to be more specific, and therefore concerned with particular perceived needs and symbolic resonances, rather than with control over existing households. Kitchen equipment, linen, pewter, spoons, tablecloths and brass, demonstrate a concentration on the dowries of daughters and the provisioning of the houses of sons, and perhaps an interest in the apportionment of reserved wealth as a definition of the lifetime accumulation of status. Every such division involves the disruption of a unity of ownership of the household as functioning unit, and its devolution into the hands of the several participants in its spaces. A testator's success in life can be measured by the number of other houses which his own stores are capable of provisioning.

The distribution of plate represents an almost equal percentage of the total bequests in both cases, although same-generation bequests are slightly higher (3.35%:3.05%).

Wives have by far the largest share of the latter, suggesting that the equality is temporally specific, as the silverware is passing to the wife 'in trust' for the children, thereby ensuring that it follows the family line.

Finally, there are differences between the ways in which more personal items are bequeathed. Although books are given both between and within the generations, as a

proportion of the total bequests in each case they are more likely to be given to brothers, sisters, or wives than they are to children. The difference is much smaller with regard to the bequest of weapons and armour, although again they are slightly more important as bequests within a generation. Both figures seem to characterise the items as of immediate practical use, and best given to those of an age to make the most of them.

Table 2.19 allows a consideration of the weighting of these bequests towards particular relationships within each category. It suggests that the evidence for the bequeathal of household items is concentrated within the nuclear family, who would have shared, at least initially, the space from which it originates. There is a striking conformity between the most popular bequests in each case: beds and bedding, chests and coffers, tables, general household items and kitchen equipment, valuables and apparel are considerably more significant than any of the other categories. Perhaps the greatest divergence from this norm occurs in the case of bequests to brothers. Bedding barely features, indicating that they were expected to possess their own facilities. Although a number of chests were bequeathed to brothers, at 1.3% of all gifts they appear to be thought considerably less suitable bequest presumably because the recipient would be head of his own household, and unlikely to need to move or protect his belongings as others did. Tables are more important, as is a percentage of the total household, and jewels, plate, armour and books are also given in some numbers. But almost 58% of all bequests to brothers involve apparel of some kind, with doublet and cloak being most common.

Bequests to brothers, of which 84% are from men, are less concerned with furniture and with fittings, concentrating instead upon personal items. Jewels, armour and clothing all adorn the person, and tables and silverware remain the only categories of solely domestic items which were significant in marking this relationship. If we take brothers to be, by and large, equal in terms of their status within the community, then the paucity of furniture and fittings given between them suggests that such bequests were mainly given from a superior (in age, wealth, or gender) to an inferior; from one in control of a house to one who lived in the space of another.

Sisters are much more likely to receive gifts of beds and bedding, especially featherbeds, and nearly 5% of gifts to them included a chest. However, it is only to

their sisters that testators do not consider giving tables, and the latter receive very little seating either. Jewellery, and to a lesser extent pewter, are seen as suitable gifts, but once again it is clothing which represents the main bulk of the bequests at 47%.

More concern is shown by testators to provide bedding and chests (the vital personal items of household furniture) for sisters than is the case for brothers, but in both cases the lack of other pieces suggests an acknowledgement of their independently constructed household units. This indicates a consequent stress upon the essential functionality of household bequests, and an attempt to provide sufficiency in all areas, rather than to build up numbers of particular items owned.

Bequests to daughters and sons are very similar to one another. The total provision of bedding to both represents just over 19.5% of all their bequests, and sons are slightly more likely to receive bedsteads and flockbeds, whereas daughters are given more bedding. Chests, and to a lesser extent cupboards, form an important sector of gifts, with slightly higher numbers of the latter being bestowed upon sons (4.2%:3.6%). Tables are considerably more likely to be bequeathed to sons (4.96%:1.82%), and they receive larger amounts of all types of seating, especially the forms which are so often found with tables. Seeing these details in the light of the 'model rooms' extrapolated from inventories, it appears that beds and chests were the items most likely to be given from chambers. The hall furniture is bequeathed as a set of form, table, and cupboard. These items indicate a kind of 'generic room', the minimum amount of furniture required for an independent household to function.

But there is a gender division in these categories, and it is important to notions of the control of domestic space. While women are only given the kinds of objects which might furnish a bed chamber (beds and chests), men are additionally bequeathed items which would be of more use in the more public hall (forms and tables). Such communal rooms are presumably the most important spaces in which the authority of the head of the household is expressed. Similarly, both painted cloths and fittings are *only* given from fathers to sons,¹²⁴ and where stated they are situated within the dwelling house of the testator and, of course, linked to the bequest of the house itself.

¹²⁴ With the exception of John Semark, gentleman, of Canterbury, who left the fittings of his house to a kinsman in Henley-upon-Thames, PRC 17.46 f.31, 1584.

Type	Brother	Sister	Wife	Daughter	Son
Bedstead	0	1	23	36	42
Bedding	1	2	14	26	18
Featherbed	2	3	24	43	46
Flock bed	0	1	7	12	15
Tester	1	0	2	0	2
Valance	0	0	2	1	0
Trucklebed	1	0	6	3	1
Bed	2	0	4	8	10
Armour	5	0	0	0	8
Looking glass	0	0	0	1	0
Book	4	0	1	0	7
Cupboard	1	2	14	24	29
Coffer	0	0	0	2	1
Chest	2	5	17	52	53
Press	0	0	2	3	3
Storage general	0	1	4	1	1
Cupboard cloth	0	0	2	1	2
Cushion	1	0	4	2	4
Carpet	1	0	1	0	2
Curtain	1	0	4	3	1
Fittings	0	0	0	0	8
Painted cloth	0	0	0	0	10
Hangings	0	0	3	0	5
Fire stuff	1	0	4	2	1
Wainscot	0	0	2	0	0
Desk	0	0	0	0	1
Shelf	0	0	0	0	3
Close stool	0	0	0	1	0
Table	4	0	12	12	34
Bench	0	0	0	0	2
Chair	1	1	6	4	9
Stool	1	1	7	3	8
Form	0	0	4	5	22
Settle	1	0	3	1	5
Household general	4	1	36	25	6
Kitchen stuff	2	2	9	52	31
Cloth	1	1	2	2	2
Jewellery	6	6	9	16	19

Linen	0	2	8	41	10
Plate	4	1	13	19	20
Pewter	3	3	15	50	37
Spoon	1	2	9	37	32
Tablecloth	1	2	6	27	16
Brass	2	2	7	37	27
Total apparel	91	48	15	66	66
Gear	0	1	0	0	5
Tools	0	0	2	0	3
Trendle	0	0	2	0	0
Wheel	0	0	0	0	0
Loom	0	0	0	0	2

Table 2.19: Numbers of each type of bequest to the most commonly recognised relationships.

Household embellishment in these cases represents a definition of status which is inextricably linked to the particular room for which it was designed. Such rooms must provide continuity throughout changes of ownership and death within the family, making them conservative spaces with considerable time-depth.¹²⁵

The other main difference between the sexes of children lies in the bequeathal of household stores. Daughters receive nearly twice as much kitchen equipment as sons, more pewter, more tablecloths, and more brass. 6.2% of their bequests are of linen, as opposed to 1.5% of sons', and if the household is devolved *en masse*, they are much more likely to be given a share. While it is probable that all such items are used by women, it is not the case that men are perceived to have no need for them or that they have no relationship with them. In the categories of jewellery, silverware and apparel there is near parity once more however, with daughters being given almost equal amounts of high-status plate, and slightly more silver spoons, which perhaps form an inflation-conscious substitute for financial bequests. In broad terms, then, the main division in suitable types of bequest is between chairs and tables, items which furnish communal rooms, and those items needed for the provisioning of the domestic routines of the house.

Wives, the other factor in the equation of the nuclear family, receive bequests which are not dissimilar to those given to children. 24.4% of the items which they receive

¹²⁵ The inventories' description of many of the hall cloths as 'old' perhaps signals coherence rather than neglect, see above p. 30-1.

fall into the category of beds and bedding, which would logically reflect the need to bestow upon the spouse technical ownership of that which she already used. She is also likely to receive storage items, although the numbers are slightly lower than they are for children, as a result of the drop in numbers of chests. Receipt of a table and stool would be more common for a wife than a daughter, although the numbers of the former given to spouses are still not as significant as those for sons, reinforcing the role of the wife as temporary repository for the patrimony.

Not surprisingly, the wife is most likely to be given a share of any whole-scale division of household goods, although when kitchen equipment is *specified* she is much less likely to receive it than both sons and daughters. This perhaps suggests that such items are not given unless they can be spared in the construction of new households, or that it is assumed that they will stay put until this eventuality arises. While wives are more likely to receive larger pieces of silverware, they are less likely to be given the easily divisible sets of silver spoons. Finally, wives receive less clothing than brothers, sisters, daughters, sons and granddaughters, and what they do get is invariably confirmation of ownership of that which they wear. The bedding and clothing which they are given, then, are often 'gifts' which merely safeguard present practice.

The connections between bequests to wives and those to children seem stronger than those between individuals of the same generation as the testator, suggesting that the division of household goods is linked to a sense of the nature of that household in a nuclear sense, and to its relationship to the potential households of sons and daughters after marriage. Despite the numbers of male testators who leave their entire estate in the hands of their wives in trust for their children, the evidence makes clear that it was important to many other will-makers to single out particular kinds of furniture for their spouses in order to provide adequately for them, and to acknowledge their joint relationship to house-space symbolically. The domestic interior is primarily seen by testators, then, as a resource for the nuclear family, which must remain to provide social and physical stability to young children, but which must then be divided in order to form new households around the nucleus of surplus which parents accumulate during life. We might even think of fathers purchasing or otherwise acquiring enough furniture to provide for their children as they grow.

2.vi.c. Qualitative evidence for bequests

Having stated above that the inclusion of a specific bequest within the will gives it a distinct status as an element of such a ritualised document, it seems clear that the

LOCATED OBJECTS

Type	Chamber	Hall	Parlour	Other	Total no. of bequests
Chest	21	3	5	2	31
Cupboard	7	18	14	4	43
Coffer	0	0	0	1	1
Press	5	0	2	0	7
Storage general	0	1	1	0	2
Featherbed	10	0	7	1	18
Bedstead	32	0	17	0	49
Bed	1	0	3	0	4
Trucklebed	3	0	1	0	4
Flockbed	5	1	0	0	6
Bedding	3	0	1	0	4
Bench		1			1
Form	1	8	6	1	16
Stool	1	3	4		8
Settle		2	3		5
Chair	3	1	2		6
Table	9	11	16	3	39
Shelf				1	1
Hangings	5	1	4	0	10
Painted cloths	3	2	2		7
Fittings		2	3		5
Cushion	2		1		3
Carpet	1	1			2
Firestuff	1	1	2		4
Book				1	1
Cloth		1			1
Pewter	2				2
Brass				1	1
Total bequests per room	115	57	94	15	

Table 2.20: Numbers of bequests given a spatial context in each room.

particular *form* which the bequest of an item takes is vital to an understanding of its function in the relationship between giver and receiver. Information given over and above the name of item and recipient falls into several different categories: the position of the object within the testator's house; details of the provenance of the

object; and an indication of a specific relationship between object and testator. Finally, there are those items which are expressly not bequeathed: which are singled out as objects which should be left where they are.

The specific location of objects within the house of the testator is clearly of great importance to this study as it suggests the perceived significance of particular rooms, and of specific items of furniture within them. For this reason it has been initially necessary to treat the qualitative data in a quantitative manner, in order to see whether there are patterns in the relationships between the kind of object bequeathed and its spatial context. The largest number of items were said to be in chambers, followed by parlours, and halls,¹²⁶ and they were mostly substantial pieces of furniture. As prominent items of high value, the mention of the room in which they are kept is presumably useful in distinguishing between them physically, but also in terms of quality and importance. Household stores are rarely given a spatial context, and consequently there are lower numbers of chests than might be expected given their prominence in the total number of items given.

There are instances of the bequest of all categories of furniture and some embellishments in the parlour. However, the bulk of the bequests are made up of 16 tables, 14 cupboards, and 29 instances of beds and bedding. This is surprising because the parlour is the room which exists in the smallest numbers in the inventories to which these wills relate, and because those rooms which are documented are not overwhelmingly characterised by their provision of sleeping arrangements. This might suggest that those beds which are kept in parlours were regarded in a particular way, perhaps being seen as the next best after those in the chamber of the householder. It is also possible that those who use the parlour as a high-status chamber, perhaps those who were too frail to climb the stairs to upper rooms, are represented more strongly in the sample of wills.

Those items said to be in the chamber are also, not surprisingly, dominated by beds. The comparatively high numbers of painted cloths and hangings bequeathed from a room which was clearly not always embellished are more noteworthy, however. They suggest that the furniture which is being given comes from the highest status chambers within each house, in which case these testators see the importance of

passing on their best items, rather than selling them. Considering the bias of wills for which inventories survive towards men and women who wished their possessions to be sold and/or divided, this is especially significant.

Those items which are most commonly identified in the hall are ones which characterised the room most effectively: the table (often with its form) and the cupboard. The hall contains the largest number of bequeathed cupboards of all the rooms, and they also represent its most frequently identified item. When they are given they are likely to be the most valuable cupboards in the house, used for the display of its goods, and metonymically redolent of this communal space. They must be familiar both to family and to friends, standing as they do in the room in which those from outside are met by those from within.

These bequests do not only identify the item to which they refer, they contextualise it by bringing the room in which it is kept before the mind of all those who read or hear the will. By drawing attention to, for example, a cupboard as being in the hall, its particularity is forcefully suggested, its relationship to the room in which it is housed, and its applicability to that situation. Such an identification may not only mean ‘the cupboard which is kept in the hall’, it may also indicate ‘a cupboard of the type which is fittingly kept in the hall’, perhaps the larger and more ornate court cupboard. By enriching the description of the bequest in such a way, the testator is drawing attention to his own organisation of the domestic interior, that which he considers fitting and appropriate, and the weight of such a suggestion must have a tendency towards the replication of context on the part of the recipient. When the beneficiary receives the cupboard, an explicit spatial context comes with it. Placing it within their own hall invites comparisons (physical, economic, hierarchical, aesthetic and mnemonic) between the two spaces. Relocation of such an item, to the chamber for instance, would be accomplished in the knowledge that the relationship between object and space is being changed.

When the testator precedes his description of an object by ‘my’, an extra dimension is added. There is a notion of possession, and of use, aspects which are combined if the will-maker is also the householder who owns the majority of the contents of the property. Objects which are only used by one person are more intimately connected

¹²⁶ An additional 15 items were located within lofts, barns, cellars or studies.

with them, and are perceived as being more closely related to them. Physical relationships eventually engender mental attachments and associations. Beds, rings and items of clothing, especially gowns, are most commonly described with the possessive pronoun.¹²⁷ They are items which are clearly personal because they relate in a literal and intimate way to the body of the testator, and are unlikely to be used by others during their life time. These bequests demonstrate the furthest reaches of the relationship between object and individual. The sensual appreciation of the shape, size, even the smell of a physical entity which no longer exists, firmly ties them to the memory of their original owner. The amplitude and intricacy of the meanings of such bequests should make us sensitive in general to the symbolic resonances which the physical is capable of producing.

Such connections are additionally significant in the case of the bed of the testator, many of which objects are described as ‘that which I now lie upon’.¹²⁸ If, as Coppel suggests, the majority of these wills are being written upon the deathbed, then the bed ‘which I now lie upon’ might be more than a phrase which refers to habitual use, such as ‘workaday apparel’ for instance.¹²⁹ It might also be an indication of present position, a context for the production of the will itself. In some ways, death frees the testator to divide that which he uses every day, those items which it would be impossible, or at least irresponsible, to give until his death. If we imagine him, as many testamentary cases in the ecclesiastical courts suggest we should, making his will upon his bed, surrounded by friends, relatives and spiritual advisors, we are made aware of the peculiar spatial importance of domestic bequests. If it is from this position that the will-maker dictates the document, then it is central to his perception of the rest of the household which he devolves, and other items are described in relation to it: the featherbed ‘that lieth under the bed that I lie on’,¹³⁰ the chair ‘by my bedside’,¹³¹ or the chest ‘now standing at the foot of the bed’.¹³² If we consider the will as the product of an event, then the testator’s chamber is its ground, the room encloses the process and gives it context. To an extent the will, when linked to the inventory,

¹²⁷ See also PRC 17.48 f.1, 1589, for a gilt saltseller; PRC 17.43 f.24v, 1586, for a pin pillow; PRC 17.39 f.47, 1565, for a chest.

¹²⁸ PRC 17.43 f.320, 1581.

¹²⁹ Stephen Coppel, ‘Willmaking on the Deathbed’, *Local Population Studies*, No. 40, Spring 1988, pp. 37-45.

¹³⁰ PRC 17.42 f.195, 1575.

¹³¹ PRC 17.47 f.202v, 1588.

¹³² PRC 17.51 f.180v, 1595.

provides us with a view of the latter document which translates its ‘total visibility’¹³³ into a set of significant highpoints: a way of seeing the interior which obscures and excludes some items, but singles others out as being of special importance at a particular moment.

The testator is literally dividing up his spatial context, and the decisions he makes must quite frequently involve the marrying of objects which are physically before his eyes with people who are sitting next to him. The choice of items which can actually be seen by the testator, as he identifies them verbally and they are written into the document, might be related to those who surround him, either in a positive or a negative sense. To give your own bed to your son as he stands next to it does not only tie spatial and pragmatic considerations into the perception of the object at a later date, it also situates the bed in relation to the process of will making, and focuses the emotions involved in such an event into the object. The bed here is not only symbolic of relationships with the dead, it is a relic, in the sense of being a physical part, of the moment of last contact with them.

To lie on this bed in the future might not involve moving it: a son might simply take over his father’s chamber. In that case this best bed is central to his status as head of the household, and his experience of its physical nature (in part) defines that role by epitomising the status which he inherits. If it is moved, that status is more objectively viewed in relation to the son’s own position: does the bed enhance his house, is it still the best one, suggestive of the advancement of his patrimony, or do his own achievements, translated into the furniture which they have enabled him to acquire, overtake it in splendour? Social and economic considerations and emotive, affective ties, come together in the item of furniture.

BEQUESTS AND THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

What I have stressed in this evaluation of the qualitative evidence is the ways in which will-makers exploit and strengthen the perceived relationship between giver, gift, and spatial context. When the object has previously been given to the testator, this process accrues extra significance. For instance Stephen Hollinden of Canterbury gives his son Lawrence “a brass pot that was my fathers”.¹³⁴ Richard Allen of

¹³³ See pp. 14-5 above.

¹³⁴ PRC17.40 f.170v, 1567.

Canterbury gives his young son John the ring “my mother gave me”;¹³⁵ and Katherine Kingwood of Tenterden gives her son Thomas “the stayne clothe that was my fathers”.¹³⁶ The latter example, given from father to daughter, and then again to her son, suggests the importance of household possessions in maintaining a sense of dynastic identity, and the strength of familial, affective ties, even in the face of the loss of family name which comes with marriage. Katherine’s ancestry had meaning through these objects, and the language which she used to pass them to her son draws attention to her own lineage, and to his position in relation to it.¹³⁷

Such bequests are obviously not common, as they presuppose an enduring object linked to a tenacious memory of its history. More frequent are those gifts which are passed on to children by one spouse, but relate to the other, now departed. For instance, Christopher Courthop, a gentleman of St Dunstan’s parish in Canterbury gave his son John two blankets “of his mothers spinning”,¹³⁸ and Henry Larke of Faversham gave his daughter Elizabeth two old angels and a silver ring “which was her mothers wedding ring”.¹³⁹ The high number of bequests from men of their late wife’s goods suggests that these gifts form a kind of unofficial testament on behalf of the mother, or at least a recognition by her husband that the fact that she made or once used these items will give them greater worth as a gift to his children.¹⁴⁰

In some cases, the agency of the predeceased spouse is made more explicit: Alice Pinnock of Sandwich, for instance, gives her married daughter Margery Brown a bedstead ‘of the bequest of her father’ which she is already using.¹⁴¹ This stresses the idea of a kind of guardianship either of the goods themselves or of the legal ownership of them, whereby a testator can entrust the control of goods within his generation for the use of the next. John Wilde of Woodnesborough gives back “so much pewter” as was in his sister’s inventory to his nieces when he makes his own

¹³⁵ PRC 17.43 f.373v, 1581.

¹³⁶ PRC 17.40 f.334, 1568; see also PRC 17.50 f.290, 1595.

¹³⁷ She also gives George Syer her brother “my lytell stupnett that was our fathers”, demonstrating the same concept of transmission, but this time within the same generation; see also PRC 17.43 f.21, 1578, PRC 17.41 f.100v, 1570.

¹³⁸ PRC 17.40 f.153, 1567.

¹³⁹ PRC 17.40 f.73, 1567.

¹⁴⁰ See also, for example, PRC 17.41 f.310, 1572; PRC 17.43 f.320, 1581; PRC 17.44 f.45, 1582; PRC 17.44 f.149v, 1581; PRC 17.49 f.24, 1593.

¹⁴¹ PRC 17.43 f.440, 1581, see also PRC 17.51 f.122, 1596.

will, along with their mother's great chest,¹⁴² indicating that members of the wider family are also used as protectors of children's rights to property, and there is evidence for godparents and even friends performing the same function.¹⁴³

The domestic environment therefore contains goods which are held in trust, either locked away or in use in the knowledge that they are the property of another, and these distinctions must be recognised at some level on a day-to-day basis. At any one time, the house may be involved in protecting the extended wishes of several individuals, its relationship to past and future drawn attention to by the objects which it contains.

The connection between the perceived provenance of goods and temporal distinctions is further elucidated by another set of wills: Robert Marden of Tenterden gives to Margaret his wife all the household goods "that she brought with her, or that he had with her at the time of their marriage";¹⁴⁴ John Crothall of Tenterden gives to his daughter Winifred a chest "which my wife brought me";¹⁴⁵ and James Benchkin of Canterbury gives back to his wife Katherine an English Bible, a testament and two English psalters which were hers before he married her.¹⁴⁶ Although part of the same household, the items are still recognised as having distinct provenances. All these items represent different stages in the life of the testator through the goods which a change in circumstance has brought into her or his home. Marriage in many cases formed an independent domestic environment, in a house of a couple's own, and in the same way that it linked two people, so it linked their goods: two halves (not necessarily equal) of the same whole, rather than an integration which destroys individuality.

John Allen receives a chest from his father Richard "which I brought to Canterbury and all the evidences and writings therein". As Richard changed his geographical location, so this chest which contained and protected his most important documents provided a link between one part of his life and the next. There is a strong sense of the

¹⁴² PRC 17.48 f.220, 1591.

¹⁴³ See, for instance, PRC 17.47 f.375, 1589; PRC 17.51 f.121, 1597; PRC 17.45 f.33, 1580; PRC 17.51 f.160, 1597; and PRC 17.43 f.17v, 1577, where there is no obvious kin link between the testator and the beneficiary.

¹⁴⁴ PRC 17.42 f.166v, 1575.

¹⁴⁵ PRC 17.42 f.362, 1576.

¹⁴⁶ PRC 17.44 f.36, 1580; see also PRC 17.42 f.343v, 1575.

need to perpetuate for the next generation physical continuities which had provided comfort and coherence in the past, and the portable space of the chest neatly encapsulates the important items of identity which are needed in a world where service or migration were a reality for many. The domestic object as bequeathed in wills both marks difference and provides cohesion: it allows links to a series of rites of passage or radical changes in the life of the testator, but it can also bridge disjunctures, and its very physicality can have a cohesive power at times of change.

Attention is also drawn to objects which have a provenance outside of the family. The majority of such bequests refer to the places where the items were purchased, or the person from whom they were bought. For instance, Walter Waterman of Bethersden gives his son Robert all the joined work which was 'bought of the rood loft'.¹⁴⁷ This type of identification of provenance clearly also has a mnemonic and commemorative function. Walter had been churchwarden in the village from 1555-7, obviously an advantageous position.¹⁴⁸ As Robert is to receive all his father's land in Bethersden, it seems likely that this work is to remain in the house. To sit in this room, to entertain others from the village within it, looking at fixtures which used to obscure the most sacred rites of the church from one's view, cannot be considered to be a purely pragmatic decision. To draw attention to this domestic item in one's will in explicit terms of provenance, to enter it into a document which will be read, reread and repeated in many different contexts, one of which might well be the church, must be an extremely self-conscious action. To pass it on to the next generation, six years into the reign of Queen Elizabeth, is either to show an allegiance to old ways of worshipping at the time of one's death, with all this means for the fate of one's soul, or it is defiantly to mock those ways, by showing that the screen which separated parishioners from their God could now line the walls of one's hall. It is either the trappings of a kind of private chapel or the results of an ironic act of iconoclasm which Robert is bequeathed, and his own beliefs must be worked out in this spatial context.

Less controversial items include Edward Knight of Woodnesborough's gift to his wife

¹⁴⁷ PRC 17.39 f.148v, 1565.

¹⁴⁸ Francis R. Mercer, *Churchwardens' Accounts at Bethersden 1515-1573*, Kent Records Society, Volume 5, 1928, pp. xvi-xvii. See Rev. A.J.Pearman, 'Bethersden, its church, and monumental inscriptions', *Archeologia Cantiana* XVI, 1886, p. 68, where he states that the rood footings were in place until the nineteenth century.

Cicely of a brewing kettle which was bought at Word and a broad pan which was bought at Sandwich.¹⁴⁹ There is no doubt that such descriptions give a temporal location to objects, that they place them in relation to the event of purchase, and position them in relation to the household as it stood at that moment. But there must also be a stronger sense of individual agency ascribed to such bequests. Knight additionally mentions the people from whom he has purchased his cart and his bed, but he identifies no bequests from other members of his family. George Stransham of Faversham gives his wife Joan two goblets which he had bought “since the marriage”, suggesting that he has added to that which they had when they married.¹⁵⁰ He gives her back all that she brought with her, and returns a grey nag to his brother.

Although quantitatively insignificant, such cases raise questions about the relationship between those items which are inherited and those which are bought by the testator. These men do not mention the former type of possession, and yet Stransham is a jurat who wants to send his sons to university; Knight, although he leaves his cooper’s tools, also leaves land and property, and Waterman was a member of one of the largest Bethersden families. These are not insubstantial men, but they are men who show a pride in their own achievements rather than evincing an interest in their family heritage. The preamble to the will of Jose de Toor of Sandwich explicates this issue slightly: like that of many other wills, it refers to the disposition of the goods God has given and lent him, but it also includes those goods he has “conquered” himself.¹⁵¹ This points to a multiplicity of meanings for the domestic object in relation to the identity of both giver and receiver which are closely tied to the connections between individual and familial identity. It would be very interesting, in a period of increasing social mobility,¹⁵² to see the way in which the widows Stransham and Knight would describe those items which were left to them by their husbands in their own wills, when bequeathing them to their sons and daughters.

There is another issue at play in Edward Knight’s will however, related to the description of his bequest to his son John of goods in the parlour. He gives him the bed, the bedstead, the table, the cupboard, the form, and the painted cloths, which

¹⁴⁹ PRC 17.42 f.169, 1575.

¹⁵⁰ PRC 17.42 f.305, 1575.

¹⁵¹ PRC 17.51 f.133, 1594. Jose is clearly a Protestant refugee, and cultural differences must, of course, be taken into consideration.

¹⁵² See below, pp. 174-5.

represented almost everything in the room.¹⁵³ He gives these goods on the understanding that none of them will be removed from its position. Other examples include that of Robert Fayle of Faversham who leaves instructions that the table, form and wainscot in his hall should not be moved, neither should the walnut tree ceiling in the little new parlour, or the cupboard, table, form bedstead, new featherbed or new boughton work coverlet lying on it.¹⁵⁴

These directions refer to specific items of furniture in particular rooms, but there are also examples of explicit concern for the form of a particular room: Elizabeth Bassock in 1583 says “the hall I will not have stirred as longe as my leace last”.¹⁵⁵ Other testators are anxious about the fate of particular types of furniture: William Gervise of Tenterden is concerned that the beds, tables, forms, shelves, cupboards, pans and brass pots should remain to the use of his son William in his house;¹⁵⁶ and others leave particular instructions about the fate of their fixtures and fittings: William Gayny of Sandwich wishes all his glass and wainscot to remain in his dwelling house for his heirs forever.¹⁵⁷

Such instructions are obviously linked in many cases to a wish to provide suitable furnishings for the house when it comes into the hands of the testator’s children, and to avoid the risk of their spouse selling off the most valuable of the household goods before this time.¹⁵⁸ John Iden indicates the possible consequences of such a denuding of the house when he gives his lease of the White Hart to his wife Richardine, “provided allwayes that it shall not be lawfull for my sayde wife not her executors or assignes to take and carry away any the longe settles nor glasse wydowes fastned in the white harte and leave that howse destitute”.¹⁵⁹ Like clothing to the body, domestic objects, and especially the fixtures and fittings which are directly applied to the fabric of the house, cover it in an appropriate and becoming manner.

Many of these additions to properties are also signs of status. As such they must be

¹⁵³ Only 4 chests were left, according to his inventory, PRC 10.8 f.4, 1575.

¹⁵⁴ PRC 17.41 f.189, 1571; see also PRC 17.49 f.286, 1594.

¹⁵⁵ PRC 17.45 f.226, 1583.

¹⁵⁶ PRC 17.42 f.122, 1574.

¹⁵⁷ PRC 17.51 f.299, 1596.

¹⁵⁸ John Wybrone of Woodnesborough wills that none of his household should be sold if it will be useful to his two daughters when they come of age, PRC 17.41 f.129v, 1570; see also PRC 17.42 f.164, 1575.

¹⁵⁹ PRC 17.47 f.3v, 1586.

kept in order to ensure that the next generation, often left without a father when still too young to provide for themselves, are able to maintain the position attained by their parents within society. The domestic object represents the achievements of the testator by demarcating the level of his social success. But when whole rooms are left intact, there is clearly an attempt to prescribe a spatial organisation, to impose a way of ordering the household on the next generation, by insisting on the right relationship between object and room. To put these two ideas together is to see the patterning of the domestic environment as a representation of personal choice within the collective systems of meaning which denote social status. Such a strategy on the part of the testator seeks to control the spaces in which daily life is lived after his decease, and this may either provide a sense of comforting familiarity which smoothes the disjuncture of death, or be perceived as a claustrophobic manipulation which allows no room for individual interpretations of daily life.

THE WIDOW'S SPACE

The final aspect of the qualitative evidence for wills which I want to consider bears directly on this aspect of testamentary provision. A sizeable number of men's wills make explicit spatial arrangements for a relative after the testator's death (usually a wife, but also a mother, sister or child) by stating that they should occupy a room or number of rooms within the testator's house. Such provisions, which are often described in some detail, provide an insight into the nature of spatial control after the death of the householder, the areas of the house which might be used by women, and the actions which they were expected to need to perform within them.

Edward Philip's wife Rose's arrangements are laid out in detail:

Rose my wyef shall have holde occupye and enjoye duryng the terme of her naturall lyef (yf the sayd Rose shall happen soe longe to remaye sole and unmaryed) the best parlour in the howse where in I doe now dwell with the chamber over the same parlour with one butterye next adyoyninge unto the haule of the same dwellynge howse with free and lawfull entrye ingress egress and regresse in to from and thorough the sayd parlour chamber and butterye bothe for her selfe and her howsholde and famylye.¹⁶⁰

This case is in many ways typical in its fundamental concern with access and

¹⁶⁰ PRC 17.43 f.217v, 1578.

movement within the spaces now owned by another. In this case, Rose's rights to a whole section of the house are being protected, and the unit of parlour, chamber and buttery seems to be a self-contained one. In other cases one room is singled out for particular use, and movement around the rest of the house is also ensured. William Finch's wife Ellen, for example, is to dwell in the parlour, and to have free movement to the hall, kitchen and bake house for a year.¹⁶¹ It may be that those testators who give their wives the use of a whole 'apartment' have a larger house to divide, but it may also be the case that these testators are trying to achieve a kind of privacy or isolation for their wives, which allows use of rooms which are not traversed by others. Interestingly, Finch's arrangements are the only ones which mention the hall. The room most commonly stipulated is the parlour, followed, and often accompanied by, the chamber, with assorted service rooms. Those parlours in inventories which were most obviously bed chambers may perhaps have accommodated a member of the family living under similar circumstances.¹⁶²

Rose Philip's arrangements were apparently made necessary by the difficult relationship she had with her son George. The specific record of this organisation within the document of the will then reads as an attempt to safeguard her rights to freedom within the house, but also as an effort to provide the possibility of spatial harmony after death. Whereas other arrangements affecting the domestic environment had a symbolic impetus, and may have had little eventual practical application, these plans are intensely pragmatic, and appear to be responses to specific sets of circumstances, reactive moves rather than proactive measures to affect matters after the testator's death. They are geared towards change rather than preservation of the status quo, although they may aim to minimise any anticipated disruption. They take a modification of spatial relations for granted as a side effect of the husband's death, and view it as their motivation for intervention.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ PRC 17.39 f.273, 1565.

¹⁶² Roberts sees a similar move as beginning earlier in life when children come of age. She sees parents moving gradually into 'retirement' within the house, with the final stage as "sojourners" in a property now belonging to their son, where they "received his food and shelter as a dependent rather than occupying space in the house by right", 'Tenterden houses', p. 240. This process would account for the small inventories of once-prominent men.

¹⁶³ Routines are also occasionally preserved, for example Walter Shetterden's concern that "my sonne shall suffer Alyce Sheterden my daughter to occupye my garden at the pygyon howse soe she make her gardyn in deue tymes in mornynge and eveninge to suffer the pygons to come in due tymes and not

Will-makers imagine personal tensions manifesting themselves spatially in the rub of ungoverned proximity, and they try to relate areas of jurisdiction to one another so that each relative has a personal area within the property. The communal nature of that space which is left is then made clear beyond all doubt. In order to segregate the house in such an effective way, there are times at which testators have to urge changes to its very fabric, and it is in these cases that the pragmatic nature of the arrangements is most clear. Richard Tulman has to insist that his son William “shall erect and buyld one chimney in one of my said chambers for his saide mother within one yeare next after my decease”.¹⁶⁴ In a more unusual set of personal circumstances, Walter Shettenden had also to provide for his sister, who needed special care:

if my wyef be not contented with my syster Roose that she shall tarrye within her, that then she to have the lytle chamber within Lewes howse where she lyethe nowe, and that it be lyned with bordes stronge and apte to keepe her with lock and keye, And that my wyef sende her meate and drynke as shall be mete for her, and Lewes wyef to have the haye lofte in recompence.¹⁶⁵



The evidence points to a disjuncture between space and its control which occurs with the death of the head of the household. As wife, the woman's position within the house is clear and unquestioned: as her husband owns the whole building, so she may move around it as she pleases. However, on his death, in the socially inferior position of sole woman, her movement is limited, and she is in danger of being excluded from some parts of the domestic space. The detail which accompanies so many of these strategies suggests the testator's anticipation of conflict, of tension, and of obstruction from one quarter or the other. Indeed, one could see the symbolic bequests between generations discussed above as an attempt to obligate people to one another by playing upon their biological and emotional ties, and therefore to mitigate against such strife. However, if the strategies put in place by her husband are successful, the widow can enjoy what appears to be a space of her own. She is given, typically, somewhere to sleep, somewhere to spend waking hours, and spaces particular to her domestic tasks. She may share these with others, her children for instance, but they remain essentially under her control. Privacy, here in terms of areas of the house into which others will not habitually enter, can be seen to be directly linked to

dryve them to rade in the morninges nor to dysturbe them therwyse then honestly", PRC 17.41 f.246v, 1570; see also PRC 17.43 f.363, 1579.

¹⁶⁴ PRC 17.47 f.82, 1585.

independence. The right-ordering of the house as a whole is dependent upon there being both communal spaces, where its participants may function as one body, and discrete areas where individuality is acknowledged.

BIOGRAPHIES

If one were to follow an imaginary girl of middling wealth through this matrix of relationships to different testators then one would see her household possessions being added to in different ways at different stages in her life. As a grandchild she might receive pewter and a share of silver spoons which may, with other goods, be stored in her own chest within her parents' house. When her father died she could add to these items larger stocks of similar things, and perhaps extend her personal stores to another chest. She might also be given a bed at this point. If any of her brothers and sisters died before she did, she might receive additional, possibly more expensive bedding, and maybe another chest with a considerable amount of her sibling's clothing within it. This, along with a piece of their jewellery, she might then add to her own clothes, allowing her a greater variety of apparel, and the possibility of a larger amount of items which could be reserved for special occasions.

On her marriage, her accumulated possessions, at present stored in various rooms within the house where she was living, would join those of her husband and all would be used together. Those in chests she might place in the chamber she shared with her husband, whether they slept on the bed from her household or one of his own. If she was poor, she might take her clothing with her, and only a small amount of cooking utensils, or a single silver spoon. Shortly after the death of her husband, ownership of the majority of the bedding, and the household stuff in its chests and cupboards, might pass into her hands, and what she did not own herself would belong to her children, either put away for the future in other chests, or in use, but with the clear knowledge of its final destination. When her son came of age and inherited the house, she might move her own location within it to make way for him. As they did when she was married, her possessions would move with her and she would concentrate her reserved belongings, in their chests, in a couple of rooms. These might provide a healing context to the disjunctions of grieving and the physical consequences of her changed position within the hierarchy of the household. She might have less freedom

¹⁶⁵ PRC 17.41 f.246v, 1570.

within the house at this stage in her life, and be more inclined to sit within her own rooms, leaving them principally to use her share of the practical tools of the household in kitchen and buttery.

As an older woman, she would then be faced with choices when making her own will. But she would come to this complex process of sensitive division having experienced what it was like to be a beneficiary in a series of different relationships, with a variety of personal and social expectations attached to them. The objects which she had to bequeath might well include those from her mother and father, her brothers and sisters, and her husband, not to mention godparents and friends, perhaps especially other widows. As well as acting as an aid to the memory of her relations with others once close to her, these objects would remind her of different stages in her own life, and of the relative experiences of dependence and independence, of levels of control over her own situation. Before she took possession of it, each of these objects had a spatial context from which it came, with which she was more or less familiar, and this must have formed a part of its function as a link to the past. Memories of relationships and their relative balances of power might then be linked to her place within the domestic environment of the giver. The object which they once owned, and which formed an integral part of their spatial context, might act as a focus for such recollections for her, simultaneously mnemonic and soothing of disjuncture.

Following a man of suitable status to be this woman's husband from his childhood would be very different. As a boy he would perhaps be given brass, pewter and some silver spoons by his grandparents on their death, maybe even a bed. As he grew up he would be aware that these objects belonged to him, and they would indicate the nature of the house of which he would one day be head. On his father's death he may, especially if he was the eldest son, inherit the hall table and forms, its cupboard, and its embellishments. If he was still a child, very little would change physically, apart from the financial hardship of the loss of his father's income. If he was of age, he would take control of the family house, presiding over its communal spaces, and considering his own taste and identity in relation to the furnishings which he had been left. He may now sleep in his father's bed, moving his mother into another room. If he had brothers, they might leave to set up their own houses, taking some of the contents of his spaces with them, some furniture and some cooking utensils given by father and

grandfather.

On his mother's death, he may inherit more household stores, and by this stage his wife would live with him in the house. He may choose to alter it now, by extending it, or just by re-fitting it with panelled walls and decorated ceilings perhaps, as he began to establish himself within the town. As a prosperous craftsman he might be asked to use his knowledge in the valuation of inventories, moving around the houses of his neighbours assessing the worth of their household items. This would no doubt sharpen his sense of his own social position in relation to his peers. The rooms would now be filled with a combination of his own furniture, either given by parents and grandparents or bought himself, and his wife's. But there might also be other items within the house, given in trust for nieces and nephews, for friends, or for his own children. These may be used, daily or occasionally, and then returned to the chests in which they are kept. If his brothers had died young, then their children may come to live with him, and join his own offspring.

As the children of the house left to set up their own homes, if he lived long enough, he might retire into a section of the property, leaving the majority of it under the control of his eldest son. If his wife died before he did, then he might keep her possessions in his quarters, ready to pass on at his own death. As an elderly man with time to spare, he might be asked to witness, perhaps to oversee, the wills of his friends, and the gifts which they gave him in recompense might make a growing collection of garments and jewellery which would both increase his status and remind him of his mortality.

Making his own will, perhaps in his father's bed, perhaps in the one brought by his wife on their marriage, he must account for all the property which he has been given in trust, ensuring that his own life closes with all 're-placed'. He is perhaps in a position to consider leaving furniture to his grandchildren, imagining their needs in their own domestic spaces as he lays at the centre of his own. His past and their future are symbolised in the objects which he can see before him.

The objects with which this woman and man's house is filled, organised explicitly into their wills at the time of their death, provide a kind of narrative of the rites of passage which they have experienced, the relatives and friends which they have lost, and the successes and failures of which their life has been constituted. Although the will as distinct document tends to obscure this sense of the individual at the centre of

the cumulative memory systems of testamentary bequests, it is recoverable through a qualitative investigation of the intentions of a few particularly self-conscious individuals. The evidence for the nature of rooms indicated by inventories should be seen within a such context, as affective ties translated into spatial meanings with public significance through the domestic object.

2.vii. Conclusion

Combining wills with inventories in a study of the domestic interior has made it possible to re-institute a sense of discrimination into the lists of goods in each room, one which hierarchies them not in terms of economic value but of their combined personal and social significance. This differentiation can then be seen to be linked to methods of embellishment: those items of furniture most commonly bequeathed were those more likely to be hung with fabric. These were the objects which appeared in the inventories to demand attention, they were, even on paper, eye-catching. There is a complex and stimulating relationship, then, between their economic status, their position within a cultural system of making meaning which dictates the fashion for their decoration, and their visually arresting nature which makes those who enter the room look upon them first and longest until they are most familiar. The object as bequeathed provides the focus for a combination of these cultural and personal meanings.

The two sets of data have also revealed a space which is both carefully controlled by the head of the household and yet made up of different pockets of ownership. The organisation of such a space is never static as the inventories might suggest, it is added to, subtracted from, and at all times shape-shifting in the different timescales of residence of both its goods and its people.

These timescales are made visible, made to be felt spatially, by the perceived relationship between rites of passage and the furniture which symbolises it. Both the combination of households which marriage entails and its disposition in the wake of the death of its head make changes in circumstance and status felt *materially* by altering the organisation of domestic space. Changes brought about by the mutable economic status of the family are also made palpable by altered levels of comfort in the house, by the greater or lesser numbers of objects which fill it, and by the

elaboration or simplicity of its domestic routine.

Increased levels of wealth mean larger numbers of goods, and these provide a security which is felt materially, real because tangible, not only for adults, but for children too. In a mobile society, the chests given to the young can be seen as a promise of future independence which extends the vision from the pragmatic decisions of the present to a future of possibility. In the light of the will evidence, the increased numbers of objects possessed by the majority of inventoried estates by 1600 could be seen as a desire to provide such physical reassurance for families in the present, and for children when they left home.

A clear link has been demonstrated between household objects and identity, both in terms of status and of the relationship between the individual and their family.

Personal progress can be measured in terms of additions to the inheritance from past generations. It is in the organisation of the domestic interior that social meanings fuse with affective and mnemonic resonances to create a sense of the house, and therefore the individuals within it, in relation to others in the town.

To talk about the hall as a room for dining, or the chamber as a place to sleep, is now more complex and much richer. It is to actions that this thesis must turn, to consider the moral conception of domestic space alongside these physical and affective notions of it: to bring a present in between this explication of its relationship to past and future.

Chapter 3: Vernacular Languages of Space

“In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the words that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception.” Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 2.

3.i. Introduction

This chapter uses the evidence of depositions given in the ecclesiastical courts to investigate the relationship between space and action. But it begins from the premise that depositions allow only indirect access to contemporary perceptions of space. Depositions offer representations of behaviour, governed by a series of narrative techniques. They provide descriptions of space which are selective and highly partial, part of an overdetermined discourse created in response to the evidential demands of the court.

Within deposition narratives, descriptions of space are positioned alongside a number of other identifiable elements: those of family and kinship; of sexuality; of neighbourliness and neighbourhood; of time; of appropriate discourse; of routine behaviour; of honesty and ‘social credit’; and of religious and political context. Spatial images, therefore, are just one of a number of constituents which help to shape narrative and make meaning. Their particular significance lies in the ways in which they enable the other factors (mentioned above) to be developed and defined. For example, as the following discussion will demonstrate, space is often an elucidatory factor in a case in conjunction with the time at which an event takes place, and its familial, or religious context.

The first section of this chapter describes the spatial elements which the narratives employ. This section relies upon the evidence of all depositions given within the Archdeaconry and Consistory courts of the diocese of Canterbury between 1541 and 1580, and that of cases which relate to the six places on which this study has concentrated for the period 1580-1600.

The second section reconstructs a range of contemporary perceptions of space. Three cases are considered in detail through the combination of the two types of evidence presented so far in this thesis: the physical composition of space and the description of actions within it; the sensory and the represented.

The way that church court depositions have been used by historians has changed considerably over the past three decades. The material has primarily been used in three distinct types of study: large-scale considerations of social structures, such as marriage and belief; investigations of the operation of the courts; and explorations of the depositions themselves in order to explicate the social and cultural assumptions which lie behind them. Keith Thomas's influential book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1971, treats a large-scale cultural issue across a fairly large period of time. It uses depositions as one form of evidence amongst many. His method is to insert quotations from or examples of specific depositions within larger passages of assertion, both as proof of the point he is making and as variation to the texture of his narrative prose.¹ Lawrence Stone's 1977, *Family Sex and Marriage in England*, and Alan MacFarlane's, *Marriage and Love in England*, 1986, use the material in a comparable way.²

In his introduction to *English Society 1580-1680*, first published in 1982, Keith Wrightson situated his work within this new kind of social history of the previous two decades. He characterises it as employing "novel methods" to ask "new questions" of "neglected sources", with the aim of rediscovering "experience", and the relationship between individuals and the culture of which they were a part.³ Although he does not explicitly say so, we may presume that church court depositions were included among the 'neglected sources', as he has recourse to them as 'examples' to support his argument at various points in his work.⁴

The aspects of the depositions which are crucial to their use in such works are both the 'animated' nature of the material (its representation of the spoken discourse of a contemporary deponent from within the society which they are discussing, and its often lively use of the vernacular); and its capacity, as a summary of a specific event, to appear to encapsulate attitudes in one example. As authors provide no critical account of court evidence as a source, and no indication of the representativeness or otherwise of the deposition chosen, the reader is encouraged to read it as a pertinent account of 'what

¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in popular belief in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; see for instance his argument about gambling, p. 24.

² Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840, Modes of Reproduction*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, see for example his discussion of parental control over the making of marriage, p. 145; Lawrence Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977, hereafter *Family Sex and Marriage*.

³ Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680*, London: Hutchinson, 1982, Introduction, pp. 11-16.

really happened', and, by implication 'what everybody thought' within a given society. The consequences of ignoring the issue of representativeness are epitomised by Stone's conclusion, from the high number of such cases being heard, that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century village was "filled with malice and hatred" and characterised by an "extraordinary amount of back-biting, malicious slander...and petty spying".⁵

R.H.Helmholz's *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*, 1974, sets legal definitions of crime against the mechanics of canonical practice. His approach is not explicitly quantitative, rather it attempts to situate the particular within a concept of relative preponderance, using particular examples of depositions in relation to both the letter of the law and usual practice.⁶ However, he considers that depositions "provide vivid pictures of life", and uses the words of deponents as 'voices from the grave', first translating the Latin of their transcription into English.⁷ Ralph Houlbrooke's 1974, *Church Courts and the People*, and Martin Ingram's, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 1987, both follow a similar methodology.⁸ Ingram is perhaps the more explicitly statistical, tabulating for example the precise numbers of different kinds of suits. His interest is primarily in the kinds of suits being brought rather than the details of the depositions, however, and he reads the former as fairly direct evidence of changing patterns of behaviour in society.⁹ Such studies have the value of seeing the cases in their legal context, and therefore being explicit about the fact that the evidence is affected by the need to address specific concerns: for instance the particular areas of legal anxiety which surround the veracity of a will.

Other studies based mainly on deposition evidence have used it to assess social issues, more or less independently of legal context. Susan Amussen, in her 1988 investigation of the relationship between political and domestic order, is more self-conscious than her predecessors about her use of source material generally. She explicitly considers

⁴ See for example his discussion of 'neighbourliness', *English Society*, p. 54.

⁵ Lawrence Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage*, pp. 98-9; see Ingram's criticism in *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, hereafter *Church Courts*, p. 30.

⁶ R.H.Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, hereafter *Marriage Litigation*; see for instance his discussion of divorce *a mensa et thoro*, pp. 100-107, where his examples of both the typical and the idiosyncratic allow him to conclude that "the courts apparently sought to change the attitudes of the parties".

⁷ Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*, p. 7.

⁸ Martin Ingram, *Church Courts*; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation 1520-1570*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, hereafter *Church Courts and the People*.

deposition evidence as vital to her concern with the perceptions of the non-elite family, for which few sources exist.¹⁰ She sees court material as uniquely elucidating the “qualitative aspects” of relations, as opposed to her other sources.¹¹ These are “some of the measurable aspects of family and village relations”, by implication requiring a quantitative methodology; and “the concepts and ideas of a particular society”, through which “material experience is always interpreted”, and which provide a “framework” for behaviour.¹²

Amussen is aware that “The examination of social meanings requires us to ask questions that the evidence is rarely designed to answer”, and that those individuals for whom it exists “are almost certainly atypical”. She stresses the necessity of reading against the evidence if it is to yield answers pertinent to everyday experience, and is careful to state that she will discuss not the *content* of the testimonies, but the “underlying assumptions about how...people ought to act”.¹³ This latter analytical move appears to side-step the issue of representativeness by looking for the controlling moral paradigms behind individual actions.

Important advances in the methodology of deposition analysis have been made by scholars working on source material for other countries. Carlo Ginzburg, in his 1989 *Ecstasies*, investigates formal similarities amongst his texts, rather than reading them as unmediated narratives of experience.¹⁴ His particular kind of depositions provide “only hostile testimonies”, those of the accused, hence “the importance of the anomalies, the cracks that occasionally (albeit very rarely) appear in the documentation, undermining its coherence”. He sees meaning in “the disparity between question and answer”,¹⁵ hence exploiting the disjunctions between the perceptions of the court and the accused. He places an important emphasis upon the court as a meeting point between the rich and the poor, between oral, vernacular culture, and legal, often Latin, written texts.

⁹ See for instance his discussion of the decline in spousals: the smaller number of cases of breach of promise to marry heard by the court suggest an increased acceptance of church weddings, the court both reflecting and encouraging this shift, *Church Courts*, p. 193.

¹⁰ S.D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society, Gender and Class in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 5; hereafter *Ordered Society*.

¹¹ Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 7.

¹² Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 6.

¹³ Amussen, *Ordered Society*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies, Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992, translated from the Italian *Storia Notturna*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Turin, 1989, hereafter *Ecstasies*.

¹⁵ Ginzberg, *Ecstasies*, p.10.

Natalie Zemon Davis's 1987 *Fiction in the Archives* defines its approach to French pardon tales in its title. Davis defines her use of the term fictional as "forming, shaping and moulding elements: the crafting of a narrative".¹⁶ Her conception of the artifice which the testimonies she studies represents alerts her to the relationship between truth and reality, a problematic link which is at the centre of the method of this chapter of the thesis.

Ginzburg's focus on the deposition as a record produced and shaped by an occurrence, and Davis's interest in the material's own particular dynamics, also characterises the most recent studies of English court evidence. Epitomised by Laura Gowing's book on women's discourse and sexuality in early modern London, British studies of the 90s theorise their material with some care.¹⁷ This chapter shares theoretical concerns with them, but extends their sensitivity to the construction of the material into a more explicit methodological issue. Elizabeth Hallam's approach considers those issues which witnesses were "sensitive towards", and takes evidence of "encounters" and "social relations" from the tales which they tell.¹⁸ Diana O'Hara is, like Amussen, concerned with typicality and "bridging the gap between deviance and normal behaviour", which "necessitates speculation and presupposes that the issues discussed in the depositions somehow reflect ordinary life".¹⁹ This chapter also recognises the value of "speculation", or imaginative reconstruction, but its primary theoretical concern follows Davis's methodological focus on the construction of the deposition. The relationship between "real life" and representation is seen to be crucial to an understanding of the nature of the material under consideration, and therefore those issues which it can be used to explicate. The intended function of depositions, and the process which produces them, must be explicitly investigated if the evidence they offer is to be taken on its own terms.

The crimes which could be prosecuted in ecclesiastical courts were those of tithe dispute; matrimonial contention (both those contracts which were uncertain from the start and

¹⁶ N.Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, p. 3.

¹⁷ Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers, Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996; see also Elizabeth A. Hallam, 'Turning the hourglass: gender relations at the deathbed in early modern Canterbury', in *Mortality*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1996, pp. 61-82, hereafter 'Gender relations at the deathbed'; Diana O'Hara, "'Ruled by my friends": Aspects of marriage in the diocese of Canterbury c.1540-c.1570', *Continuity and Change* Vol. 6, No. 1, 1991, pp. 9-41, and 'The language of tokens and the making of marriage', *Rural History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1992, pp. 1-40, hereafter 'Tokens and the making of marriage'.

¹⁸ Hallam, 'Gender relations at the deathbed', pp. 62, 65.

¹⁹ O'Hara, 'Tokens and the making of marriage', p. 6.

those which were in need of dissolution); sexual misconduct of all kinds; contests over testamentary issues; and the whole range of slanderous utterances.²⁰ They could be brought by the court itself, informed by churchwardens' presentments from the parish, or by one party against another.²¹

When defendants appeared in the court, they were examined on a statement of the case presented by the plaintiff to which they had to reply point by point. They could then present a counter case called an 'allegation'. Witnesses were examined and "[t]heir written depositions were subsequently published in court and were then available for scrutiny by both parties".²² In addition to the libel (or articles) which each deponent had to answer in order of its questions, opposing council could give interrogatories to hostile witnesses, asking for clarification of any of the points raised, and enter 'exceptions' "to call into question the character or competence of the deponents."²³ Although a part of the written record generated by such processes was in Latin, the proceedings themselves were conducted in English and, theoretically at least, in private audience with the judge and legal representatives.²⁴ The documents which we read, then, are answers to specific questions (usually lost), and the form they take is seen to affect not just the outcome of the case, but the reputation of the deponent as well.

A vast majority of disputes were settled outside the court by arbitration, and we must see those which were tried as the result of an explicit decision on the part of the plaintiff to elevate a private contention to a public level.²⁵ Court machinery, from the serving of citations to public penance, was highly visible within society, and, in addition, it guaranteed a great deal of discussion of local cases within the community, in some cases

²⁰ For a more detailed account of the distinctions between types of cases, see Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 2-3, and for the position of ecclesiastical justice within the wider legal context pp. 27-9.

²¹ For the former, see Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 3, pp. 44-6, and pp. 35, 43 for the latter.

²² Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 48. See also Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, pp. 40-3 for this process.

²³ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 48.

²⁴ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 47-8. But see PRC 39.21 f.155v, the deposition of Alice Love of Sandwich, a 56 year old widow. She says she will not repeat the words with which Walter Powell slandered her in her own house 4 years ago, partly because she has forgiven him, but partly because "she is loath to offend anye honest wooman by repeateinge the said undeacent wordes". This may just be a display of her own honest modesty, but it would still make much more sense if she was not being examined in private exclusively by men.

²⁵ For arbitration see Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 32, 34; and pp. 57-8, where he says that cases could last for anything between a few weeks and several years. He finds that in the Salisbury consistory court in the early seventeenth century the average length was 9 to 12 months; for the cost of litigation see also Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 40.

including informal written records.²⁶ Between the mid sixteenth- and the mid seventeenth-centuries, these courts saw an unprecedented increase in business which made them central to the maintenance of moral order and the definition of social norms.²⁷ This gives value to deposition evidence as a vernacular language treating the moralisation of space which was known to all. But the extraordinary nature of those cases which were tried also calls into question the use of the material as a record of actual behaviour.

Gowing's work in particular points to two crucial areas which need to be taken into account in any analysis, in order to deal adequately with this evidence: the extent to which depositions record the ideas and voice of the deponent, and the processes and techniques by which such evidence is structured. She characterises her source material as "a mediated, rearranged, and possibly rewritten version of the real words [the court officials] heard", but one which could at the same time be individualised and original.²⁸ The framing of the original questions; the interjections which return the deponent to the relevance they define; and the clerk's translation of everyday speech into a suitable legal form, create a document which records the interface between the individual and the forms and functions of legal process, rather than a verbatim account. This severely problematises any use of the material as evidence of personal perception, but increases its value for readings of cultural preoccupations, and of ways of making moral meaning.

The form which a deponent's description of events initially takes will be affected by that deponent's knowledge of legal process. If a witness wants to offer the kind of proof which the court will find acceptable, then that witness's answers must fall within the range of data of which the court can make sense.²⁹ For example, the question about the soundness of mind of testators is invariably answered in one of two ways. Either the will-maker answered all questions put to them without any 'idle words'; or they knew all those present and greeted them by name. To crudely sum up a complex process: these two most esteemed legal proofs become types of behaviour to which testators more or

²⁶ See for instance PRC 39.22 f.9, 1598, where events in a Bethersden slander case are repeated and discussed, and the exact words spoken are written down at the time so that they will be remembered.

²⁷ J.A. Sharpe, "Such disagreement betwix neighbours": Litigation and Human Relations in Early Modern England', in John Bossy ed., *Disputes and Settlements, Law and Human Relations in the West*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 168; Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 13-5, sees it beginning after 1570.

²⁸ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 47.

²⁹ As Bernard Jackson puts it, a knowledge of arguments which are likely to persuade in a legal context will "depend upon... observation of those forms of behaviour which are 'sanctioned' (recognised) with approval by the sub-group concerned and those which provoke a hostile reaction", Bernard S. Jackson, 'Narrative

less consciously aspire and for which witnesses to their wills more or less consciously look. Legal proof and social action are hence in a position of mutual influence,³⁰ and between them they create the particular forms which social knowledge takes.

Seeing an event, then, a potential deponent must interpret sensory experience in the light of accepted forms of social knowledge if it is to *mean* anything to them, if they are to *understand* what they have just seen. The concept of social knowledge does not necessarily imply a personal experience of exactly parallel situations, rather it suggests an understanding of things as they are *perceived* to exist. It offers a cultural store of more or less possible characters and scenarios.³¹ If the witness *is* required to describe what they saw in court, then their experience will be mediated once more. The standards of legal proof will further refine their evidence into a form that has legal meaning. ‘Telling the truth’, then, may be about both ‘seeing’ and ‘telling’ in relation to pre-existent social patterns of the likely or the probable, and these patterns must, by definition, have substantial resonance for the culture which elevates them in terms of probability.³² Such connections between social practice and legal definitions are always present. But in a period in which the courts were seeing a huge expansion in business, the implications of the relationship must have been considered much more explicitly in the event of crime or rites of passage.

Such ‘probable scenarios’ give the shape of narrative to experience. This structuring process has important implications for our understanding of the evidence. Deponents at first glance appear to present a series of facts. Indeed unmediated evidence of situations is what they are encouraged to provide for the court. If, however, as Hayden White states,

Theories and Legal Discourse’, in Cristopher Nash, ed. *Narrative in Culture, The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy and Literature*, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 42, hereafter, ‘Narrative Theories’.

³⁰ The former can be drawn upon and manipulated consciously: Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 37, says, “The themes of insult drew on and were shaped by the concerns of contemporary moral projects, but defamers discussing sexual behaviour were not enforcing one standard of behaviour: rather their words defined images of acceptability and transgression which gave insult its power”, p. 119.

³¹ Jackson gives the example of the ‘criminal stereotype’, who is, both physically and in terms of his background and circumstances, perceived as more likely to have committed the crime.

³² Amussen and Gowing see female sexuality as the key cultural obsession in early modern England, which would therefore generate series of tropes surrounding ways of discovering sexual crime. Katharine Maus highlights the implications of this process of comparison between the perceived and the known for the deponent’s reputation: perceiving sinful activities can suggest a too-clear understanding of the event in question: a legal version of the idea that ‘it takes one to know one’, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 125, hereafter *Inwardness*. Paul Ricoeur points up the engendering function of familiar tropes: “As soon as a story is well known...retelling takes the place of telling”, in ‘Narrative Time’, in W.J.T. Mitchell, ed. *On Narrative*, Chicago: University of

“Every narrative, however seemingly “full”, is constructed on the basis of a set of events that might have been included but were left out”,³³ then the criteria for selection must be a perceived relevance, both to the question asked and to the deponent’s understanding of the *meaning* of what happened. Elements which conflict with the initial process of making sense, or which appear to make the deponent’s experience less important to the case, will be discarded. The presentation of facts in a particular order, White says, cannot help but be productive of meaning, even if that presentation does not explicitly conclude. This is especially true in the case of narratives presented in court, as their purpose is to answer the implicit ‘question’ which the case represents: ‘was there an act of slander/adultery/testamentary fraud?’, through the more particular one of the interrogatory: ‘what do you know of the events of a particular day and place?’.

For White, because every narrative necessarily gives significance through its ordering process, “every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralise the events of which it treats”. Narrativity itself “presupposes the existence of a legal system against which or on behalf of which the typical agents of a narrative account militate”.³⁴ In the case of depositions, this allying of the account with the moralising properties of legal machinery is particularly explicit. The deponent situates her/his account of the events in question in relation to the legal definitions of right and wrong within which s/he produces the narrative. The elements which go to make up the narrative inevitably take on a moral meaning because of their position within such a discourse, and those meanings are then read back into actual social situations. The relevance of domestic spaces to narratives of wrongdoing becomes a part of the generic cultural identity of the rooms of the house.

White argues that we have, in our contemporary accounts of the past, “a notion of reality in which ‘the true’ is identified with ‘the real’ only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity”.³⁵ Those events which are presented as narrative are perceived to be true because they appear ‘real’. Their status as things which ‘really happened’ is achieved through the status of narrative as the supremely mimetic form for

Chicago Press, 1980, p. 175. He discusses the way in which well known tales tell their ending as soon as they are begun, repeating it again as they conclude, p. 176.

³³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form, Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987, p. 10, hereafter *Content of the Form*.

³⁴ White, *Content of the Form*, pp. 13-14.

³⁵ White, *Content of the Form*, p. 6.

the representation of experience. Applied to depositions, such an ordering of moralised narrative elements becomes the only way to make events relevant to the case: narrative becomes the form of *truth*. But narrative is also the form of *reality* in these cases because of its capacity for illusion. The spatial elements employed in these narratives are crucial to this process as they create a mental image which increases the plausibility of the actions by giving them a believable, concrete context. The status of the deponent is increased by the effectiveness of her/his employment of narrative elements as the mimetic qualities of their representation work to deny other interpretations of the essential facts of the case.³⁶

Such elements may be simple (presenting a culturally probable scenario in little detail) or they may be more complexly structured, additionally employing a variety of details in order to suggest that the tale is actually true, that it really happened in exactly the way in which it is presented, as well as appearing plausible. Circumstantial details, then, are a narrative strategy for indicating the act of witnessing through the production of a rhetoric of authentication.³⁷

It is this combination, of structure and detail, which sets the particular narratives which are presented in court apart from other cultural tales. Details of space and place, although forming only one series of narrative elements, are perhaps the most important in this respect, as they give events the impression of being physically anchored. But the identification of the relative positions of the participants and onlookers goes one step further. An impression is given of the description of a visual scene as opposed to the details of what took place there: an image constructed not only through the description of the people involved, their demeanour, movements and clothing, but through a way of signalling intention by means of spatial relations.

To give an example, Joanna Brown of Canterbury refers to a trip which she took to Sandwich, where she stayed in an inn called the Three Kings. Her deposition is about a slander which took place behind the building between its proprietor and another woman. Brown deposes that she “saw Winyats [the respondent] looking upon the said Debeney

³⁶ It is this which makes depositions appealing to the historian, who considers them a ‘ready-made’ picture of the social life which is so elusive in many other kinds of document. Their internal coherence is taken, as it was intended to be, as a sign of external reference, and the representation which was designed to give status to the teller through his or her tale is taken for a ‘photograph’ of reality.

through the pale or particion betwene them at such place or places where the pales were not closly joyned together”.³⁸ As the detail invites the audience to picture the scene, so it insists that they visualise it as described. The detail of the irregularity of the pales, possibly suggested in response to a question about the exact manner in which the deponent was able to see the woman on the other side of a fence, gives the extra information which is necessary to make this description particular, without affecting the narrative’s status as a typical dispute in a familiar context. The tale is at once plausible and sufficiently clearly imaged to be believable as a first-hand account. The narrative, while in no way proving that the women were the only ones involved, implicitly constructs such an inference through the visual impression it communicates. Detail functions to deny alternative meanings by creating the illusion of mimetic representation, total recall. But the individuality of the narrative element does not prevent it from carrying moral meaning. Although particular, the pales of the fence are still a spatial trope generated in response to the need for moral significance. The physical barrier ‘locks’ the women together on either side of it in a moral relationship of intent.

The narrative tropes which deponents employ do not only order events, they order space by giving it an arrangement which simultaneously makes it impregnable and imbues it with a moral significance. It is the coherence of their representation in both these senses which makes the written testimonies so seductive. Historians have been too ready to take these qualities as a cue, in theoretical terms, to read them as unmediated documentation without a specific rhetorical intention. In terms of methodology, they have been equally tempted to allow the evidence to ‘speak for itself’, which it does with a power and conviction capable of enlivening any account of social practice.

The following sections take their legitimisation from the dialectical relationship between representation and social practice; and from the plausibility of the narrative schema which are used. Church courts, particularly in this period of increased moral vigilance, provided the primary site of mediation between official doctrine, elite, literary discussions of morality, and a popular, communal understanding of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. The dialectic between experience and its legal representation, during which the seemliness of the former was tried and tested, was the most likely point

³⁷ Gowing mentions the use of detail in depositions, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 55-6, but sees it as offering a chance to ‘say more’ rather than a move towards realism.

³⁸ PRC 39.17 f5v, 1593.

of contact between ordinary individuals and moral theory. The men and women who made up the vast majority of the play-going public both acquired and expressed their understanding of morality through their experience of these courts: as deponents, respondents or churchwardens; or as their friends, neighbours, families or drinking companions.

Methodologically, in view of the status of depositions as non-representative evidence, this chapter will work substantially from individual examples. It will, at the same time, try to give an indication of the degree of universality of the tropes under consideration in order to situate them as more or less common figures for making cultural sense.

3.ii. Narrative tropes

Deposition narratives represent action through a syntax of identifiable elements. Of all the aspects of an event which form its imprint in the mind of the deponent, those chosen for representation may not be the most visually prominent or appealing: as this discourse is, above all, a moralised one, such elements are accentuated rather because of their capacity for metaphorical resonance. The motifs which occur regularly in the evidence, then, have a plausible literal truth value which also generates a moral meaning. I intend briefly to indicate the nature of the non-spatial narrative elements (such as gesture and clothing); then to consider more fully those which frequently conjoin with spatial concepts in order to make moral meaning (such as daily routine and sexuality); and finally to discuss the purely spatial tropes which occur in the depositions.

Obviously all actions take place within a space. However, not all the narrative elements used to reconstruct events rely on the portrayal of physical context to make moral meaning. A description of the amount and type of clothing worn by those involved, for example, can be used to indicate the nature of their interaction with an event. Those who attended the bedside of the dying Gregory Crump, for instance, say they found him “in his gowne”.³⁹ Such a description is implicitly concerned with establishing the mental state of the testator through his self-presentation: he may be physically unable to entertain friends and neighbours at the hall table, but undress would suggest that he was also unaware of their presence and therefore unfit to perform his testamentary duties.

In cases of adultery, the implications of the state of dress of the parties are even clearer.

William Willis of Brookland, returning to his chamber in a Mr Wood's house, finds several men within it who claim to have discovered a man called Lye with Wood's wife: "And there he saw the said Lye's codpiece downe and unpoynted and his sherte hanging out".⁴⁰ Although Lye tries to explain his appearance by claiming that the other men present have attacked him, the evidence of his undress is compelling. It is further bolstered by the assertion that when the couple were found, "one of his leggis did hang over the bed".⁴¹ Within such a discourse, this informal gesture represents a slackening of moral standards and a loss of self-control.

Clothing and gesture are here being read as outward signs of inner, and hence hidden, intentions: they are generated at the border between the individual and her or his surroundings, between the self and its public presentation as person. Narrative elements in general can be seen as a way of elucidating the relationship between the hidden and the manifest in human interaction; attempting to forge an unequivocal set of meaningful correspondences. In many cases this process involves the interpretation of actions which are generally known: public in the sense that they take place outside the house. Daily routine is such a narrative element, one which has its own spatial aspects and implications for the reading of other spatial metaphors.

The tales deponents tell begin from a high level of familiarity with the habitual actions of those within their community. Both the deponent and those who appear within her or his narrative of events belong to a closed, privileged world of intimate mutual knowledge. The daily routine with its employments and domestic errands builds into a normative representation of each person, known to those whose houses are passed, or whose routines cross their own. Any movement outside one's own house puts one in the public domain and is therefore subject to scrutiny. The shops which one uses, the friends whom one visits, the roads which one uses most frequently, even the number of times that one leaves one's house each day and the manner in which one does so (alone or accompanied by a servant, in apparel of a particular type) all such information places the individual socially. This information is so well known as to be internalised by deponents, and they must translate it into a language which the court can comprehend to make their testimony meaningful. Routine is the narrative element which allows this transition from the locally

³⁹ X.10.7 f.18v, 1560.

⁴⁰ X.10.2 f.112v, 1544.

⁴¹ X.10.2 f.113v, 1544.

known to the culturally significant.

I begin with a case where the nature of routine behaviour (as the coincidence of action, time and place) is itself being investigated. In the context of a dispute about the delivery of beer on Sundays and other holy days in Canterbury, Reginald Bourne, a carpenter from Northgate parish, says that he had seen the servants of the brewer Leonard Bonner, “come with the horse and beere cart and vesselles of their said master to bring this deponent beere, and so hath seene them go in the streetes in the suburbes of the city”.⁴² The case is concerned with establishing within a legal context those things which are known to happen regularly in the streets of the town, events which are so familiar that they go almost unnoticed. Thomas Swetland of All Saints parish says that he used to fetch his own beer from Bonner’s brewhouse:

custome was and yet is that after evening prayers ended...divers of his customers, especially such as fetch beere by the gallon or by smale measures did then fetch away the beere, and so did this deponent during all the time articulate himself hiring one man and some one of the said Bonner’s servantes at every time using to cary the said beere between them on their shoulders in a ringe from the said bru house along the streetes unto this deponent’s house.

This happens after 2 or 3 o’clock, the time of evening prayer, “which he knoweth by the ringing and tolling of the belles there”.⁴³

Swetland is keen to stress the customary nature of his practice, thereby giving it a temporal structure. Such movements are part of the habitual texture of life within the community: sights, sounds and smells which fade into the subconscious until attention is drawn to them. They are regular: they fit in with the tolling of the bells; and they regulate, by dividing and pacing the lives of both participants and observers.

The last two decades of the sixteenth century were a period of particularly intense focus on routinely performed actions, as the Sabbatarianist tendencies of town governments demanded that careful note was taken of working practices within shops, and indeed the movement of delivery carts, on the holy days. On Sundays, in such towns, people must have been especially sensitive to the windows and doors of premises, and to the noises which escaped through them from inside. Robert Hedend of St Andrew’s parish, in the

⁴² PRC 39.18 f.61, 1595.

⁴³ PRC 39.18 f.62v, 1595.

centre of Canterbury, deposes that,

one maye daye laste paste this deponent did well see that the articulate Thomas Ospring his twoe apprentices did openlye woorcke one their occupacion of needel makeing in the shop of there saide maister the whiche hee did the rather note...for that as hee saith there were twoe or three whoe shewed this deponent of the same and towlde him that ‘there were some some [sic] that woulde not se the may pole’ or ‘woulde not bee idle’ or some such woordes, meaning the servauntes or apprentices of the saide Ospring. And this deponent saithe that as the saide apprentices were at woorke the lower parte of the shop [where the] windows were open soe as this deponent and dyvers others did openlye see and beeholde them at worke there... And hee saith that yt hath beene a usuall matter to see them soe at woorke one dyvers other holydayes. ⁴⁴

These cases define the nature of routine through their explicit interest in the conjunction of space, action and time, in response to a specific set of religio-political imperatives. In doing so they demonstrate categorically the efficacy of this particular narrative element in situating the protagonist morally in terms of conventional communal practice. They also show clearly the complicated interweaving of spatial elements (the apprentices were in the shop) with temporal, contextual and performative ones (on a holy day; in a period of new legislation on the subject; making needles), which forms the moral implications of the trope.

In other types of case, actions are defined as legitimate or suspect through the positioning of an individual’s actions within the common patterns of social intercourse. Presence and absence in the street become important indicators of moral worth at key moments. At times of divine service one should be seen to leave one’s door; after curfew one’s appearance outside the house could cause suspicion. Leaving the house can be assumed to suggest certain activities by the time and direction of the journey, and hence its relationship with legitimate social movements. Visual clues, such as a basket or a milk pail, are useful additional details in narratives of the actions of others because they help to explain and legitimise the assumptions of the deponent.

Richard Grange is accused of keeping his sister Margaret, a self-confessed harlot, who “everie daie lyveth suspiciouslie in running about at hir will and pleasure and commeth

⁴⁴ PRC 39.13 ff.63-63v, 1589. On the particular nature and details of Kentish Sabbatarianist practices see Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and*

not unto the church”.⁴⁵ Her movements are out of control: she leaves the house too often, but she does not leave it when she should, for expected and credible purposes. The whore whom Agnes Butterwick is accused of housing has also been a common sight to her neighbours: “whiche woman this deponent hath many tymes seen before, that in the said Agnes Butterwick’s house and also going and commyng to and from the same”.⁴⁶ Her going and her coming are used to identify, visually and spatially, her relationship to the house in which she is living, which forms the beginning and the end of every journey she makes. Her reputation is constructed by the nature of those journeys within the town, and ‘brought back’ to the house which becomes a repository for it. Such narrative expressions position the building centrally. They add a metaphorical representation of all that its inhabitants are known to be socially to its function of holding all that they have physically. In this moralised construction women in particular should, of course, be kept within the house as much as possible, and if they stray too often from it, their gaze needs to be re-centred upon it. Agnes Butterwick, herself a contentious figure, was beaten by her husband “because she wold not geve attendaunce with hym, as he said, but rather be abrode...saying as she hath herd hym that he had rather his wyfe remayned at home spyning and carding woll”.⁴⁷

Another narrative element which is related to daily routine and is spatially defined is that of the nature of the relationship between the parties involved. William Clerk, examined about his relationship with John Wright, says that “many tymes now adaies he hath seen...the said John Wright carryng beeir to and froe in Canterbury...and at such meting of hym this deponent hath saluted hym”. Having defined their public relationship, the way in which their daily routines caused their paths to cross, he considers their personal friendship: “And divers and many tymes within the tyme that he hath before deposed he this deponent hath been in the company of the said Wright in divers honest places in Canterbury and hath droncke with hym together in honest company, and somtymes he hath been at this deponent’s house”.⁴⁸ The description of their relationship moves through recurrent narrative images, from the chance encounter, to the choice of each others’ company in the public interior space of the ale house, to the invitation to spend time

Society in Kent 1500-1640, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977, *passim*, for Canterbury and the cutting down of its maypole especially pp. 175-7, hereafter *Provincial Society*.

⁴⁵ X.1.6 f.48v, 1564.

⁴⁶ X.10.8 f.54v, 1561.

⁴⁷ X.10.8 f.87, 1561.

⁴⁸ X.10.8 f.82v, 1561.

together in one another's own houses. As the spaces involved become more reserved, so the element of chance in their meeting consequently diminishes, and the time and place of their encounters can therefore be used to define their mutual familiarity.

Such a definition, with its need to stress the length of the visit, its intentional, premeditated impetus, and its purpose of the sharing of leisure time, often includes the trope of the sharing of food. Joanna Pilkington deposes about her invitation to breakfast at the house of Richard Richards of Canterbury, in a case about a supposed contract of marriage between his daughter and Thomas Cocks, a young scholar. Pilkington's husband Hugh was a tailor who had been hired to make a friar's garment for one of John Bale's plays, thereby sparking a row with local Catholics, and Richards had lived in the town for the last 20 years, apart from three years during the reign of Queen Mary.⁴⁹ This meeting, just before the Protestants gained control of the government of the town in the 1570s,⁵⁰ is presented as a habitual affair distinguished only by Joanna asking Thomas Cocks "whye he dallied so with Marye Rychardes", Richards' daughter. The promises of marriage which he says that they have already made are then repeated, in front of Mary's friends and family, before the breakfast is eaten.

In his deposition, the girl's father explains,

that about a seven weekes before christemas laste paste the saide Cokes came to this deponent's house with Daniell Welkinson, the which was the firste tyme that the said Cokes ever frequented this deponent's house when as yn the presence of this deponent's daughter he did as yt were aske this deponent leave to frequente his house saying that he would have cum thether a hole yere before that tyme, and that because so longe tyme he fansied and loved his daughter⁵¹

The deponents who support the existence of a contract between the couple focus their narrative upon these two events which involve Cocks' entry into the house as a way of demonstrating his position within the family. In asking to frequent the house, this narrative construction suggests, he is allying the licence of physical entry with the wooing, and hence 'knowing' of the girl: to form a relationship with her must involve sharing her spaces and locating himself physically within her family. But the sealing of

⁴⁹ For further discussion of the Bale case see Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England, religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988, p. 104.

⁵⁰ For details of the religious factionalism of the period see Butcher ed., *Marlowe*, p. xxi.

⁵¹ X.10.11 f.210v, 1570.

the public iteration of the contract is done by breaking the morning fast. Cocks is placed at the table within the family which he should shortly have entered, and there food is shared between them. Perhaps particularly in this company there would have been a sensitivity to the alternative form of the Protestant Eucharist, with its table in place of the altar, and its cup instead of the chalice; and a consequent focus upon every meal as a communion, binding its participants in their common action.

The intimate nature of routine and its relationship to household and friendship is often used as a narrative trope to characterise crimes which disrupt such mutual responsibility. Situating actions within the linear continuum of the domestic routine gives them a particularly insidious character. Richard Alcock of Tenterden is accused of having “carnall copulacion wyth the [said] Bennet’s wyf in the meane tyme while he was eatyng hys porege, before she dyd bryng in the meate”.⁵² Similarly, an unnamed man is accused of having “carnally to do with [Joan Colson] whilest an oven full of cakes were a bakynge”.⁵³ It is also suggested, by a group of women who move out of a hall in Luddenham and into a parlour to discuss the matter more privately, that “he dyd eate parte of them with her when he had don”.⁵⁴ Such images are the antitype of the binding ties of the communal meal.

It is their position within the daily routine which characterises these events as ‘antisocial’ or ‘anti-domestic’. The focus of the cases upon the production and consumption of food is partly pragmatic, in the sense that it stresses the small temporal gaps between chores into which women must fit their crimes, during which their position in the service areas of the house (rather than its more public rooms) gives them a spatial advantage. As high-status men of the house sit around tables involved in the rituals of dining and the consequent cementing of friendships, women gain control over other areas of the house for the duration of the meal. This is passive rather than active control: a by-product of the social obligations of the status of those around the table, and the etiquette of the meal itself.

However, these motifs are intentionally readable in terms of appetite, as they pattern several different types of hunger. The juxtaposition of work and sex, of the domestic and

⁵² X.10.2 f.16, 1541.

⁵³ PRC 39.9 f.126, 1580.

⁵⁴ X.10.6 f.126v, 1556.

the antisocial, of the control of routine and the licence of licentiousness, of smooth running and of rupture, and of the appearance of normality and its perversion, all of these are comic pairings, and they make the tales seductive to repetition. But within the representation is an anxiety: such humour threatens the overall hierarchical control over the household by suggesting that what is seen from the perspective of the hall table may be an illusion; that as dishes come and go with faultless ease, the pauses between them may not represent the duration of production, but the illicit consumption of the economic and moral worth of the household.

Deponents also identify domestic routine within their narrative to explain their presence at the event in question and to distance themselves from it by identifying the true object of their attention.⁵⁵ When Isabel Debeney and Agnes Winyat of Sandwich each suggest that the other should ‘return to her illicit sexual activities’, their words are heard by a considerable number of people. Bennet Adis of Canterbury was sitting in the backside of Debeney’s inn with Joanna Brown, whose testimony was referred to earlier,⁵⁶ “neere to or under a windowe (for they had bought shrimpes and sate downe to eate them)”. While they eat, they see “many rommers [sic] and goers” who “went in and out through the said backside at and about the same time”.⁵⁷ The fact that the house is an inn creates several different perspectives on the event, as many of its rooms are in use simultaneously.⁵⁸

James Scaper, a tailor, “dwelling nere unto the house of the articulate Isabell Debene...did (as many times he useth to do) cary his pressing yron to heate, to the said Debeney’s house”. His route to the constant heat which serves the needs of such an establishment is “through an entry that joyneth to the backside of the said house which backside is devided onely by a pale from the backside of the articulat Wyniates her house”. He sees not only the pair arguing, but also “two women...sitting upon a logge in the backside”, eating their shrimps.⁵⁹

Several men are “sitting at a table in the...lofte” eating a meal, from which location they “did not see either of the women, for they were belowe”, but they recognised their

⁵⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis stresses the importance of the routine setting for tellers of pardon tales. Those who stated that they were going about their daily business when the dispute began were by implication less likely to be seeking confrontation, *Fiction in the Archives*, p.47, and *passim*.

⁵⁶ See above pp. 116-7.

⁵⁷ PRC 39.17 ff.9-9v, 1593.

⁵⁸ The Three Kings was on the South side of Strand Street, one door down from No. 5, photographed in Appendix 2. It was given by John Iden, jurat, to his eldest son Francis in his will of 1586; PRC 17.47 f.2v. Although it is no longer an inn, the building and its yard are extant.

voices.⁶⁰ Lactantius Preston, once apprenticed to Christopher Marlowe's father, but now a wool broker in Sandwich, had resorted there for business and was having breakfast in the parlour.⁶¹ "[T]horough the window of the said parlour", he "did see them both", but he only heard their insults "as he and Robert Clark were washing their hands in the backside".⁶²

Winyat and the witnesses she produces all live in the house next door. Abigail Willes, a 25 year old spinster, saw the two women shouting, and also saw her fellow witness Parnel Vanderschera "loking out at a windowe of a lofte or uper chamber wherin she useth to lie".⁶³ The latter, originally from Flanders, has dwelt in the house for at least 10 years. Hester Willes, 23 and also a spinster, says that Winyat was washing in soap in the backside which the women share as a communal area of the house.⁶⁴ Thomas Yeomans, who used to sub-let the kitchen from Winyat, explains that the Vanderscheras, the only married couple, have a chamber over the hall and one of the shops next to the street, as he is a goldsmith, and the misses Willes, who are also of the Dutch congregation, live in the chamber over the kitchen where they spin "as the strangers usually doe".⁶⁵ The property is owned by Joanna Crispe, a 58 year old widow who says that all her tenants "live very well and in good sort by their honeste laboure and are well provided for both in household stufte and apparell".⁶⁶ This defensive assertion of the status of her tenants suggests the precariousness of deposing in such a case for one's own reputation and in doing so underlines the importance of routine as an element which allows deponents to admit to being present while remaining uninvolved in the immoral actions which took place.

These depositions situate the slander within a complex intersection of different routes and sightlines, both those which are routinely used, such as the tailor's trip across the backside to warm his iron, and those which happen by chance, like the women from Canterbury eating their shrimps under the window. The backsides of the accused are situated between several different physical ways across the town, and many different

⁵⁹ PRC 39.17 f.7, 1593.

⁶⁰ PRC 39.17 f.3, 1593.

⁶¹ Preston, or Presson, was at one stage apprenticed to John Marlowe in Canterbury. However the apprenticeship ended when his master was fined for drawing his blood in a row in the workshop. Preston then moved to Sandwich. See Butcher ed., *Christopher Marlowe*, pp. 23-4.

⁶² PRC 39.17 f.4, 1593.

⁶³ PRC 39.17 f.41, 1593.

⁶⁴ PRC 39.17 ff.41v-42v, 1593.

⁶⁵ PRC 39.17 f.102v, 1593.

⁶⁶ PRC 39.17 ff.100-100v, 1593.

journeys and actions. Communal areas such as the yard of an inn are more likely in the first place to be used simultaneously for different purposes, and those spaces which are bisected by entrances and exits are, of course, liable to be crossed by those pursuing their daily routine. Such an area is bound to be busy, a space pictured mentally as forming part of the way from one place to another, which might be physically flattened and dented in places, creating a map of its use like footprints in the snow: barer in some places than in others.

The advantage of such a situation for both slanderers and court lies in the large number of witnesses which it produces. Each represents the events through the employment of similar narrative elements, and the different perspectives from which they present their evidence obviously converge on the main protagonists and their spatial relationship. When seen in combination, the images they produce appear to generate a whole which is analogous to the three-dimensional model: the event itself, thus triangulated, seems capable of being rotated and viewed from every angle. And this, of course, gives it a coherence which seems closer to reality because it appears autonomous, cut loose from its generation in narrative by the similarity of the salient spatial features of the tale around which each of the depositions is grouped.

If deponents do show themselves to be involved in events they organise the narrative so that their participation stems from an identification of an extraordinary relationship between social practice and expected routine. Alexander Burnley of St Mary's parish in Canterbury calls the borsholder to his neighbour Hennaman's house on the strength of his careful observation of such a hiatus: "espyenge Gyles Wynston to go into the house of Hennaman scytuat and beinge in the parishe of Our Lady St Mary...and perceavyng that the said Wynston stayed there a certen tyme".⁶⁷ Having seen him enter, he expected to see him leave again shortly, his visit then falling into the durational category of 'errand'. The identification of such a disjuncture acts as a kind of narrative key in that it legitimises the presentation of an ensuing change in normal behaviour on the part of the watchers, allowing them to include in their tale the entering of spaces, and the adoption of spatial relations, which might otherwise be prohibited by accepted levels of privacy.

Thomas Wood of Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey, "was goyng home to his owne howse after supper, abowte 8 or 9 of the clocke in the nyght" having been working in

Warden parish. His deposition is one of the longest testimonies in the records of the two courts,⁶⁸ and it is structured around the motivation for and reasons behind his change of routine on this particular night. Normally, “his waye lyng nere to the parsonage howse or parsonage barne yarde”, he would have gone back to his own house. However,

on fryday before Symon and Judes day last past...he herde as he went that way homeward behynde the parsonage barne a noyse of some talkyng or whispering. Wherupon this deponent, having herde before that tyme that the said George Segar did much resorte to the said parson's wyfe...after that he was somewhat gonne paste the parsonage barne and howse and remembryng what talke and speache hath beene...he retourned backe agayne and came and satt downe close under a hedge on his knees.⁶⁹

Wood presents the break in his own routine as being prompted by the relationship between the social information of which he is aware, and the details of his surroundings which he notes as he goes about his business. By including the retracing of his steps in his deposition, he is able to represent the temporal duration of adding these two forms of information together and making meaning from their combination; and this suggested pause for thought exonerates his actions. The noise of talking which he hears is a clue to wrongdoing, and as such it legitimates his initial deviation from his route, and his subsequent unusual behaviour:

And the moone then shynyng very bright and light, this deponent did then see the said George Segar and the said parsons wyfe, thorough the hedge, syttyng downe upon the grounde talkynge together

Wood sits under the hedge for some considerable period of time as he waits for clear evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the couple. Their presence in such a place, outside the house in the dark alone, is instantly suspicious. But at first they are only talking “together of an horse and of one that was excommunicated, but what that conversation ment he doth not knowe. And sayth that the said parsons wyfe did beshrewe Segars hart, but wherfore he cannott tell.” His presentation of such phrases as incomprehensible partly stresses his distance from the couple, but it also reflects his awareness that they are not useful as evidence in this case. His discomfort is finally rewarded by the concrete acknowledgement that the couple are aware of their precarious privacy at the intersection of several different routines:

⁶⁷ X.10.20 f.140, 1582.

And as they were thus talkyng together upon the grounde some thyng, as this deponent supposeth eyther mowse or wesell, did runne into the hedge. Wherupon the said Segar presently did aryse upp and, suspetyng as he supposeth that some came that way, he looked over the hedge where this dept did sitt, and presently he satt downe close by hyr, and then the said parsons wyfe asked hym whether he did see eny body, and he sayd no. And then the said Segar, knowyng before that this deponent did contynually worke all the day longe at the said Robert Pynnes and that every night he came home to his owne howse, his way leadyng very nere to the place where they two satte, the said Segar sayd Tomme Wodde, meanyng this deponent, will come this way by and by, and tooke her aboute the necke and kyssed hyr, in this deponent's sight and hearyng, for he sayth that the place where he did then sit was within 12 or 16 foote at the moste where the parties aforesaid did sitt.

The space they occupy is not inherently private, and it will not necessarily shield them from discovery. Wood's narrative suggests that they hope their own knowledge of the routines of their neighbours will give them a conjunction between time and space which is productive of seclusion, and he presents this evidence of the need to hide as morally suspect. The place itself is set between the road and the parsonage house, and, like the bakers of cakes noted above, their meeting occupies a position between the homecoming of Thomas Wood and the responsibilities of the parson's wife: it finally ends when Helen has to re-enter her house to attend to the domestic routine: "And then the said Helene Esquye said I will now go in and looke what my maid dothe". But Wood stays in his position in case she reappears, only leaving to broadcast his tale in the alehouse when Segar himself leaves, frightened away by another curious suggestion of the presence of another:

And then with longe sittyng on his knees in the cold this deponent's knees did cracke, wherupon Segar presentely did aryse, and looked over the hedge agayne, right over this deponent's hedd allmost, but this deponent puttyng his hedde under a bramble bushe which was higher then the rest of the hedge, he was not espied. And then the said Segar went from that place towardses the parsonage howse, but whither he went in there or no he cannott depose.

Wood's construction of his deposition is intricate and skilful, allowing him to focus on his own resourceful and inventive spatial charade rather than limiting his narrative to the one piece of evidence, that of the kiss, in which the court is actually interested.

⁶⁸ Whereas the record of most depositions fills a page, Wood's takes up five.

⁶⁹ PRC 39.8 f.138, 1577.

The importance of the order of his narrative to clarity, and to the effect of his evidence upon his own reputation, is made even more explicit by comparing this deposition to another. Christopher Selherst of Whitstable is deposing in a breach of promise case involving the widow Joan Port, who has broken off her engagement with his brother. He begins his story with a piece of reported information:

That before shroftid last past how much he cannot tell, after that this deponent and his wif were goon to beed, his brother cam in and sent for Joane Port to com to hym as his mayde told hym.⁷⁰

He then moves on to answer the question whether they are man and wife:

And their they twoo lay togethers all night in one bedd to whom this deponent cam in the morning and found them to gither in the bedd embracing eche other. She lying in her smock and he in a sleveles trusse as he remembreth. And this deponent lifted up the clothes on her side, none being present at that tyme saving that his maide lay in their chamber all the same night either in the same bedd or out of the bedd for there was no moo beddes in that chamber⁷¹

This part of the testimony is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly the initial statement, that they lay all night in the same bed, is not backed up by the experiential evidence produced, the latter referring only to one moment, at 7 o'clock in the morning, and in any case providing proof of co-occupancy in a bed rather than intercourse. Secondly there is the narrative motif of their attire, intended to prove the latter point by insisting that they shared the bed in a state of undress. Selherst's action of 'lifting up the clothes' appears to have been recorded in answer to a now silent question about how he knew what they were wearing. Partly, of course, it is the ambiguity of the word 'clothes', perhaps the hangings of the bed, or the covers under which they slept, or the smock itself, which lends this sentence an unpleasantly voyeuristic air. Whichever fabric he disturbs to uncover their unperceiving bodies, his representation of his presence in the room immediately becomes problematic to the court. Rather than appearing to fulfil his moral duty by uncovering illicit sexual behaviour, the failure of Selhurst's narrative to begin with a morally suspect detail positions him as a snooper, as one who enters the space of others for his own voyeuristic purposes.

From this point on, the deposition becomes a defence of its author's own actions. He is

⁷⁰ X.10.6 f.234v, 1558.

⁷¹ X.10.6 f.234v, 1558.

“examyned whither he reproved their conversations at that tyme or no”, and he is “examyned what cause he had to goo unto them that mornyng”, to which he replies “that it was to call them to brekefast”. In the light of this seemingly improbable reason, he is “further examyned how he knew they were there”, to which “he saith he might heare them talke together lying in his bedd”. Part of the problem here is that Selhurst’s presentation of his relative spatial position and its motivation suggests that he endorses a form of contract of marriage which is not presaged by a church service: he is also asked “whither he was myscontent that they had so companied to gither before they were marryed”, to which “he saith no, for that he toke them together assured as man and wif”.⁷² His collusion in the sort of contract which the courts were trying to curtail⁷³ is implicit in the way in which he orders his deposition. Had he begun with the evidence of the voices which he could hear, this would have legitimised his invasion of their shared space by overriding a habitual respect for personal space by a moral imperative. As it is, he had no intention of ‘catching them in the act’.

The difference between the physical positioning of Wood and Selhurst is one of trope, of the particular kind of relationship between themselves and the actors in the scene which they wish to represent. For Wood, the motif of the revelation of wrongdoing was important, belonging to the same set of narrative elements as the bursting open of the chamber door. For Selhurst the situation of the event within a sequence of behaviour; indeed the negation of the whole notion of ‘event’ as extraordinary, was more useful. Selhurst, taking his brother’s part over the broken contract, was trying to present the suggested intercourse between the couple as an occurrence which had become routine, and which might therefore characterise their relationship as a lasting and serious one, rather than a hasty and lustful encounter. But his presence in the room had no place in such a tale. The ordering of the elements of the narrative in which these two investigations of the relationship between a man and a woman are set is very different, and this makes them very distinct tales which reflect contrarily upon their tellers.

There was also this kind of time-depth to the parson’s wife’s wrongdoing, however. Stephen Osborne of Eastchurch in Sheppey met George Segar on Beacon Hill, and talked to him about the time he was spending with her. Segar promised not to see her again, but

⁷² X.10.6 f.234v, 1558.

⁷³ On the contemporary movement away from ‘informal’ contracts and towards the marriage service in church see Martin Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 132, 190; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, pp. 56-7.

in fact he had done so more than ever “in places and tymes unconvenyent and mete”. The encounter which Wood watched on his knees under the hedge, in the light of the other depositions in the case, begins to look like the final straw.⁷⁴ It is simply that deponents present the central event of the schedule in a different relation to the history of the sin. While individuals must reveal, whole communities can bide their time and watch. The presentments from Headcorn parish to the archdeacon’s visitation include an accusation of adultery between William Welles’ wife and Robert Humphrey “and the matter so evident that it is knowen where and howe his hawnte is used”.⁷⁵ The word ‘haunt’ seems to encapsulate the sense of ingrained behaviours which have become habitual, and are of a different nature to the one-off lapse.⁷⁶ Sin is represented as a part of the routine behaviour of those involved when it is a fact known within the community by the frequency and uniformity of their behaviour, and morally this is the most damning of such narrative elements.

It is when events reach this stage that informal intervention is seen to have failed and the churchwardens must file a presentment.⁷⁷ Beatrice Garman asks the advice of Richard Quilter of Kingsdown about the behaviour of her husband William, who “did haunt Goodman Gauntes wif from place to place, who could not goo to Canterbury, Sandwich or Dover but would follow her as it wer an Anthony pygg, saying moreover that she [Beatrice] was ashamed to heare of it, and that the chiefe yomen of the countrey talked of it in Mr Hamondes house”.⁷⁸ His routine has become merely a shadowing of Mrs Gaunt’s, his moves dictated by her own like the faithful pig of the saint. Beatrice feels that something must be done at the point where the story of her husband’s behaviour is becoming as popular a legend as the image which she uses to illustrate it.

3.iii. Spatial narrative elements

The central difference between the contrasting stories of Selhurst and Wood is the representation of the relationship between the space of the watcher and the space in which the event itself takes place. The hedge behind which Thomas Wood presents himself as hiding provides a frame to the actions which simultaneously reveals and

⁷⁴ PRC 39.8 f.140, 1577.

⁷⁵ X.1.7 f.21v, 1565.

⁷⁶ See also X.10.2 f.67v, 1541, where a couple are said to ‘hawnte the church lane’ in Faversham.

⁷⁷ See above p. 112.

⁷⁸ X.10.12 f.16, 1564.

conceals, allowing him access to the event without disclosing his presence, but exchanging this spatial advantage for a contraction of perspective. Those who watch from windows, from behind doors, or from the vantage point of various natural features, are at one spatial remove from the action. The barrier which divides them from what is happening creates two separate loci which are both clearly demarcated and firmly connected by the gaze which moves between them. By presenting their information through such a trope, deponents make certain statements about the event which they are looking at and their relationship to it.

As long as it has been sanctioned by the telling detail, such a perspective on events simultaneously points up the attempt at secrecy on the part of those involved and the moral distance between the watcher and their actions. The frame which deponents give to their narrative acts as a kind of protection from ‘moral infection’, from the potential pollution of sharing a space with sin. This is a trope which is useful in cases of slander, where the witness might regard events from inside a house, as was the case in the scandal between Winyat and Debeney, but it is most frequently used in the imaging of adultery. However it is also a tale which is hard to control, and which needs external substantiation if the force of its image is not to return upon the teller.

William Alcock of Canterbury and his friend Thomas Boys, both gentlemen, were walking together “in the body of Christchurch” when Crench, one of Boys’ servants, passed by.⁷⁹ Boys calls him over in order to ascertain the truth, or perhaps the proof, of certain rumours which Crench had been spreading about two of his fellows. In the hall of Boys’ house, Crench, having asked leave to ‘tell the truth’, retells his tale officially. He says that

the said Colbrand and Elizabeth Purfry articulate had bene...walking together and being come home to the said Mr Boys his house the sayd Colbrand and Purfry stayd together in the entry and he the sayd Crench went in and lighted a candle and went up into his chamber and there pulled of his shoes

Crench, who has to return to lock the doors, implicitly provides a temporal and physical space for the couple to begin something which he could later interrupt. Able to move quietly now, he

⁷⁹ X.11.3 f.75v, 1598.

came downe in his hose and heard the said Colbrand and Purfry
rumbling againste the walls and blowinge in the entry and heard the
said Colbrand say (Oh sweete Besse sweete Besse)

In this case, happening as it does within a house, it is necessary for the deponent to practice a certain amount of deceit in order to provide himself with the secrecy which Wood achieves behind his hedge. This is usually achieved through the mimicking of the expected domestic routine. Through imitation of his own habitual actions, Crench is able to create space, to succeed through shifting his shape, by gaining an advantage over the couple. Deponents frequently pretend to leave the space, and then return later and take up their place behind doors in order to read the signs of wrongdoing.⁸⁰ Alerted by the deviations from the usual practice of others, hiding behind the cover of their own feigned habitual movements, they are able to negotiate the house, often in the dark, through their familiarity with its layout. Such tropes of interior detection are credible because of the intimate knowledge which people have of those with whom they share a house, and of that structure itself, its potential to provide cover for those they follow and for their own clandestine movements of ‘discovery’.

It is the fact that the deponent must acknowledge that both they and the accused are involved in secrecy (and the deception which hiding necessitates) in order to present their information that makes these cases so problematic. There is a very fine balance between enhancing one’s reputation by discovering ‘the truth’ and endangering it by appearing personally culpable. Wood, kneeling behind the hedge, said that he went to enormous lengths to conceal his presence in order to ensure the unfolding of the truth in time. But he also presumably had to protect himself from possible violence, and from an accusation of spying, had his evidence remained unsubstantiated. Watching from behind some form of barrier, although it allows a spatial distance which is morally cogent, is a trope which generates and shapes a narrative which is often hard to sustain. As a solitary activity, usually unsubstantiated by other witnesses, it becomes problematic in terms of the angle from which it formulates the event. Unlike the public disturbance, only one view of the scene is offered, and visual perspective therefore tends to become synonymous with individual interpretation, perhaps even with bias or with prejudice. Deponents offer two narrative moves to combat the uncertainty of their status: a physical detail as a clinching piece of evidence, and the revisiting of the scene of the crime.

⁸⁰ See also PRC 39.18 f.58, 1595, as an example of a similar construction.

3.iii.a. Sign and content

Crench, having told his tale thus far and presumably thinking that he had reached a meaningful conclusion, is further questioned: “then sayd Mr Boys aforesaid what of all this?”. Facts presented within a narrative which addresses particular accusations in the court have a built in method of signification: they are stated in reference to specific questions (interrogatories) about wrongdoing. Outside that context, however, in this examination within an examination, their unity as story and the uniqueness of their interpretation is open to question. Crench applies an explicit meaning to his narrative in response: “the said Colbrand did there occupye the said Elizabeth Purfrye”, but he is still met with the paucity of his proof: “quoth Mr Boys ‘howe canste thou tell?’”. At this point the narrator realises that the story has become one about his own honesty, hinging on the plausibility of his tale. He begins to backtrack a little: “then sayde Crenche ‘I hope you will not seeke advantage of me, I did not say he occupied her but I *thinke* he did’”. The proof which he is forced to provide now is unique in detail, but common in narrative position, within the evidence: “for sayd he, when they were gon owt of the entry I fetcht a candle to locke the dore and there I sawe his nature ly upon the ground”.⁸¹

It is particularly in cases of suspected sexual activity that physical signs are required by deponents to carry the weight of the proof of the case, and they range from footprints in the mud to codpiece points outside chambers.⁸² In a way such signs are allied to the tokens referred to in breach of contract cases.⁸³ Objects were important to a contemporary understanding of the nature of relationships, providing an embodiment of the ties between testator and beneficiary as demonstrated above, and between courting couples. In the latter case, they provided a concrete assessment of complex emotional interactions for the couple involved: a proof that the words and glances of courtship had not been misunderstood. In deposition narratives, however, the meaning of objects is subtly different. Here, their physicality is vital as it allows the external comprehension of a relationship otherwise entirely unknown: a way of translating a private and particular relationship into a publicly intelligible system of signs with a wider significance.

Neither love tokens nor the proof which Crench offers in and of themselves meant ‘commitment’, or ‘intercourse’. It was their position within the duration of affection or

⁸¹ X.11.3 f.76, 1598.

⁸² See X.10.11 f.202v, 1569; X.10.2 f.112v, 1544.

the narrative of discovery which gave them significance. In the court, as Crench's experience demonstrates, ways of making meaning are themselves often on trial (in the sense of being susceptible to legitimisation or rejection) alongside the crime itself. Such cases need a careful management of the giving of evidence if their credibility as coherent narratives is to be sustained. They require the manipulation of discourses of sign and symbol and their strategic positioning at the interstices of temporal, spatial, and routine, narrative elements.

Many cases are based on little firm evidence of wrongdoing, but a great deal of spatial suspicion: for instance when a couple are found lying down together in a field outside the town. If the spot itself is hard to locate physically it will provide descriptive difficulties for subsequent narratives, and the witness, with a view to becoming a deponent later in the proceedings, may invite others to view the place for themselves. This action generates further witnesses, and is another strategy for confronting the problem of the presentation of an individual perspective: others can now depose upon the spatial logistics of the location of the crime, if not the event itself.

This curious separation of event from spatial context in the interests of the provision of a wider range of narrative stances is elucidated by a case from the Canterbury suburbs. Having made accusations about her neighbour Margaret Raven which the latter denies, Helen Joyseman says that Margaret Richardson brought her,

goodman Smith, the sergeant...Fantynges wif and the husband of the said Richardson unto the place in the feld aforesaid where she saw the said Raven's wif in the morning betwene six and 7 of the clocke wher was a man whome she said she saw not, but shewed the way where a man had goon over [the hedge]⁸⁴

Richardson, whose evidence is slim and depends entirely upon her own testimony, takes this party of interested and influential people back to the field where she saw the couple and asks them to consider the plausibility of her story in spatial terms: to assess the probability of the relationship between space and event in terms of the sightlines and distances of her narrative. Such a re-enactment of the event allows proof to be generated by the capacity of the space to stage the actions in question. It is a logistical form of circumstantial proof. But it is compelling because of the relationship which it forges

⁸³ See on this subject, Diana O'Hara, 'Tokens and the making of marriage', pp. 1-40.

⁸⁴ X.10.7 f.111v, 1560.

between space and narrative. Richardson, showing the place where the man disappeared from her sight, walks, or at least indicates, the ways in which the field was used. She animates the space into place, inscribing her version of events upon the landscape, and giving what she saw a three-dimensional solidity. Both narrative and space are enriched by this process.

James Mortimer and Leonard Colsonsack, who discover a couple in a ditch beside a field, do not see the activity in which they claim them to have been involved, but they do see a clue which they find convincing. “one mighte have seene, and theye did see there, manifeste pryntes of the tooes or feete of the saide Harman agenste a bancke at thone syde”.⁸⁵ As a result, “the cunstable was sente for and other witnesses the moste parte whereof sawe the place and gave judgemente that they have comitted suche an offence”. In his narrative in the court, the deponent is at pains to stress the separation of physicality and interpretation: ‘one mighte have seene, and theye did see’, giving the footprints the independent status of unmediated fact. The prints of action become proofs of sin when they are seen within the spatial context as a whole, and when they are explicated as a ‘guided tour’ during which not only their physical position, but their relationship to other details and their presumed meaning is pointed out. In the actual place, such a process is less contentious and the evidence can speak for itself. Place (both physical and narrative) gives details meaning.

Once explained spatially, the narrative is ‘insinuated’ into the space for those who see the demonstration. The process by which traces of an event imbue the place which contained it is hastened: immediately, space is altered and comes to represent the crime in its design. Visualisation is acknowledged as contributing substantially towards believability, and the nature of the deposition itself as presentation of image rather than fact, as something which must be ‘seen to be believed’, is made explicit. The spatial element in such narratives is manifest as context rather than relative positioning; it is presented as a sealing wax which retains an exact impression of the event: a ground impressible by sin but also offering proof through its immutability as external, verifiable referent.

In cases which do not utilise either of these narrative defences, the deponent merely presents a bald, unsupported trope of spatial relations. When the mayor of Maidstone calls William Smith to his house to answer charges of slander, the latter confirms that he

has said that “the said Agnes was naught with a servant of hers whos name was Duffield and said that he did see her and hym in a chamber together committ adulterye, loking in at a hole”. The deponent who remembers this event, however, is unable to recall “whither it [the hole] wer at a wall or a door”.⁸⁶ James Busbridge, a jurat of the town, remembers that Smith was sent to the cage for his story because he was unable to prove the truth of it “other than by his awne tale”.⁸⁷

Two issues seem to arise out of this last case. The first is that Smith’s narrative is implicitly set against his own reputation, and with no substantiating evidence the more reputedly honest of the two parties is more likely to be believed. The second point is about the currency of his narrative trope, which offers such a straightforward, unquestionable proof that it becomes unbelievable. Cases which present their evidence as framed by the rather more solid barrier of a wall or door occasionally claim that there was a hole in it through which they saw the events which took place within. They use the perceived flimsy nature of the partition as a ruse for total visibility. In the context of a neighbourhood argument of considerable time depth, Joan Clinton brings two watchmen to the house of her next door neighbour Goodwife Nowre. When they arrive they pause to listen for a while, and she then asks them “whether they harde any thinge or no, and they said no”. Joan herself then claims to have “harde William Harris the tapster at the Quenes Armes and goodwife Nowre here together and ther they were blowing”, and her husband Roger adds “that he had put his heade in at a hole into the shoppe” and heard them together.

The hole is used as a metaphor for clarity and shared sensory experience, as the deponent attempts to present a narrative of perceptions in which understanding is undeniable, and signs cannot be construed differently. The evidence which Crench presented of the relationship between his fellow servants demonstrates the desirability of such irrefutable meaning. But images of this clarity are suspicious. Because they encapsulate the crime so perfectly they develop into a shorthand for it, and they are then available as a language of insult and groundless accusation. Mrs Lasshenden, landlady of the Fleur de Luce in Canterbury, dislikes the preacher Mr Russell as he “preachith much of slanderous

⁸⁵ X.10.11 f.203, 1569.

⁸⁶ X.10.6 f.158, 1557.

⁸⁷ X.10.6 f.256, 1558.

tongues which is but a tale of truth”.⁸⁸ She proves his dishonesty by retelling a tale which had been told to her by someone who had frequented her house that day, who “said that she sawe hym com from a preestes wif with his breaches about his legges”.⁸⁹ There is no room in this image for varying interpretations: the distance between the sign and that which it signifies is minimal. The narrative trope, like Russell’s preaching, acknowledges a simultaneous polarity and dependency between ‘tales’ and ‘truth’, the former in this case being an abstraction and concretion of the latter. In structuring the elements of their narratives, deponents tread a path between obscure, multi-interpretable forms of proof and those which are so obvious as to seem stereotypical, ‘unreal’.

3.iii.b. Sharing domestic space

So far the spatial tropes identified have pertained to cases of observed wrongdoing. Testamentary suits, which present rites of passage in front of witnesses, might be expected to generate different narrative elements. However, there are in many cases marked similarities. The majority of Richard Hardiman’s will is written after the testator’s death, by a man called Peter Glover.⁹⁰ Arthur Chamber, Hardiman’s servant, presents himself as being excluded from all the practices surrounding the testament of his master. Having positioned himself at the door of Hardiman’s room when the bequests were being discussed, where he “loked into the chamber and harkened what was there in doing”, he follows two men downstairs to the brewhouse, source of the majority of the temporal wealth of the household, and probably his own place of employment for most of his working hours. The two, Glover and Paynter, “went into the bruehouse and their on a barrelles hedd did write the will of the said testator. But what it was he cannot tell, for this deponent did see thone of them writing of it, and they caused the doore to be shut fast to them”.⁹¹ Here too he says he is denied admittance, and this time he is not even able to hear or see what is happening as the closing of the door breaks off all sensory contact between the two spaces.

Henry Jordan, Chamber’s fellow, was even more remote from the discussion of the will: “he being servant to the said testator was in the hall of the house of the testator where he hard Peter Glover and Thomas Ellice being with this deponent’s master in a chamber

⁸⁸ X.10.7 f.342, 1568.

⁸⁹ X.10.7 f.339, 1568.

⁹⁰ X.10.6 f.50v, 1551.

⁹¹ X.10.6 f.52, 1551.

over the hall speake and move the said Richard Hardyman to be good unto his wif⁹². Jordan gives evidence of the entire discussion from a position directly underneath the proceedings, and this seems to be on the limits of the court's willingness to credit an act of communication. He is asked to clarify several times in his main narrative and again in each interrogatory that "all he hath deposed he did perfutely and sensibly heare" from such a large physical and psychological remove.⁹³ He also describes his own experience of the location from which he experienced the events: "their were no persones in the said hall hearing all this by hym deposed but he this deponent alone", and states that he did not know what was written into the will as he too was totally excluded from the brewhouse.⁹⁴

Both servants organise their depositions around the framing barriers of structures of the house (ceilings, doors, and doorways) and by doing so they cast doubt upon the status of the document itself in the light of the space in which it was generated. The tropes they use to describe their relationship to the event in question share formal similarities with the perspectives of those who observed illicit encounters: they are at one spatial remove from processes; alone in the room which they occupy, one which is still and silent, antithetical in its emptiness to the space towards which their gaze is directed. By stressing such spatial relations these deponents signal wrongdoing through division and exclusion, insinuating crime by identifying a barrier between individuals involved in the same event. There is no reason why they should, as servants, have been included in these processes. But they do not say that they have nothing to depose, they use spatial tropes to narrate their unawareness as impropriety.

Deponents in testamentary cases who describe themselves as sitting in the hall until they were called into the room in which the will was being made can instructively be considered in the light of this case. Although they must often have been aware, as Jordan was, of the events which were taking place in adjacent rooms, they only depose on the events which occur when they enter the will-space. By going through the doorway into the room itself, witnesses became formally present, as opposed to sensorily aware, and the narrative of their attendance also becomes one of their involvement. The framing device of the doorway acts as a divide on the other side of which actions, their

⁹² X.10.6 f.49v, 1551.

⁹³ X.10.6 f.50, 1551.

⁹⁴ X.10.6 f.50-50v, 1551.

interpretation, and the attention paid to them, are altered. Presenting oneself as crossing such a threshold signals a change of status in relation to the event. Once the narrative is given from the perspective of the room in which the event is taking place, it becomes a tale about acting rather than knowing, and about having to ‘witness’, in both senses of the word, with no possibility of escaping the compulsion. Chambers and Jordan are able to depose on the subject of the will, but they were not and could not have been signatories to it, as they were not considered to be formally involved in the process. Co-residence in the room is the moral opposite of the trope of spatial division, then, as it allies the deponent with the actions taking place.

Such spatial organisation is seen to be evidentially satisfying in breach of promise cases too. This is demonstrated by the deposition of Abraham Burton who, returning to the house which his wife appears to have run as some kind of inn, “founde Walter Robinson and...Rabeche Baker in the hall sitting on a benche under the strete wyndow, and so sone as this deponent and the said John Davy cam unto the house [they] rose up and went bothe togiethers into an upper chamber requiring this deponent to goo up with them and to drinck with them”.⁹⁵ Robinson then carefully chooses the others whom he wishes to be present with him in the chamber.

Once he has decanted those who are close to him from the available audience in the inn that evening, he reveals the reason for their presence: his intended contract of marriage with Baker. This is performed at the end of a meal taken in the chamber and some drinking, and is divulged when Elston asks for a reckoning, and is told there is nothing to pay. Utilising the discourse which marks and intensifies friendship, the taking of food with one another, Robinson makes his friends financially indebted to him as a prelude to asking them to repay him with their witness.

Davy prioritises the arrangements in his narrative, stating that as soon as they entered the house “the said Walter callid for drinck desiring Burton’s wife to lay a cloth in the chamber above for them”.⁹⁶ Implicit in such preparations, and in the careful control of entry to the space, is a sense of purpose, clear intent, and deliberate planning. Unlike those couples who contract marriage in the road, in shops, and in private, Robinson and Baker are shown to have come to the house to find suitable witnesses, and then provided

⁹⁵ X.10.9 f.1, 1562.

⁹⁶ X.10.9 f.5, 1562.

an appropriate space and social context in which to introduce their intentions.⁹⁷ By situating their betrothal at the end of a meal, Davy acknowledges its status as a social event which must be known within the community, but also as a transformation which affects their close friends, and for which the latter's approval is important. It is a celebration, an affirmation of emotive and perhaps financial ties, it is both open (it takes place within an inn), and personal (it moves between the hall and the chamber, with its focus upon the latter).

The laying of the cloth is a very telling detail in this case. It marks the chamber out as a different kind of space, one which is about to be used for a meal rather than to sleep in, and as such it both signals an impending occasion and defines and determines the particular function from the range of those which of the space is capable. Domestic routine is here employed in readying the furniture in the room to create a suitable context for the event, both literally and in terms of its narrative construction. It transforms space (potential social context) into place (located and actualised). The construction of the deposition draws immediate attention to the table as the centre of what is to follow.

The table around which so many contracts take place gives a structure and a hierarchy to the event which is a product of its place within domestic festivities. It organises those who sit around it: possibly socially differentiated by the seating, but nevertheless facing inwards towards each other, forming a more or less coherent and unbroken ring of shared interest; and this presents itself as the perfect metaphor for witness. In many ways such a spatial trope is similar to that of the friends and neighbours who group themselves around the bed of the testator, where the emphasis is upon one individual. Here, however, their gaze is focussed upon one another, and their actions are shown to be totally visible. The importance of the event to all present, its honesty in terms of openness – prominent and unobscured even within a potentially cramped and crowded space – is achieved by and figured in its organisation around a large and significant piece of furniture.

Within the pragmatism of such a formulation lie several tacit assumptions about the nature of involvement. These are demonstrated negatively in the deposition of Henry Harrison of Canterbury, who went to pay a Mrs Lawrence £20 which he owed to her. While he was “busye about the payment and telling of the same money”, two of the men

⁹⁷ See Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, p. 58, for the perceived inappropriateness of contracts made in transitional locations; X.10.4 f.22, 1550, for an example of a contract made on the highway.

who were sitting with him “fell into many owtragious speeches eyther to other”.⁹⁸ The argument comes to a head when “the said Prichard vexed the said Barber soe far that he starte up sodenlie and this deponent stayd him, fearinge that he would have stricken the said Prichard. ‘Nay’ said Barber, ‘let me alone, I meane not to strike him but he vexeth me soe far that I must needs stand up to talk with him’”. The location in which these simultaneous events take place is never explicitly stated, but it is clear that the company are seated. This case demonstrates in the negative both the physical proximity which sitting together is taken to stand for, here registered as a claustrophobic bond of eye contact on the same level, and the metaphorical implications of sharing a space so intimately: the tacit acknowledgement of common purpose, of concord and harmony of intent which coming to sit with someone implies. In terms of the relation of these issues to the act of bearing witness, being seated suggests a willingness to become implicated in the event which is taking place, but also an enduring, physical relationship to it which ensures that every detail is registered.

Sitting is opposed in deposition narratives to the fragmented experience presented by those who ‘come and go’, whose spatial, and hence experiential, connection to the actions in question is not continuous. Johnson’s wife, who laid the cloth in the chamber for Robinson’s contract, was one of those who ‘came and went’, and was therefore at the peripheries of the marriage agreement. Such a spatial relation of other parties to the case is identified by many deponents who are asked who else was present at the time, and it is not restricted to any particular kind of dispute.⁹⁹ Many of those who do not sit down and attend to the event are, of course, women. In houses with servants it is they who provide the items which those involved consume, and who allow the consumers to remain stationary by bringing in the things needed by them. Where there are no servants then the women of the house must perform this task. The higher status accorded to chairs, as opposed to stools, forms, or benches, and their association with the head of the household, can be seen to be related to this issue. With their more deliberate, individual and solid structure, they provide for those who are able to sit for long periods of time, who by definition are in the main men who are important, and hence sedentary, within the household.

⁹⁸ X.11.3 f.178v, 1599.

⁹⁹ See X.10.12 f.185, 1565, for women who fetched victuals while a slander was taking place, and PRC 39.4, f.151, 1568, for a similar relation to the making of a testament. This trope is clearly very useful to those who do not wish to be involved in bearing witness.

In a reworking of the same idea as a comic motif of opposition, a Mrs Robinson, in Sturry church on the Tuesday before Wye fair, says that she has asked her man William “why he came not home to breakfaste, and the saide William saide he coulde have a better breakfaste at his cosyn Bigges than she his dame coulde make hym. For whan the churle her husbände sitteth churlyng by the fyre in a chaire she the saide Bigges wyf will wyncke uppon hym...to come in to the buttrie”.¹⁰⁰ Mr Biggs’ position in his chair by the fire is one of high domestic status. His wife moves about the house carrying on its day-to-day running while he enjoys the more sedentary pursuit here parodied and hence dismissed as ‘churling’. William manages to rework his lower social status (as servant), his comparative marginality within the household (as cousin), and his peripheral claim on the affections of Mrs Biggs (compared to that deserved by her husband), and to turn them into a dichotomy between youthful virility and aged impotence.

Those who do join the focussed circle of attention around the protagonists present themselves as experiencing the event in a very different way. Firstly there is the continuity of their perception, which allows them to make sense of the proceedings as a linear progression towards conclusion. But their spatial experience, represented by the angle of their gaze, must also be considerably altered. As the evidence of the inventories suggested, furniture will be grouped in a room according to its use as units of production. It is logical that stools and chairs in the hall will face tables and fireplaces, and that chests in the chamber will either be placed by the walls or around the bed. As pieces of furniture are placed in relation to one another, rather than littered meaninglessly across the open spaces of the room, so sitting on a chair, or even a chest, orientates one in relation to that room in a particular way: the position from which one views the space and the other objects which fill it is implicit from the start. To sit down in the twentieth-century living room is usually to find oneself looking at the television set, especially if one sits in the chairs habitually occupied by members of the household. To sit in an ‘extra chair’, one only used by visitors, while the television is on might be to view it from the side, to have an imperfect view of it. Such a position has consequences outside its logistical problems: it has implications for status within that room and therefore in other social spaces, and it highlights the relationship between individual and space: it defines ‘belonging’. In the contemporary example it might delineate a relationship between householders and friends, in the early modern period that division can be extended to masters and servants,

¹⁰⁰ X.10.3 f.43v, 1548.

men and women. Gender and status are experienced in these terms, learned not as an explicit set of social relations, but as their practical embodiment in space, gesture and practice. The spatial location from which deponents represent themselves as viewing the proceedings has implications for the relationship in which they wish to cast themselves to them.

3.iii.c. Spatial control

The preceding section has implicitly discussed the relationship between social status and spatial control, something which needs to be considered explicitly. The most conclusive physical manifestations of power over space involve restricting access to it, but the most obvious trope of this kind, the locking of a door, is one which is rarely used. Deponents do not stress the main door of the house in particular as offering a line of defence. When an old woman reports the fact that the sexton of Ash has entered the house of Robert Ford “about 8 of clock at night at Bekettes tyme, her husband being then away from thence, and his wife being in the house”, a group of men meet together to investigate the allegation.¹⁰¹ Two of them “kept the doore of the said Robert Fordes house on the one strete and William Solley and Robert Jervys kept the the dore on tother side of the said house on the garden side”. When both exits were secure, “Mr Henry Seth knocked at the dore on the streate side, whome the goodwife Forde, being within, asked who was there. ‘Mary’, said he, ‘I your land lord am heir’. And she asked what he wold have... [to whom he replied] that he wold com in and see what good rule she kept there”. In this case Seth’s overall ownership of the property carries little weight with Mrs Ford, “she replying said agayn she knew hym for no officer and therefore shuld not com yn ther”. As he is not the borsholder or constable, officials who are legally entitled to have doors opened to them, she is unwilling to allow him access to her house and its contents (at this moment including Thomas Stonard the sexton). It is only the threat of violent destruction which removes the obstacle from Seth’s path: “‘Then’, quod he the said Seeth, ‘I wille offer my self at this tyme or els break up the doore’”. As barrier, the door becomes focus for their competition over jurisdiction and control over the space of the house, opened only after several different types of power (of possession, legal and physical) have been measured against one another.

In the case of inner doors which divide the communal from the personal space of the

¹⁰¹ X.10.15 f.92, 1566.

household, rather than securing the latter against intruders, closing a door is presented as giving less control over the room. It signals the fact that one is seeking privacy rather than physically preventing others from entering. Anna Jones sleeps with Thomas Holt in her chamber “the doore being shut to them”,¹⁰² but this does not stop her maid opening the window. The maid has to weigh the control of the domestic space in her mind. As she knows what is happening, her moral imperative to discover the truth and exhibit it gives her access to the kind of extraordinary practice taken advantage of by those who watched from behind hedges. Weighing against this authority, which only really functions retrospectively (if she is right and if she can prove it) is her mistress’s command over the rooms of her husband’s house, especially in his absence. Her eventual invasion underlines these competing authorities by its partial and temporary nature.

This case, and many others like it (for instance the next one described below), considers a wife’s control over the household in her husband’s absence. This is clearly an important point of contention, as the cases brought suggest that these women felt a security in their ability to control their domestic environment which extended to committing adultery within it. Standing in their husband’s stead, representing his authority in order to ensure the continued smooth running of the domestic routine, they seem to assume that their crimes will go unnoticed. The expectation in these cases is that social status will provide privacy from the gaze, if not the awareness, of others by dissuading them from entering spaces. A three-layered seclusion prevents those of lower status, if not from comprehending actions then from actually seeing them, and if not from seeing them then from broadcasting the information. The distinction between others knowing roughly what happens in one’s intimate domestic spaces and being morally justified in intruding (and so actually seeing one perform those actions) provides a working definition of privacy within a society. The depositions demonstrate the fact that this is not an issue of the construction of spaces, but rather of the hierarchised control which individuals can exercise over them. They also show that a wife’s privacy is wholly dependent upon the nature of her actions, and this defines her domestic authority in a hierarchised relationship to that of her husband. There are no similar cases involving servants disclosing the actions of their masters in this evidence, suggesting that gender is in a complex relationship to social hierarchy.

¹⁰² X.10.8 f.203, 1562.

Control over space also provides a group of metaphors to characterise the nature of particular actions. Robert Marleton, a ‘sojourner’ in the house of Mr and Mrs Osborn, presents his evidence for the woman’s adultery from a position “standing...apon a stayeres out unto the yard” of their house, watching the woman’s movements and those of a Mr Wallop. The latter was walking “up and downe in the ketchin about half an hower” while the former “brought her husband of bedd”, after which time she “cam downe owt of her chamber into the ketchin unto Wallop”.¹⁰³ After sending the maid out for apples, Mrs Osborn sets her candle aside and follows the man into the backhouse where they stay for a quarter of an hour. She then “cam out of the backhouse to the ketchin and tourned her about the candle which she had set by and brusshed her clothes behinde her with her handes”. On Wallop’s return “she went into the hall and he out of the ketchin door, out of the house, and sat a while at the gate”.

This deposition offers no proof of a sexual encounter, but nevertheless it is richly suggestive in its presentation of movement between spaces and of the gestures which accompany such transitions. The narrative is constructed around the relationship between hall, kitchen and bakehouse, the last presumably a detached building in the yard of the house. The tale sets up the outer limits of the house as areas less susceptible to scrutiny, and as spaces which are opposed to the constraints and obligations of family life. The couple use the kitchen as a kind of middle ground where they meet before either leaving together for a more private space, or departing in opposite directions. It is here that the light, simultaneous discoverer of spaces and delineator of the path taken through them, is left behind, and this detail is, of course, highly moralised. As the light is reclaimed by Mrs Osborn to illuminate her way back to her husband’s bed, so she readjusts her clothing. Neatening the back of her skirt seems an eminently liminal gesture of reintegration into the space of the house proper, a perfecting of the self-image and a reorientation towards a different role and new set of expectations.

The woman must have experienced this movement as one from privacy to the potential gaze of others; from darkness into light; from wrongdoing to domestic routine; perhaps from coldness to warmth. Marleton’s organisation of the spatial elements of his tale situate him at an elevation from which he can observe her journey not as a series of consecutive spaces viewed independently, but as a complete itinerary: his moralised

¹⁰³ X.10.12 f.79v, 1564.

relationship to the events in question is one of omniscience. The unbroken vision which the deposition elucidates is suggestive of wrongdoing because it presents a series of actions which are coterminous but not coherent. They suggest her employment of different personas within different spaces.

Marleton's deposition goes on to focus on another event which took place "apon a certayn night whan the godwife Osborn's husband was out of the way".¹⁰⁴ On this occasion Mrs Osborn goes to Wallopp's chamber in the house, where she again stays a quarter of an hour. Marleton does not see the couple at all, although he "hard them speake or swisper together", and he affirms that she once again came "without any light". When Mr Osborn is not at home, then, his wife is seen to use the house as her own, showing her as confident that her spatial control will afford her privacy from intervention in her actions. It is only when he is present that she must move to the peripheries of the house, and this movement has consequences for Marleton, and Spycer his bedfellow, who watches with him on the stairs. In the initial scenario of wrongdoing, both actors and watchers found themselves marginalised within the social space of the house, pushed into inappropriate and unseemly areas which they would not normally occupy for such a purpose. As control over domestic space decreases, then, actions which need to remain unseen are shown as being forced further and further from spatial normality. Space itself becomes a commodity to those with little social independence.

Several of the most common tropes of illicit sexual activity demonstrate the literal and metaphorical meanings of a lack of spatial power. William Harnden is accused in the churchwardens' presentments "that he hath had to do with her that was nawghte and that he had to doo with her apon the steres carnallye", and that he did so four times.¹⁰⁵ Here, the unsuitability of the space signals contingency. It is outside the norm of expected spatial practice within the house just as it is outside the bounds of morality. Like those contracts of marriage which take place on the highway, there is no encompassing room to sanction the action as properly thought through. No right and proper place is available for such actions, the depositions state, as sexuality outside marriage is forbidden, and it is only through marriage that one might hope to gain sufficient control over one's own space to achieve a kind of privacy.

¹⁰⁴ X.10.12 f.80, 1564.

¹⁰⁵ X.8.5 f.96, 1562.

Magdalene Lewis of St Paul's parish in Canterbury, in a case mentioned above, deposed that "about mydd of the harvest tyme and that apon a workynday...this deponent was sitting and spynnyng at her dore situate in Ivy Lane with other her poore neighbours sitting by and spynnyng".¹⁰⁶ Into this honest and hardworking scene bursts Margaret Richardson who says she has come from the fields, "and told this deponent and other there present how that the mornyng of the foresaid workday betwene 6 and 7 she toke Margaret Raven in a hedge comyng owt with a knave in the said Barton feld being Yonges grounde and that she and the said man had plaide the whore and knave together".¹⁰⁷

Helen Joyseman of the same parish says she met Richardson in the market that morning where she tells her that while battering a sheaf of corn which she had taken from the field she saw the couple "the man creping away after and whipping over the hedge, and she going a long the hedge till she cam to the foresaid stile wher she whipped over".¹⁰⁸

In this case, as in the last, there is the association between exigency and an ill rule over the bodily appetites. Whereas the staircase as a location more strongly suggests abandon as it is set within domesticity, the field is allied with animal imagery. In this case the couple run along the hedge and then jump over it. Isabel Valyor's testimony records the cry of Margaret Richardson as she passed Raven's house: "here be privye whores com they leaping in the feld on this fasshion".¹⁰⁹ In the other case cited earlier where the place was revisited by further witnesses, James Mortimer, seeing a woman rise from a dyke by a hedge, said to the man who was walking with him that "theye had started the heare oute of the bushe".¹¹⁰ This euphemism, which makes explicit reference to the chase, the hunt which ends in possession of the quarry which is sexual fulfilment, is linked to their description of the place where the couple had been. Here "the gras was as flat crussed downe as was possible and yn the place rounde aboute the gras and nettles verrye highe and rancke". They had created an animal's den by flattening the vegetation, and yet leaving a screen for themselves which hides them from the road. In Mortimer's description the grass and nettles which remained standing were "as high as a man so as a man, going ynto the same mighte have hidden himself". As he tells it, the prodigious growth of the wild vegetation has colluded with the baser animal instincts of those who

¹⁰⁶ X.10.7 f.110v, 1560.

¹⁰⁷ X.10.7 f.111, 1560.

¹⁰⁸ X.10.7 f.111v, 1560.

¹⁰⁹ X.10.7 f.112v, 1560.

¹¹⁰ X.10.11 f.202v, 1570, see also, for example X.10.6 f.36v, 1551, where the same metaphor is used.

make their 'home' within it by shielding them from the eyes of all but the most morally vigilant.

The staircase and the edge of the road also share a nature as places intended for transition. Pausing on a staircase, as Marelton and Spycer did to watch their hostess in the kitchen with Wallopp, and as Harnden did with the 'woman who was naught', demonstrates not only the ways in which one's activities marginalize one, but also the effect wrongdoing has upon movement. In such passages, where progress and motion are the norm, sin makes immobility necessary. In an inversion of the trope of involvement in the domestic routine employed by Margaret Raven's spinning neighbours, these crimes are presented as an engrossing focus which mitigates against productive occupation. The routines of the house and the town are seen to be disregarded or slowed by the spatial hiatus of a blocking of their arteries. Margaret Waller says that if she were to repeat all the slanderous things which Ursula Baker had said about Sophory Cotton, "the stones in the street would go together by the ears".¹¹¹ The moral outrage, it is suggested, would cause a physical rent in the fabric of the town which would halt the progress of its citizens by denying them passage.

Mortymer and Colsonsack found the couple in the ditch "directelye ageinste the middeste of goodman Poredges barne" in "a deepe deeke under a hedge situate and being between the said greate coorne feelde and the greene cloose where the barne ys".¹¹² The court's need to place the spot accurately prompts the fullness of this description, but its complexity is noteworthy. Margaret Raven was seen in the hedge by the stile, and the parson's wife on the isle of Sheppey, when the borsholder came to search her house, "did then aryse and went not paste 2 or 3 rodde of and then lay downe close under the hege, thinkyng therby that she should not be espied".¹¹³

Ownership and jurisdiction over the land on which the parties are found provides useful information for the purposes of identification, allowing all who hear the deposition to place the actions spatially. Colsonsack's evidence, which identifies the wheat field as lying "from St Dunstans and Harbledowne to a highe waye being hard bye the Stowre runnyng aboute the wall from Westgat warde",¹¹⁴ goes further. He locates the event at the

¹¹¹ PRC 39.9 f.54v, 1579.

¹¹² X.10.11 f.202v, 1570.

¹¹³ PRC 39.8 f.139, 1577.

¹¹⁴ X.10.11 f.203v, 1570.

interstices of parochial jurisdictions; routes which join one place to another; and barriers which demarcate, contain and hence define different areas of town and field. By lying under the hedges and in the ditches these individuals are shown to be seeking a certain level of privacy, but at the same time their exclusion from the land on the other side is stressed. Hedges in particular exist to mark the border, and lying under one emphasises and accentuates this barrier between one piece of ground and another. In another way, however, such a position is perhaps the most truly liminal available, as it involves fitting oneself into a space near the town which nevertheless is not owned. As a border they mark an edge or an abutment, the point at which the land belonging to one person becomes the field of another. They exist to draw attention to spatial change, and to ensure that its boundaries are stable; represented upon a map they might be shown as a change of colour from one ownership to the next, without even a containing line. In other words, no one owns the space underneath the hedge as it is the point of transition, and those pictured as entering it attempt to tuck themselves into the margins, to fold their encounter into the seam between road and field, or between grass and barley.

In the fullest manifestation of the narrative trope of the street which Margaret Richardson's neighbours represent, the walls of houses are like hedges, uniquely and economically marking the point where 'here' becomes 'there', one house becomes the one 'next door'. The points where jurisdiction changes are often shown to be sites of social abrasion where space is both the focus of and the context for dispute. The ongoing variance between the Clintons and their next neighbours in St Paul's parish in Canterbury, the Nowres, has already been seen to focus upon an alleged hole in the door of the latter's shop through which Mrs Nowre was to be heard 'blowing' with Harris the tapster. Her servant John Naylor is woken in the night when Roger Clinton, "standing in his yarde and loking in at a windowe into the parlor of the house of the said Nowre" tells him to get up and fetch his dame out of the shop.¹¹⁵

It is this latter connection, between the Clintons' yard and the Nowres' parlour window, which mediates the next confrontation, this time between the two women. A week after the previous incident, "Joane Clinton articulate stode in her yarde and loked into the house of the sayd Joane Nowre at a windowe". The latter was at the time at supper with some guests in the parlour, but nevertheless carries on a conversation with her neighbour

¹¹⁵ PRC 39.23 f.159, 1599.

through the window: “Joane Nowre said unto the sayd Joane Clinton ‘what meane yow to eaves drope my house’, and Joane Clinton sayd she woulde stande in her owne grounde and loke into the house of the sayd Nowre”. Neither is trespassing, both are legitimately standing on their own property, but it is the direction of Clinton’s gaze which irritates Nowre. Rather than turning her attention in towards her own domestic space, she is looking outwards, penetrating the walls of her neighbour’s house. Her posture is presented as a metaphor for the attention which she pays to Nowre’s business, her intention not to regard but to understand, with a penetrating gaze which does not look on, but through. The incident comes to a climax when “Joane Nowre called for a dishe of water and flownge into the face of the said Joane Clinton”. Perhaps playing on the original meaning of ‘eaves dropping’ as an antisocial intrusion of water onto the property of another, Nowre physically drives Clinton away from their common boundary.¹¹⁶

The borders of the house are problematic because the jurisdiction of its inhabitants technically ends there, despite a perceived area of ‘personal space’ around it which usually prevents others from coming too close. When a wrongdoing has been identified, neighbours are legitimately allowed to look *in*, to use windows and doors intended for egress as a point of access, and to make the domestic public. In the course of the normal routine, however, such unbidden proximity is an unwanted intimacy, and is read as an invasion akin to the twin sexual and spatial meanings of the verb ‘to occupy’. The narrative trope which facilitates moral enlightenment comes into conflict with the spatial elements of a slander case where both parties are eminently visible to one another. This is a problem inherent in the nature of urban space, where the density of housing ensures an intimate and detailed knowledge of the nature and practices of the domestic environment of others.

3.iii.d. Household and community

The final series of tropes to be considered are those which characterise the relationship between events and their context. One of the primary interests of the court is in the ‘visibility’ of events: the size of the audience before which they take place. In the case of handfastings and the making of wills, the intimate ceremony is frowned upon. Witnesses ensure correct practice, and they enable the future representation of the event. By their

¹¹⁶ *OED* “To stand within the ‘eavesdrop’ of a house in order to listen to secrets”, the latter being “the space of ground which is liable to receive the rainwater thrown off by the eaves of a building”. I am

ability to verify the occurrence they ‘make it real’: if it cannot be proved to have happened, then legally speaking it has not taken place.

But events also need witnesses because rites of passage affect families, households, and communities. Those who watch do so as representatives of the social context of the protagonists. They are interested parties who can attest to the performance of the handfasting or the will as a happening which is recognised as having wider significance; as being both personal and communal in its meaning.

To state that a handfasting was conducted outside the house is immediately to cast doubt upon its integrity by suggesting that it was not taken seriously by those involved. These are social rituals, linked to the transfer of property, and as such they are properly situated within the domestic environment. Such a context reinforces their familial importance in the presence of the goods which define identity, and which signify the obligations of lineage and status. But it also ensures that they are controlled and supervised, domesticated by their situation within the routines of the household as well as its rooms, given dignity and form by them.

Within this broad scheme, individual rooms within the house are seen as particularly suitable for certain events. To state the particular domestic space in which an action occurred immediately characterises it as usual or extraordinary, credible or improbable, appropriate or inappropriate.¹¹⁷ Will-making is fittingly said to have been conducted

grateful to Andrew Butcher for this reference.

¹¹⁷ A catalogue of the most common rooms in which the actions investigated by church courts took place restores a sense of the plausibility of the event-space relationships. The quantitative evidence of all depositions in both Archdeaconry and Consistory courts between 1550 and 1580 which locate events in chamber, parlour, or hall show 150 incidents said to have taken place in chambers: 107 stated that the testator was lying in the room in his or her sickness. There were 14 cases of sexual activity, 12 contracts of marriage, 5 discussions surrounding marriage, 3 incidents of people hiding in the room, 2 repetitions, one of the words of slander and one of promises, 2 original slanders, an examination of a witness by the mayor, and the discovery of some stolen goods.

Of the 170 activities in the hall there were 30 cases involving testators, 36 instances of discussions about slander, marriage or legacies. 16 contracts are made there, and 14 wills written; 16 individuals are slandered, and there is one case of fornication, and one other attempted. Other infrequent events include 3 formal examinations by officials, several payments of money and consultations of accounts, 3 repetitions of slander or contracts and some weeping. In general however, deponents situate themselves within the hall at the moment when events take place. 15 deponents were sitting there when ‘something happened’, and a further 11 either came into it shortly before an incident, or identified someone else as doing so. 5 people were working there at the time in question, and the 19 cases of the consumption of food and drink are divided between those arranged to celebrate and confirm the events in the schedule and those interrupted by them.

Of the 96 actions in parlour, 37 testators lie in them, 15 contracts are performed there, 12 wills made, and 10 discussions of proceedings take place. There are 3 instances of slander, 3 of repetition, and one of fornication. There are individual cases of accounts being read, acquittances written, deeds of gift produced.

within the chamber, where the majority of testators, comforted by their worldly goods and soothed by their most opulent furnishings, invite friends and neighbours into a room which they have rarely, if ever, seen. This marks the occasion as extraordinary, and heightens the attention of the witnesses to the details of correct procedure. However, to state that a testament was made in the hall is not to rob it of all dignity, as the testator's position at the centre of communal space, in a room bisected by the routines of the household, defines, perhaps, a more defiant attitude towards death.

Room-names are capable of operating as moralised elements of a narrative because of their relation to a perception of correct use of domestic space. Rooms are seen as suitable for particular events because of their position within the house: nearer to or further from the service areas, more or less penetrable by the outside world; but also because of their status in the household hierarchy: the value of the goods they hold, the status of their furnishings relative to other rooms, the particular kind of furniture which they contain. The meanings which they have in the court will in turn, of course, affect the way in which they are regarded as potential contexts for particular actions in the future. They will further the process of characterising rooms as having distinct functions by identifying them with the fitting conduction of rites of passage, where the meanings of the objects they hold resonate with the significance of the event itself.

Cases which involve the witnessing of wrongdoing operate on a moralised binary between inside and outside. In the case of slander, the relationship between event and context is a part of the formal legal definition of the crime. When Margaret Richardson broadcasts her tale of her neighbour Raven's sin, she does so firstly in the street in which she lives, to those who live close to her, and then in the market, where there are "other countrey folkes about", but also those who "knew her very well".¹¹⁸ She is said to choose her locations carefully in order to achieve the maximum publicity for her tale amongst those whose opinion of Margaret Raven will be altered. It is only by presenting information to those who share a social context (community) that reputations can be affected and honesty increased or diminished: the choice of spatial location and the consequent numbers of witnesses distinguishes the passing insult from the public slander.

books 'exhibited' to resolve contention, consultation of papers, agreement over finances being reached, and the payment of wages. 3 individuals were present in the room when the incident in question took place and 8 deponents enjoyed food or drink there.

¹¹⁸ X.10.7 f.111v, 1560.

The street, because of the way in which houses are organised along its length, provides the perfect arena for those who wish their actions to be as visible as possible within the community. Both those who you can see, and those who use the façade of their house as a barrier through which sensory information filters, can see you as you walk along the street. As narrative context, it provides the apotheosis of visibility: the only place which offers no possible form of privacy. There are two tropes which characterise the nature of event and community simultaneously through their identification of the relationship between house and street, and they are in many ways opposite to one another.

In the first trope, the house is constructed as ‘other’ in relation to the street, and the illusion of a strict division between public and private behaviour is fabricated as a dichotomy with the façade of the house as its dividing line. On either side of this barrier cluster the exclusive pairings: inside and outside, invisible and visible. When Beale and his wife are arguing in the street with Ringer and his wife outside the latter’s shop, Mr and Mrs Beale both call the Ringers cuckold and whore respectively, adding that “if he were a man as he is a cuckold knave, he would then fetch in the said hore his wife”.¹¹⁹ Here there is the double meaning of stopping her running out of control and removing her from the street, from the gaze of those who might be offended by such a sight. The stage-like quality of such a space prioritises it as one perfectly created to ensure maximum visibility, and visibility demands action, it insists upon a reply, upon a progressive dialogue either of verbal insult or social meaning and interpretation.¹²⁰ Spatial control is traded for the moral superiority of peaceful retreat, as participants show themselves prepared to lose the spatial battle in order to win the righteous war. The façade of the house, rather than allowing deponents to see without being seen, it is constructed as a totally separate, non-interactive area. In this scheme, community exists solely in communal spaces, and they are unsuitable for the honest as they present dangers to the reputation. Within the house, relationships can be controlled. In the street one might encounter people with whom one would not normally associate, and the employment of this trope can be seen as a way of drawing attention to the social implications of such a metaphorical clarity of spatial division.

¹¹⁹ X.10.2 f.36v, 1541.

¹²⁰ For this reason the street is seen as an inappropriate place for fighting by Richard Birwell of Canterbury who was struck while sitting on his master’s stall by William Twyne. The former “willed hym to avoide, for that it was not a place to quarel or fight in, nevertheles offering to fight with hym in the feld”, X.10.8 f.5v, 1562. Rather than settling a private quarrel, fighting in the street would cause a public, and hence punishable, disturbance.

The opposing image is one of mutual responsibility and community. Joanna Moyse, a widow of St Alphege parish in Canterbury, locates the slander which took place in her house both physically and temporally. She says that the event happened “about the tyme of the yeare when yt ys said that Queene Elizabeth our sovereign lady began her rayne when ther was rynging in Canterbury yn the house of this deponent within the city of Canterburye in the kitchen there”.¹²¹ The bells which she hears from the inside of her house enable her to relate her experiences to the public events which they announce. She presents sounds as filtering through the permeable membrane of the walls, and uses them to give shape to personal experience through its coincidence with the rhythms of communal life. In this case the external event mentioned is a one-off, but the deponents who relate the death of Gregory Crump to the ringing of the day peal make an explicit connection between the intensely focussed and lengthy process of his death (which has taken up a good deal of the night) and the dawning of a new day – an event which has relevance for all in the community.¹²² Sound is used as a mediator which insists upon a dependence between the personal and the communal by invading the established space of the former with the concerns and preoccupations of the latter.

This has implications for a sense of what is ‘private’. Individuals are not only related to ‘the community’ as an abstract notion of alterity, the nature of the town as a collection of people is insisted upon. Thomasina Bellinger of St Peter’s parish in Canterbury, “hearynge say before that the said John Graves now deceased was very sicke, and this dept beyng in hyr bedde and hearyng the bell of the same parishe knowllyng in the night, supposyng that yt was for the sayd Graves, arose out of hyr bedd and went to the said Graves his howse situate in St Peters aforesayd to vysitt and to comferte him if she were able”.¹²³ Using her detailed knowledge of the wellbeing of her fellow parishioners, Thomasina, along with several other women and the alderman James Nethersole, alter their habitual routine and make their way to the place where they are needed. They make it clear that it is their position within the local community which allows them to interpret the meaning of the bell in the first place, and their reiteration of its tolling in the silence of the night translates such shared knowledge into a narrative of moral imperative. Rupture in the social routine, represented by the unusual spatial positioning of the inhabitants of the parish at such a time, is here constructed positively. The movement of

¹²¹ X.10.14 f.3v, 1571.

¹²² X.10.7 f.20v, 1560.

individuals out of their rightful places demonstrates their unselfish prioritisation of the needs of those outside over their own personal comfort. By presenting the noise of the bell as penetrating the houses of the parish, the spatial interconnection is made clear, and any dichotomous relationship between inside and outside, between personal and communal, is denied. This trope could stand as a metaphor for the moral and social projects of ecclesiastical justice in its attempt to emphasise the connections between the people who go to make up the community.

3.iv. Experiences of space

3.iv.a. Introduction

Having identified the narrative structures used by deponents to shape their personal memories into evidence with a general meaning, it is now necessary to consider what can be said about the actual experience of space. This section attempts to reconstruct the experience of particular spaces as sets of meanings generated by the resonance between event and context. It does so partly to restore a full range of meanings to deposition evidence, and partly to explore more fully the implications of all the evidence so far studied for an understanding of contemporary responses to representations of domestic space. There are two related issues here. Firstly, those who hear the deposition in the court understand considerably more than is actually said. The status of the deponent and the protagonists informs a mental image of the room which is identified for those who hear it represented. This image is informed by an understanding of the effect which social difference has upon the specified domestic space, and upon behaviours within it. The information about rooms delineated in Chapter 2 makes it possible to reconstruct this process of ‘imaginative listening’ as a series of assumptions about the probable nature of the spaces inhabited by different types of individual.

Secondly, it must be borne in mind that, despite the formal similarities of their telling, depositions refer to events which were specific and personal in the memory of their teller. Clearly a complete reconstruction of the particularity of the experience which lies behind that memory is not possible. However, an investigation of an individual’s likely responses to a space and the objects which fill it must be attempted if we are to understand the differences which social status might make to perception. Three cases are

¹²³ PRC 39.7 f.51v, 1574.

therefore treated in detail in order to investigate the way in which the significance of domestic objects is brought out by the actions which take place within a room; the effects of social hierarchies upon the relationship between people; and the way such differences are felt and understood. Testamentary evidence is used here as a proxy for those socio-cultural assumptions about the nature of the private lives of others which define one's own place within social hierarchies. This is intended to provide a synthesis of the sensory and the cultural: what Lefebvre calls the perceived, the conceived, and hence the lived.¹²⁴

Methodologically, this latter task relies heavily upon imaginative reconstruction. It presents probabilities rather than facts, and, while it follows the most likely route of supposition based upon the evidence available, this does necessitate the omission of other possibilities.¹²⁵ However, imaginative reconstruction is also the methodology of the court which hears a deposition: a part of the process of translating the seen and the heard into the understood. This is, of course, the task undertaken by all audiences of representations, including those of the theatre.

3.iv.b. Case studies

1.

On the Friday before St Andrew's day in 1574, James Nethersole, a 58-year-old alderman of the city of Canterbury was lying in his bed at "abowte 10 or 11 of the clocke" in the night, when he "herd the said Joane Graves go up and downe in the streate pitiously lamentyng and monyng, and desyryng certeyne of hyr neighbors to come to hyr husband then beyng very sicke as she sayde".¹²⁶ The main bedroom in the house, presumably Nethersole's bedroom, is the one over the shop, its windows opening onto the street and allowing Joan's cries to be heard.¹²⁷ The standing bedstead in which he lies has a tester and valance and four curtains of red silk around it; inside is a featherbed whose bedding, including a coverlet of tapestry, is worth £3. The total value of the bed in which he sleeps is over £8. From this bed, on a night at the end of November, "hearyng hyr pitious lamentacon and crye", he "requested [his] wyfe to aryse and go to hyr, for that they were

¹²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p. 39.

¹²⁵ See Edward Muir, 'Introduction: Observing Trifles', in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1991, for a discussion of a historical methodology which "balances possibilities against probabilities", and explicates the comparison between the historian and the detective.

¹²⁶ PRC 39.7 f.51v, deposition of James Nethersole; the case continues to f.54.

neighbors, and to comforte hyr the best that she could”.

This she immediately does, leaving the warmth of her bed, drawing back heavy tapestry cloths, pulling aside the silk curtains. She is then faced with a room whose surfaces are almost entirely covered: a little framed table with a dornix carpet on it, a press with a dornix cupboard cloth and a cushion on top. If she goes to the window to look out into the street, she can kneel upon a long needlework window cushion to pull back the curtain which hangs there. There are five other fair needlework cushions in the room and four ordinary ones. One is perhaps on the joined chair by the table, the others may be on the bed. There are only two chests, but one is large and made of wainscot, and between them they contain extra carpets and coverlets. This room is comparatively warm, lined with painted cloths, each surface softened by coloured and patterned fabrics whose texture is the smoothness of silk or the complex roughness of tapestry.

Thomasine Nethersole is followed by her husband, “slyppyng on his night gowne” and descending the stairs. Their chamber stands at the front of a hugely complex house, with two sets of two-storey outbuildings one of which appears to be purely domestic. The main building seems to have a small, heated parlour behind the shop, and a study perhaps next to it. Behind this is the hall, then the kitchen and the entry. Off to one side is a buttery and another hall for the servants to eat in. The Nethersoles’ chamber is as far as possible from the servants’ quarters and the service areas. The couple go down a set of stairs which may come out in the parlour, with its covered stools, fringed cupboard cloths and andirons from Flanders in the fire. Or they may enter the hall, with a green pennistone cloth on the long table, dornix carpet on the little table and three coats of arms on the walls. On one of the tables is a chronicle, a bible of the old translation, and a service book, and, although there is no evidence to this effect, it would be interesting to think that James takes one of the latter with him to such a solemn occasion.

James leaves the house unaccompanied “and, for that the moone dyd then shyne very bright, he went without candle”. The parish of St Peter’s is a small one in the 1570s, so he does not have far to walk. He stresses at every opportunity in his deposition his denial of his own comfort: an alderman walking alone in the night in his indoor attire with only moonlight to guide him. He also emphasises his sense of community: the implicit immediacy of the recognition of Joan’s voice, the innate knowledge of the parish in

¹²⁷ All information about the house is from James Nethersole’s inventory, PRC 10.13 f.116, 1582.

which both families live which enables him to walk unguided. To his own narrative, carefully detailed to image his virtue as Christian and citizen, we must add that which is implicitly communicated to the court. Standing giving his testimony he must have been an impressive figure. His clothing was expensive, highly embellished, and allowed him choice and variety within the narrow range of appropriateness. His best gowns are black, guarded, welted and faced with furs, worth £5, £4 and £3 6s 8d respectively. The impression given by this clothing was bound to lend great weight to the evidence which he gave, his status making truth. It could also be translated by those present, who needed to understand clearly the events of the night in question, into an implicit, unconscious comparison between two spaces: that which the Nethersoles left and that which they subsequently entered.

The depositions do not state the room in which John Graves was lying when his neighbours arrived, but he seems to have had little choice.¹²⁸ His house had a shop, a hall, a bedchamber and a backhouse. Nethersole enters through the shop, then, seeing his way by the light of the moon outside. There is a spinning wheel there, three books, some instruments, and a painted cloth on the wall. This latter has an “ottemaye” upon it, and, although the word is obscure, the most likely derivation is “otamy”, a corrupt form of “atomy” meaning a skeletal figure.¹²⁹ The explanation is made considerably more likely by Graves’ occupation as a barber surgeon. In the context of this event the practical tools of his craft become a *memento mori* for the man who enters the shop, demanding comparisons between the furnishings of the room and the body of their owner.

The hall behind the shop is not at all bare. There is a cupboard with a cloth on it, a table with seating and cushions, another small square table, some storage equipment, and some painted cloths. Whereas Nethersole’s hall cushions were worth 26s 4d, however, Graves’, valued with other items, are only worth 4d. In fact, paradoxically, it is the amount of furniture which the hall contains which must make Nethersole feel the difference in their wealth most palpably. There is no bed here, but the two coffers and a chest, all old, characterise Graves’ house as one where necessity ensures that spaces have a variety of functions.

¹²⁸ All information about the house is from John Graves’ inventory, PRC 10.8 f.95v, undated.

¹²⁹ *OED*, first recorded meaning as skeleton is from 18th century, but 2 *Henry IV*, V, iv, 33 (“Thou atomy, thou”) refers to an emaciated, skeletal man.

Moving from the hall, Nethersole must be aware that he is approaching the room where the wealth of the house is kept. When he enters the chamber it is dark, candles throwing the edges of the room into shadow, and he must take in the spatial and personal dynamics quickly, as it is unlikely that he has been into this room before. It is crowded: he “founde then and there with the sayd testator, Adryn Graves the testator’s sonne, and others whome he dothe not remember”. One of the others was Thomasine Bellinger, 40 year old wife of Richard of the parish, who had risen out of her bed “hearyng the bell of the same parishe knowllyng in the night”, and “hearynge say before that the said John Graves...was very sicke”, and putting two and two together. Katherine Williams, 48 year old wife of Thomas, was also there, having arrived “beyn hyr neighbor to visitt and comferte hym”, as was Nethersole’s servant Agnes, only 20, who refers to him as her uncle, and, of course, both his and Graves’ wife. The group is large for a room not designed to house many people, so all are enforced into spatial intimacy.

There are three featherbeds and a flockbed in Graves’ chamber, suggesting that the whole household slept there. But none of them are curtained, so the view of the dying man is clear and unframed. He is surrounded by his worldly goods, such as they are, in three chests: one contains his clothing, worth 19s, another his valuables: 6 silver spoons, his best silver instruments and a gold ring, worth £2 1s, and the last his household linen: a cupboard cloth and two tablecloths, 5s and 6s 8d respectively. The only other items in this room are some bedding, and an old carpet, which must also be on his bed. Those present might be seated on the chests which contain the items he is about to divide, cold and hard, but filled with materials; or they might sit on the bed, on the 10s-worth of sheets and covers, old, worn and coarse, the whole apparatus worth under £1. They will be close to their neighbours, perhaps touching each others’ clothing.

Thomasine “had skarse beene there half a quarter of an hower but Mr James Nethersole came in unawares to this dept and stoode behynde hyr before she knewe it”. She must be familiar, culturally or personally, with the situation in which she finds herself: a man is dying in a room befitting such an event, perhaps in a similar situation to that in which her father died, in which her husband one day would.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, she is clearly unsettled by Nethersole’s arrival. His presence is strongly felt by her, as his wife’s is not, and whereas he does not remember the names of the women present, they all know who he is.

¹³⁰ See her inventory as widow, PRC 10.27 f.70, 1598.

The arrival of his wife as one of the comforters increases expectation of his own entrance, self-consciously staged and redolent of increased importance. Standing in the doorway as someone fetches him a chair from the hall, his nightgown must have been the costliest piece of fabric anywhere in the house, of a quality not possessed by those gathered around the bed, perhaps never even touched by them. Perhaps, in such close confines, he even smells different.

Although they recognise him, this is not a personal recognition. Their knowledge of him divides rather than joins them, built as it is upon his radical otherness economically, socially, physically, experientially, in terms of his gender, and in terms of the power and authority which he wields in their community. His physical proximity to them at this moment only serves to underline his distance in every other sense. As they look at one another they might appreciate a subtle diversity of status. Their wealth may range from the £2 15s 10d which Thomasine died in possession of, through the £8 15s 8d which Graves' household goods are worth, up as high even as £50. As they look at Graves' bed, they may feel the novelty of his carpet as a paucity in their own provisions, or they may feel themselves slightly precocious in their possession of a boughton coverlet, newer perhaps and therefore brighter. Their physical proximity to one another in the context of Graves' goods forces an acknowledgement of relative social positions. Each single object means differently to each of them as a result of the process of comparison, because comparison brings together the physical and the cultural, the particular and the general, the sensory and the mnemonic, the present and the past, the concrete and the imagined, dreamed, desired, feared, in order to make meaning.

As Nethersole looks at them he knows them too, but in very general terms: they are all his inferiors, and he may not be aware of any difference in their standard of living, even the quality of their clothing. The chair which is brought for him as the highest-status seating in the house, will seem hard, poorly crafted and cheap.

Apart from Adrian the testator's son, then, Nethersole is the only man present at the deathbed. His suggestion that his wife go first indicates his awareness of the gendered divisions between constant ministrations and occasional intervention.¹³¹ Nethersole exercises his power in this room through the division between the social actor and his

¹³¹ See, for a wider assessment of such differences, Elizabeth A. Hallam, 'Turning the hourglass: gender relations at the deathbed in early modern Canterbury', in *Mortality*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1996, pp. 61-82.

audience. He asks Graves who he will leave his goods to; he reminds him “yow have here apooore daughter of yours my neighbour Flecton, who hath children, what shall she have[?]”. His presentation of himself is as the consummate professional, clarifying whether or not she is his only daughter, asking him which particular gifts she should have. The only specific gifts which Graves gives are a George noble and a silver spoon, to daughter and granddaughter respectively. His wife receives the residue of his estate.

Nethersole’s final intervention is to say “herre is your sonne Adryan, what say yow to hym?”. And the said testator, castyng hys eye over his shoulder towards his sayd sonne Adryan answered and sayd, ‘he hath enoughe’”. In this chamber, which contains the majority of the items of value in the house, those who gather around his bed are taken through the ritual of bequeathal swiftly, consummately, by a man socially superior to them, who, despite the fact that he must view the goods to be divided as almost worthless, understands the need to divide them with equity. As the narrative of Graves’ wishes unfolds, his neighbours see the dying man more clearly, know him more particularly that they have ever done. But the meanings of the objects which defined him change in the instant that they are named. By devolving his property, Graves passes authority over to his wife, and those objects which she had habitually employed in the daily routines of the house now become her own possessions. Through the divisions of death, connections alter as individuals become richer or poorer in relation to one another. His son, who gets nothing, is invited to compare the value of those objects which fill the room to that which he has already been given, to contrast his own status, set up in the world, it is implied, by money from his father, to that represented by what he can touch, see and smell within his father’s house.

Nethersole takes those present upon the narrative journey from unreadiness to preparation. He may well already have written his own will, and it might be at home in his study. This room with lock and key, along with the stricter division between service and living areas in his house, allowed him the mental space to plan his life more carefully by creating time set aside to focus upon and to design the future. His wealth afforded him the time for contemplation, and his status gave him the experience to take command of Graves’ situation, to know exactly which questions to ask. The contrasting lack of forward planning is painfully felt in Joan’s uncontrolled emotion in the public space of the street, and Nethersole presents himself as giving back to Graves a more dignified

control over his death.

Those present remember the alderman's actions clearly. As the audience must attend to the details of the scene, knowing that legally its efficacy may be called into question, so it is upon him that they must look. Nethersole's status, which allows him to control the entire event, to generate it and to shape it, naturally leads to a focus on his person. Only he and Graves speak, the others attend silently to the words and the gestures of the men. His presence, imposing because high-status and yet physically close, combined with the centrality of role which this gives him, shifts the focus of the depositions in this case from the deathbed occupant to the person who structures his wishes. The event, for some witnesses at least, has been the making of Graves' will, explicitly mediated through the sharing of a chamber with James Nethersole.

2.

William White, Sergeant at Mace, was in the hall of Mr Richardson the mayor of Sandwich on a working day, where a man called Stephen Ruck was "standing by the table there having Elizabeth Richardson, daughter of the said Mr Richardson, in his armes and playeng with her upon the said table".¹³² Ruck says "This is she that shalbe mine heire of all my goods if Mattheve my sonne die", to which Elizabeth's mother replies that it is just a jest. Ruck denies this and, 5 or 6 weeks later when his son does die, he repeats his words.

Francis Bartholomew, Richardson's servant, says that the incident took place at about 9 or 10 in the morning, and that Richardson, "standing by, bade them that were present beare witnes, for said he, as unlikely as it is [that both father and son should die] it may come so to passe".¹³³ Bartholomew adds Mrs Richardson's words that if Ruck died he "had many kinsfolke that would looke for his goodes", but "the said Rucke answered sayeng that none of his kinsfolke should fare the better for him, for he fared not the better for any of them".

Stephen Ruck lived with the Richardsons at the time of the incident in question. He was a jurat of the town from 1577 until his death in 1595, and mayor himself in 1584.¹³⁴

¹³² PRC 39.18 ff.223v-225, 1596.

¹³³ PRC 39.18 ff.226v-229, 1596.

¹³⁴ See Ollerenshaw, 'Civic Elite of Sandwich', p. 223; PRC 10.13.240v, 1584, where he is given the title mayor when he organises the making of an inventory.

However, it was kin obligations rather than their office-holding connections which tied the two men together most firmly. Their wives were sisters, and it was in consideration of this link that Ruck was invited to live with the Richardsons when his own wife dies.¹³⁵ Elizabeth Brayne, Ruck's servant, describes the move which took place: "so soone as his wife was dead he and his sonne and this deponent came the same night that his wife died to sojourne and dwell with the said Mr Richardson".¹³⁶ Ruck's son, whom he calls Matt, was suffering from the 'yellow jaundice', and Brayne continues the emotive language in which this case is conducted by stating that she "hath heard him say weeping that if the said Mr Richardson and his wife had not enterteyned him in their house he could not have told what he should have done by his child it was so sickly".

The hall is, logistically and symbolically, the ideal situation for Ruck's decision about his possessions. In addition to Richardson's own family, the house holds his mother-in-law, presumably attended, and his brother-in-law, his nephew and their maid. Two other households, fragmented into dependency by death, operate in greater or lesser autonomy under his roof. The hall as communal space which they all share, where meals are taken, reminds them of their collective bonds and the debt of gratitude which they owe to the householder.

This is a case which investigates the relative strength of familial and affective bonds, and the deponents who favour Richardson's claim stress the depth of Ruck's appreciation, and the breadth of his love for the infant whom he calls Bess: "for he loved her so well as that he would have her about him almost continually and made so much of her as that she would seldome be from him when he was in the house".¹³⁷ Following the death of his wife, kept in mind of the future by the deteriorating health of his son, Ruck clings to this child in order to alleviate his grief with her constant presence. Domestic space, especially for high-status families, is expected to provide the physical solace of constancy in adversity. Because of his son, however, Ruck has had to move, and the sense of belonging, of the house as concentration of the memory of events into spaces which makes identity concrete and tangible, has evaporated.

The proposed gift can be seen as a strengthening of those ties of affection built upon a

¹³⁵ They are the daughters of William Reede of Folkestone.

¹³⁶ PRC 39.18, ff.234v-236v, 1596.

¹³⁷ PRC 39.18 f.228, 1596.

tenuous kinship. Ruck offers to join his household more permanently with his host's in the future, and in doing so secures a stake in the space he inhabits in the present. He transforms the house into a home by mimicking the devolution of possessions from father to daughter, making the family his own. As he utters his promise, so the meanings of the hall change. In 1590, 5 years before this incident, Nicholas Richardson's cousin William, also jurat and mayor, had died childless. Wishing his nearest kin to 'fair the better' as Ruck did not, William gave the majority of his estate to his cousin, and the reversion of his wife's portion to Nicholas's son William, the testator's godson.

At his death, William's hall was decorated with 10 maps and the arms of the lord chief baron of the Cinque Ports, and over £6 worth of armour. There were two larger tables with frames and a smaller folding one with numerous stools and their cushions, and he owned a bible and other books which he kept in the room. Some of this furniture may well have been in the hall in which the men sat with the 3-year-old Bess, and even if it had been sold, the direct benefits of such a bequest would be seen and felt in the increased resources of the household. In any case, at Nicholas's own death, his moveable goods were worth £725 7s 11d.¹³⁸ William the younger was adequately provided for, and the complex twists of fate appeared about to ensure Richardson's daughter's future.

An inventory survives for Ruck's goods, divided by room. If these were kept in the house in which he was living, then they too would have been visible as he made his promise. As he spoke, these items would take on a new significance for those present, at once explicitly viewed as his, and considered as Bess's in the future. In the hall are listed 2 chests and a little cupboard, a table and 4 stools, 3 small chairs, a carpet and 17 cushions.

Ruck owned considerably fewer items than William Richardson, perhaps because his estate was smaller, perhaps necessitated by his move, but many of them are very valuable. He has £16 10s worth of silver and jewellery, in contrast to Richardson's £48 12s, but Ruck's best bed is priced at £11 15s, Richardson's at only £6. The bed must have been a source of pride to Ruck – his most valuable and therefore perhaps newest possession. It may also, of course, have been associated with loss, as it is now only he who sleeps in it. Although the men recognised a parity of office-holding status reinforced

¹³⁸ The probate account of Nicholas Richardson, produced by William his son, is dated 1616, and originally had an inventory attached, now lost, from which the total is taken. His wealth after his debts paid is valued at £1100 13s 6d; PRC 2.19 f.82.

by kinship ties, they must also have been aware of subtle distinctions between their positions, as objectified in their possessions. For them, the two beds would be instantly calculable and translatable back into the resources which provided them, although this information might be so highly codified that only men socially so similar would be aware of the differences. The hall, as a room in which objects are explicitly displayed and which is seen by all within the house and many from without, particularly invites such comparison. Lefebvre's insight that "any space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships"¹³⁹ can be seen to function through the goods with which it is filled, and to be made more or less explicit by the manner of their arrangement.

Elizabeth Brayne, Ruck's servant, remembers her master's words as being spoken "ether about dinner time or supper time which she doth not justly remember for she had taken up the cloth from the table a litle before as she remembreth".¹⁴⁰ She, like Mrs Richardson, who is 'coming through the hall' as the event takes place, views it in passing. This is not a self-conscious ritual like the death-bed testament, its focus is much less intense, and, even for the participants, it takes place at the interstices of domestic routines. The hall as a room makes this inevitable, and Richardson's comment about the likelihood of the bequest coming to pass is made poignant by the contrast between Ruck, seated at the meal table, and his jaundiced son, "sate in a chaire in the said hall very sicke and like to die".¹⁴¹ The latter is peripheral to the continuing processes of domesticity generated by and sustaining of life.

Laying the table, Elizabeth handles the rich carpet, unfolds the diaper cloths, and places the pewter dishes on top of them. In her parents' house, the comparable routine would have been shorter and much less elaborate. Here she is involved in such comparative splendour, but only in order to construct a fitting space for the meal, and to ready it for other purposes afterwards. Mrs Richardson may sit down at it to eat, but Elizabeth may not join their focus around the table, she must stand above them, and hear only snatches of their conversations as she moves about the room and to and from the kitchen.

Nevertheless, this is her house. At the time of her testimony she is still living there, despite the death of her charge and his father. She "loketh to the goodes that were her

¹³⁹ Lefebvre, Henri *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p. 82.

¹⁴⁰ PRC 39.18 f.236, 1596.

¹⁴¹ PRC 39.18 f.224, 1596.

said master's" and "stayeth (she sayth) to see who shall have the same godes that she might be payd her wages which is behinde onpayd".¹⁴² Left in the house as a relic of the disjunctures of three deaths, she orients herself to all that is left of the family she served: their possessions in the house of another. For her, the event had meaning because Ruck's wealth was her means of sustenance: it facilitated her position within the house in his life, and legitimated it after his death. The physical difference of her perspective upon his 'will' is intimately linked to the difference in the meaning of the objects concerned for her, and her position within the house and within society is defined by her relation to them.

3.

The testimony which Anna Jones of St Margaret at Cliffe gives is unique because she changes her story half way through. Initially she says that "in the first week in Lent last Thomas Holt...cam to this deponent's house, her husband being absent, into her chamber being an under chamber in thafternone, and there tooke her in his armes and cast her upon the bed provoking her to his filthy lust of the fleshe".¹⁴³ Her construction of the event, especially her use of the language of moral outrage, presents this as a one-off attempt at rape which fails: "she did not commit any carnall act with hym".

Her next recorded comment is that "[Holt] wold spend xx markes rather than her husband should put her away for any thing he did", and perhaps this thought upsets her. It implies both social expulsion as a woman rejected by her husband, and physical exclusion from the comfort and shelter of her home. There is no record of what happens next, merely a break, her testimony recommencing with the confession that "sithens and daily the said Holt hath com to this deponent in thabsence of her husband and the doore being shut to them". She subsequently identifies their actions behind the door more explicitly, stating that "the tyme in Lent before rehersed [they] had carnall knowledge to githers of their bodies".

No inventory survives for John Jones, but we can reconstruct a generic one from the data considered for rural parishes.¹⁴⁴ The only things we know about this house specifically are that it has a lower chamber and a maid, as it is she, Ms Philip, who "did open the

¹⁴² PRC 39.18 f.236v, 1596.

¹⁴³ X.10.8 f.203, 1562.

¹⁴⁴ See above pp. 36-46, and Appendix 3.

wyndow of the chamber and saw her and hym to gither upon the bedd, saying, ‘what Holt, are ye heare?’, and so went a way”. Philip’s presence in the house suggests a domestic unit at least in the middle part of the band of inventories valued at under £50. When she looks through the window, she probably sees the couple on a featherbed, but not one with curtains. It may even be that the trucklebed on which she herself sleeps is pushed underneath it. There are bound to be several chests in the room, perhaps at the foot of the bed, with her master and mistress’s clothes in them, the linen with which she decks the house on special occasions, and perhaps some pewter. Perhaps her master’s armour and weapons will be in the corner, and there may even be a spinning wheel there too. Apart from a painted cloth on the wall there would be little else.

The chests which the chamber contains represent the majority of the household’s stored worth, its most precious treasures. Anna’s dowry will be within them, as will the objects which John was bequeathed by his parents. The bed itself may have been given to one of them by a member of their family; it would certainly symbolise their coming together in marriage: the first bed in which they slept as husband and wife, the place where any children they might have were conceived and born. The combination of the goods of husband and wife within the same chest and their placing within the chamber, at the foot of the bed, identifies this room above all others with their relationship and elucidates that relationship as productive of the household, as its centre and fulcrum.

For Anna to have sex with this man in this place is dangerous as they are much more likely to be discovered here than, for instance, in the fields. It makes palpable the way in which domestic routines tie women to the house, circumscribing their movement and limiting their privacy to interstitial moments. But it is also to invite an outsider into the space which, as the least permeable room, contains stored goods; because those who lie in the bed are supposed to be the proper guardians of those items. There is a radical disjuncture between event and space, the one threatening the meaning and significance of the other.

As the event puts in jeopardy the coherence of the meanings of all the objects within the chamber, so it threatens the structure of the house itself. Spaces become out of bounds as the door is closed, there are secrets and suppressions between the inhabitants, and the integrity of the house is fractured. The stability of Philip’s position within the family is therefore in danger, as it is the couple-as-house whom she serves. Philip does not,

presumably, want to see. Had this been her intention she would have entered through the door, or opened the window quietly and stood there watching. She wants them to know that she is aware of what they are doing, that she has imagined it. Such imagining unpleasantly combines the familiar with the abnormal: her mistress lying on her bed, but with another man; the chamber occupied, but in the day, the door closed. As Anna eventually confesses that this has happened frequently, we must assume that Philip has spent some time imagining before intervening. She is creative in gaining access, and her visualisation of the event can be seen to be vital: the window becomes a device of transition from imagination to proof, one which legitimises a judicial intervention. Its physical nature as frame encourages assessment, the interpretative gaze which redefines intimately known spaces in the light of new actions, and turns their altered meanings back onto the protagonists. The meaning of Anna's crime is more than sexual incontinence, it is infidelity in her husband's bedchamber.

This final section has been about the experiential differences which are a product of social status. It has considered the physical differences which this engenders in individuals' domestic environments and the distinct attitudes which this produces towards objects, spaces, and situations. It has also touched upon an individual's perception of the conditions of others within her or his society: the way that keen distinctions are made between those close in status, while broader, looser categories are used to comprehend an individual's social relationship to those socially distant to them. It is this kind of information about the way that individuals relate to one another in stratified societies that sixteenth-century men and women take with them when they enter the theatre to watch a play.

Chapter 4: Dramatisations of Space

4.i. Introduction

“The presence and circulation of a representation...tells us nothing about what it is for its users.” Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xiii.

This chapter relates interpretations of the testamentary and legal evidence from Chapters 2 and 3 to the domestic tragedies which flourished on the commercial stage in the 1590s and the first decade of the seventeenth century. The preceding chapters have presented evidence of qualitative distinctions between the domestic experience of those in different social positions. This chapter works from the premise that distinct experiences alter the manner in which audience members interpret representations. It considers how social differences might produce particularly disparate perceptions of plays about domestic issues.

This study does not attempt a rigid definition of the genre of domestic tragedy because it does not seek, as many other critical accounts of the genre have done, to include or exclude plays on the basis of their relationship to particular groups of political or religious texts.¹ As its purpose is a consideration of the effect which a knowledge of contemporary domestic practice would have had upon an audience member's understanding of the drama, the readings which it offers of particular plays are intended to be suggestive rather than prescriptive. The altered interpretations which the first chapters of this thesis make possible have a greater or lesser bearing upon *any* play which represents a domestic scene. The texts which are discussed below are therefore those whose interpretation is likely to be altered most significantly by contemporary understanding: those which explicitly appeal to the experience of the domestic.

The main focus of this discussion is upon *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (1603), *Arden of Faversham* (c.1588-92), *A Warning for Fair Women* (c. 1596-1600), and the English narrative of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (c. 1594-8), although reference is also made to *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1605).² These plays are unashamedly chosen for the novelty of their

¹ See below for summaries of representative arguments.

² All subsequent references to these plays are from Thomas Heywood *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, ed., Brian Scobie, New Mermaid Edition, London: A&C Black, 1985; *A Warning for Fair Women*, ed., Charles Dale Cannon, The Hague: Mouton, 1975; *Arden of Faversham*, ed., M.L.Wine, Revels Edition, London:

presentation of the domestic, in order to expand as far as possible the significances of an approach which considers attitudes to house and household.

Attempts at generic definition are important, however, in order to elucidate the range of contemporary preoccupations which occasioned such a novel dramatic form. Henry Hitch Adams, in the first full-length treatment of the genre of domestic tragedy, which treats the homiletic intention behind the texts, defines the central characteristic shared by them all as a departure from Aristotelean definitions of the tragic as involving the actions of kings and princes.³ He takes domestic to mean both “any phase of family life” and “familiar, local”, summing up thus: “It is a tragedy of common people, ordinarily set in the domestic scene, dealing with personal and family relationships rather than with large affairs of state, presented in a realistic fashion, and ending in a tragic or otherwise serious manner”.⁴ Frances Dolan, in a book about different kinds of representation of domestic crime, considers only those texts based upon local historical events, as her discussion is delimited by her interest in the pamphlet literature which provided the sources for them. Keith Sturges, in his edition of three domestic tragedies, calls the group of plays “well-defined”, and describes them as “attempting to portray the unheroic crimes and passions of ordinary life”.⁵ He admits two plays by Heywood (*A Woman Killed With Kindness* and *The English Traveller*) to an otherwise homogenous group of historically-based plots which end in a murder, because, he says, they share a focus on domestic detail which aims at what he calls a “journalistic treatment”. These critics, then, stress the plays’ appeal to a sense of the contemporary, the shocking, and the local.

Lena Orlin and Viviana Comensoli both stress the novelty of the generic form, and the self-conscious way in which many of the texts set themselves apart from “classical or aristocratic models”.⁶ Comensoli invariably defines the genre negatively, seeing its

Methuen, 1973; Robert Yarrington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Students’ Facsimile Edition 153, Amersham: John S. Farmer, 1913; and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, in *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies*, ed., Keith Sturges, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

³ Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy 1575-1642*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1943, (reissued Benjamin Blom Inc., 1965), pp. 1-5, hereafter *Homiletic*, hence his use of the word ‘domestic’.

⁴ Adams, *Homiletic*, pp. 1-2.

⁵ Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars, Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, hereafter *Dangerous Familiars*; Keith Sturges, *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p. 7.

⁶ Viviana Comensoli, *Household Business, Domestic Plays of Early Modern England*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 3, hereafter *Household Business*; Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 12, hereafter *Private Matters*.

differences from medieval representations of the domestic unit as highlighting its “interest in the ideology of private life”; and its adoption of the household rather than the city as its “fulcrum” as separating it from citizen comedies.⁷ Her consideration of early seventeenth-century ‘domestic comedies’ which also interrogate the dynamics of family life reveals the family itself as her overarching criterion for inclusion. Lena Orlin’s rule for incorporating texts into her analysis has to be flexible enough to encompass her critique of *Othello* in addition to those plays more traditionally associated with the genre. She puts what are perhaps the furthest possible limits upon the term domestic tragedy, therefore, by describing it as a genre which concerns “property owners”.⁸

I see the plays which appeal most strongly to notions of domesticity as sharing most of the distinguishing features described by other studies: they have a homiletic purpose; they are self-consciously innovative, both in their concern with the contemporary and the heinous, and in the way they present them; they investigate family ties and the relationship between household identity and property. My reading investigates the manner in which such concepts might have been understood by a contemporary audience, given the ideological apparatus with which they had to work. My analysis of the visual and rhetorical information which the plays communicate identifies a focus upon the interdependence of household and community. For example, *A Woman Killed With Kindness* and *Arden of Feversham* draw most heavily upon notions of the relationship between the house as structure and the household as a collection of individuals, and for this reason their representation of domestic interiors is the most striking. Alternatively, *A Warning For Fair Women* and *Two Lamentable Tragedies* view the house from the outside. Their concern is with the relationship between the personal and the communal, and both demonstrate particularly urban anxieties in connection with these.

The immediacy of these plays, the production of three of them shortly after the judicial conclusion to the events which they represent, and their portrayal of recognisable situations, stress the importance of the particular set of historical circumstances by which they were informed. Their grouping in two decades indicates that their specific concerns, or at least their status as response to them, dissolved in the 1620s. In order to position the preoccupations and intentions of the plays in relation to their particular social and economic context, then, it is important to review the main social and economic

⁷ Comensoli, *Household Business*, pp. 7, 16.

developments of the period in which domestic tragedy emerges.

Various historians have located several fundamental changes in the composition of society in the second half of the sixteenth century. The sale of monastic lands in the wake of the Reformation, to increase crown revenue in the 40s and 50s, and then again to finance the foreign wars of the 60s and 80s, fundamentally altered traditional attitudes to the sale of land.⁹ Although “the main buyers were the local gentry seizing the opportunity to round out or extend their inherited estates”, the sale of such vast amounts of land stimulated an estate market which must have had ramifications further down the social scale.¹⁰ Whatever the realities of the situation, popular perception, evinced by the various accounts of Thomas Arden’s change of fortunes through the purchase of Faversham Abbey estates, was certainly that monastic property offered the possibility of social advancement.¹¹

Such changes in land ownership could cause confusion in the evaluation of social status. Keith Wrightson points out that rank and degree were hard to define,

for they were *compound* qualities which might involve birth, inherited or conferred title, wealth and the nature of that wealth, occupation, mode of land tenure, legal status, lifestyle and tenure of positions of authority.¹²

Alteration of any of the criteria could make identification of an individual’s status difficult. Wrightson also demonstrates that economic change altered the whole structure on which society was based: “the pressures and opportunities of the period also produced a quickened pace of both upward and downward social mobility, leading over time to a

⁸ Orlin, *Private Matters*, pp. 250, 8-9.

⁹ C.G.A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700, Volume II*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 262-3, hereafter *Economic Expansion*.

¹⁰ Clay, *Economic Expansion Volume I*, p. 146.

¹¹ See Lena Cowen Orlin, ‘Man’s House as His Castle in *Arden of Faversham*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 2, 1985, p. 57, hereafter ‘Castle’, for details of these representations of the story. A considerable amount of criticism has been generated by the idea (which the play itself denies in its opening passages) of Arden as a ‘new man’; see John M. Breen, ‘The Carnival Body in *Arden of Faversham*’, in *Cahiers Elizabethians* Vol. 45, April 1994, pp. 13-20; Garrett A. Sullivan, “‘Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground’: surveying, land, and *Arden of Faversham*’, *English Literary History*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 1994, pp. 231-252; and James R. Keller, ‘Arden’s Land Acquisitions and the Dissolution of the Monasteries’, *English Language Notes*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1993, pp. 20-24.

¹² Keith Wrightson, ‘The Social Order of Early Modern England’, in Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith and Keith Wrightson eds., *The World We Have Gained, Histories of Population and Social Structure*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, p. 180.

significant modification of the profile of stratification in English society".¹³ There was, he says, "both an expansion of the 'pseudo-gentry' and a growing occupational complexity among the 'middling sort'". While the experiences of the richest and the poorest members of society diverged, a large middling group became increasingly isolated from both.¹⁴ William Harrison's often-quoted description of the improving living conditions of the majority of Englishmen should be seen as the contemporary perception of the beginnings of such rapid changes.¹⁵

David Underdown has situated the origins of capitalism in this period. He sees the latter half of the sixteenth century as characterised by the spread of a mode of production divorced from the household's inward-focussed labours, and giving rise, through an increasing individualism, to a "decline in the habits of good neighbourhood and social harmony".¹⁶ Within the household, he sees labour for the production of goods giving way to consumption of purchased items from both near and far. Other historians who have followed his approach have related two large conceptual shifts to this change in domestic practise. The acquisition of goods from external sources, combined with increased spending power in some sectors of society, is taken to stimulate the desire for more goods. Chandra Mukerji, for instance, has situated the emergence of consumerist tendencies at the end of the sixteenth century, stating that both the rich and the poor in this period "gave themselves luxuries that went beyond either need or investment".¹⁷ Changes in the physical composition of the household have been noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and, although I would not go so far as to see them in terms of a nascent consumer culture, there can be no doubt that increased numbers of possessions must affect the perceived significance of personal property.

The role of the wife within the household is seen to have changed as a consequence of different attitudes towards possessions. Once a "skilled producer", her function is said to have altered until she became a "savvy consumer" who could buy more cheaply those

¹³ Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680*, London: Hutchinson, 1982, p. 140; for a detailed account of social change in the period, see chs. 5-7.

¹⁴ Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 140.

¹⁵ William Harrison, *Description of England*, Georges Edelen ed., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968, esp. pp. 195-204.

¹⁶ David Underdown, 'The taming of the scold: the enforcement of patriarchal authority in early modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 126, hereafter 'The taming of the scold'.

¹⁷ Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images, patterns of modern materialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, New York, 1983, p. 5.

items which she had previously produced herself.¹⁸ Underdown views the increased independence which women gained through their dealings in the marketplace as straining the relations between the sexes, traditionally clearly hierarchised and therefore peaceful. For him, this change lies at the heart of the preoccupation, which he sees reaching a peak between 1560 and 1660, with “scolding women”, and which Dolan terms a crisis of order “focussing on gender relations”.¹⁹ The evidence for this ‘crisis’ comes from an undoubted growth in church court prosecutions of women for scolding.

An increase in business seen in all church courts from the 1580s was noted in the previous chapter, and Susan Amussen and Laura Gowing put a convincing case for a notion of credit and honesty which was defined by women’s sexual continence.²⁰ As a concern with local order, which was focussed upon the moral control of women, Margaret Spufford sees this expansion of legal activity as a result of the “stricter moral code of behaviour” imposed upon communities by the Puritan governing body who controlled them. Although this emphasis has been considered, both by contemporaries and historians, to be a feature of the moral rigor of the doctrine, Spufford points out its historical links to similar periods of population increase and agricultural dearth in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, suggesting that moral vigour is a persistent feature of periods of social and economic crisis.²¹

In the sixteenth century, there were several key factors in a sense of social and economic insecurity. Poor harvests in the 1590s, for instance, led to problems of food supply and consequent starvation which caused food riots.²² After the victory of 1588 over the Spanish, over a decade of sustained military activity, at first in France and after 1595 in response to the Irish rebellion, also brought considerable costs in terms of men and the taxation which was levied in order to finance the campaigns.²³ Shortages of all kinds instigated a migration into towns. Although the national population did not even double between 1550 and 1700, the amount of people living in its capital city quadrupled from 120,000 to 490,000, as harsh economic factors led the poor to migrate to urban areas in

¹⁸ Natasha Korda, “Household Kates: Domesticating Commodities in *The Taming of the Shrew*”, in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 47, Summer 1996, No 2., p. 111.

¹⁹ Underdown, ‘The taming of the scold’, p. 126; Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 17.

²⁰ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, *passim*; S.D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society, Gender and Class in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p.182 and *passim*, hereafter *Ordered Society*.

²¹ Margaret Spufford, ‘Puritanism and Social Control?’, in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 56.

²² Clark, *English Provincial Society*, Ch. 7.

search of work.²⁴ Of the greatest demographic significance, however, was the series of plagues which hit the country between the mid 1590s and 1603. Plague burials in the City of London and its liberties are estimated at 10,675 for 1593, and 25,045 for 1603, representing 14% and 23% respectively of the local population.²⁵

The three issues of the social and economic upheavals, the moral vigilance of civic governors, and the renegotiation of gender relations, are clearly closely connected, even though historians differ about the precise nature of their relationship. They are also inextricably interwoven in the concerns which the narratives of domestic tragedy evince, and this gives the genre itself clear political significance. It has suggested a consideration of the texts in the light of other contemporary works which are involved in the renegotiation of social order to several critics.

Susan Dwyer Amussen's 1988 study of the political commonplace of early modern thought, that "the family served as a metaphor for the state" and that, by implication, as "the king was father to his people, the father king to his household", has been very important in literary critics' understandings of the historical and ideological context of domestic tragedies.²⁶ In theory, "the family...was composed of people in complementary and distinct relationships. While the male head controlled the household, his roles as husband, father and master were distinct". It is the 'ambivalent relations' within this arrangement, such as the position of the wife as subject to her husband and yet jointly in control of children and servants with him, which undermine the analogy.²⁷ She sees anomalous hierarchies within the structure of the analogy as productive of tensions in gender relations. "The control of gender disorder", as it affected so many discursive areas, and moved between elite and popular cultures, "symbolically affirmed all social order".²⁸

Amussen identifies the operations of the church courts, stimulated by the involvement of communities in the domestic activities of friends and neighbours, as the primary method

²³ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 222-226.

²⁴ A.L. Beier and Roger Finlay, eds., *London 1500-1700, The Making of the Metropolis*, New York: Longman, 1986, p. 38, hereafter *London*.

²⁵ Beier, *London*, p. 62, Table 7.

²⁶ Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 1; see also her earlier article, 'Gender, Family and the Social Order, 1560-1725', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, hereafter 'Social Order'.

²⁷ Amussen, *Ordered Society*, pp. 200-201.

²⁸ Amussen, *Ordered Society*, pp. 182, 188.

of enforcing the hierarchised norms of the analogy: a site for the practical application of political theories. We can then see the interest which people took in each others' lives on a parish level, and the methods which they developed in order to obtain personal information, as forming the only direct evidence of peoples' attitudes towards political thinking. Her thesis ties the rapid shifts in living conditions experienced in the late sixteenth century, the increase in the business of the courts in the same period, and the problematic issue of gender relations, to a notion of the household as the raw material of political analogy. And she gives these concerns a specific temporal boundary which further particularises the period in which domestic tragedy was popular. She sees the local obsession with familial disorder, and the direct interference into domestic affairs which it legitimated, as declining after the Restoration. This was, she says, a result of an "increasing distance between men and women, rich and poor", as "the hierarchies of class and gender became increasingly polarised" and experience "ever more distinct". She explains the effects of this distance as making "the elite more secure and [depriving] those they ruled of the proximity – social and economic – necessary for effective challenges".²⁹

Drawing together the various periodisations of different social issues identified by contemporaries and historians, a rough but significant chronology can be demonstrated. The movement from the anxiety over social mobility in the 1550s, through the changes Harrison decried in the 1580s, and the severe economic hardship and physical mobility of the 1590s, clearly caused problems for the clarity of social status. I see the conflict within hierarchies as being worked through in these plays as a series of threats within the domestic space which nurtures and defines the individual. In a time of constant crises which ruined some families, and possibilities for social advancement which furthered others, a relative economic homogeneity in some strata of society made it difficult to define hierarchical place. Social security, to take Amussen's argument further, relies upon being able to see one's own position as quantifiably different from those who surround one. This is clearly not only an economic issue, it is also a spatial one of the proximity of urban living and a consequent familiarity with the defining domestic experiences of others. The comparisons induced by seeing and knowing in a period of social change must have led to insecurity. 1599, a year in which, as Orlin points out, *Arden of Faversham* was reprinted, *A Warning for Fair Women* was published, and *Two*

²⁹ Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 187.

Lamentable Tragedies was performed, can perhaps be seen as the pinnacle of the social upheavals of the previous half century.³⁰

Amussen's analysis has been picked up by two of the most recent writers about domestic tragedy: Frances E. Dolan, in her 1994 book *Dangerous Familiars*, which considers dramatic material as one type of evidence about domestic murder; and Lena Orlin, most recently in *Private Matters and Public Culture*.³¹ Both authors study domestic plays as representations which interact with ideologies of household order. Dolan's interest in the plays is two-fold. She considers them primarily as evidence of the representation of the emergent subjectivity of women in the early modern period: as "a discourse of criminality" which "constructed the emergence of married women's subjectivity *into visibility as violent*".³² Tangentially, she considers the texts as representing a more general threat to social order: "All the conspirators [in *Arden of Faversham*] rely on violence to gain money or land and to resculpt their social positions".³³ Although she discusses this problem mainly as it applies to the representation of women, there is a tacit acknowledgement that in a rapidly changing social world, subordination of any kind can provide the grounds for rebellion. Those representations of domestic crime produced before the middle of the seventeenth century, including the plays themselves, she sees as revealing "the irreconcilable contradictions within and among early modern constructions of married women's status, as well as the anxieties surrounding intimacy in this period". From the middle of the century onwards, however, when domestic tragedy had died out, she finds that the focus shifts "from insubordinate dependants to the murderous husband".³⁴ She sees all the representations as articulating "the instability of masculine privilege and power".³⁵ My analysis is also concerned with the issue of social mobility in these texts, but it focuses more closely upon the ways in which power is exercised, and the ways in which control of domestic space functions to demonstrate the nature of

³⁰ Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 91. The convergence of plays in this year should also be seen in the light of the reopening of the hall playhouses and the consequent focus on competition for audience; and in relation to the settling of Shakespeare's company at the Globe and the loss of Will Kempe to Worcester's company who put on *A Woman Killed*. The significance of these theatrical coincidences is, however, hard to gauge, and represents a further topic of enquiry. See Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, hereafter *Playgoing*, pp. 69, 150-1 for details of the events.

³¹ Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*; Orlin, *Private Matters*, see also by the same author, "The causes and reasons of all artificial things" in the Elizabethan Domestic Environment', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 7, pp. 19-75, and 'Castle'.

³² Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 57.

³³ Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 56.

³⁴ Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 13.

³⁵ Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 58.

privilege.

Lena Orlin's emphasis is on the notion of man's house as a castle. She traces references to political discourses of riot and rebellion through the texts of the plays, and sees these metaphors as giving the genre a quasi-judicial authority.³⁶ Orlin announces her project as one which, by "counter-disciplinary means", links "the history of property...with the history of privacy".³⁷ The conceptualisation, rather than the experience, of the private, especially its alteration after the Reformation, is her focus. Through the metaphor of the household/ commonwealth, she sees private experience gaining public worth. She quotes Cheke on the "dissension we see in small houses", which allows us to "take example to great commonwealths...and thereby learn to judge of great things unknown, by small things perceived".³⁸ The implication here is that personal experience can aid contemporary (and therefore twentieth-century) understanding, and that the small detail can be the starting point for a process of revelation by analogy.³⁹

Orlin's source material for the history of property is that of the treatise and the classical discourse: she is interested in theories of possession, as she is in conceptualisations of privacy.⁴⁰ I see the plays as evincing similar interests, but I take her evidence for the role of personal experience as a starting point for an identification of contemporary responses to these plays, rather than as the end-point of an analysis of elite discourses. While such theories indicate the resonances between different types of cultural product, they are unlikely to have been known *as theoretical texts* by the majority of a theatre audience. Useful as the relationship between theory and play is to an understanding of the operation of culture, the comparison is a *textual* one, which does not advance our understanding of the dynamics of a *production*. If experience of the domestic is called upon by the analogous nature of a political theory which equates the ordered house with the ordered state, then it is necessary to reconstruct that household if we are to understand the resonances and significances of domesticity which these plays stimulated in their audiences.

³⁶ Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 12, where she discusses the validating properties of the language, but see also pp. 85-91 for an extended consideration of the domestic/political analogy.

³⁷ Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 4.

³⁸ Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 88, quoting John Cheke, *Hurt of Sediton*, 1549.

³⁹ Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 89, although she does stress that outside this kind of literature the private is seen as having little importance.

⁴⁰ See, in particular, *Private Matters*, chapter 3.

The fundamental difference between the approach taken in this thesis and previous work on the genre, then, is that the following sections are concerned with the reception of the plays by their audience. The initial task of such an approach must be to set out the probable nature of the audience who were consumers of domestic drama, in order to examine the mechanics of their comprehension of the domestic representation they were offered.

4.ii. Audience

English Renaissance theatrical method has been said by Katharine Maus to be “radically synecdochic, endlessly referring the spectators to events, objects, situations, landscapes that cannot be shown them”, and has therefore been seen “deliberately to foster theatre goers’ capacity to use partial and limited presentations as a basis for conjecture about what is undisplayed or undisplayable”.⁴¹ This reliance upon conjecture means that the nature of each audience member’s experience, brought with her or him to the theatre as memory, is of primary importance for an understanding of her or his perception of the play. Domestic tragedy is a genre which, as shown above, deliberately draws attention to the relationship between the play and personal experience, as a part of its moral project of promoting the analogy between household order and state security. In addition, attention is drawn to personal experience as an important part of the thrill of seeing the familiar in radically altered terms.

Maus appears horrified by the task facing those trying to identify contemporary responses to dramatic productions: “Under the gaze of multiple spectators, interpretations proliferate uncontrollably, and in place of consensus one is left with myriad perspectives, each one unique, but none authoritative”.⁴² Although there may be no ‘one true perspective’, the range of responses to a production cannot be infinite as it is bounded by the differences between audience members, and controlled by the sophisticated methods by which the play manipulates their interpretations. The Epilogue to *A Woman Killed With Kindness* acknowledges the limits of the range in three verses about “An honest crew, disposed to be merry” who call for wine in a tavern. Each has a different opinion about its quality: “The wine was new, old, flat, sharp, sweet, and sour”, and, as the final stanza makes explicit, “every several mouth hath sundry taste”. The taste, approach.

⁴¹ Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 32.

⁴² Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 103.

experience and expectations of each audience member will be different, but there is enough common ground for the drinkers all to agree that they have tasted wine.

Individuals perceive cultural data on two levels. Firstly, they comprehend representations in terms of their own personal experience of the events portrayed. This facility covers both personal memories and present concerns – for instance seeing a tragedy directly after the death of a loved one will acutely alter an individual’s understanding of it – and such turns of fate can never be fully reconstructed.⁴³ Secondly, recourse is made to an individual’s sense of the cultural probability of a particular meaning for an action. These social significances were initially discussed with reference to deposition narratives above, but all artistic representations can also be seen to influence them: both accessing and contributing to their ways of making meaning.⁴⁴ This latter category, still extremely broad, can usefully be considered in terms of a perception altered by status. The probable domestic experiences which life as a gentleman or a wage-labourer would offer are radically different, as noted in the previous chapters. Such differences affect physical standards of living; familiarity with different activities; and consequently attitudes towards particular situations, behaviours and possessions.

The experience of watching is predicated on the perception of similarity and difference. Although comprehension involves comparison with other representations, the portrayal of the domestic environment in particular invites comparison with experience.⁴⁵ The general significance of the representation lies in its capacity to be sufficiently ‘recognisable’ to the majority of the audience so that a rough consensus about its meaning can be reached.⁴⁶ Responses to the domestic on the stage might fall somewhere between two poles: that which I as an audience member can comprehend as similar to my own

⁴³ Indeed, this process may not be desirable, as it tells us very little about the communal, as opposed to the personal, meanings of the representation.

⁴⁴ See pp. 114.

⁴⁵ Heywood’s own *Apology for Actors*, published in 1612, asks “What can sooner print modesty in the souls of the wanton than by discovering unto them the monstrousness of their sin?”, and relates the story of a Norfolk woman who was moved to confess her own crime when she saw a young woman murder her husband in a play in a similar way. Discovery of sins only works if one compares the representation to the realities of one’s life. Quoted in Scobie’s edition of the play, p. xx.

⁴⁶ Anthony Cohen’s explanation of the use of polyvalent symbols of community in the maintenance of order through an illusion of consensus is useful to a comprehension of this process: “What passes as *understanding* is often based on *interpretation*”. His diagrammatic explanation of the function of cultural products is as filters through which many meanings are distilled, and of which many interpretations are made, the two sides of the process meeting at an interface which is their sole point of contact and of seeming concord. Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, London: Routledge, 1985. 1993 edition, p. 73.

experience (I too have a room called a hall, although it may not be very much like the one on the stage), and that which is not different, but alterior – totally ‘other’ to what I know (I do not have a study, and I have never seen one). The latter obviously does not negate engagement, as everyone has an idea of what a study might be like. Rather it necessitates recourse to imagination as opposed to memory.

Critics tend to see representations as offering their audiences either images of similarity, or pictures of alterity. On the one hand there is Laura Bromley’s analysis of Heywood’s cultural project in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*: “Heywood’s main intention is to make us see what we have in common with his characters, not what sets them apart”.⁴⁷ The assumption which underlies Bromley’s thesis is that the audience is to see itself mirrored in the representation, and the recognition which takes place is to provoke mental comparison between life and art. Alternatively, there is Maus’s analogy between “early modern court proceedings for sexual misconduct and...the celebrity industry”: “the lucrateness of this industry rests upon its claim to represent a ‘private’ and therefore more authentic life presumed to reside behind the glittering surface of the celebrity lifestyle”.⁴⁸ Inherent in Maus’s view is a sense of distance, of the representation as that of otherness. What these positions share is a tacit assumption of a knowledge of the audience (those who gauge similarity and difference) and of their homogeneity. Assumptions about the ‘typical consumer’ of the representation discount other responses: how, for instance, do celebrities respond to images of the private lives of their peers? Domestic tragedy, indeed, flourishes at a point when the audience is likely to be particularly heterogeneous, and it is to this issue that the next sections turn.

4.ii.a. Composition of the audience

Alfred Harbage’s *Shakespeare’s Audience*, published in 1941, represents the first in depth study of the relation of the texts of the early modern theatre to their probable consumers. Harbage concluded that such entertainment was within the means of all but the poorest in Elizabethan London, and, therefore,

Although the more leisured classes would have been better represented than by their pro rata of the population, it was predominantly a working-class audience because of the great numerical superiority of the working classes in the London area, and because theatrical tariffs

⁴⁷ Bromley, ‘Domestic Conduct’, p. 271.

⁴⁸ Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 214.

had been designed largely for them.⁴⁹

In 1981, Anne Jennalie Cook published *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London*, where she asserted that "London's large and lively privileged set ruled the playgoing world quite as firmly as they ruled the political world, the mercantile world and the rest of the cultural world".⁵⁰ She does not claim "that playhouses were filled exclusively with the privileged", only that the companies "relied principally upon [their] support".⁵¹ These two books have formed the opposite poles of a debate about the type of audience for whom plays were likely to be written, based on an assessment of which group's patronage kept the theatres afloat. Despite admitting that "each commentator explained the group's composition a bit differently", Cook sums up the nature of the "privileged minority" as containing "The nobility, the gentry, the wealthier merchants, and the professionals".⁵² Following the advice of Sir Thomas Smith, however, who defined a gentleman as a person who "can liue idley, and without manuall labour, and will beare the Port, charge and countenance of a Gentleman", she must then acknowledge that this particular section of the privileged audience were in fact distinguished from their less fortunate counterparts only by "a certain style of life".⁵³ In all, these men's experiences of life were "tremendously varied", and the nature of the group can be glimpsed only against the dark ground of the "mass of society", from whom they stood "firmly apart".⁵⁴ The identification which members of Cook's privileged group may or may not have felt with one another is hard to determine: their own homogeneity might only be a feature of the way they were viewed from outside, either by their contemporary inferiors or their twentieth century enumerators. From within, there might only be heterogeneity: those at the top seeing all those below them as inferior, for instance.

Andrew Gurr's 1987 *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* deals with the legacy of Harbage and Cook. In rejecting the homogeneity of either a working or privileged audience, Gurr insists that even Cook's "more plausible stereotype...needs dissecting into its component parts by factors more intricate than numbers or social status".⁵⁵ His own discussion of the social composition of those attending the plays divides them into

⁴⁹ Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, p. 90.

⁵⁰ Anne Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London 1576-1642*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 8, hereafter *Privileged*, p. 272.

⁵¹ Cook, *Privileged*, p. 8.

⁵² Cook, *Privileged*, p. 16.

⁵³ Cook, *Privileged*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Cook, *Privileged*, p. 272.

Harrison's four principal classes, "first the nobles and gentlemen, next citizens and burgesses, thirdly yeomen, the rural smallholders, and finally artisans and labourers".⁵⁶ Although he accepts the contemporary concern with social mobility, he states that "each class was distinct from the others in education, occupation, dress and income, and would have been shocked to find itself lumped in with any of the others".⁵⁷ Such an awareness points up the futility of class terminology in this debate.

What we are left with is a series of negative, external definitions of the status of groups whose financial support may or may not have influenced the nature of the plays. If, however, these groups are considered in terms of the experiences which they brought with them to the theatre, then it is possible to talk about responses to representations. This is a more satisfactory approach because it concentrates upon consumption rather than production, actualities rather than intentions. The testamentary material studied in Chapter 2 provides a tool for dissecting the imprecise categories of social nomenclature ('privileged'; 'working class') for such a purpose. Internally rather than externally defined, based upon distinct experiences of daily life, the distinctions demonstrated above are, as Gurr indicated was necessary, "more intricate than numbers or social status".

Gurr asserts that almost all of the classes among the "middle stratum can be found amongst Shakespearean playgoers...though the complete social range goes all the way from earls and even a queen to penniless rogues...and the unemployed".⁵⁸ And he concludes that "the inference is that citizens were the standard kind of playgoer in the 1590s, but that they were a distinctly less normal feature of the later indoor playhouse audiences".⁵⁹ In the 1590s, when domestic tragedy began to flourish, London had only two amphitheatres. Even after 1599, when the hall playhouses were reopened, Gurr suggests that it was a decade or so before any kind of social division became evident between the two types of playing space.⁶⁰ By the time domestic tragedy declined, the audience had become divided along lines of status. The decades surrounding the turn of the sixteenth century, then, appear to have provided the greatest diversity of social status within the early modern audience. The variety of responses of such a socially

⁵⁵ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Gurr, *Playgoing*, pp. 49-54.

⁵⁷ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 49.

⁵⁹ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 60.

⁶⁰ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 79.

heterogeneous collection of individuals to a genre which encourages the employment of personal experience demands attention.

4.ii.b. Provincial society and the capital

In order to use the evidence of the previous chapters to investigate audience response to plays which were mostly staged in London, it is necessary to consider the similarities and differences between their typical audience within the capital and those individuals whose wills, inventories, and testimonies formed the basis of Chapters 2 and 3. London in the latter half of the sixteenth century has been characterised, both by contemporaries and twentieth-century historians, as a melting pot of men and women from across the country and beyond.⁶¹ Its high mortality rate and prodigious economic growth necessitated a huge migration on a regular basis from the provinces as early as the 1550s.⁶² The plagues of the 90s increased the need for working men and women without appearing to make it an unattractive place, either to earn higher wages or, if one's status permitted, to spend leisure time.⁶³ Many of the migrants were, not surprisingly, from the South East of England.

The experiences which these people brought with them of life in a provincial urban centre, and their attitudes towards communal order and personal morality, fed into the capital's social life. The basic similarities of domestic practice which lay behind the variety of urban houses and the diversity of urban experience were demonstrated above. These fundamental meanings of urban life were what allowed 'Londoners' from different counties to understand one another's practices and expectations, and to appreciate the basic social distinctions which were necessary for society to function peacefully.

The testamentary evidence for Kent permitted these basic, meaningful social distinctions to be examined inside a coherent model of social relations which, unlike London itself in this period, demonstrated a measure of stability. Such stability, by permitting the

⁶¹ Steve Rappaport quotes John Stow on the image of London as a melting pot "by birth for the most part a mixture of all counties, by blood gentlemen, yeomen, and of the basest sort without distinction", *Worlds Within Worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 86.

⁶² 5 out of 6 men enrolled as freemen of the city were recent immigrants in the 1550s, the Southeast providing 18.5% of them, Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 77.

⁶³ Fisher, F.J. 'The development of London as a centre of conspicuous consumption in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in P. Corfield and N.B. Harte eds., *London and the English Economy, 1500-1700*, London: The Hambledon Press, 1990, p. 111. Fisher sees the move to the capital as linked to the active land market and the consequent see-sawing of fortunes, which saw gentry acquiring one another's estates, p. 108.

appreciation of the internal operations of social structure, gave those who migrated to the capital the working knowledge of the relationship between status, morality and the ordering of domesticity which allowed London as a city to maintain law and order. The different perceptions inherent within such a hierarchy, which were elucidated above, can be seen to relate to all but the top and bottom of the status-scale of London's population.

The wills and inventories of Kentish men covered a range of occupations. Of just under 400 inventories which named the occupation of their subject, over a third were those of urban tradesmen, especially in the textile and clothing trades (68), the provision and manufacture of food and drink (51), and of leather goods (30). These men were mainly freemen of the cities in which they lived and, although their common occupations belie significant differences in levels of wealth, a proportion, especially of those in more prosperous trades such as goldsmiths and those who styled themselves 'merchant', must have been on the cusp of movement into the lower sectors of the gentry. Those who styled themselves 'gentleman' made up 8% of the sample, and an additional 36 men's inventories (9%) stated that they were office holders within the town, but gave no occupation in addition to this mark of status. There were some whose occupation drew attention to their association with the land, most prominently yeomen (24) (although many others must have worked city gardens, or laboured in the surrounding fields), but also a considerable amount of clergy (29). In all, the inventories and their accompanying wills give a fairly wide spread of urban occupations, representing all but the very highest end of the likely playgoing spectrum: "from the Earl of Salisbury, whose income... was almost £50,000 a year...down to the wife...of a glover or shoemaker who might earn for his family no more than £3 6s 8d a year".⁶⁴

The relationship between London and the provinces was a hierarchy of urbanity, with the metropolitan centre at one end and the village at the other. To put the evidence for life in Kent into the perspective of existence in London in the same period is, therefore, to see both similarities of form and differences of degree. These similarities are important to an understanding of the nature of urban life which migrants brought with them to the capital: the basic experiences which they used to negotiate life in the metropolis. Kent was

⁶⁴ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 49. All the provisos about this type of evidence which were considered in the introductions to Chapters 1 and 2 also apply here. The deposition material in chapter 3 also provides numerous less economically based definitions of the subtle negotiations of degrees of status.

relatively highly urbanised from at least the thirteenth century,⁶⁵ its larger towns divided into a series of smaller parishes. Gowing's rich descriptions of slander cases in London show a capital in which identity and reputation were constructed very much on parish lines. The moralised tropes of the townscape, with the importance of streets and doorsteps for broadcasting personal grievances, demonstrate a common language of spatial use, easily recognisable in the evidence for Kent.⁶⁶ The evidence which was available for London housing showed similarities to the layout and use of Kentish urban properties,⁶⁷ and the comparable data for domestic objects in the capital in the seventeenth century suggested that Kent at least equalled, if not exceeded it in the numbers of individual possessions.⁶⁸

Canterbury obviously provides the closest parallel to London, as the largest urban centre, followed by Faversham and Sandwich. Clark's research for the former shows that "fewer than one in ten of the male deponents [in ecclesiastical court cases] do not mention a significant move in their life and seven in ten claim to have been born outside the city". He characterises the pull of the town as "quasi-metropolitan", in contrast to that of Faversham, which nevertheless attracted fairly large numbers of immigrants, mainly due to its growth as a port in this period. In the latter, 61% were born outside the town but in Kent, and 20% outside the county altogether. Canterbury had a significant community of Protestant refugees, in addition to groups of Welsh and Scottish families.⁶⁹

Perhaps the most universal feature of early modern urban living, however, is the close proximity of the living conditions of those at different points in the social hierarchy. In a period when it was important for traders to have their habitation in the commercial centre rather than to retire to the peripheries, visual access to the facades of the houses of the rich, and to their physical presence in the street, were a part of the image of the city for

⁶⁵ Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 11, hereafter *Transition*.

⁶⁶ See above pp. 154-5. See also Scholfield, *Medieval London Houses*, p.108, for similar London disputes about visual access through windows caused by the "friction of close proximity".

⁶⁷ See above pp. 41, 50, 51.

⁶⁸ See above p. 24. Little work has been done on sixteenth-century interiors in London, but see, for a "brief and impressionistic review", Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 128-133, which, although based on only 20 inventories, demonstrates many similarities to the rooms defined in chapter 2.

⁶⁹ See for instance, X.10.14 f.20, 1571, where a bigamist is told that "divers Scotishe men went to and froo thorow the said city of Canterbury whiche would bewraye him yn thende".

those socially inferior to them, and vice versa.⁷⁰ An appreciation of these factors provided important experience of urban life for new migrants to London, and the concept of proximity in particular was essential for an audience's awareness of representations of elite domesticity as different but still meaningful to them.

In experience of the theatre itself Kentish migrants were particularly fortunate in comparison with those from other counties. Peter Greenfield states that

Even such events as the construction of purpose-built theatres in London...or the great plague of the early 1590s, or James I's institution of a royal monopoly on patronage in 1603-4 had little effect on the frequency of touring, which did not begin to decline noticeably until the second decade of the seventeenth century.⁷¹

Moreover, Kent's proximity to London placed it on nearly every touring company's route: "The circuits that players travelled most frequently led east from London along the Roman road to Canterbury and the Cinque Ports".⁷² Giles Dawson's preliminary collection of civic records about playing in Kent shows the Queen's men visiting Faversham and Canterbury throughout the 1590s, as well as Lord Strange's men, the Earl of Derby's men, and the Admiral's men to name but a few.⁷³

Kent's proximity to London puts it in a different position to other provincial centres with regard to the dissemination of ideas and information. Watling Street facilitated swift movement to the capital,⁷⁴ and many must have brought wares back into the county. One such was Henry Oxinden of Barham, who lived several miles outside Canterbury towards the coast on the London road. His commonplace book contains a list of plays apparently owned by him.⁷⁵ Included in the 123 titles are a copy of *A Yorkshire Tragedy* of 1608; a

⁷⁰ For the housing of the elite "in the heart of towns not on the periphery", see Clark and Slack, *Transition*, p. 14. Obviously Canterbury did not have such a wide range of wealth as London, but its position on the coastal route made it a perfect stopping place for monarchs and other dignitaries *en route* to the continent.

⁷¹ Peter H. Greenfield, 'Touring', in John D. Cox, and David Scott Kastan eds., *A New History of Early English Drama*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 253.

⁷² Greenfield, 'Touring', p. 261.

⁷³ Giles E. Dawson, 'Records of Plays and Players in Kent', *Malone Society Collections* Vol. VII, Oxford University Press, 1965. These lists of performances, although they are only taken from the civic accounts, are nevertheless full and complex. When the *REED* volume for the county is published in 2000, this picture will doubtless be considerably expanded.

⁷⁴ Thomas Arden, both historically and as the play presents him, is a frequent 'commuter', using horse and boat to pursue his business interests. The town accounts for Canterbury show regular payments to individuals for their carriage back and forth both on important embassies and on mundane city affairs. FA 11 *et seq.*

⁷⁵ The manuscript is in the Folger Shakespeare Library, and is detailed in an article by Giles E. Dawson in *The Library*, 4th Series, Vol. xv, 1935, pp. 445-456, 'An Early List of Elizabethan Plays'. The dates given

1607 copy of *A Woman Killed With Kindness*; a 1592 edition of *Arden of Faversham*; and *A Warning for Fair Women* printed in 1599. The men and women of Kent may have seen these plays, either in London or their home town (*Arden of Faversham* is surely a likely candidate for taking on tour), and they had access to copies of the texts.

Despite the cohesive action of a general concept of urban morality, there were causes for concern in London motivated by the lack of a static hierarchy which made it hard to inculcate a sense of communal responsibility. To a greater or lesser extent, all towns in the period are experiencing similar problems, exacerbated by their economic and demographic problems. Greene's pamphlets present an image of the provincial migrant which characterises him as gullible and inexperienced in urban existence. In *A Noteable Discovery of Cosenage*, the ideal victim is said to be "a plain country fellow well and cleanly apparelled, either in a coat of homespun russet, or of freize".⁷⁶ Such images of rustic buffoons have often been read as accurate descriptions of new Londoners, rather than as the literary 'country cousin' to the conventional dramatic clown.⁷⁷ What they represent instead is a preoccupation with defining a genuinely metropolitan experience in the face of the diversity of the capital's inhabitants, and the rapidly changing faces of the London street. Domestic tragedies, by appealing to experience which is common to all Londoners, are also implicated in such a project, although their approach is inclusive rather than exclusive. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and *A Warning For Fair Women* in particular, take this concern with urban life as their main subject of investigation. The specifically urban characters they portray are threatening in their attempts to subvert their responsibilities to their fellow town-dwellers.

4.ii.c. Status of the characters

The status of the characters in these plays is clearly important, both for the ways in which an audience might see themselves in relation to the perpetrators and the victims of domestic violence, and because status is the cause of many of the protagonists' discontent. The remainder of this chapter suggests that the use of domestic situations in plays allows the audience to see similarities between the represented households and their

suggest that they are mainly first editions, the greater part of which are earlier than 1610. The fact that he was not born until 1609 suggests that Henry is unlikely to have assembled the collection himself, and he did not compile the list until some time between 1663 and 1665. Oxinden was a poet, educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he obtained a BA in 1627, he died in 1670; *Dictionary of National Biography*, Concise Version, 1939.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 25, Greene's pamphlet was published in 1581.

own experiences. But the plays also give their characters very particular positions in the social hierarchy, and this is often accomplished with the use of small narrative details. Scholarly attempts to see the genre as representing the actions of one particular social group have proved contentious. The confidence of Adams' statement that "The lowly social station of the tragic protagonist is the one invariable characteristic of the genre" has been recently echoed by Orlin, but she contradicts it by claiming that the protagonists are all gentlemen.⁷⁸

The pamphlet literature from which many of the plots of the plays are taken presents individuals who range from workers in their own businesses without hired labour to those who run sizeable establishments and have some purchase in the land.⁷⁹ Thomas Merry, the murderer in one of the *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, would find his place near the bottom of this scale, his victim Thomas Beech towards the top of it. The former, who runs a victualing house frequented by his neighbours, begins his opening speech: "I live in meane and discontented state", and the murders he commits are an attempt to change social places with Beech, who describes himself thus: "My shop is stor'd, I am not much in debt...I have a score of poundes to helpe my neede".

The status of Sanders in *A Warning For Fair Women* is briefly sketched by his daily dealings on the exchange and the sums of money which he mentions in connection with both his business ventures and his wife's proposed expenditure on linens. The argument over payment of £30 to the Draper and the Milliner values these trifles at more than the price of many a man's estate, and the £1500 which he has to tender on the exchange is a very large sum indeed. Sanders stands apart from the other husbands in the exclusively financial definition of his position in society, with its suggestion of new forms of transaction, if not new types of wealth.⁸⁰

A Woman Killed With Kindness and *Arden of Faversham* elicit a confusion of critical opinion as a result of the range of statuses which they represent. Laura Bromley considers the former play in the context of the conduct books aimed at gentlemen in the period of

⁷⁷ See, for instance, Maus's discussion of this quotation, p. 25.

⁷⁸ Adams, *Homiletic*, p. 1; Orlin, 'Castle', p. 82.

⁷⁹ Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, pp. 32 fn.25, 31.

⁸⁰ Saunders seems to epitomise the new money economy described by Agnew and seen by him as productive of considerable social tensions about the transparency of exchange, Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theatre in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, *passim.*, hereafter *Worlds Apart*.

the play, and sees it as a part of the same cultural project to “meet the needs of the growing segment of society which turned to conduct books as guides to proper behaviour”.⁸¹ The subplot of the play, however, seems to fit this description less easily, as the hawking and hunting in Scene 3 deftly indicates. The technical language in which this is constructed accentuates its socially rarefied nature, and Sir Charles’s identification of the £2500 a year which he was left as patrimony defines the family in money terms as the 300 years of his progenitors does in influence and importance. Rick Bowers points out the aristocratic scale of the subplot in comparison to a middle class main plot, but does not define his terms clearly.⁸² The truth of Gurr’s assertion, that the movement from citizen to gentleman was not only the most prevalent form of social mobility in the period, but also the hardest distinction to make, is demonstrated here in the extreme critical flexibility and consequent uselessness of the term ‘middle class’.⁸³

In discussion of *Arden of Faversham* the problem is further complicated by its source in a story that was “an object of cultural desire”: a narrative which was very frequently reproduced in different media.⁸⁴ Orlin lists the many different representations of the narrative, stretching from urban record to national chronicle, and from play to ballads, each offering a different definition of their victim’s status motivated by their particular social or political project.⁸⁵ The play itself characterises the social position of its own Arden firmly and clearly in its opening speeches. Franklin begins:

Arden, cheer up thy spirits and droop no more.
My gracious Lord the Duke of Somerset
Hath freely given to thee and to thy heirs,
By letters patents from his majesty,
All the lands of the Abbey of Faversham (2-5)

At line 36 Arden himself defines his own hierarchical situation: “I am by birth a gentleman of blood”, thereby separating himself from Mosby whom he describes as “A botcher” (25), from noblemen like Lord Clifford who “countenances such a peasant” as his rival (32-3), and from his own historical counterpart who was not born a gentleman, but had risen through the gift of lands with which the play began. However it seems

⁸¹ Bromley, ‘Domestic Conduct’, p. 263.

⁸² Rick Bowers, ‘A Woman Killed with Kindness: Plausibility on a Smaller Scale’, in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1984, pp. 293-306, p. 302.

⁸³ Gurr, *Playgoing*, pp. 51-2.

⁸⁴ Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 79.

⁸⁵ Orlin, ‘Castle’.

likely that audience knowledge of the other versions of the story made it possible for the playwright to enter into a rhetorical game of sorts with the different social locations of the play's eponymous victim.

Common to all 'Ardens' is their position within the local community. The historical Arden held a complex selection of positions of authority, both within the town and in other places in the county, rising up the structures of local government in a very short space of time.⁸⁶ This placed him at the head of the civic officers, whose business it was to control morality within the town. Both the irony and the threat of Arden's situation, then, is that Faversham's inhabitants turn the moralising gaze, which such men harnessed in the service of local order, against his own family.

The characters in the plays on which the following sections concentrate, therefore, are diverse in social standing. The graphic details of their social position act as a metaphor for lifestyle, allowing the audience to situate the narrative information about household and family within a conception of the likely domestic operations of a man like Arden, the one-time mayor, or Beech, the small-time brewer of beer.

4.iii. The plays

4.iii.a. Mimesis and the imagination

This section considers the ways in which the household is represented on stage in domestic tragedies. It seeks to suggest a range of techniques by which different plays made the domestic manifest to their audience. It considers how an audience member's imagination might function, and the nature of the materials it might have to work with.

Dollimore sees a conflict at the beginning of the seventeenth century between what he terms realist and idealist mimesis. Idealist mimesis he defines as a perfecting force representing a world where the unjust are punished and narrative closure is equated with resolution. He argues that realist mimesis, taken to its limits, shows the world as it is, devoid of divine intervention to detect the sinner. Describing realist mimesis, he says "drama was rapidly progressing as a form with empirical, historical and contemporary emphases".⁸⁷ In Doran's terms, there was a gradual shift from the 'universal' to the

⁸⁶ For a list of these civic roles, see Orlin, *Private Matters*, p. 31; see also Patricia Hyde, *Thomas Arden in Faversham, The Man Behind the Myth*, Faversham Society, 1996, *passim*.

⁸⁷ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. 71.

‘probable’ and even the ‘credible’, the latter capable of being verified by comparison to the world outside the artwork.⁸⁸ Ways of ‘seeming true’ appear to have been changing.

Weimann notes the consequences of such a change as a shift from the moralities with their presentation of “preordained patterns of static conflict”, to “the realistic mode of characterisation”, which “was particularly well-suited to represent the movement (the relations and the struggle) between the world and the ego, environment and character”. This change, he suggests, was “finally achieved through a new dialectic between generality and detail, vision and experience.”⁸⁹ As far as can be established, there was also a change of acting style around the change of the century to a more ‘natural’ effect, which could be seen as linked to alterations in the nature of characterisation.⁹⁰ Instead of “falling back on predetermined modes of synthesis”, Weimann says, writer and reader, and, I presume, actor and audience too, “were called upon to analyze the areas of congruity and incongruity between vision and experience for themselves”.⁹¹ We are familiar with contemporary descriptions of this process through the sophistry of the demands made upon the audience by the prologue to *Henry V*, drawing attention to the paucity of representation in relation to the powers of the imagination.⁹² But *A Woman Killed With Kindness* also draws attention to the incompleteness of its representation from the start, the prologue moving from an acknowledgement of the peculiar nature of domestic tragedy: “our muse is bent/ Upon a barren subject, a bare scene”, to the paucity of what the audience will see: “Our russet, tissue...Our coarse fare, banquets; our thin water, wine”.

Alan Dessen’s exploration of stage conventions is the fullest investigation of the actual mechanics of such audience participation. He discusses the way in which an object “came into existence when the actor gestured towards something (a pillar, a railing) or some

⁸⁸ Madeleine Doran, *Endeavours of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1954, pp. 65-81.

⁸⁹ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz, John Hopkins University Press, 1978 (Paperback edition 1987), p. 200, hereafter *Popular*.

⁹⁰ Alexander Leggatt, ‘The Companies and Actors’, in J. Leeds Barroll, Alexander Leggatt, Richard Hosley and Alvin Kernan eds., *The Revels History of Drama in England, Vol. III, 1576-1613*, Methuen, 1975, pp. 97-117, p. 103.

⁹¹ Weimann, *Popular*, p. 202.

⁹² In the opening speech of the play the audience are first asked pardon, then to “let us...On your imaginary forces work”. They are to “suppose” one thing another, and to “Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts”. Talk is to lead to the imagination of sight: “For ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings”.

place, thus giving a local habitation and a name to an otherwise neutral area".⁹³ The illusion works through the localisation of the dialogue: the relationship between word and space which Dessen says is created through the gestures of the actor. Such a system of representation does not attempt to mask the status of the stage through a visual transformation, instead it accesses the infinite and unpredictable variety of the audience's imagination, creating in them "a sort of double consciousness in which the stage, without ever ceasing to be itself, becomes also as needed an open field, a stream...".⁹⁴ But in what way does it 'become'? Asked to 'see' armies converging on the stage, the audience need not picture them, the prologue's emphasis on the metonymic properties of sight might just be a metaphor. It might be that they must merely accept that the logic of that particular situation is to be taken to adhere, that the actors are now to behave *as though* they were part of a large army, as though they were going to battle. What we *see* does not alter.

When it comes to the mental construction of interiors, Dessen is considerably more reticent. As an Elizabethan viewer had no access to cinema or television, he says, they "would not have moved so readily from the signal (bed, throne) to our sense of 'room'".⁹⁵ This difference between the imagined stream and the conjectured bedroom is never really explained by Dessen. It is illogical to consider that those capable of visualising a river might not be able to do so with a chamber, that they would be unable to reconstruct the logic of such a space and the situations which take place within it. I have shown that a contemporary audience is in fact likely to be much more conversant with a conception of an object which sees it as imbued with symbolic properties, and this suggests that they may have been more skilled at dealing imaginatively with visual blankness than their twentieth-century counterparts, who are used to having these blanks filled in.

Analysis of the deposition material of the previous chapter has demonstrated the ways in which space functions in the representation of events. The central issue is one of imagination, of the function of memory in a present awareness of the absent. In an investigation of the ways in which the plays make use of a knowledge of the household, it is important to consider its form and status within the memory. As an example which bridges the theatrical and the personal, in nature if not in theory, I take Edward Alleyn's

⁹³ Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters*, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 61, hereafter *Conventions*.

⁹⁴ Neil Carson, quoted in Dessen, *Conventions*, p. 62.

letters home while in Bristol on tour with Lord Strange's Men in 1593. On 1st August, he writes to his wife

mouse you send me no newes of any things you should send of your domestycall matters such things as happens att home as how your distilled watter proves or this or that or any thing what you will...you sente me nott word of my garden but next tym you will but remember this in any case that all that bed which was parsley in the month of september you sowe itt with spinage for then is the tym: I would do it my self but we shall nott com hom till allholand tyd⁹⁶

The homesickness is palpable, and it manifests itself in Alleyn's parallel mental following of the domestic routines which form his experience of home while away from it. On 28th September, Henslowe writes to him, including news of his house. John Griggs, a carpenter who had previously been working on the Rose, was now involved in alterations to Alleyn's house.

your Joyner hath seate up your portolle in the chamber & hath brothe you a corte cobert & sayes he will bringe the Reaste very shortley⁹⁷

He is clearly updating the house, using the profits of his provincial tour to improve his most personal living space. As the space alters he must imagine the changes from a distance, and the prospect of seeing them in reality becomes part of an anticipated homecoming, pleasurable as both familiar and different.

If domestic drama necessitates the use of the imagination, and if imagination is linked to experience and its memories, then mental images of the house are strong, and they involve a stimulating relationship between the emotional and the physical, and between the static and the routine. The following three sections attempt to reconstruct responses and meanings which must have seemed automatic and self-evident at the time. The first section focuses upon the use of stage properties in the construction of a recognisable domesticity; it works from one particularly rich example in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*. The second section considers the rhetorical and spatial form which the house takes in *Arden of Faversham*, *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, and *Two Lamentable Tragedies*: the scheme into which the domestic props are introduced. The final section considers the moral project in which the plays are engaged through a reading of the

⁹⁵ Dessen, *Conventions*, p. 91.

⁹⁶ Carol Chillington Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 75, hereafter *Rose*.

spatial relationships between their characters. As the early modern stage most frequently presents unlocalised action, and rarely retains a mimetic logic of place between scenes, it is usefully read in the light of contemporary perceptions of the moral implications of the physical relationship between individuals, explicated by the church court material.

4.iii.b. Domestic properties

Rather than attempting to consider the possible representational and mnemonic associations of each prop in each play, I use Scene VIII of *A Woman Killed With Kindness* as the focus for a microhistorical investigation which brings the various strands of this thesis together. As the richest example of the use of domestic properties, this scene is unique in the genre,⁹⁸ and it therefore provides an ideal focus for a full exploration of the implications of their use. The resonances suggested here are not understood as universal definitions of the meaning of a particular object, exclusive of their position within the narrative of the play. They are rather a series of concretely historicised significances with which the object on the early modern stage is potentially invested, to which attention is drawn by their particular dramatic context.⁹⁹

The household environment is represented in domestic tragedies through the use of stage properties and their employment in routines of preparing domestic spaces, usually for sleeping or for eating. The theatrical property has two meanings. First it has a situation within the play: this is constructed through the narrative, and it creates the context into which the object is brought when it comes on to the stage. Identification of the status of the characters is a part of this process. Secondly there is the accepted usage of such an object outside the theatre: its employment in normal social practice, and knowledge of these meanings is brought to the theatre by the audience. The relationship between this ‘stage history’ of the domestic object, and the social significance of such a piece of furniture, constructs meanings for a contemporary audience which are not immediately obvious in the twentieth century. The props are, in other words, a focus for the mechanics of the relationship between the narrative and the individual spectator.

⁹⁷ Rutter, *Rose*, p. 77.

⁹⁸ Possibly even in this period, Orlin says it is “unmatched in the English Renaissance theatre for its detail”, *Private Matters*, p. 150.

⁹⁹ The same exercise could be undertaken for, for instance, the bed in *Yorkshire Tragedy* and Anne’s death bed in *Woman Killed*, the former an object which the audience must invest with considerable significance, the latter one whose importance is repeatedly drawn attention to discursively in the text. The table and the chair in *Arden* are similarly important properties with complex moral and social meanings.

The early modern interior has been shown in Chapter 2 to contain more goods by the time of these plays than it had done a generation before at nearly every social level. The props which represent it on stage are not being used as scenery: they do not in themselves attempt to recreate a room. They are chosen carefully, and they are capable of functioning both symbolically and metaphorically. In combination with the experience which each audience-member brings to the representation, these properties work towards the construction of an interior in which the events of the narrative are carefully situated.

The judicial and testamentary evidence considered in this thesis has demonstrated the contemporary propensity of the domestic object to hold considerable symbolic meanings. Wills and inventories showed that certain pieces of furniture were seen to be vital in particular rooms, and therefore came to characterise the space in which they stood. Testamentary material also demonstrated the capacity of objects to hold affective, mnemonic information which linked the present to the past, and symbolised the relationship between giver and receiver. Depositions explicated deeds of gift as a form of transfer of property where one object was given in place of the whole. Testimony also revealed love tokens as objects used as a form of proof to elucidate the extent of the relationship between individuals; and objects as telling pieces of evidence which could encapsulate the nature of the crime in which people had been involved. There was a clear contemporary facility and willingness to consider the one as a metonym for the many, and to see the inanimate article as representing the actions to which it was connected, the place which had previously housed it, and a history of human relationships. It is in the light of this information that the full meanings of domestic properties on the stage, in connection with their discursive positioning within particular rooms of a house, can be reconstructed.

The importance of Scene VIII of *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, in which Nick tells Frankford about his suspicions regarding Wendoll and Anne, lies in its significance as the point in the narrative at which the husband re-takes control of his household. It opens thus:

Enter 3 or 4 servingmen [including Nick and Spiggot the Butler], one with a voider and a wooden knife to take away all, another the salt and bread, another the table-cloth and napkins, another the carpet. Jenkin with two lights after them.

JENKIN: So, march in order and retire in battle 'ray. My master and the

guests have supped already, all's taken away. Here now spread for the servingmen in the hall. Butler, it belongs to your office (1-4)

At first reading, it appears that the servants lay a table on the stage itself in dumb show, as servant and master discuss betrayal further downstage. But Frankford questions Jenkin later on in the scene:

Nicklas, what make you here? Why are not you
At supper in the hall there with your fellows (123-4)

It seems, then, that the line of servants enters holding the material necessities for dining in such a household, and then exits, having displayed their wares to the audience.

Having finally comprehended the information which Nick is relaying to him, and formed a plan to deal with it, Frankford turns his attentions back to the evening's entertainment, asserting his authority over the domestic environment by directing the stuff of the house:

Lights and a table there! Wife, Master Wendoll and
Gentle Master Cranwell --

*Enter Anne, Wendoll, Cranwell, Nick and Jenkin with cards, carpet,
stools and other necessaries. (116-7)*

Jenkin underlines the function of the items which are brought onto the stage at this point by talking through the servants' actions as they put the goods to use:

A pair of cards, Nicklas, and a carpet to cover the table. Where's Sisly with her counters and her box? Candles and candlesticks there! Fie, we have such a household of serving creatures! Unless it be Nick and I, there's not one amongst them all can say boo to a goose. (121-5)

I want to focus on these two sets of stage directions, investigating their functions in relation to one another, and the way they direct and enhance the meanings of the narrative which is played out between them. Both directions make reference to the laying of tables, the first for dining and the second for recreation and leisure purposes. What I want to argue initially is that the introduction of a table and the objects associated with it into a domestic drama proffers certain symbolic resonances. The table functions to alert the audience to the imminence of a ritual or symbolic event, and to make reference to the presence of such events within the domestic environment. It focuses a symbolic language into the play, alluding to the habitual function of such objects within the house. The form in which the servants bring the properties onto the stage is also ritualised, and the

construction of this scene makes clear and determined reference to such self-consciously mannered aspects of household routine.

When the servants enter at the beginning of the scene, they come on in procession one after the other, and the objects which they hold are suggestive of a sequence too. First come those who will remove what is already there, those who will tidy up what is left of the previous meal, and in so doing prepare the table for the next event. Next come those who provide for the present, for the ritual which is to be participated in now. The objects which they hold are divided along lines familiar from an inventory: into different categories of things which are priced together. Tablecloths and napkins, for instance, are kept together in the same chests, and bequeathed as sets from one generation to the next in wills. Coming under the generic term of 'linen', they are related to carpets which are also 'fabric' items, the latter also kept in chests for protection when they are not in use. If they were the best, reserved for special occasions, then all these items would of course be most likely to be kept within the householder's chamber, and would be understood to have been fetched thence. The items are coverings, things which can be seen as clothing, protecting, or concealing the furniture of the house. They are adjuncts to the table, the things which it needs to define it in the context of dining. When one puts a carpet, cloth, and napkins upon the table, and then the salt and bread, one determines, delimits, and fixes the event which is about to occur there. The table for which these items are destined will not be used for cards, it will be used for a meal, and the parade of props signals this like a prior warning, a signal of intent.

Also interesting is the fact that the things come on in reverse order, apart from the lights. Presumably one has to lay the carpet first, then the cloth, then the food. So it might be that they come on in reverse order of value, with the pageant of goods becoming a progression of statements of wealth. This also works visually – the carpet will be the most eye-catching of the props, it will be colourful and complex in design, and it may refer to exotic countries and the wealth and status to be gained from trade connections with them.¹⁰⁰ Both servants carry very important possessions, those things which are, after the plate collection of the house, amongst the most valuable of its portable assets. The wealth of the house, its reserves of splendour, is played out before the eyes of the

¹⁰⁰ See Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, Macmillan, 1996 p. 429; for the rich significance of the oriental object within Western culture see Brian Spooner, 'Weavers and dealers: the authenticity of an oriental carpet', in

audience in what one presumes is silence. The first actor to speak is at the end of the line, ensuring that the goods have been fully appreciated visually before he characterises their situation discursively.

In terms of its construction, this opening is a pageant or procession, an organisation of space and actors more usually associated with displays of military might, where the props carried are weapons and standards. This is an impression which is reinforced by Jenkins' first speech about 'marching in order' and 'retiring in battle 'ray'. It is old-fashioned in its static presentation, as opposed to explication, of dramatic evidence, but it is visually exciting and redolent of solemnity, gravity and dignity. The dramatic convention of the pageant is also associated with royal progress, with church processions, and with displays of civic unity - all of which are to do with the hierarchical organisation of space. As image it emphasises the respect inspired by the correct display of status.

The form harks back to traditional notions of hospitality as marking the status of its provider.¹⁰¹ But it is a status whose dramatic representation defines bounty not in terms of the plenty offered to the diners to consume, but in terms of the domestic objects of which the host is possessed. His hospitality is implicitly experienced as something to be admired but not devoured. This could be seen as having meaning for an audience in terms of an emergent consumerism: the insistence of the displayed object upon engagement here suggesting a particular kind of personal comparison which takes into account the number and quality of the audience's own domestic objects. In the light of the construction of the pageant as display and then retreat – tantalisingly removed – it could be seen as related to the nature of Franford's offer to Wendoll: that he can have the use of the household, but he may not fully possess it.

The experience of domestic rituals which the table calls into play has the effect of stressing the regular, the predictable, and the routine. But the initial parade of goods, having indicated a projected narrative for the audience, having suggested dining with the broad but expressive brushstroke of equipment, proceeds to frustrate those anticipations and to reveal them to be a dramatic 'blind alley' as it leaves the stage by the other door.

Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things, cultural commodities in perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 195-235.

¹⁰¹ See, for a detailed discussion of this phenomenon over the early modern period, Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, Oxford University Press, 1990. Although, "Shame traditionally

In its public display, the domestic ritual is interrupted, and such an interruption signals the importance of the dialogue which is to follow. The dining in the parlour is also interrupted, as Frankford's suggestive gesture makes clear:

Enter Frankford as it were brushing the crumbs from his clothes with a napkin, and newly risen from supper.

The reason for these disjunctures of routine is, of course, the sin committed by Anne and Wendoll, and the context which has been so carefully set up as a ground for the communication of this news defines its significance in very particular terms. In this context the symbolic meanings as well as the ritual significance of the meal which we never actually see are brought into play. The function of the judicial trope of dining together as a definition of friendship and an acknowledgement of common intent and implication needs to be brought to this scene. The form of the table itself underlines this function by joining all those participating in the meal around its sides, it stresses interconnection and responsibility, and cements the bonds between individuals aiding peoples' formation into a community. The table forces individuals into a spatial expression of their interdependence and inter-reliance. But dining also has connotations of bounty and of Christian charity through such imperatives as the corporal acts of mercy, and is related to Christ's actions at the Last Supper. Christian teaching, filtered through domestic practice into a moralised discourse of involvement, sets up a typological association between Frankford's impending sufferings and those of Christ.

Seen in terms of these connections to other culturally significant discourses, the table focuses attention upon ideologies of the provision by the householder of sustenance for those who are dependent upon him, and the consequent, expected return of allegiance from those who receive at his hands: a feudal reciprocity with a Protestant twist. The meanings of the image presented by the properties can then be seen to resonate with the textual identification of dependency soon after the departure of the parade of goods: Wendoll is said to be "a daily guest"(8), in contrast to Cranwell's position as "the gentleman who came but this afternoon"(9).

In the context of the unselfish provisioning of the domestic environment, and against the bounty of cloths and candlesticks, the play sets the revelation of betrayal. This has the

attached to those who failed to personate themselves as men of generosity"(p. 390), this image of "an elite given in honour to open hospitality" was diminishing by the later sixteenth century.

effect of figuring it not only in personal, emotional terms, but also as a sin against the house itself. Problematized here is the richer concept of 'household' as a very intimate connection between properties and people, in which both give definition and meaning to each other. As these two aspects begin to pull away from one another as a result of Anne and Wendoll's sin, the presence of properties associated with household rituals comments ironically upon a disjunction much more fundamental than the interruption of a meal.¹⁰²

The table on stage can be seen as acting as a metonym for the room which is being represented, by bringing with it a coherent spatial context. It indicates to the minds of the audience the room as a whole; the distinct meanings, for instance, of parlour as opposed to hall. The audience bring to the representation their memory of an organisation of space, a conjunction of objects, the missing details of the room which houses it in their memory or imagination. As the procession of objects which initially suggests this particular table in this particular scene enters, it does so like the edge of a curtain, necessarily pulling with it its domestic situation: the original position of goods in the chests and cupboards of the house; the likely position of furniture in a hall or parlour for which it is destined; the most likely type of events in such a room; their probable nature in such a house. What *actually* happens must be set against these notions of probability.

However, the primary import of the testamentary information considered in Chapter 2 was the distinct mental image of room organisation, and consequent domestic practice, which different-status audience members were likely to have. Whereas larger numbers of people might have had a carpet in the 1590s than in the 1560s, it is nevertheless not the case that the whole audience would respond to it as an object which formed a part of their domestic routines. What I want to stress, therefore, is distinct functions for the various kinds of properties which are shown in this scene, functions which are suggestive of particular relationships with different social sectors of an audience.

The domestic rituals at whose heart the table is situated can be seen as working in the opposite way to those properties which cover it. The latter close down meanings and narrow significances by tying them to cultural specifics. They characterise the particular

¹⁰² Inversions of the symbolic resonances of domestic routine can be noted in *Arden of Faversham*, where the disrupted sleep and spoiled meals he experiences in Faversham culminate in the preparations for a communal meal for whose consumption his murder is substituted. *A Warning For Fair Women* characterises Sanders through his generous hospitality to Drury, and thereby stresses her betrayal more

household which Frankford runs, and therefore the particular type of man he is. In doing so they invite each audience member to compare them to the objects and the social situations, with which they are themselves familiar. Servants may recognise such items as ones which they themselves lay on tables for others; labourers may never have touched them before; gentlemen may be more used to seeing their tables set with silverware. This is clearly a socially specific house, with the logic of such an interior (in terms of practice, ritual and meaning within it) which this implies. The process of comparison between the real and the represented domestic interiors stresses any disparity between the two.

The table itself, however, functions as a generalising reference which cuts across the nice social and economic distinctions which the carpet, for instance, refers to. As such rituals are common in one form or another, so they allow engagement on the part of the audience; they offer a point of connection with the play. In the most literal sense, the message is 'brought home'. This would seem to be at the heart of the selection of properties from the stock of the domestic interior: the use of their function as symbolic objects, capable of generating meaning in relation to their context and employment within the household. The events of the scene are perceived in the context of the symbolic and moralised implications of dining such as friendship, mutuality and common purpose.

The audience bring their own points of reference to the stage property, inspired by the table's use in rituals with which they are familiar. Comparison is set up between the way in which their own household operates and the way in which everyday life is structured in the domestic environment represented on the stage. Dramatic properties are either more or less like the viewer's own domestic objects, and operate in more or less similar ways. In the light of this function of the prop, and within its carefully managed meaning, the plot unfolds like the best of stories, by repetition of the known, but with some alterations.

Ritual, as a form which connects past, present, and future through the repetition of particular actions, brings with it the suggestion of customary practice and reiteration when it is produced on the stage. This stage business carries with it a sense of regularity which can be used to define a baseline of normality. It is against this normality of the domestic environment that the crimes are so shocking, so 'unnatural'. The construction of

strongly. It moves between the narrative suggestion of domestic dining and the dramatic representation of the dumb show banquet served by the furies.

a sense of what is normal is difficult because it depends upon creating the illusion of something which has become invisible through familiarity and stability. Those things which are familiar, which make space personal by being constant, go unnoticed because they fulfil their function so effectively. Their surfaces, whose marks of wear and tear fade into the subconscious and come to mean only 'hall', or 'parlour', are culturally silent until violated. What the domestic property achieves is a relationship with the audience which facilitates the realisation of the culturally invisible as representation, in order to set up a contrast with the unusual, the bizarre - to give the latter a sense of being 'out of place'.¹⁰³

The property achieves this effect through a kind of 'production' of the history of the household. An audience member's experience of household objects attests to a meaning enriched by time depth, by the function of a table to reflect in its physical nature the emotional dynamics of the household, inscribed in the special occasions to which it has played host and its links to the past of the family through bequeathal. Household goods are essentially stabilising entities because they have a past, they bear the marks of changing circumstance, they relate to marriage, birth, and death through the ways in which they enter the house and the rituals to which they are party which surround these rites of passage. The floor of the hall, pockmarked by the boots of the wedding guests, to which the opening scene of *A Woman Killed With Kindness* refers, is just such a physical reminder of events.¹⁰⁴ The value which becomes attached to the domestic is one which provides a way of moving into the past by tracing back the thread of memory, organised around the object itself. As customary practice, domestic ritual also has a linear function, forcing the present to be seen in terms of a putative past and a projected future, and it becomes a way of suggesting a posterity for the characters which can then be cut short by crime.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ The consequences of disruption are, of course, manifested in the disruption of normal procedure. In *Two Lamentable Tragedies* the community's sleep is interrupted by the murder of Beech's boy, and they converge on his shop from their beds. In *A Woman Killed With Kindness* potential disorder is signalled by Sisly's preferral to chambermaid, and Jenkin's to porter, and actualised as the stage is traversed in Scene XIII by Wendoll "running", "in a nightgown", pursued by Frankford with his sword drawn. In *Arden of Faversham* Alice's loss of control leads her servants to ask who should wait on who, and culminates in the image of her kneeling to scrub the blood with her maid, and image which gains dramatic weight, as it does in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, from its similarity to a perfectly normal domestic routine.

¹⁰⁴ Sir Francis: 'You shall see tomorrow

The hall floor pecked and dented like a millstone' Scene 1, lines 88-9.

¹⁰⁵ Other plays use small tropes of domesticity in a similar way. The scene in *A Warning For Fair Women* where Anne sits at the door with her small son and discusses the new suit he may have at Easter

Comparing the 'biographies' of domestic objects and stage properties demonstrates the position of particular items in relation to the construction of family and household identity.¹⁰⁶ Before the table is brought on to the stage it has a set of meanings attached to it as a part of the property of the company of actors who make use of it in their productions.¹⁰⁷ Once the play begins, however, it becomes particularised. Its significance is determined by its position within a particular kind of narrative, and its use for a particular set of purposes. Similarly, off the stage, meaning is given to the domestic table by its location within a certain domestic context. Depending upon the room in which it is placed, and the time of day at which it is required, it will fulfil different functions, and its significance in relation to other household objects will either be increased or diminished. There is, of course, a general cultural meaning which a table brings with it wherever it might be situated. What it gathers in addition within the house is a more sharply defined set of actual, as opposed to potential, uses: ones which are particular to that household and defined through its routines.

But there is one significant difference between these biographies. When the stage table enters, its dramatic context it is abruptly cut off from its particular history. The methods, means and motivations for the production of this specific table are suddenly lost. This severing of the past from the present moment of representation happens because of the provision of an alternative, fictional context for it, constructed through the narrative of that day's performance. This narrative context has, then, to act as a shorthand for the particularising process which the domestic property undergoes: the layering of the object with specific cultural meanings. As each cloth and each article is laid down upon the table, its cultural significance becomes more and more differentiated, meanings accumulate in complexity, in the thickness of layer upon layer of properties. It is these trappings, like the gendered clothing which covers the body, which define the way in which the object functions in the social setting, which give it a voice which is understood by society as a whole. They make the connection between the narrative construct of household and the domestic object on stage.

pathetically presents a future for Browne to truncate. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* has Beech crossing the stage with a piece of cheese which he has cut to eat with his drink, ironic because the social event for which he has thoughtfully prepared is his own murder.

¹⁰⁶ Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things, cultural commodities in perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

¹⁰⁷ For its significance in this context, see the list of more complicated, less prosaic properties belonging to *The Admiral's Men*, in Rutter, *Rose*, pp. 133-7.

The properties enable the audience to read all the events of the play up to Scene VIII back into the domestic environment, imbuing it with a time-depth which is achieved in a matter of minutes. In place of the truncated biography of the stage property, the audience substitutes the suggested past of the Frankford family, with its celebrations and rites of passage, its networks of kin and inheritance. The subsequent actions of the play, especially the discovery scene in the chamber and the banishment of Anne from the family home with a small amount of possessions, can then be seen against this background, starker and more meaningful as a result.

4.iii.c. The house in relation to the community

This section investigates the presence of the house as the site of domestic crimes in these plays and its relationship to the community in which it stands. It is into this narrative space that the properties examined above are introduced, and as a result of which they are given their meaning. The section examines the connections between the discursive constructions of the house and that which is physically seen upon the stage. By analysing the way these constructs are altered by commonly understood meanings of house and household, it aims to offer a range of contemporary responses to domestic locations.

In *Arden of Faversham*, Arden's Faversham house does not become a palpable interior presence until his murder finally takes place inside it, but its importance as the location for the crime is built up in the preceding events of the narrative, both in contrast to the context of the other attempts upon his life, and as a place particularly associated with Alice's authority. In the lengthy opening scene, during which the various murder plots are set in motion, it is Alice whose presence on the stage is most constant. As other characters come and go, she appears to the audience as an anchor which connects the narrative events, and this centrality can be seen to be linked to the idealised place of the woman, linked physically to the household. Her presence on the stage defines the location as 'Faversham', and should characterise the action as 'domestic', in the sense of profitable and productive for the household. But her actions at this point in the play generate the initial series of murder attempts, which she sets in motion with calculating rapidity.

For a contemporary audience, the substitution of the criminal for the domestic routine characterises the house as diseased even though it is barely realised on the stage. Deposition narratives demonstrated a contemporary sensitivity to the comings and goings

of individuals as a legally satisfying method for defining a reputation which reflected upon their house. This was particularly true for women, whose honesty was seen as characterising the nature of the household. In terms of this cultural practice, Alice can be seen as a kind of embodiment of Arden's house, which becomes a domestic space defined by her actions, and signalled by her presence upon the stage. This is reinforced discursively when she is invited to visit Lord Cheyney, her excuse for remaining at home being that "If I should go, our house would run away/ Or else be stol'n" (X, 25-6). There would be no house if she, like Arden, left the spot.

Alice's control over the spaces of the house is indicated by two striking images which she employs to manipulate Mosby. In an effort to restore the intimacy which he threatened with his "Henceforward know me not", she brings to mind a shared event in the past: "remember, when I locked thee in my closet" (1, 190-1). This has been the location for a solemn oath to murder Arden, and her authority over the room which she represents as her own personal space is symbolised by possession of the keys, and the status to use them without question. Usually a masculine privilege, this brief image suggests a personal space within the domestic which allows licensed intimacy.

In Scene XIV, as the frustration of regular failure mounts, Alice again images the impenetrable spaces of the house for Mosby: "This night I rose and walked about the chamber,/ And twice or thrice I thought to have murdered him" (86-7). Her independence is again striking; looking down on the sleeping man her actions are private not because of their context, but because they are unseen and unknown. There is a contrast between the nature of the Ardens' relationship as seen by the audience – they only ever share the stage when Arden leaves or briefly returns, and they are never alone – and this rhetorical image of her control over their private space. The intimacy of sleeping together is fractured by her objectifying gaze within a space which should protect them as a couple from exterior threats. Married couples share the best chamber in the house by virtue of their status as joint heads of it, as a space to which they can retire from those rooms to which others have greater access. Arden, in this brief image, can be seen as vulnerable because unclothed and asleep, despite being in the comparative comfort and luxury of his most opulent domestic space. The goods which the room contains are, by implication, also endangered by the critical separation of the couple into subject and object. Alice's movements are particularly threatening, not by virtue of the thoughts she claims, but

because of the contrast between the intimacy which the situation should produce and the circling gaze of the murderous wife.

Although brief, these two images are so freighted with cultural fears that their importance to an understanding of the dynamics of the house is out of proportion to their length. They link the audience's visual impression of Alice's control of the space of the stage to her authority over the imagined house. They play with concerns over the extent of a wife's rule in the absence of her husband by suggesting that the licence of particular circumstances can be dangerously perceived as customary practice. Her control in the absence of her husband is quite legitimate, but her embodiment of the house suggests that the space has become her own, that Arden's absence has been so prolonged that her dominion has become habitual, and this reflects badly on his skills as master of the house.

In the first scene, at the point of Arden's first journey, his preparatory orders locate his house within the town of Faversham, and within the range and tenor of his business interests:

Whilst Michael fetch our horses from the field,
Franklin and I will down unto the quay,
For I have certain goods there to unload.
Meanwhile prepare our breakfast, gentle Alice,
For yet ere noon we'll take horse and away. (88-92)

In some ways this speech sets up Arden's influence within the town through an identification of the places around it which he controls. But it also spatialises the audience's image of Faversham, filling in details of its makeup. Arden's mercantile interests simultaneously place him socially and identify the one aspect of the town's economy with which the majority of the audience must have been familiar – its status as a Cinque port with close trading ties to the capital. For those who have never heard of the place, Faversham is now a town with a port. For those who have been there, Arden becomes one of the merchants who trade from it, and his house is mentally situated in relation to the quay.

Alice is presented as shrewdly aware of the image which she displays within this town. She suggests a clandestine meeting between herself and Mosby, asking Adam to persuade her lover "To come this morning but along my door/ And as a stranger but salute me there./ This may he do without suspect or fear"(1, 127-30). She is able to manipulate the

construction of her reputation by feigning a different kind of meeting between them, one which takes advantage of the visibility of the street as an arena for the making of social meaning. The self-consciousness of these constructs makes insistent reference to the morally idealised contemporary distinction between public and private behaviour as a spatial division between inside and outside, house and street. On the one hand, then, the play creates a contrast between those actions which are ‘seen in Faversham’ and those which are not, from a series of events which are equally visible to the audience. But on the other hand the workability of such a distinction, necessary to a Puritan notion of the public control of morality, is called into question. The potential which public action, by its nature more self-conscious and ‘constructed’, has for duplicity, is ideally explored on a stage where *all* action is necessarily feigned.

The portrayal of Arden’s own relationship to the order and control of urban vigilance is confused and equivocal. In response to Franklin’s advice to Mosby to “Forbear his [Arden’s] house”, in order to “eschew the speech of men,/ Upon whose general bruit all honour hangs”, Arden instead suggests Mosby “rather frequent it more./ The world shall see that I distrust her not.” (1, 346-50). On the other hand, he himself complains of their “privy meetings in the town”(1, 16) which make him “to be pointed at”(35), and of the “common table-talk”(344) which is made of Mosby and Alice. He cannot seem to see the connection between his rival’s frequenting of his house, the rumour which spreads in the town, and the consequent damage done to his reputation. The depositions reveal such ignorance as an incompetence in urban living, and a lack of awareness of the mechanics of the construction of the public person.

The actual street in which the house is situated is represented by movement across the stage during the first few scenes. Alice talks about “these my narrow-prying neighbours”,¹⁰⁸ who “blab,/ Hinder our [hers’ and Mosby’s] meetings when we would confer” (1, 134-5). The suggestion is that she indicates them with a gesture at “these”, as being close by, all around her perhaps. The flexibility of the stage represents a change of location with a brief movement to another door: the painter is said to live “hard by” (1, 149), and Mosby, presumably crossing the stage, says “This is the painter’s house; I’ll call him forth”(243). In the light of the signals given to suggest morally vigilant neighbours and a privacy constructed through simulated honesty, however, the

¹⁰⁸ The 1592 quarto has “marrow-prying”, but both carry the sense of intense scrutiny.

conventions of stage space come also to characterise place: the intimate relationship between houses in an urban situation.

The two scenes which take place within a domestic interior, the attempt upon Arden's life at the London house, and the final, successful attempt in Faversham, simultaneously define the crime and the nature of the domesticity of which it is a product. The former, Scene IV, is constructed around a series of disjointed soliloquies by Arden, Franklin, and finally Michael, which focus attention rhetorically upon Arden himself and his relationship with the other two men and with his wife. Dramaturgically, these soliloquies set up a sense of the isolation of divided loyalties and moral conflict, linked as they are by brief dialogues which send the other characters from the stage to conduct their business. In aggregate they define the hierarchical and interpersonal relationships which make up the household whose order is under threat.

Prior to Michael beginning the dream-speech which changes the course of the narrative (through his resolution to lock the doors of the house), he is sent from Arden to Franklin: "My master would desire you come to bed"(55). The household removes to the intimate security of a chamber defined in opposition to the isolated stage space in which Michael is left, discursively constructed as a communal area 'near the door'. Michael's social position leaves him on a stage which now represents the exposed vulnerability of the interface between house and town. This space is constructed in opposition to the chamber which, in theory at least, offers repose and rest, a protective comfort whose companionship defines a supported shared privacy. On his own before the audience, Michael is simultaneously a social inferior responsible for maintaining the boundaries of the house and a character whose knowledge isolates him from others, whose decision must be made alone. His position at the borders of the house is represented as one of power as he physically controls entry to its spaces, although he does so as a human extension of the authority of the house-owner. His decision is made by weighing the various claims upon his person, and these threats and obligations reveal his command to be mechanical rather than controlling. This distinction between the physical and the familial household, one which divides the control of entry from that of use, must have resonated strongly with many in the audience.

The focus upon the doors throughout the remainder of the scene can be seen to be related to the ideological association between the house and a defensible castle: a private space

which can be sealed off from external assault. Franklin and Arden return from their rest through the entrances at the rear of the stage. As he checks the doors, however, Arden must be trying, if not the same door, then at least one in a similar spatial plane. The doors are defined by that which is represented, by their relationship to the action on the stage, rather than as static edifices which contain a particular type of space. They do not provide a sustained mimesis of interior vs. exterior, rather they focus attention upon points of access to the house and consequently the possibility of security. The doors, as barriers, must have been seen as representing the customary nature of domestic space, as refuge from the wider social, in this case highly threatening, world. Scene IV demonstrated their importance in keeping the town out, and Scene V, where Black Will beats upon them, reinforces this notion clearly. To Scene XIV the audience bring a conception of the house as a place where, above all, space can be controlled, and this is added to the stress upon the Faversham building as a space over which Alice has power.

Before this scene, and in the intervening events which prepare the ground for the denouement, the stage represents either the spaces of the town which are characterised by their susceptibility to the gaze of others, or the wider expanses of the land outside its bounds. The former is too open and the latter hard to control. In both places, the intervention of others disrupts carefully laid plans. In order for this restless, peripatetic murder to be accomplished, the narrative suggests, it must find a context which can be manipulated and governed unproblematically.

The successful plans which are set out for the deed demonstrate the domestic as an environment easier to manipulate because familiar and clearly understood. Arden's social superiority is seen to be undercut as he is skilfully moved around his own room. His inferiors control his perspective on events closely in a series of moves which must have appeared particularly disturbing as they reverse the normal hierarchical control over the house. He must not see the villains enter, so he is set facing in the other direction, his view is manipulated so that he sees a different scene to that witnessed by the audience.

The sureness with which all take up their positions rests upon familiarity with the space of the kind which Michael attempted to give to Will and Shakebag in the form of a map of the London house: "No sooner shall ye enter through the latch,/ Over the threshold to the inner court,/ But on your left hand shall you see the stairs/ That leads directly to my master's chamber"(III, 181-4). His directions are supposed to give them an understanding

of the space which shortcuts experience of it, and which confers on them a freedom to use it as though they were familiar with it. But social propriety dictates that knowledge of an interior comes as a result of closeness to its owner, of a parity of social situation and an acknowledgement of affective ties which acts as a key to admit the individual. There is no substitute for experience as a guide to use.

The murderers know Arden's parlour intimately, and they spend enough time within it to plan their actions carefully to take account of its particular logistics. A contemporary audience would immediately be aware of the impropriety of such familiarity. Will and Shakebag are literally excluded from the London house because Michael shuts the door, but the metaphorical implication of their failure to use its spaces to their purposes is that they are socially and morally inferior to its owner. In Alice's space, however, they are given the keys of the counting house in which Arden's wealth is stored. When the mayor enters after Arden's body has been discovered, his knowledge of Arden's habitual position in his parlour, although necessary to the operation of providence, also demonstrates his legitimate familiarity with the dead man's domestic space. A part of Alice's crime, perhaps the most pernicious part, was to allow such men to share a knowledge commensurate with that of the town's highest officer.

As Will invents his own strategy for the use of the Ardens' parlour,¹⁰⁹ he takes possession of this high-status room by imposing his own image of events upon it. The deposition strategy of reading events into places for post-event witnesses, in order to demonstrate the plausibility of that particular space for the alleged actions, is here reversed. Will communicates his imagination of the high-status parlour as a suitable context for murder to the others, and thereby suggests a radical reorganisation of its expected use, and its careful definition of the importance of the householder. This only works if his suggestions are set against a knowledge of the habitual uses of such a room: if the audience are thinking about the intimate leisure space of their own room, or that so rarefied that they have never experienced it.

Those who gather in the house for Arden's final meal are not his close friends, they are his wife's associates. As the meal usually defines a network of affection and mutual responsibility, so here it determines the lengths to which Alice has gone to procure her

¹⁰⁹ The room is only named in the sources. It is characterised in the play by the seating facilities and the leisure items which it contains.

husband's demise. As the gathering of the 'guests' makes clear, Arden's domestic spaces, rather than providing a definition of their owner's status, actually characterise Alice's crime.

The key to Will's suggestions bears directly upon Arden's status: "Place Mosby, being a stranger, in a chair,/ And let your husband sit upon a stool,/ That I may come behind him cunningly" (XIV, 117-120). His advice is pragmatic, that of the professional killer who weighs space in terms of its potential for smooth and effective action. It has the effect of moving Arden onto a stool from his rightful position on the chair. Mosby now, as Arden feared, 'usurps his place', fulfilling his own dream of being seen "in Arden's seat" (IV, 29; VIII, 31). Physically, the chair itself was unsuitable because its back protected its occupant from those actions which, even within his own house, he could not see happening behind him. The defence offered by status to the threatened assaults of society is now afforded to another who, by replacing Arden in his wife's affections, manages to switch places with him physically. With the chair came the prime position within the room, that around which all other furniture was organised. The privileged view of the house's bounty which it offered was a spatial definition of authority through the all-encompassing perspective. On stage of course, this could not be the case, but the insistence upon the seating, picked up later by the mayor (who discovers Arden's blood "in the place where he was wont to sit" (400)) signals the entire spatial organisation to the audience, in order to destroy its relation to hierarchical control of domestic space.

Alice's confident statement "My house is clear" (356) appears to misunderstand the nature of the power of the vigilant community. Her attempts to deceive the mayor are met with his simple refutation: "I saw him come into your house an hour ago" (363). The full import of this statement is only appreciated in the context of popular, communal observation of the comings and goings of neighbours and the extraordinary jurisdiction over domestic space which it allowed. Legitimised by the disparity between external observation of the house and that which is said to have happened by those within, the machinery of justice follows Arden into his home in order to read the providential clues to the event which has taken place there.

The facility of Arden's property to hold sufficient evidence to reconstitute the event of his death builds upon the perceived relationship between occurrence and spatial context. This link is vital to the operation of justice, as evinced by the depositions, and the implicit

consequences of its failure would be a social and moral anarchy. Although the body itself has gone, the line of footprints in the snow connects the spaces of murder and discovery, and the various objects, the towel and the knife, the rushes in his shoe and the blood under his chair, provide just enough traces from which to construct a narrative. The reading of the clues is an immensely satisfying narrative scheme for an audience used to such a process of revelation, and translated into a theatrical device it has the additional power of emphatic reiteration: the understanding of the characters eventually, and against all the odds, becomes equal to that of the privileged audience. The play, by employing such a scheme as a method of closure, borrows a quasi-legal authority from popular perceptions of deposition narratives. But it also reinforces the importance of such methods of interpretation for communal harmony.

The house which *Arden of Faversham* presents is characterised by the high degree of control which can be gained over its spaces. It opposes inside and outside, but not as a distinction between protection and vulnerability. They are seen instead as the difference between intimate knowledge of interiors, the ability to manipulate the domestic to one's own end, and a frustration of exclusion where those who are unknown are kept outside.

A Woman Killed With Kindness explores the possible disjunctures between the physical and the human household. The buildings around which the two plots are centred form a contrast between the house which endures physically and the house whose familial relations prove stronger than its fabric.

The play opens with the Frankford's marriage celebrations which, as a period of licence, allow readjustment to the altered relationships and the shifts in positions within the hierarchy of the household.¹¹⁰ The pairing of the two opening scenes, the one showing the higher status guests discussing the renegotiation of authority between the spouses while dancing, the next also opening with a dance, but this time between the servants who discuss their position within the household, demonstrates the complex network of affective and productive relationships which Anne Frankford enters on her marriage.

The various advantages which Anne gains by her relocation are drawn attention to in the subplot. Sir Charles and his sister Susan suffer a gradual loss of their house and lands as

¹¹⁰ Orlin, *Private Matters*, pp. 141-3, quotes John R. Gillis, *For Better or For Worse*, 1985, on marriage celebrations.

the result of a murder committed by the former in the heat of the moment. Sir Charles's definition of his change of fortunes is figured in terms of the sensual pleasures and comforts of wealth:

I have so bent my thoughts to husbandry
 That I protest I scarcely can remember
 What a new fashion is, how silk or satin
 Feels in my hand...I have quite forgot
 The names of all that ever waited on me;
 I cannot name ye any of my hounds (7, 47-53)

Those things which were so familiar that he had not been conscious of them, things which made up the texture and the quality of his daily life, become noticeable in the breach, where they are replaced with inferior goods and different methods of self-preservation. The verbal identification of change is also underlined visually: in every successive entry onto the stage, Sir Charles's clothing is altered. He appears in the first scene as a gentleman, in the seventh as a yeoman and in the tenth as a prisoner, and in the process of this transformation the audience sees the constancy of the richness of the Frankford household as fine fabrics and an enveloping household routine. Increasingly isolated and independent, Sir Charles draws the audience's attention to the domestic context into which Frankford invites Wendoll as his financial inferior, and underlines both visually and verbally the qualitative difference which this must make to his daily life.

The mention of the different cloths and the issue of service can be approached by an audience either through recognition or through a sense of unfamiliarity. In either case they are a short-hand for difference which invites imaginative involvement through qualitative identification. The material differences between the domestic provisioning of those of high status and the majority of their social inferiors is employed here as a recognition on the part of an audience member of his or her own position in relation to both Sir Charles's many demotions and Wendoll's contrasting promotions. It is not the identification of a particular rank, but the qualitative differences this makes, which give the action of the play its moral and social import.

Charles ends his speech with the striking line "To keep this place I have changed myself away"(56). The place he has kept is the final outpost of his patrimony, a summer house on the edges of his father's lands. The house is prioritised by Sir Charles as more

important than himself, and it is suggested that, as it brings with it a history of status, it should become the repository of identity. Even this lesser house is ‘prior’ to the brother and sister in every sense, their present status is grounded upon it and judged against it. Its peripheral nature to the estate is seen by Susan as a sidelining of their fortunes: “O brother, here’s a change/ Since old Sir Charles died in our father’s house”(5-6). Lineage is embodied in the enactment of successive rites of passage within the same domestic space. In such a way, it is suggested, that space comes to contain all the meanings of household by its successive use. This is, as the evidence of the previous chapters has shown, much more likely to be the case for high-status families than for those lower down the social scale. But the notion of a cumulative sense of familial identity could also, of course, be understood in negative terms. In a period of social mobility, a sense of self could be grasped by comparing the promotions of personal success against parental social stasis.

With even this reduced dwelling under threat, Scene IX sees Susan begging one relative after another, who each refuse to help her and then leave the stage. As Sandy explains:

I knew you, Lady, when the old man lived;
 I knew you ere your brother sold his land.
 Then you were Mistress Sue, tricked up in jewels;
 Then you sung well, played sweetly on the flute;
 But now I neither know you nor your suit. (21-5)

An extension of the material and experiential changes which accompany a shift of status is being signalled here, as something more fundamental which takes the relationship between lifestyle and identity to its logical conclusion. These men will not help Susan because she has lost her identity. Although they know who she was, she no longer is that person, as poverty has dislocated the self which others see from the one she knows. What is left when the physical wealth of the house is gone are the affective ties of kinship, and they are often a debased coinage with which to bargain.¹¹¹ The play images high-status lifestyle, family, and individual identity as interdependent, and sees social status as defined by their combination. But it presents that relationship as easily fractured, and although that need not deny an innate superiority (Sir Charles is personally admirable even when in rags), it does prioritise domestic quality as the (unadmirably) valorised definition of status.

The benefits of the protective household, as negatively defined by the Mountfords' experience, are generously conferred by Frankford. When Anne and Wendoll enter his house on a permanent basis, they are given the fruits of his bounty. The latter is told to "use my table and my purse,/ They are yours"(IV, 65-6), and then, "I will allow you, sir./ Your man, your gelding, and your table"(70-2). To seal this generously one-sided bargain, he takes the new member of his household within to a meal with the words "Welcome to me forever"(84), and so defines his friend as his social equal, able to share the experience of Frankford's plenty. As identity was seen to be formed by and experienced in the quality of domestic life, so social position was to be understood in the comparison between the individual's own goods and the possessions of another. The near-parity of rank and the diversity of resources between the two men would immediately suggest a complex process of evaluation. Domestic objects and rituals which had previously stimulated envious comparison in Wendoll were now to be enjoyed by him, leading to the near-dissolution of the distinction between individuals which comparison produces.

Anne's benefits must be taken to be similar, her position as the lesser of two equals within marriage allowing her to use all the resources of the household. The presentation of the marriage celebrations and the quipping references to her dowry in the first scene point up the complex and readily understood meanings of marriage for women: the change of location and status. They bring to mind the pragmatic amalgamation of her inherited possessions in addition to her financial contribution to the shared household, and this would have meaning at almost every point in the social hierarchy. A twentieth-century audience has this spelt out explicitly for them after Anne's crime is discovered: incredulous about the reasons for her betrayal, Frankford asks her "Was it for want/ Thou playedst the strumpet? Was thou not supplied/ With every pleasure, fashion, and new toy./ Nay, even beyond my calling?"(XIII, 108-11), and his search for her possessions in his house after she has left demonstrates a need to undo the process of amalgamation. But these ideas must be present throughout her wooing by Wendoll and the discovery of the couple in the chamber for the full force of Frankford's betrayal to be felt.

When domestic spaces are particularised as specific rooms in this play, which they are more frequently and clearly than in any of the other works under consideration, the effect

¹¹¹ The final conclusions of this process can be seen in *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, where the husband explicitly

is achieved by setting them against one another. They are opposed both in terms of communal and reserved rooms, and of lower and higher status spaces. The opening scenes, for example, move from the parlour, where the bride and groom and immediate family and friends dance, to the hall where the local families are celebrating, to the yard where the servants are arguing over the tunes. The space is particularised in the dialogue: Sir Francis commands the couple “Into the hall! Away, go cheer your guests”(I, 74), and Jenkin announces “now that they are busy in the parlour...we’ll have a crash here in the yard”(II, 4-5).¹¹² The change in location must also be made immediately obvious by the change in costume of the two sets of dancers, location becoming a shorthand for status within the house. The rooms are constructed discursively, merely by naming, and their opposition functions only through a shared cultural understanding of their nature and social significance. On one level, few in the audience possessed a study, and Frankford’s relocation to it to decide upon his course of action would be an experience which they would have to imagine. The household was more complex than any they knew. The distinction between parlours and halls, however, would be one which the majority could comprehend as a memory of experience. In this case, the qualitative differences between the rooms and the appropriateness of particular actions within them could be brought to the presented action. There have been shown to be more rooms, historically, within the higher-status house, and they were seen in Chapter 2 to make a clearer differentiation between different actions possible. The dramaturgy here, the constant changing of scene for meals and the movement from one room to another, can be seen to characterise Frankford’s house as a complex domestic space. As well as varying the texture and pace of the action, such changes of place contribute to a definition of the nature of the high-status household.

The rooms work in relation to one another to form a symbiotic whole, and as such they echo the perceived nature of a household as a unit which functions only while its inhabitants fulfil their different roles within it. As each room is localised by mention of another to which people are moving, or in which different events are taking place, so the stage space represents one stratum of the household hierarchy, spatially positioned in relation to another. Their paths rarely cross as their use of space is contiguous rather than synchronic: one set of characters prepares rooms for another to use.

refers to his murdered children in terms of credit and debit.

Stage-space also represents the definition of public and private household areas through opposition. Wendoll alters the nature of the pending meal after Frankford leaves on his pretended journey by changing its spatial location: "We will not sup abroad so publicly./ But in your private chamber, Mistress Frankford"(XI, 91-2). It is now understood to be a different kind of occasion. Rather than a public manifestation of the bounty of the head of the household, the event becomes a private indulgence in its reserved and forbidden treasures. Rather than cementing the relations between friends around the table, it produces a splinter grouping of the couple around the bed. In such large houses, the communal rooms were understood to link semi-autonomous households such as that which Wendoll heads, and it was within them that the entirety of the whole was experienced and reinforced. The chambers, in contrast, allowed the individuality afforded by rank. Wendoll's explicit contrast between public and private must be seen as one between the communal responsibilities of the household and individual, selfish interest, and between its hospitably shared spaces and those of intimate designation. Anne was not included in the riches whose use he was offered, and there has been a confusion of the communal with the private, the metonym with the microcosm. Anne Frankford is seen by her lover as the single object offered in a deed of gift, as Alice Arden and Anne Sanders also are: their lovers view possession of the wife's body as symbolic of ownership of the household.

Within the main chamber of the house, of course, are its richest treasures. Both those items which sustain its running through their worth, such as money, deeds and leases, and the stored objects which maintain its status through their opulent display of cloths and metals for special occasions. A man of Wendoll's status would not be able to enter such a space, let alone make use of it, unless Frankford himself was present.

In his brief wooing of Anne, Wendoll sets her imagery of the maze of sin against his of the logical and immutable progression of entry into the house: "The path of pleasure, and the gate to bliss,/ Which on your lips I knock at with a kiss"(VI, 161-2). In doing so he makes clear the relationship between her body and the house itself. Through the location of her productive labours within its bounds she, like Alice Arden, is taken to be the fulcrum of domesticity. Through the bond between her honesty and the family's good name, the building-as-family becomes dependent upon the woman's chastity. One set of

¹¹² See also Scene VIII, when Nick finally confronts his master with his suspicions, where the latter has

spaces is mapped onto another.

At the opening of Scene XIII Frankford and Nick are forced to enter their own house as strangers in order to attain proof of the extent of Wendoll's invasion of spaces to which his social and domestic status does not permit him access. The tension of the scene is built by the graded stages of entry through four doors. Only the final one seems to have been realised on the stage, the others are symbolically present in the form of keys which Frankford tells as a narrative progression imitative of the spatial: "This is the key that opes my outward gate;/ This is the hall door; this my withdrawing chamber."(8-9). His familiarity with the space, and hence its personal, particular relationship to his identity, is signalled by the fact that he can tell each key from the others. This clearly demonstrates the legitimacy of his jurisdiction. The rooms decrease in size, recede from the external walls, increase in the value of their contents and contract in the numbers of individuals who have experienced events within their interior.

As Frankford brings to mind each room for the audience through the instrument of its security, the mystery of the reserved rooms of the house is reinforced by the disjuncture between his familiarity and their experience. For the audience, the sequence of the list, in situating their experience in relation to the progression of rooms, demands that at some stage along this journey they must begin to imagine: only the gentlemen and the richer citizens would have experience of a withdrawing chamber separate to a bedchamber. As their imagination is called upon, so their understanding of this space becomes one of their social exclusion, in addition to their sense of its intimate and personal nature. Unlike Wendoll, those who have no knowledge of such spaces are excluded from their mental visualisation, and this underlines the presumptuousness of his intrusion. For those who can imagine their own withdrawing chamber, the intrusion into such a visceral space must feel especially threatening.¹¹³

Although it should be Anne who is in command of the house when her husband leaves it.

been dining in the parlour, and the servants are on their way to the hall for their own meal.

¹¹³ One other door is mentioned prior to this list, and that is Cripplegate, which Nick says Frankford's doors must not match in the noise of their opening if his progress is to stay undetected. Brian Scobie, in his edition of the play, points out that this is the gate which spectators would pass through *en route* to the Red Bull, where the play is likely to have been put on. If this is so, then the audience are being asked to imagine the first spatial barrier as that which they came through on their way in, and the progression to the final irrefutable identification of sin begins with the decision to come to the play. The discovery, in other words, is both a spatial and a moral movement to understanding, and its relevance is widened to the point of total inclusivity.

she is merely given the task of communicating her abdication of responsibility to Wendoll. This transfer of command from the socially expected deputy to another man signals the complexity of the domestic arrangements which Frankford has constructed for himself. Wendoll is “To make bold in his absence and command/ Even as himself were present in the house”(VI, 74-5). The language used makes it clear that giving over command always involves a process of doubling. Wendoll is to pretend to be Frankford, to be, indeed, “a present Frankford in his absence”(79).¹¹⁴ The wife, as one body and one person with her husband, can take his place in the household hierarchy without calling its order into question. This house, however, effectively has two wives, brought into it within a small narrative space of one another, and given roughly equivalent privileges. When Frankford calls for his keys too to be doubled, concern must be generated by the counterfeiting of the methods of protecting the personal from the communal. Although he makes this move in order to reclaim control over the house by altering the terms of entry and egress, he effectively sets up two independent heads of the house, who function simultaneously, but whose jurisdiction is identical. The doubling is therefore seen to permit illusions of control, fantasies of illegitimate authority indulged in by those less privileged socially.

The failure of Frankford’s initial arrangement indicates that while hierarchy is undoubtedly a spatialised means of definition, it is not sufficient merely to take up a higher position in order to raise oneself. There clearly are ways of moving up, just as there are palpable ways of moving down its ranks, but sitting on the throne does not make a man a king. Critically for the functioning of the household, this is because each position is defined against that above it, and secured by that beneath it. The structures of rule demand that every level recognise the one above it as qualitatively distinct and rightfully superior. But Nick, representative of those below, is clearly not convinced by Wendoll’s potential as superior. The disparity between his view of the man and his master’s permits the play to explore Wendoll’s illegitimacy from below and above. Nick’s objective view of the social alterity of both men is, in the end, surer and more accurate than Frankford’s too-close appreciation of subtle difference.

The relationships between the layers of the domestic hierarchy in the play are characterised carefully. In order to legitimise the liberty Nicholas takes in reporting such

¹¹⁴ The confusion here is one between the role and the individual who fills it, similar to Mosby’s fantasies

scandalous information to his master in Scene VIII, he iterates his position in relation to Frankford: “Sir, I have served you long. You entertained me seven years before your beard. You knew me, sir, before you knew my mistress”(33-5). This seems less an impertinent attempt to undercut hierarchy than an explicit recognition that its effectiveness relies upon the relationship between status and affection, between social inferiority and the detailed knowledge of others produced by the domestic situation. The play’s normalising, stabilising vision of household is of differentiation within wholeness, imaged spatially in the nature of the house as different rooms contained within the same walls. Despite the differentiation of attitude towards and use of goods and spaces which ownership creates, individuals within the same household share the same place, their differently-angled perspectives converge upon the same points, and in doing so they produce the total image of such a house which is needed in order to operate effectively.

This is the community which *A Woman Killed With Kindness* offers, against which the domestic must be understood and controlled, as the community’s surveillance is an integral part of its nature.¹¹⁵ Once again the community takes on the role of audience – observers who note and interpret, and so judge the actions which they see. When Anne’s sin is discovered, the household members are arranged as an image to provoke the stirrings of repentance through the shame of exposure. In her night attire, the lady of the house faces her servants who cry in unison “Oh mistress, mistress, what have you done, mistress?”(XIII, 146). As they watch her, she explicates her own isolated, ill-clad image: “See what guilt is: here stand I in this place,/ Ashamed to look my servants in the face”(151-2). Their gaze is a moralising one which reverses the expected social hierarchies, and she is therefore unable to meet it, having no conventional social perspective from which to regard them. The household watches itself, and the division between subject and object which this creates within its smooth-running wholeness defines the impact of Anne’s crime upon it.

Concentrating on points of access to the house, and the relationships between different rooms, the preceding two plays have not attempted to replicate a coherent house shape on the stage. Critics have been doubtful about the uses of an upper and inner stage in this period for mimetic purposes. Richard Hosley suggests that the Elizabethan stage offered

about Arden’s throne-like chair.

no opportunities for “movement in depth” either in the discovery space or on the balcony above. Twentieth century directors, he says, “have tended...to invent non-documentable uses for [these spaces] such as the representation of domestic interiors that ‘in real life’ would have been found, respectively, on upper storeys and on the ground floor of Elizabethan buildings”.¹¹⁶ In other words they have used the possibilities which the different parts of the stage offer as a tool for the mimetic representation of the spatial relationships of domesticity. The 1601 edition of Robert Yarrington’s *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, however, indicates that the spatialising potential of the balcony in particular was an important part of the making of meaning in this text.

Thomas Merry’s hastily conceived and brutally executed murder plan is sketched out for the audience in soliloquy: “Ile fetch him to my house,/ And in my garret quickly murther him”(B3). Feigning a group of friends who wish to have his company, the innkeeper lures Beech up the stairs of his house. “*Then being in the upper Rome Merry strikes him in the head fifteene times*”. Following Merry’s picking of the pockets of the corpse, his sister, entering below, then exits “up” to see what he is doing (B4). After a brief conversation with her brother, Rachel descends again, but Williams, their servant, saying “Ile know the cause wherefore we are undone” insists on seeing what is happening, and exits up, followed by the woman (“She goes up”, B4v). It seems clear that the murder itself is to take place above, and the toing and froing to the balcony sets the location of the crime in a very interesting spatial relationship to the stage space below.

The location of the murder and the body which it produces divide the space between the upper and lower planes. The upper floor of the house, top-heavy with its weight of actors, must appear almost separable from the area below. Although the audience can see it clearly, the way to it is via the stairs they cannot see. Obviously this would be taken as read in the majority of situations, the focus on the stage as street, and the mimetic logic of the upper floor, encourage a reading of the stairs as a part of the private house. The murder room is then comprehensible but unreachable, concealed from the other characters by its distance from the doors. This is reinforced later in the play when the

¹¹⁵ In every way Frankford’s house is self-sufficient. That which is outside it is characterised as nothingness, as the placeless wilderness. But even such a wilderness is owned by Frankford, and it forms the (hierarchised) way from his central property to a peripheral one.

¹¹⁶ Richard Hosley, ‘The Playhouses’, in J. Leeds Barroll, Alexander Leggatt, Richard Hosley and Alvin Kernan eds., *The Revels History of Drama in England, Vol. III, 1576-1613*, Methuen, 1975, pp. 119-237, pp. 232-4.

salter's man is sent knocking on all the doors of the street to see if he recognises the person to whom he sold the bag in which Beech is found. Merry tells Rachel to "Hide thee *above* least that the Salters man,/ Take notice of thee that thou art the maide./ And by that knowledge we be all undone"(G3v). In Merry's conception of the situation, the further Rachel can move from the street the less chance there is that the crime will be discovered.

As, in the depositions, the open shop window on a Sunday was provocative to the moralised connection between private behaviour and its public consequences. so too is the façade of the house, mediating as it does between the domestic and the communal. The opposing tropes of the relationship between the two offered in the court: the inviolability of the claim to an unobserved interior, and the community penetrating the house through doors and windows, are vital to an understanding of the spatial organisation of this play. Merry's comprehension of his domestic space is in the former terms: he considers physical distance from the street to be synonymous with social invisibility, an inviolable space which can remain unseen. The play's moral project is quite explicitly a refutation of this interpretation, and a defence of the trope of the façade as point of access, rather than screen to action.

Merry's second murder, of Beech's boy Thomas Winchester as he sits in his master's shop door, draws a crowd in its wake. Thomas's cries are heard by a maid who runs to tell her master. He in turn calls to Beech's landlord who lives above the shop and who appears at a window to answer him, where he is told to "come down with speede"(C4). Loney, the landlord, is described as "sleeping" (he adds to the confusion of the scene by calling out "What would you have some Mustard?"), and those entering the stage presumably signal night-time by the state of their attire and by carrying torches.¹¹⁷ Having pulled himself together, Loney restores order decisively: "The night growes late, and we will have this course/ Be watch'd all night, to morrow we shall see,/ Whence sprang this strange uncivill crueltie"(C4v). The first murder threw Merry's own house into disarray as his man felt morally obliged to leave him; the second brings disorder to the street, and that street stands, as it did in *Arden of Faversham*, for the surrounding community. As murder was antithetical to the protective and nurturing space of the household, so it is in opposition to the ethos of urban life, 'uncivil' being in every way contrary to the idealised

¹¹⁷ See Dessen, *Conventions*, pp. 40-3.

notion of community.¹¹⁸

Meaning is made, in this play, through contingent spatial relations, rather than static binaries between spaces: the communal confusion of this latter scene, and its moral consequences, are set up spatially by the relationship between the individual premises, the window above, and the street itself. It is the movement between these three areas which creates a sense of rupture, defined against the façade of the street, here visualised by the tiring-house wall. The different levels, rather than representing the less easily accessed areas of an individual house, can here be seen to define the relationship between the personal and the communal. The fact that action outside has implications for those indoors, and vice versa, is emphatically demonstrated by the morally significant breach of the barrier which divides the one from the other. The relationship between the house and the community is uniquely represented in this play, then, through a mimetic spatial positioning, but it is the moral implications of this ‘authentic’ representation which define the play’s didactic project, and they are revealed by the deposition tropes.

From the outset, the language of murder is dominated by images of the act’s suppression which, as they mount upon one another throughout the play, signal the futility of the search for secrecy. Merry is led from his assertion that “none can open what I meane to hide” to the realisation that “his boy will say I fetcht him foorth”. By murdering the boy too he hopes to avoid that channel of discovery, but is faced by further impediments to secrecy: “But then my sister, and my man at home”. However, for love and reward respectively, he convinces himself that they will conceal his “close intent” (B3). The images of an idealised secrecy for sinful deeds reach their height as Williams tries to resolve the dilemma of a loyalty divided between his love for the fallible master of his household and his duty to the instruments of an uncompromising justice which takes no account of circumstance. With his friend Cowley, he travels to “some unfrequented place,/ Where none shall here nor see my lamentations”(F4v). It is important that there should be no public record of his pain, as this will instigate a search for a motive for his emotions on the part of those who observe it. Indeed it is Williams’s “heavy looks” and his “eyes brimfull of teares” which have suggested a silence in his friendship with

¹¹⁸ *OED* definition 5 of uncivil gives a first date of 1597 for “Not in accordance with civic unity; contrary to civil well-being” from Beard, *Theatre of God’s Judgement* (Adams, *Homiletic*, p. 42). The newness of such a word, and its perceived applicability to this situation, is significant here.

Cowley in the first place as they bear “testimony of some secret grief”(F4).¹¹⁹

In similar idiom to Rachel’s terminology of silence (she “conceals” what others might “open”), Cawley advises Williams to “Reveale” his secret (F4). At the quiet spot he begs him to “Open this close fast clasped mysterie”(H3v), and the truth is imaged as an object kept close to the person, locked away in the inner parts of their body. In the other narrative of the play, this is figured in terms of the parity between house and body. Fallario is aware of the vulnerability inherent in sharing secrets with others: “I would not ope the closet of my brest,/ To let you know my close intention”(Dv). This image also helps to explicate Williams’s dilemma to the audience. He is unwilling to tell the truth to Cowley unless he is “assur’d my heart should have release,/ Of secret torment”, in other words he will not tell him just to propagate the facts of the murder, he must be sure that some resolution will be forthcoming which will bring equilibrium through justice to the situation. He is aware that as soon as he shares his secret with another it will have a power he cannot control, and this makes both him and Merry vulnerable to a reshaping of the facts.¹²⁰

Finally, the mention of the closet reminds the audience that Williams will lose, whichever action he takes. Already made homeless by his inability to share a violated domestic space “With him whose love is dearer then my life”(H3), he becomes frustrated with Cowley’s attempts to guess the truth of the situation: “No, no, your understanding is but dimme,/ That farre remooved, cannot judge the feare”(H3v). There is an acknowledgement here that the experience of a shared household cannot be entirely understood from the outside as it is impossible to imagine the affective ties which bind its individuals together, impossible literally to imagine oneself inside that space. This is the particularity of circumstance which muddies the clarity of justice seen from outside the context of the crime, and complicates the clean lines of its decisions.

Because each individual household is so complex in its organisation, because there are secrets and suppressions within it, and between it and the outside world, it marks “the

¹¹⁹ For similar reasons, Merry tells Rachel “To make no shew of any discontent,/ Nor use too many words to any one”(F3v).

¹²⁰ The related but in some ways opposed meanings of ‘privy’; *OED* definition 6, “clandestine, furtive, surreptitious, sly” and therefore undisclosed; 3, “intimacy, familiarity”; and 4, “intimately acquainted with or accessory to some secret transaction”, offer a useful gloss on the dangers of even a minor revelation.

threshold and the vanishing point of power's efficacy".¹²¹ Although cultural assumptions are easily made about the nature and operation of the households of others, based on the status of the householder, the particular nature of the *individual* household is unattainable to the imagination. It is also, therefore, incomprehensible to the operations of justice in its infinite diversity. The policing of the household is seen in this play as a work of co-operation between those within and those without, the former having first to do the work of interpreting interpersonal relations and judging them in general terms. The sense of mutual responsibility which the staging of the play accentuates provides an insistent theatrical response to a particularly urban set of moral problems.

In line with such a project, the audience are encouraged to read the bodies of Merry's victims as images with a coherent and powerful meaning. Rachel notes the nature of his first corpse as representation, referring to it as "This timelesse [o]ugly map of crueltie"(C3), a spatialised image which defines the nature of his crime. In the extraordinary scenes of stage display in which brother and sister first relocate Beech and cover him in faggots, and then chop him into two more easily manageable halves, the audience is given ample opportunity to observe the consequences of the crime. Merry himself refers to the body as "The spectacle of inhumanity"(D2v), and the community, represented by the neighbours, realise the potential of such a sight to move the guilty to revelation of their crimes.¹²² They give instructions following the death of his second victim: "Bring forth the boy, that we may see his wounds...*They survey his woundes*"(D3v). This lengthy piece of business, coming just after Merry's own strategy first to cover and then to disperse the remains of Beech, enlarges the metaphorical interest in the relationship between concealing and revealing and its effects upon both individual and community. The 'map' and the 'spectacle' are both ways of displaying social information to others: they allow the manifestation of power and/or allegiance to a wider audience.¹²³ As such public proclamations they demand attention and interpretation.

With Beech laid in front of his own house the boy finally dies and the neighbours order

¹²¹ Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage, License, Play and Power in Renaissance England*, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 43, hereafter *Place of the Stage*, where he uses the phrase to describe figures which personify the "ambivalent displays of power" for which places on the margins provide a forum.

¹²² See also *Yorkshire Tragedy*, where the husband is moved past the static display of his crimes on the stage as a narrative progression which completes his repentance.

¹²³ Once again, map can be interpreted in many different ways: *OED* has as geographical representation, and "a detailed representation in epitome", but the inventories clearly showed that it is often taken simply to mean an image, often of arms.

the women to “Bring him foorth too, perchance the murtherers/ May have their hearts touched with due remorse,/ Viewing their deeds of damned wickednesse”(G3). The street which, as the play opened, was a thoroughfare of small commercial ventures, open for customers, has now become a stage on which to display the maps of cruelty and the plots of wickedness. All who go by (and a street ensures a quantity of “passengers”(G3) some of whom may have information to give) may read the evidence and either take warning from it, or be changed by it and confess. When both bodies are set out here as a kind of civic pageant, they must resonate for the audience with other public events: not only public executions and the display of corpses, but also more parochial instances of spatial practice such as slander. The pernicious nature of the latter crime was characterised by the courts as its effect upon the reputation of the victim through the use of communal space to publicise it. It was the relevance of the display to its context which made meaning, slanderers being understood to be trying to alter the perception of as many of their victims neighbours as possible by using the street as their performance space. Merry’s neighbours can then be seen to exploit the street’s perceived nature as context for communally relevant meaning, in the hope of inducing repentance by displaying the workings of providence.¹²⁴

Neighbour 4 issues a verbal proclamation that if the watermen see a body “Floting in any place about the Thames,/ That straight they bring it unto Lambert hill,/ Where Beech did dwell when he did live in health”(D3). The body is to be returned to his local area because the crime was committed, and therefore it is here that an explanation for it will be found. This is perceived to be a local issue, engendered by local emotions and perpetrated by local hands.

The playwright is careful to particularise the places to which Merry takes the parts of Beech’s body. Paris Garden ditch and “some darke place nere to Bainardes castle”(F3v) each receive half of the corpse.¹²⁵ These co-ordinates on a map of London demonstrate to the audience the distance which the murderer hopes to put between his own street and the

¹²⁴ The domestic equivalent of such a move is demonstrated by Frankford when he calls for Anne’s children to be brought onto the stage.

¹²⁵ Paris Garden, the site of the chief bear-bating until it collapsed in 1583 (Harbage, *Shakespeare’s Audience*, p. 84, lists those killed or injured), was on the South Bank of the river close to the Swan Theatre. This puts it slightly to the West of Baynard’s Castle, which was on the waterfront below St Paul’s, and only two streets to the West of Lambert Hill where Beech lived. The places where the body was dumped are marked on the engraving of the city from Braun and Hogenberg’s *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, 1572.

evidence, and therefore the limits which he puts upon the authority of his community and the vigilance of justice. Secrecy, as the concealment of crime, comes to mean that no one knows who has committed the murder, rather than that no one knows there has been one: that the convenient line of footprints in the snow which tied Arden's house to the place where his body lay can be disrupted, rubbed out by the passage of hundreds of feet in a town the size of London. The play works to deny Merry's hope that the relationship between crime and context will be confused by the size of the population and the anonymity offered by the breadth of the town's liberties.

Placed after the scene in which Williams looks for a private place in which to indulge his grief, the confusion of the waterman who assumes that the bag he has found is the off-cuts of an execution ties the discovery of the body to the opposingly public face of justice: "because he [the hangman] thought too much of his labour to set this head upon the bridge, and the legs upon the gates, he flings them in the streete for men to stumble at"(G). The appalling disorder and carelessness with life and law is also signalled comically by their slapstick routine with the body parts. A Gentleman then appears with the rest of the pieces, discovered by his water spaniel as he was out shooting. Different parts of the city, different kinds of men from different walks of life, engaged in labour and leisure, work together to the common purpose of the reconstitution of Beech, and with it the first step towards to restoration of a fractured civil order.

The play demonstrates these scenes of communal co-operation spatially as a movement of people across the stage, encompassing the whole area in their common purpose, leaving no corner unsearched. They are set against the isolated attempts of Merry and Rachel to cover their tracks, which happen in secret and in the night: an individual tracing a solitary route across the dark places of the town as opposed to the hue and cry of collective action. At the end, however, it must be a combination of the personal and the common which convicts Merry. When the constable arrests him, he tells him that Williams "hath confest,/ The manner how, and where, the deede was done"(I2). Although the searches of the townsmen produced the evidence, the only way to tie it to the crime itself, that which took place within the private space of an individual's household, was for the human parts of the domestic whole to display the wrong within it to the community. The moral project of the drama, utilising its audience's experience of urban life to play on

concerns about urban space, concludes that even the workings of providence can only return the body. Those who understood the human context of the corpse's pitiful state are morally compelled to turn their attentions outward to justice.

4.iii.d. Characters: spatial links and divisions

This final section deals with cultural preoccupations which, as they motivate the conclusions of the plays, are implicated in the audience's response to the didactic aims which the drama achieves. The section investigates the representation of ways of circumventing the rules which are generated by the relationship between space and social hierarchy. It considers those cases where the rules are broken because of the primacy of moral superiority over social superiority, and the attitude which the plays demonstrate towards those who try to cheat: to use the nature of the urban landscape to advance their own social position.

In the final chapter of *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition* Robert Weimann examines "the constant efforts of the Elizabethan dramatist and actor to keep the play in close touch with the audience's response".¹²⁶ He sees these partly in terms of the interplay between action which was "nonillusionistic and near the audience", and "a more illusionistic, localized action", taking place, for instance, in a discovery space.¹²⁷ He considers the localising powers of dialogue, with their "illusionistic modes of causality and locality", and the opposingly "neutral position[s]" of "monologue or aside" from which a character could collaborate with the audience.¹²⁸ From the latter place the character "offered a special perspective to the audience", that of an individual "less inclined to accept the assumptions – social, ideological, and dramatic – of the localized action".¹²⁹

Understanding the heritage of stage space as rooted in a liturgical practice developed by the mystery plays out of ecclesiastical binaries such as heaven and hell also allows Weimann to conclude that "spatial position assumes a moral function".¹³⁰

If we imagine a contemporary perception of the significance of Weimann's explication of a division of the stage into its own spectacle with its own interpretative audience, then we can conceive it as setting up visual connections to the spatial tropes of court discourse. It

Historic Towns, Vol. III, London, Oxford University Press, 1989.

¹²⁶ Weimann, *Popular*, p. 210.

¹²⁷ Weimann, *Popular*, p. 212.

¹²⁸ Weimann, *Popular*, pp. 218-20.

¹²⁹ Weimann, *Popular*, p. 222.

is then possible to envisage stage space as underscoring the experience of inclusion and exclusion, of social intercourse and isolation. The morality of sin and redemption might be combined with a discourse of concealment and revelation, as the audience's awareness of dramatic convention resonates with a familiar social practice, informing their understanding of the physical relations between the actors on the stage.

One aspect of the realistic portrayal of the domestic interior in these plays is the relationship between the space occupied by servants and that enjoyed by their superiors. In nature, of course, they are the same areas, but the quality of their experience of them is portrayed very differently. There are several points at which the servants have the stage to themselves, but this space is always at the beck and call of the 'rooms beyond the doors', from which orders are issued. As a group they are characterised by brief snatches of conversation and almost constant movement. Such demands on time, which mean that personal actions cannot be attended to from start to finish, provide a way of characterising Thomas Merry's social frustration and therefore the motivation for his crimes. He has problems committing the murder in the first place because guests are due to arrive at his house for their meal: as he leaves Rachel says "I pray you stay not long./ Guesse will come in, 'tis almost supper time"(B3v). This is a narrative trope familiar from the court, where it is used to characterise the sexual sins of women as interstitial. Those who are socially disadvantaged are seen to have little time for their own needs, and hence little private space in which to conduct personal activities.

Scene III of *Arden of Faversham* is an example of the relative control which servants and masters are shown as exercising over the stage. It opens with the comic rendition of Michael's letter to Susan, lengthy in the unskilled complexity of its erroneous prose. Before he begins to read, however, Arden and Franklin enter and listen to him, the former breaking in at the end with abuse: "Why, you paltry knave,/ Stand you here loitering, knowing my affairs,/ What haste my business craves to send to Kent?"(18-20). The relationship between the socially superior observers and the inferior performer is stressed by Arden's unceremonious and angry deflation of both Michael's pride and, presumably, the audience's laughter. By observing the parody of a love letter, the two men stress an intellectual hierarchy in addition to the social one. But the audience's position with relation to the space of acting and that of watching must be complex: although the heavy-

¹³⁰ Weimann, *Popular*, p. 232.

handedness of the parody ensures their amusement at Michael's efforts, the unsympathetic nature of the intervention by Arden and its slightly sanctimonious repetition by Franklin is equivocal.

In addition there is the ironic import of the letter, not, as Arden thinks, a trifling matter of a love triangle between inferiors which frustrates his business, but, as the audience knows, the generation of several plots against his life. The letter is simultaneously the source of laughter and death, and the observation of its reading provides a point in the play when the audience's identification with and sympathy for Arden is severely tested. The equivocation of the presentation is predicated upon the differences between the experience of the privileged and the non-privileged, and it opens out a space in the representation for differing empathetic responses on the part of audience members who recognise different sides of such a social situation. Presumably at the front of the stage, reading to the audience, Michael thought he had the time and space to woo and to entertain. The audience, however, are aware that this is circumscribed and eventually curtailed by the master whom they can see behind him. Arden, at this moment at least, controls both Michael's time and his movements.¹³¹

Understanding these differences in spatial authority which come with an individual's hierarchical position within a household explicates the actions of Wendoll in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*. Offered the use of Frankford's table and purse, and then his own 'man, gelding and table' (IV, 71), Wendoll is first invited into the house as a whole and then given a microcosmic equivalent of it. This must be understood in terms of a site of contemporary concern over the relation of jurisdiction to authority, linked to the limited command available to a wife in her husband's absence. Frankford proposes to share his household with a man who can be neither as subservient as a wife must be, unable to command in his presence; nor exactly equal to him as he does not own the house itself, and its services are only on loan (however permanent) to him.

Scene VI, the first in which the permanent guest exercises the space of his new domestic situation, is crucial to an understanding of the problems inherent in Frankford's invitation. Wendoll enters to give a soliloquy which mirrors that of his host two scenes

¹³¹ See also Scene X, when Michael and Clarke fight, where he is reprimand by Alice: "Have you no other time to brabble in/ But now when serious matters are at hand"(76-7), this time for neglecting to pursue her business of murder.

previously, on the subject of the virtues of the same woman. He is painfully aware that it is his close proximity to Anne which is at the heart of his problems:

I will arm myself
 Not to entertain a thought of love to her;
 And when I come by chance into her presence,
 I'll hale these balls until my eye-strings crack,
 From being pulled and drawn to look that way.(12-16)

No regular domestic situation would result in his sharing the intimate space of the house alone with a woman his social equal, to whom he is heavily indebted and yet unrelated in terms of kinship. Their spatial relationship upon the stage must be understood by the audience to be extraordinary. The suggestion of such a daily experience of her, the constant possibility of finding her alone as he enters a room, characterises the intensity of the spatial relations of a household by its stress upon visual presence. Dramaturgically, this is underlined by Anne, Frankford and Nick's appearance '*over the stage*', demonstrating the chance encounter. Standing on a part of the stage separated from him by their own internalising interest, their self-sufficiency as a household group is defined spatially. Anne is the eternally present other, whose social experience he is excluded from, and yet proximate to.

As close observation of Beech creates Merry's jealousy, so Wendoll is stimulated to desire by being able to see but not enjoy Anne. Within the community, the envious can to a certain extent be spared the frequent experience of their insufficiency: Beech need not, for example, have told Merry about his money. Within the household, however, there is no way of disguising the display of wealth, for which purpose its communal rooms are designed. And display, as an invitation to comparison, makes explicit the differences between individuals.

Watching the passing parade of the responsibilities of reciprocity, Wendoll is himself watched by Jenkin. The servant, taking up a position unseen on the edge of the space of privilege, gives a perspective on both of the other groups of actors. Nearest to the audience, his spatial distance from Frankford and his wife constructs the divisions of the stage as hierarchised removes from authority. As Wendoll explains the relationship between himself and Frankford: "He doth maintain me; he allows me largely/ Money to spend"(27-8), so Jenkin draws parallels to his own relation of service: "By my faith, so do not you me; I cannot get a cross of you"(29-30). The implications are clear. Wendoll's

household, comprising Jenkin and Sorrel the mare, fits inside Frankford's like a Russian doll: the space in which he watches is watched by the servant, it is finally owned, as Jenkin's eventual allegiance is, by Frankford himself. So although Wendoll can command, he does so within the compass of the other man's authority. Jenkin himself aggressively jokes at the end of the play, "What shall I serve you still, or cleave to the old house?"(XVI, 115-6), both of them were subservient to Frankford, and Wendoll's epithet of "slave" for Jenkin attempts to assert a superior, even though ultimately circumscribed status.

"The old house" is the key term here: there was only ever one physical house, and Wendoll was given a gift which he could never really enjoy because his spatial command was an illusion.¹³² This is a problem which is characteristic of high-status houses, where different permutations of families live under one roof, but with the possibility of a particular kind of autonomy facilitated by the size and organisation of the domestic space. It is not the distinction between the public and the private which is seen as threatened in the play, but that between the personal and the communal. Although this is an issue with its roots in a particular social situation, its manifestation as a distinction between use and ownership has interesting parallels with the experience of servitude.

When Anne is banished, she, like her lover, is given an allotment of goods from the old house as her own: "Take with thee all thy gowns, all thy apparel... Choose thee a bed and hangings for a chamber;/ Take with thee everything that hath thy mark"(XIII, 160-5). Partly she is to remove all the objects which her husband associates with her, but these also enable her to set up her own house in miniature, of a similar status to his own as its goods were a part of it. She is to take all that she brought to the marriage, all that came from her own household (marked with her name), and to relocate it in a reduced version of the house.

The parallels to the language of a husband's last will are unmistakable here. She is to behave as though he was dead to her and she to him, to take her widow's provision and thence dissolve the affective attrition of daily contact which Wendoll also found so

¹³² In contrast, when Sir Francis finally takes Susan on reasonable terms he says to her brother "Your metamorphised foe receives your gift"(XIV, 141). Changed by the action of giving, from someone who lacks to someone who has the potential to command the thing they desired, he can 'enjoy' his bride because her role as his wife outranks her role as Charles's sister. Together, the couple can begin a relationship in their own physical space.

difficult. As a husband mindful of domestic disorder should, Frankford makes provision for a personal space for Anne within his holdings. The outlying manor which she is given is still in his possession, but it is not directly *overseen* by him. As such, he gives her a space of her own, a female equivalent of the study to which he retired to pass judgement, in which she is to contemplate her situation. Frankford recognises the usefulness of a personal space within the household's bounds of ownership as a site of self-knowledge for his wife, but it is left to the audience to make the connection, through their understanding of the widow's provision and the division between ownership and use, to the impossible complication inherent in the domestic arrangements which he initially proposed for Wendoll.

The visual proximity of Frankford, Anne and Nick to the outsider is set against the impossibility of moving between the two spaces. Distance is rhetorically constructed by Anne's words when she does meet Wendoll: "We sought about the house,/ Hallowed into the fields, sent every way"(69-70). The space in which the audience had observed him was a non-mimetic one of his own thoughts, of course, but it must also be seen as the position of the observer, the distanced watcher whose situation is guaranteed by invisibility and yet impoverished by the inability to intervene.

Wendoll's position as watcher of Anne demonstrates to the audience the dangers of the visual objectification of women which is available to an outsider. Browne describes Anne Sanders similarly for the audience: "Yonder she sits to light this obscure streete,/ Like a bright diamond worne in some darke place"(343-4). As she is as clearly visible upon the stage as he is, his explication of her image becomes a way of objectifying her, of calling the audience's attention to her as an object of his affections, as a character who is never given her own volition, with even her capitulation represented as dumb-show. His gaze is simultaneously alterior and parasitic. Women are to stay within the house because on the street they become just such an image for men to objectify: an image divorced from a context of their domestic and familial relations, and hence independent in the sense of being unprotected, available.

Within the house there should be no division between subject and object of the vision unless there is a breach in expected behaviour. The play pairs Wendoll and Nick as watchers, the latter's activities being legitimised by the former's strange behaviour. Stallybrass and White's identification of a politicised division at the fair is modified in

the light of contemporary evidence for the relationship between the spaces of actor and observer. They state that “the subordinate classes become the object of a gaze constituting itself as respectable and superior by substituting observation for participation”.¹³³ Observation as opposed to involvement sets the individual in a superior relation to that which they observe. But the depositions demonstrated that when this relationship is moralised: when the watcher is *morally* superior to the object of their gaze, it cuts through the social hierarchy. Servants who watch their masters or mistresses engaged in sinful activities can override the usual domestic hierarchies. Nick’s role within the play is as a commentator very much in the mould which Weimann identified. But seen in these terms the ‘assumptions’ which he is ‘less inclined to accept’ are those of the social hierarchy. This reversal is able to be represented as simultaneously destructive of domestic order and restorative of communal harmony.

The different ways in which servants and their masters use space is also represented as a pragmatic division between those who command and those who prepare. The laying of tables, for instance, is directed by the heads of the household, but it is undertaken by their inferiors. In *Arden of Feversham* it is Michael who leaves to prepare chambers (III, 127), who walks onto the stage for just long enough to be sent off again to make beds and check tides (VI, 3-4). *A Woman Killed With Kindness* has the largest array of serving persons, and their actions are directed by Frankford even when he is not present on the stage. Due partly to the nature of staging practice in such a theatre, the domestic scenes are often constructed in view of the audience,¹³⁴ but these plays exploit necessity to make a point about the nature of the domestic environment. They show it as carefully constructed, demonstrating both the complexities of a display of wealth and the technical competence of the servants.

When Frankford is accosted by his servant and told of his wife’s infidelity, in the scene discussed above, the encounter takes place in a space of service. Both he and Nick are *en route* to social events which are put on hold for their presence. The other servants have gone off through one door to lay the table in the hall, and Frankford has entered through the other, having come from the parlour where he has been dining. Their exchange, situated between the parlour and the hall and occurring between two meals, nestles within

¹³³ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White ‘The Fair, the Pig, Authorship’, in Stallybrass and White eds., *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, 1986, p.42.

a domestic space not designed for a man of Frankford's status. It is located within the house, but defined only in relation to those rooms which it is not. We see the house at this point from a place which is traversed rather than inhabited, much as the stage itself is, without the illusory permanence of the prop. The very absence of the properties, fresh in the mind from their recent exit with the servants who are about to lay the table, sharpens the audience's perception of the space as an unlocated one. Implicit in the positioning of Frankford in such a liminal place without property is the unsettling feeling that his social standing is compromised. While even his wife and her lover can command the public areas of the house in Scene XI, he is reduced to inhabiting its comfortless passageways. He is forced there by the deceits which sin necessitates for both the guilty and those who expose them, which throw all spatial definitions of status into disarray.

Frankford's action as he enters the stage, brushing the crumbs from his clothing, is a gesture which suggests the private man, the self which stands behind the persons.¹³⁵ Whereas the parade of goods with which the scene opened was about self-conscious, prepared, constructed definition, this is about the imperfections of reality. The implication is that Frankford has relaxed, that his personae have slipped away, and that he is here for us as the private man. Ironically, as he begins his conversation with Nick, he feels secure enough within his house, in control of both the goods which fill it and the people who inhabit it, to relax his public image.

The hierarchised division between production and consumption of space is seen in *A Warning For Fair Women*, too, as one between the honest, straightforward presentation of the mechanics of social life and the complex, artful form of public display. As Browne awaits justice we watch the physical construction of the display of equity from the underside. Two officers come in to "wel prepare this place"(2160), to alter the space from a part of the stage with the potential to become anywhere to the specific arena of the court, and in doing so to build anticipation of its importance. As Anne Sanders waits for her death her repentance is prompted by a sudden comprehension of the method and impending arrival of her demise. Wil and Tom, two carpenters under Newgate, idly

¹³⁴ See for example Scene VIII of *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, and the dumb show in *A Warning For Fair Women*.

¹³⁵ A private moment, with its own symbolic ritual involving domestic properties is what is being signalled here, as opposed to the dramatic presentation of interiority of character. See Dessen, *Conventions*, p. 3, where he points out that the 'as from dinner' convention often included a napkin and the brushing of crumbs. Its conventional nature need not, of course, negate its mimetic qualities.

discuss the manufacture of her gallows within hearing of her prison cell (2525-2549). These cameos of comic underclass life are related to the actions of the domestic servants in that they prepare the spaces in which the other characters are to act, they define them for their superiors, and in doing so they allow the audience to see those spaces from the other side, from the reverse. Such men cannot see the wider picture, their vision is often limited to the task in hand, but the bounded perspective which they offer is one of the integrity of early modern space as a meeting point between maker and user, controlled and controller, suppressed and displayed, back and front, lower and upper end of the hierarchy.

Two Lamentable Tragedies characterises these spaces behind the scene differently, however. At the point where a search of the underside of life is instigated in response to the extraordinary nature of crime, they are seen as potentially divisive:

Then let commaundement every where be given,
That sinkes and gutters, privies, crevises,
And every place, where blood may be conceald,
Be thoroughly searcht, swept, washt, and neerely sought,
To see if we can finde the murther out (D3)

These are the seams of the city, the places in-between which normally escape attention because they are ‘non-spaces’; linked to the removal of that which the city no longer needs, the excrement of urban life. As they are opposed in every way to the normal arenas for display, as they stand behind them, offering to transport from the surface the by-products of social life, so they are ideal for concealing crime. Their capacity for shrouding evidence is increased by their cultural invisibility, and this makes them likely to be literally overlooked.

These scenes implicitly suggest that social life is a complex intercourse which translates public communication into a series of more or less mannered, symbolic exchanges. In doing so, the plays engage with contemporary debates about the nature of social experience. Jean-Christophe Agnew, in *Worlds Apart*, considers the prevalence of concerns over the decline in ‘transparency’ of social relations. He sees these anxieties reflected in the altered use of the metaphor of the *Theatrum Mundi*, which lost its medieval connotations as an image of the vanity and futility of human life, and became instead a symbol of the “multiple purposes” of human beings, which “invited the

penetrating, ‘voyeuristic’ scrutiny of an absorbed yet critically distanced other”.¹³⁶

As “Persons and things inwardly *are*”, but “persons and things outwardly only *seem*”, the visible is a sham,¹³⁷ and as such offers a site for discrepancy, dishonesty, and social confusion if not anarchy. With the visual world’s status as an allegory of that which lies within in doubt, the signs which allow individuals to judge their own place and that of others within social hierarchies also become unreliable. Clothes and suits of arms cannot be depended upon as insignia of rank,¹³⁸ and social relations become little more than the deceitful posturings of those who would pretend, for their own benefit, to be what they are not.¹³⁹

Arden of Faversham is the play most clearly concerned with the relationship between social life and acting, and Alice explicitly shows herself to be aware of the independent power of the social image, and its relationship to her reputation. She makes clear reference to this system of the moral quantification of individuals by their public actions as one which is controlled by the courts. When Arden throws down the poisoned broth, she vows, “Now will I be convinced [convicted] or purge myself”(373). She recognises the court as the ultimate interpreter of social actions, final judge of their authenticity, although she clearly considers herself able to manipulate their ways of making meaning.

Social dissembling is rife in the play, and theatrical metaphors abound. Mosby congratulates Alice on her quick thinking when she nearly persuades her husband not to go to London, “Ay, Alice, and it was cunningly performed”(I, 419); he asks for her leave “to play your husband’s part”(637-8) once he has left. Both Dolan and Schutzman take Alice’s description of her experience as the abused wife to Greene as a ploy to secure his involvement in the plot, as it is unsubstantiated in the narrative. The latter sees her as constructing “a fictional ‘private life’ and neatly expos[ing] it to public view”.¹⁴⁰ Alice

¹³⁶ Agnew, *Worlds Apart*, p. 60.

¹³⁷ Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 5.

¹³⁸ Agnew, *Worlds Apart*, p. 72.

¹³⁹ Other scholars have noted similar shifts, although they have not always linked them so explicitly to changes in economic processes. Maus finds that by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, “the sense of discrepancy between ‘inward disposition’ and ‘outward appearance’ seems unusually urgent and consequential for a very large number of people, who occupy virtually every position on the ideological spectrum”. Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 13. See also Orlin, *Public Matters*, p. 92; Mullaney, *Place of the Stage*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ Schutzman, ‘Suspended Moment’, p. 300, see also Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p. 55. In reading the text in this way, of course, they make a silent division of their own: accepting only what the audience actually sees as dramatic truth, and taking that which is merely rhetorically present as a construct with a duplicitous potential similar to that with which the play imbues social action.

retells a culturally familiar female tale as her own experience, and in doing so she provides a complementary role for Greene himself, that of her deliverer; a morally righteous part which he is able to take up as a relational position to her own feigning.

Schutzman describes Alice and Mosby's walk down the street arm in arm to meet Arden as a "constructed spectacle".¹⁴¹ In the play it is set up in opposition to her husband's expectations: "Come, Franklin, let us strain to mend our pace/ And take her unawares playing the cook"(XIII, 72-3). As opposed to this image of the domestic role, Alice chooses to present one of an "Injurious strumpet and...[a] ribald knave"(78), of herself playing the whore in the open street. Schutzman says "she is able to salvage the situation by deftly manipulating the meaning of her spectacle",¹⁴² but the gap between image and gloss had always been the point of the exercise, the trap into which she hoped her husband would walk. She asks him "what folly blinded thee?"(88), substituting the confusion of her explanation for the flawlessness of his vision.

This text deals with the threatening consequences of a gap between external signs and their internal meanings, the relationship which is at the heart of the forms of proof which the legal system demands. In *A Warning For Fair Women* Drury's cozenage of Anne Sanders works in the same way, taking Anne's hand as an image and reading a meaning into her text. Like the yellow spots which Anne herself considers to be a portent of anger, Drury's meanings are all presented as though "manifest as day"(674), as "characters" which "signify" events in the future. In *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, Frankford, faced with information about his wife's infidelity, compares her outward appearance with the possibility of an inner duplicity. To him she is "modest, chaste and godly"(VIII, 104), so he must ask himself "Is all this seeming gold plain copper?"(105). Playing with metaphors of worthiness, and unworthiness as 'worthlessness', he weighs "The bare report of this suspicious groom [Nick]", against the "double gilt, the well hatch ore"(109-10) of his wife and his friend. As gold-plated silver inlaid with metal, their hearts are linked to his wealth, to his chamber where they are kept and his table on which they are displayed. Seen in the context of legal definitions of right and wrong, these fake signs and false readings set up the possibility of the failure of the whole process of moral detection.

¹⁴¹ Schutzman, 'Suspended Moment', p. 307.

¹⁴² Schutzman, 'Suspended Moment', p. 307.

In the light of such confusion, the only proof which is incontrovertible is, of course, that of personal experience. In order to tell base metal from precious, Frankford, like Othello, demands ocular proof. Nick has already had “an eye/ In all their gestures”, having turned “a spy” in order to “watch them in their close conveyances”(VI, 174-80). But he is able, due to his status within the house, to see without being seen, as his master’s position prevents him from doing (both physically and in terms of propriety). To his master he is reassuring about the stability of visual attestation, telling him, “I know a villain when I see him act/ Deeds of a villain”(VIII, 56-7), and, despite the personal cost, the servant follows the morally correct progression of action which Williams in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* shies away from: “I saw, and I have said”(75). In order for Frankford to know, rather than be told, however, he too must have the proof which his servant offers him, that of “Eyes, eyes”(85). Although social encounters may be deceiving, there are as the depositions suggested some situations which, experienced first hand, have a totally unequivocal meaning.

At the point at which Frankford retakes control of his household, the domestic situation is characterised by two distinct and opposing secrets, shared by two sets of dissembling couples who pretend to one another in order to remain undiscovered. The house, in other words, is divided down the centre. In order to reach any kind of resolution, Frankford is forced to dissemble in a complicated, and yet culturally familiar fashion.

The judicial evidence of Chapter 3 demonstrated a certain judicial tolerance of spatial ‘entrapment’. Deponents pretended to retire in order to engender a particular set of circumstances. Social dissembling, pretending to follow an expected routine, was used to create a time and place which fosters a particular type of action on the part of others.¹⁴³ The deponent was then able to ‘discover’ them, ensuring a morally stable position for her or his spatial intervention by guaranteeing the subjects room to engage in sin. It is an action which manipulates, perhaps forges, the relationship between watcher and actor on the terms of the former, and it can be seen as a common motif in popular narratives such as ballads and pamphlets.¹⁴⁴ In this play it allows Frankford to play the bawd to his wife

¹⁴³ See above p. 134.

¹⁴⁴ David Atkinson, in ‘An Approach to the Main Plot of Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed With Kindness*’, *English Studies*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1989, pp. 15-27, suggests several sources for the main plot, one of which is from a pamphlet by Greene: “The Conversion of an English Courtizen”, 1592. All of the sources he describes are linked by this motif of the feigned journey and the surprise return. This suggests that the ruse of ‘prostituting’ domestic space was a common one in popular literature. See also, Dean A. Hoffman, “‘Both bodily deth and werldly shame’: ‘Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard’ as source for *A*

through his control over his own domestic space.¹⁴⁵

In Scene XI the irony is rich, as Frankford once more invites Wendoll to indulge himself in the treasures of his house: this time both knowing the way in which his offer will be understood, and meaning it quite genuinely. Having doubled the keys, Frankford engineers a situation in which “when they think they may securely play,/ They are nearest to danger”(VIII, 223-4). The complexity of the explicit social relations of the card game in Scene XI, where every word has a double meaning, and where the household is divided into two sets of actors who purposely misrepresent facts, meanings and emotions, culminates in Frankford’s creation of the illusion of Wendoll’s possession of his host’s domestic space. Physically, he alters nothing. But the doubled keys allow Wendoll the impression of security within the chamber, and the space becomes one of licence exteriorly controlled, the door to which is, as Frankford explicitly describes it, “bawd unto my shame”(XIII, 10).

Those who broker space in such a way are not usually the heads of households. They have little actual authority, and this demands that they are creative with the use of social space, circumventing its usual rules if they wish to augment their power. Michael barter information about Arden’s whereabouts to Will and Shakebag as the only resources available to him to ensure his own safety in Scene VII: “with the tide my master will away,/ Where you may front him well on Rainham Down,/ A place well fitting such a stratagem”(17-9). Knowing his master’s mind, privy to his moves as he must facilitate them by checking the tides, Michael is able to some extent to ‘see the future’, and to predict the coincidence of time and place so important to those who need to take up their positions ahead of the arrival of their quarry. As Michael prepares his master’s domestic environment, so he also attempts to arrange his final social context through a

Woman Killed with Kindness, *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1989, pp. 166-178, who suggests both the ‘English Courtesan’ and the Musgrave ballad as sources, the latter of which includes an interestingly similar spatial progression:

“With that my lord Barnard came to the dore,
And lit a stone upon;
He plucked out three silver keys,
And he opened the dores each one.

He lifted up the coverlett,
He lifted up the sheet...”.

¹⁴⁵ The husband in *Yorkshire Tragedy* says he was “never made to be a looker-on,/ A bawd to dice”(2, 95-6), a phrase which balances the impotence of observation with the license it permits those who act within the space one watches over. To call the particular type of watching which the characters undertake ‘bawdry’ is to ally this description with a commonly understood type of spatial practice.

foreknowledge of his routine.

But it is *A Warning for Fair Women* which exceeds the other plays in the importance of spatial brokering and the number of its characters who indulge in it. Anne Drury is skilled as a go-between, and as a provider of opportunity. She initially agrees to produce a space where Browne can meet Mrs Sanders and talk to her. He asks “But how shal I have oportunitie?”, and is answered “That must be watch’d, but very secretly”(286-7). She is represented as having an eye for those interstices of routines which are an ideal location for the inconspicuous event, and this characterises her as morally suspect, allying her spatial practices with those of the men and women who sought space for immoral actions in the court narratives. The friendship between Drury and Anne Sanders gives the former a knowledge of the movements of the latter, and this allows her to influence Anne’s perception in order to gratify Browne’s desires.

It is her servant Roger, however, who brokers the space for the murders. A dedicated procurer of any commodity for a price, it is he who initially plays the part of persuader in Browne’s suit to Drury for assistance. The two seem to work as a team akin to the cony-catchers of Greene’s pamphlets, the one having influence in the domestic realm, and the other covering the urban space outside the door.¹⁴⁶ As the tension of failed attempts mounts, Drury assures Browne of Roger’s tenacity: “he will rather die than come again,/ Before he finde fit place to do the deede”(1107-8). His affection for his adopted master is allied to a suggested professional pride in his work akin to Black Will’s assertion that should there be a livery company of murderers he would be the master of it.

Sanders is realised within the play as never before by Roger’s description of his movements during the day throughout which he has followed him. Having left home, their quarry goes to Cornhill, “where he staid/ An hower talking in a marchants warehouse”(1123-4). He proceeds to the Burse for an hour; then on to dinner, where he talks with a gentleman of the court; to Lion Quay where he takes a boat to Greenwich; from whence he eventually calls a waterman to be ready for his return to London at six at night. No hour is left unaccounted for, no step untraced. This long speech plays with the public image as a product of routine, a trope familiar from the depositions. However. it

¹⁴⁶ See on these pamphlets, Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers*, London: Athlone Press, 1983. She describes them as coming out of a traditional literature of roguery, which was now developing away from medieval abstraction and towards “Renaissance realistic description”, p. 40. Maus sees the victims as provincial dupes, *Inwardness*, p. 25.

does not use it solely as an itinerary which plots the important commercial and financial centres of the town, and simultaneously characterises the dealings of its businessmen as diverse and practical. It suggests that actions in public spaces lay individuals open to scrutiny in unpleasant and dangerous ways, providing not only a definition of normality against which deviation from their routine can be judged, but also a plot of their movements which allows those who watch carefully to look ahead.

It is the minuteness of Roger's observation, and his proximity to the prey, which allows Browne the element of surprise. Roger echoes Sanders' every movement, and part of the audacity of the plan is that the servant to a woman of dubious reputation has shared the social encounters of the men at the Bourse and a gentleman of the court.¹⁴⁷ When imitating another becomes a spatial issue, it is immediately implicated in a political project threatening to the clear definition of hierarchy. This imitation of the movement of an individual is a form of doubling akin to Frankford's suggestions to Wendoll to replicate him in his absence and Mosby's wish to sit in Arden's chair. The information which Roger gathers allows Browne to be spatially ahead, to get to the next place on the itinerary before the man who has planned it arrives there, it gives them the advantage of the long view as though from a high place.¹⁴⁸

Drury and her servant do not procure the spatial advantage for their client for nothing, they do it in the expectation of social promotion. Roger says to Browne, "I trust sir when my mistris has obtaind your sute,/ You'le sute me in a cast sute of your apparell"(317-8). He looks to improve his situation by becoming the servant of a man with social pretensions; he has presumably looked ahead to the possible outcome of Browne's schemes, and he sees a place for himself in its indirect rewards. Drury's imagined gains are more specific:

¹⁴⁷ It is worth considering this tactic in the light of Maus's discussion of Walter Raleigh's behaviour in the mid seventeenth-century *Skeptic, or Speculation*, 1651, where he "tries to duplicate in himself the different conditions of animal perception, rubbing his eye into the shape of a cat's eye in order to see as a cat sees", *Inwardness*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Virilio's theories of the formation of the modern city around the movements of war are useful to an understanding of this advantage. Even the "rudimentary hillock", he says, gives "quicker information of the surroundings", and a "mastery over dimension". He sees the change to non-transportable wealth as negating such advantages and enforcing the alteration of the 'theatre of war' instead. However, these plays make clear the importance of a knowledge of urban space and its operation which circumvents normal social hierarchies through a peculiar spatial advantage. See Paul Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, trans., Mark Polizzotti, New York: Semiotext(e), 1990, p. 15; *Speed and Politics, An Essay on Dromology*, trans. Mark Polizzotti, New York: Semiotext(e), 1986, pp. 61-74.

The mony I will finger twixt them twaine
 Shall make my daughter such a dowrie,
 As I will match her better then with Browne,
 To some rich Attorney, or Gentleman(463-6)

In exchange for procuring spatial advantage, then, these men and women expect social advancement, they anticipate a change in their place in the world. While the role of the wife in such plots is undoubtedly shocking, it is unsettling as a part of this radical potential social instability.

There are differences between Frankford's plan and Roger's, connected to the domestic context of the former and the urban situation of the latter. Deponents in the court spoke about individuals who dissembled to keep their household in order, who were able to set traps because of the intimacy of their knowledge of those they caught out, and of the house in which they planned their actions. This kind of knowledge is legitimate and it is used only in the restoration of domestic order. Roger's activities, on the other hand, are guided by an objective professionalism which is creative with the impersonal townscape. Familiarity with spaces is a cultural indication of social ties and personal intimacies. To demonstrate such an understanding of the public space of the street is to flout the careful distinction between individual and communal action which is organised around an identification of house and street as binary opposites. It implicitly suggests that the town itself is capable of supporting a non-domestic life.

In *A Warning For Fair Women*, physical space and place in the social hierarchy are closest to one another. The former is used to change the latter; as a commodity with which advancement can be bought.¹⁴⁹ And this is accomplished through a deliberate misunderstanding of the relationship between personal intimacy and spatial proximity. Roger and Browne take advantage of the crowded urban environment in which they live, and they turn their attention outwards, from their own domestic business (never realised within the play) to that of others. Situated, as they are always shown to be on stage, within the streets of the town, the stifling closeness of their pursuit of Sanders becomes akin to the actions of those individuals who were pictured in deposition narratives, looking in through the windows of their neighbours. This concern with the predatory nature of the outward-turned urban gaze serves as the balance to the image of community

proffered by *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. Each demonstrates one of the tropes of community offered by the depositions,¹⁵⁰ and together, their message reads ‘be concerned with your neighbour’s business, but not too much’.

4.iii.e. Conclusion

This chapter has identified the connections between domestic furniture and theatrical properties; and between the forms in which moral order is negotiated in the court and the dramaturgy of domestic plays. Through these convergences, or connections, it has suggested contemporary emphases which are not revealed by a literary-based scholarly approach.

It is the relationship between the domestic interior and the definition of moral order which gives these plays a social role, however. Section 4.iii.b, which considered the function of stage properties, explored their significance in a period when the domestic object was understood to define identity as the personal choice of socially significant commodities. The discussion of the function of routine as a narrative element in depositions which defined individuals and the households to which they belonged morally needs to be considered again here. If status is the combination of personal identity and moral honesty, domestic quality and social credit, then it is experienced and comprehended in the combination of public and private lives (here literally meaning what is known of a person’s house, and the actions of those within it which are observed in communal spaces). The image of status which the domestic presents is only valid as long as the household’s moral worth is intact. Should that be lost, then it becomes a sham. This is the extended irony of the display of Frankford’s goods: they are tainted by his wife’s infidelity, and her sins call his status into question.

The connection between the inner expression of identity and the outer definition of morality means that property is subject to a ‘proof by honesty’: its capacity to reflect and define status is always on trial, tested by every social action of the household.

The audience are encouraged to see the representation in moral terms because viewing the domestic spaces of others in sixteenth-century society is always an explicitly

¹⁴⁹ See Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 73: “Social privilege is based on the choice of viewpoint...on the relative position that one manages to occupy, then organize, in a space dominating the trajectories of movement”.

¹⁵⁰ See above pp. 155-7.

moralised act: that is the only justification for the social transgression it entails. The end result of the process of watching is a reinvestment of the particular household with the implications of the dramatic narrative's closure. Coming home from a domestic play begs questions about the security of one's social status, and of the fixedness of the correlation between the domestic interior and one's social standing. Those questions are articulated through the possible instability of the meanings of household objects and the routines which they generate, focussed into and prompted by the form of an individual's domestic spaces.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis has two intimately related aims. It has worked to construct perceptions of domestic life, and further it has demonstrated the effects which such perceptions had upon the consumption of domestic drama. This investigation has identified a contemporary articulation of imagination and perception in spatial terms, within a provincial society intimately linked to the expanding metropolitan centre of London. Techniques of imaginative reconstruction have been applied to the documentary evidence, and these have made it possible to translate what can be seen and heard (through such evidence) into what can be understood as the experience of the domestic and the dramatic.

A close reading of specific source material was necessary to elucidate the imaginative processes of audiences. Each of the sources investigated involved specific problems of method, as I have shown, but each also offered distinct advantages for the study of perceptions. So, an analysis of material goods has provided a way of exploring the dynamics of domestic life in order to reach an understanding of process, of identity, and of social distinction through the objects kept in each room of the house.

Depositions were explored to show the ways in which space was moralised in contemporary life, and how it formed a part of the strategic discourses of public morality through which individuals understood the consequences of their actions. A full understanding of these processes makes a substantial contribution to the comprehension of a drama which focuses upon the domestic.

As has been shown in Chapter 2, in order to reconstruct experience, the interiors which were described from probate records had to be imagined as they were used: they had to be animated both in terms of journeys through them and as they would be affected by the events which took place there. Going through the urban house meant negotiating different spaces, moving from light to dark, small to large, warm to cold, up and down stairs, from cellars to lofts, in order to conduct one's daily life. It meant appreciating proximity to and distance from others who are within the communal rooms of the house, and from the noise of the street. It may also have meant hearing the activities of one's neighbours in the houses on either side.

Objects were the starting point for imagining experience. Standing in the hall with the

intention of laying the table for a special meal, for example, might mean making mental connections between that room and the tablecloths and napkins in chests in the chamber above; the silver plate locked in a cupboard above the fireplace in the parlour; the pewter on top of the cupboard next to you; and the guests coming from their own houses in the streets of the parish. Eating such a meal would bring specific resonances to the room, drawing attention to certain goods and making their meanings explicit. If the meal was prepared to celebrate a handfasting, for instance, the furniture of the hall might be considered in terms of the new couple's own potential domestic provisions: some of it might have been bequeathed to them by other members of the family, and would be taken to their own house, other pieces they would have to acquire for themselves. The table itself would become a focus for affective family ties, for the notions of responsibility and of nurture, and the progression from childhood to adulthood, to which both meal and promise of marriage draw attention.

The evidence of domestic bequests in wills demonstrated the role of household goods in the formation of personal and familial identity. The strength of the affective ties which were indicated linked objects, space, and emotions, over time. Such evidence suggested that both giver and receiver saw the meanings of the object which passed between them as linked to the connections between the individual and the family. As those within the nuclear family received the majority of such bequests, the interior of the house could be imagined as intimately linked to the formation of an awareness of the importance of family, and to the definition of the bonds of affection and mutual responsibility which it entailed. The division between the communal areas of the house, such as the hall, and those which were understood to be occupied by particular individuals (or groups of individuals), such as chambers, provided a way of articulating and inculcating the distinct and yet symbiotic issues of individuality and family responsibilities. As children grew up, the household could be seen as a symbolic, moral, political, material and economic resource for them in the future; providing security in physical terms, but also a store of what might be called social patterns which would, when they occupied their own homes, tend towards the replication of the domestic life which they had grown up with: practices which were in a sense generated by the objects which they were given through their mnemonic association with a history of use. This function of the domestic object offered continuity in periods of stress such as death and migration. Repositioning bequeathed

furniture, or reusing it for different purposes, could then be seen as a way of explicitly asserting one's own identity against family customs, and in doing so experiencing a sense of one's distinctness.

Chapter 2 demonstrated that the patterning of the domestic provided the point of fusion for personal, familial, and social practices. Particular types of objects and their positioning in individual rooms had a social meaning distinct to and yet inseparable from their affective and mnemonic significance. These meanings placed the house and its family in relation to the town as a whole. The domestic interior, in addition to defining individuals in relation to families, has been shown to provide a way of understanding the family's place within society. Perceptions of space were seen to be linked, through objects, to the definition of social groups. An object's position within a relative social and economic discourse of definition implicates it in the formation and definition of the relationship between people. We can imagine the associations which are built up between this interior and others, between a particular cloth and ones in certain drapers' shops, between this chest and ones which come into the ports of Faversham and Sandwich from Flanders. All display invites comparison, not only in terms of an understanding of the social valence of particular objects, but in relation to the domestic experience of the observer, and to the houses of others which he or she has seen. This codified way of understanding social position through the nature and positioning of objects formed a flexible addition to the nomenclature of status. The variety of meanings with which it imbued the domestic object were then available to the dramatist and the actor in their use of stage properties.

Further, this thesis has demonstrated the intimate implication of spatial practice in the contemporary experience of social status. Rather than being understood as a series of social relations which are communicated to the individual, this hierarchised system of the definition of an individual's place within society has been seen, through an imaginative engagement with the evidence, to be embodied in space, gesture, and practice. If we are to understand the contribution which social status makes to perception, then we must consider the way in which it was experienced in a period before a clearly articulated conception of inequality was available with which to give form to difference.

Gender has been implicitly considered as one of the major definitions of social status

in this thesis: one very particular aspect affecting perception. To say that women's "role in society was peripheral" is to beg more questions about women's experience than it answers.¹ Apart from the specific provisions made for widows, the evidence for the range of social statuses which wills, inventories and depositions provide has offered no indications of spaces specifically for women. What it has suggested is the ways in which women use domestic interiors, and the influence which, for instance, the knowledge that one's father has willed the furniture of the hall to one's brother, and a chest and bed from the chamber to oneself, might have upon those uses. From such a perspective, 'female experience' divorced from 'male experience', and from the status of the household and the woman's position within it as wife or servant, tends to evaporate. I have strongly suggested that an individual's particular relationship to the control and possession of domestic space is what defines their perception of their social position. Further research could explore the specific significance of this idea for women's lives, beginning from the premise that the ties between families were perceived as stronger than the ties between individuals of the same sex, and that an understanding of the experience of gender will only be achieved through the investigation of women as wives, mothers, widows, servants, and children.

This has been a study of the logic of spaces, and of their organisation, which has been approached through an examination of the objects with which such spaces were filled, and the ways in which they were discussed. It has articulated subtle and important diversities of experience, but it has also demonstrated that there is a similarity in the modes of articulation of those experiences. The actual layout of peoples' houses might be different, but the ways in which they discuss them are comparable, because, although the physical relations between rooms were diverse, the logical relationship between them (which gave them their social and moral significance) was the same. An analysis of modes of articulation is important because it explicates those things which the domestic has in common at each level of the social hierarchy. It allows observers (sixteenth- and twentieth-century) to make sense of social life in terms which transcend the distinctions of individuality and location, and give meaning to the very real differences which were perceived in the quality of life at different social

¹ Miranda Chaytor, 'Household and kinship: Ryton in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century', *History Workshop Journal*, Autumn 1980, pp. 25-60, p. 50.

levels. At either the general or the particular level, there is infinite homogeneity or diversity respectively (everyone had a chest; everyone had a different chest). The generally-perceived logic of the use of particular object or space (the reasons for having a chest) is a more useful approach to material culture, and it is the logic which representations use to make meaning. Such an analysis is only possible within a coherent body of evidence which makes it possible to understand the *relative* meanings of objects and spaces.

I have argued that these aspects of provincial society give access to contemporary modes of perception of social and private life. However, the implications of the changes to the domestic noted in Chapter 2 are more far-reaching, and the conclusions which they suggest about the effect of domestic change upon social relations indicate profitable areas for further study. The concerns which such alterations to the ways in which life was experienced produced were focused upon domesticity, and their implications should therefore be seen as being worked through in the genre of domestic tragedy. They should also be seen in terms of the broader social and economic changes of this period. The internal alterations to the domestic must have been related to external pressures of demographic and moral change, and the development of attitudes towards the market. As the effects of the Reformation led to moral reform, and the numbers of exchanges familiarised more and more people with the pressures of commodification, so the way that individuals perceived the world altered. The following investigation of the implications of material domestic change should be seen as responses to these wider shifts in perception.

Chapter 2 showed that a large proportion of the ‘middling sort’ in society had houses with more rooms in 1600 than they had done earlier in the century. This change suggests a gradually altering relationship between actions and the spaces in which they take place. When actions needed privacy, people in a large proportion of the social scale were starting to appreciate the experience of leaving one space to enter another, of withdrawing. The evidence suggests, for instance, that there might now be a choice between the intimacy of a parlour instead of the larger, more open space of the hall, which was frequently traversed by those going about their domestic business. This choice allowed a variation in the nature of an event through relocation to a different space. Change made it possible to define experiences in terms of spaces. to

mark their difference by relocation. This has implications for the contemporary definition of privacy, also signalled by the increase shown in numbers of curtains at windows and around beds. There is considerable scope for further research which bases a discussion of privacy upon the changing nature of spaces and the possession of such key domestic objects as the curtain. The contribution of extensive databases such as the one produced for this study make detailed analysis of the relevance of such notions to individuals of different status possible.

Any distinction between the events which take place in certain rooms suggests a possible division of individuals, who may be either included or excluded from the space. This has implications for the social visibility of actions. If a contract of marriage took place in the hall of an inn, it could be seen by the whole community, but if it takes place in a parlour or chamber there, then it is only witnessed by the couple's friends and family. Such spatial changes alter social knowledge of the behaviour and actions of individuals, and this creates very significant social changes. What is communal, what is of relevance to the community, is then altered, and its compass is narrowed along the lines of the formation of new socially-distinct groups. The development of larger numbers of smaller rooms is both symptom of and contributory to a larger private life which is out of the reach of the public (both as instrument of moral control and as socially different and yet interested others). The concept of 'community' changes because of this, and the concern which this causes about the responsibilities which individuals have to one another are made clear in the domestic plays. These connections, between changes in domestic interiors and the redefinition of the communal relevance of peoples' actions, offer a further topic of enquiry which can be approached through a greater understanding of domestic life.

Chapter 2 also identified an increasing specialisation of room use as one of the features which distinguished the urban property from the rural, and the higher- from the lower-status house. Here too there are further social implications inherent in physical change. Once the relationship between space and action becomes specific, once particular spaces are uniquely associated with certain actions, then transgression is possible. If a hall can be used for many different activities, then only by committing a crime can you misuse it. But if a hall is only perceived as suitable for open, public meetings with friends and outsiders, if its use over the hours of the day and the

seasons of the year is uniform, then the range of socially unsuitable, inappropriate and unfitting actions which it is possible to perform in it increases substantially. As domestic space becomes more complicated, so its negotiation is more problematic, and the understanding of social life (as a range of more or less suitable behaviours) becomes similarly complex. Further work could be done in this area to assess the relationship between the development of spatial and social relations in the seventeenth century. The moral consequences of the incorrectly located action are mediated through social status: a person of such standing should have known better, whereas someone without a parlour, for example, could perhaps be excused. These consequences are linked to the expected familiarity with certain social situations which in part defines status groups. They are possible, *conceivable*, for the majority of the population for the first time at the end of the sixteenth century. The idea that a highly mannered social existence could be born out of spatial change is hinted at in the evidence of Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, and the explicit attention which it focuses upon the relationship between space and action is also a subject of domestic tragedy.

The increase in possession of a variety of household goods which Chapter 2 demonstrated has implications for the definition of the social hierarchy. The chapter showed that a householder in 1600 would be in a different relation to his neighbour in the next house to such a man in 1560: the objects which indicate the neighbours' relative status would have increased in numbers, and the way in which those goods indicated status, the times at which they were displayed and the routines which surrounded their display would have become more complicated. There are, of course, socially-specific levels of cultural production of consumer goods: the curtains of an inn-keeper would not be of the same quality as the alderman's silk ones. Nevertheless, the experiences of a whole range of the 'middling sort' have been shown in this thesis to be comparable to those of their superiors in form if not in degree in this period. For the first time, high-status domestic experience is being echoed, albeit on a muted level, by domestic life lower down the social scale. It had become harder, by 1600, to identify exactly which household experiences set those of superior status decisively apart from those below them. Although such changes are clearly only just beginning, concerns about their ramifications are clearly articulated in domestic plays about the illegitimate use of household space. Additional material on the relative social status of

those whose inventories are contained within the database would allow subsequent use of the computerised information to give additional definition to these processes.

The final implication which the analysis of historical data suggests is that new goods are in the process of being moralised in this period.² The analysis provided in Chapters 2 and 3 has made it possible to talk about complex routines and newly-acquired objects in terms of experience of them, and of the moral meanings they attain through their implication in discourses of consumption, of greed, of vanity, of luxury, and of pride. Within the domestic environment, there are things which are current and exciting, and others which are dull, old, and socially embarrassing, and each room should be seen as offering those distinctions to the eye which interprets its social meaning. This study has enabled a focus upon the specifically historicised meanings of individual objects. Such an approach makes clear the way in which the function of objects in all types of representation is altered by a close analysis of their contemporary meanings. Not just drama, but all forms of cultural product can be understood more clearly by the methods of investigation developed in this thesis.

The audience for domestic plays, when presented with images of the household, see those images in terms of the current meanings of the domestic, ones which include an awareness of the radical changes outlined above: in the way in which the household attempts to define and expresses ever-changing social distinctions, and in the different forms of behaviour which it encourages. The household has been the site of considerable renegotiations of social values in domestic space, and this gives drama about it a significant importance as an arena for the examination of contesting social values.

The plays both utilise and explore their audience's notions of the domestic. Paradoxically, one of the most important aspects of this thesis has been its explication of what is *not* represented on the stage in domestic tragedies: the majority of the objects and relations which the first chapters demonstrated are not to be found in the plays. For this reason in particular, their reconstruction is essential to an understanding of the drama. Those objects, routines and attitudes which are habitually connected with particular spaces, if they are not physically present on the stage either

² This is not, of course, a new phenomenon, but the end of the sixteenth century sees it happening again in response to the increase in the numbers of goods, and their social distribution.

as properties or as gestures, are brought to the representation in the imagination of the audience, as part of the logic of each particular situation. If, before you leave the hall to go into the street, you always look at yourself in the mirror, then when someone is said to leave a hall, the reasons for checking your appearance, rather than the gesture itself, will be taken to pertain to the meaning of the dramaturgy. These reasons might include, for example, the understood transition between household and community. the need to alter the domestic self into a suitable public representation, and the moral implications of such a change. When a playwright writes a scene, such attitudes and their accompanying actions are 'taken as read'.

Looking at these plays from the perspective of audience members, at the way in which drama represents their social situations, demands that one asks how domestic plays address those individuals differently from other genres. Although attitudes generated by the domestic will apply to all plays, domestic tragedies manipulate contemporary concerns and individual knowledge more actively and more explicitly. This aids an understanding of the function of the plays: it indicates the way they draw attention to the social meanings of the domestic as a particularly 'raw' site of cultural renegotiation, in a state of flux, and bearing the brunt of the mediation of social status which the changes of the past decades have made necessary.

This thesis has taken interdisciplinary study past the point of intertextual comparison by using historical source material to imaginatively construct a socially-determined range of provincial perceptions. In doing so it has made possible a focus upon the contemporary consumption of representations, and a fuller understanding of the meaning and significance of the domestic within them. Close analysis of a substantial group of documents has permitted a detailed investigation of a coherent social system: the perceptions of domestic life in the provincial centres of Kent. This approach challenges less carefully historicised analyses of representations by demonstrating that it is only through an examination of the evidential context of historical sources that an understanding of the internal logic of societies (and therefore their perceptions and representations) can be reached.

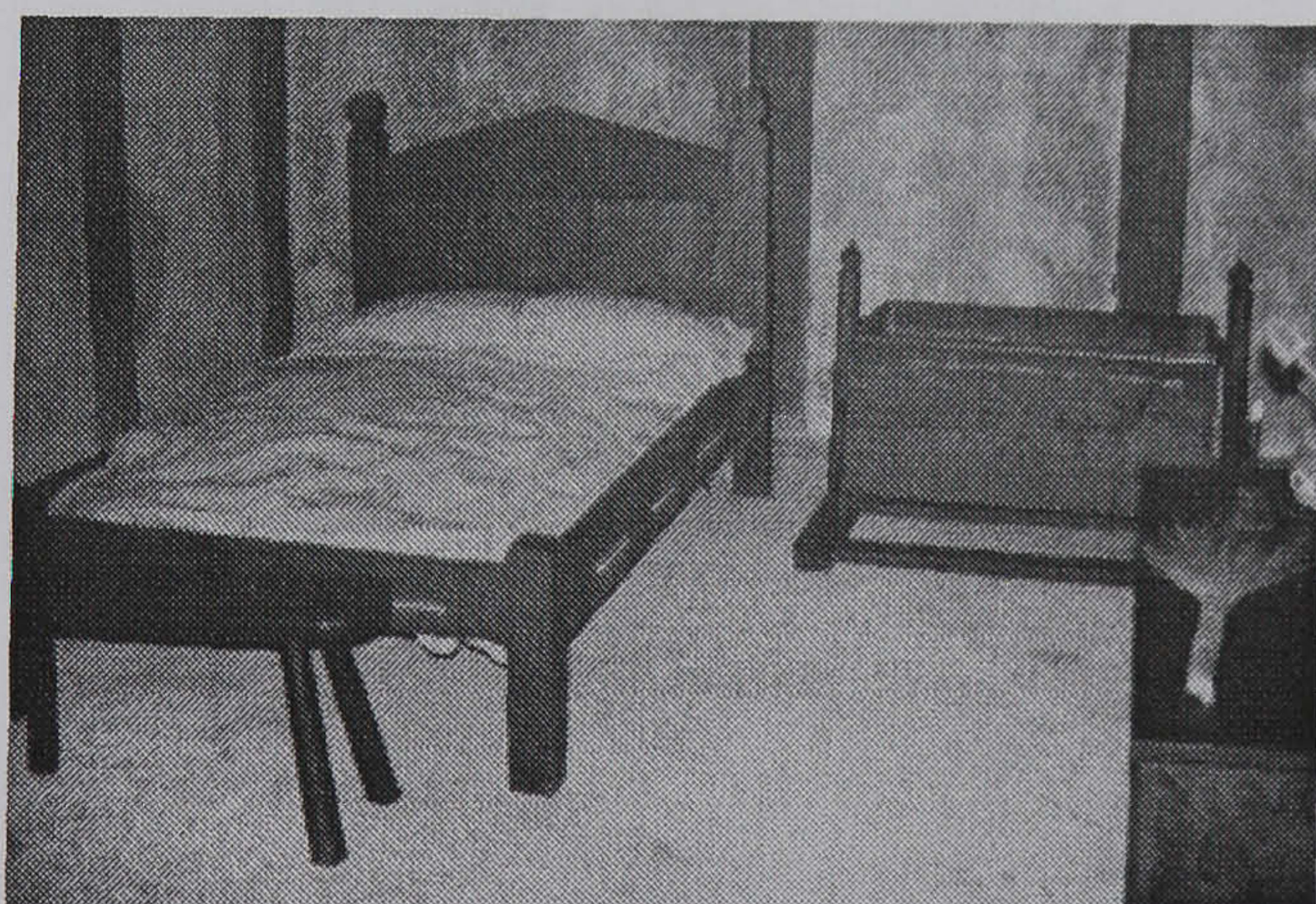
Appendices

Appendix 1: Visual descriptions of contemporary furniture

The following images are intended to provide the roughest of guides to the generic shape of the furniture mentioned in the inventories and wills, and, where appropriate, an indication of differences of form between the most and least expensive versions.



Reproduction of a late-medieval standing bed with trucklebed underneath, Bayleaf Cottage, Weald and Downland Museum, Singleton. The house, built in the fifteenth century, originally stood near Edenbridge in Kent. It is a Wealden hall-house, which they have tried to furnish as it would have looked in the 1540s, but using information from the inventories which make up this study as the only reliable source material. This was the highest-status chamber.



Lower-status bed on the ground floor of the same house, underneath the high-status chamber on one of the wings of the property. See also the cradle. The majority of those inventoried would probably have slept in a bed like this one, although a sizeable minority of householders had a standing bed, as above.



Late sixteenth-century oak standing bedstead with wooden ceiler and tester, dated 1593. Such a bed might have been found in the highest-status inventories in this study, belonging to gentlemen and perhaps the mayor of the town. This and all subsequent illustrations of furniture from Herbert Cescinsky and Ernest R. Gribble, *Early English Furniture and Woodwork Vol. I & II*, Routledge, 1922.



Oak chair, 4'7'' high, 2'2'' wide, 2'6 1/2'' deep, dated 1574. Although well made and redolent of status and solemnity, this chair is plainly decorated and one like it, or a cheaper version, was to be found in the majority of the inventories.



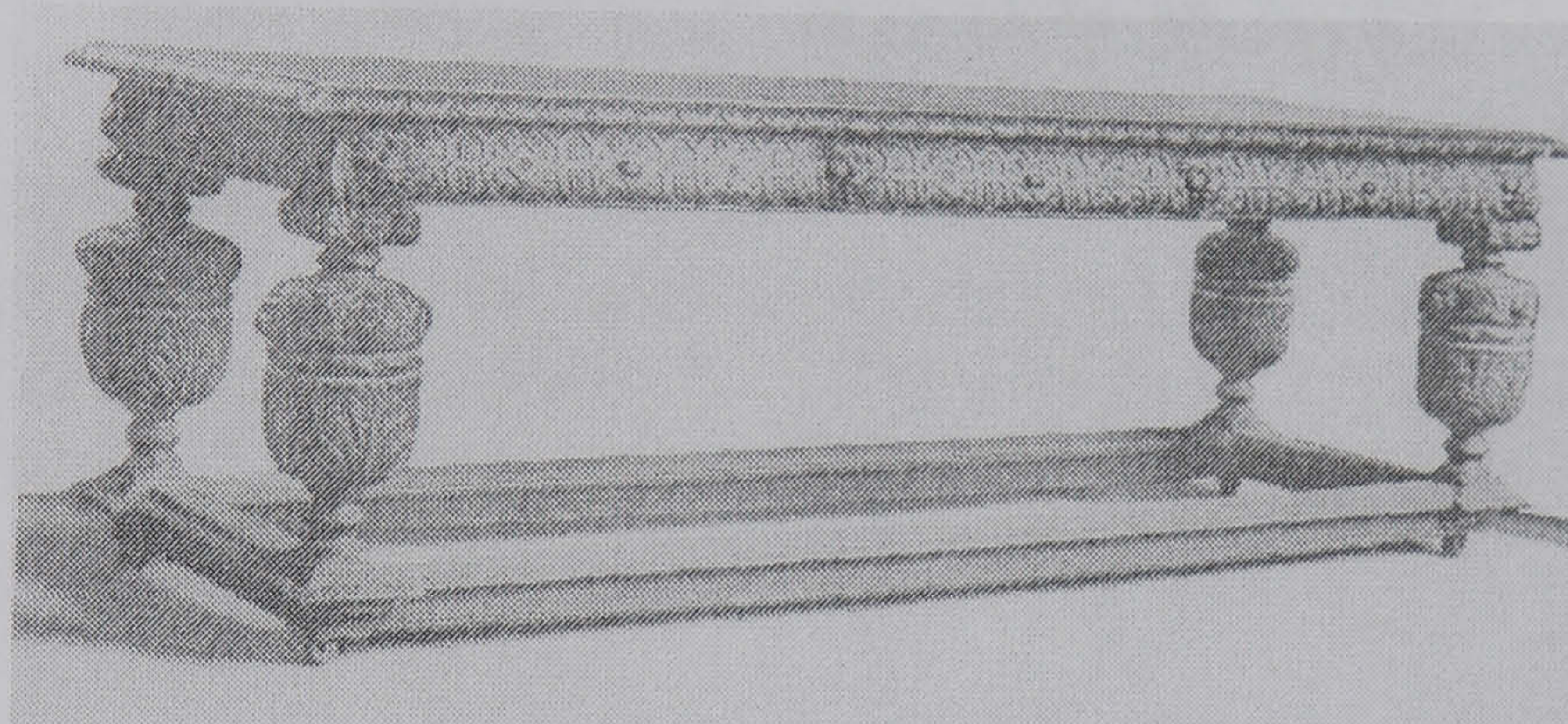
High-status oak upholstered chair, late sixteenth-century. Chairs covered with cloth are mentioned in only the most prestigious houses, and this is a particularly fine example, embroidered and fringed. Like the bedstead, it would be found in the top few percent of inventories.



Oak stool 1'10" long, 1'10" high, 1'1" deep, early sixteenth-century. This most basic unit of furniture for seating large numbers of people is to be found in all of the inventories in the sample.



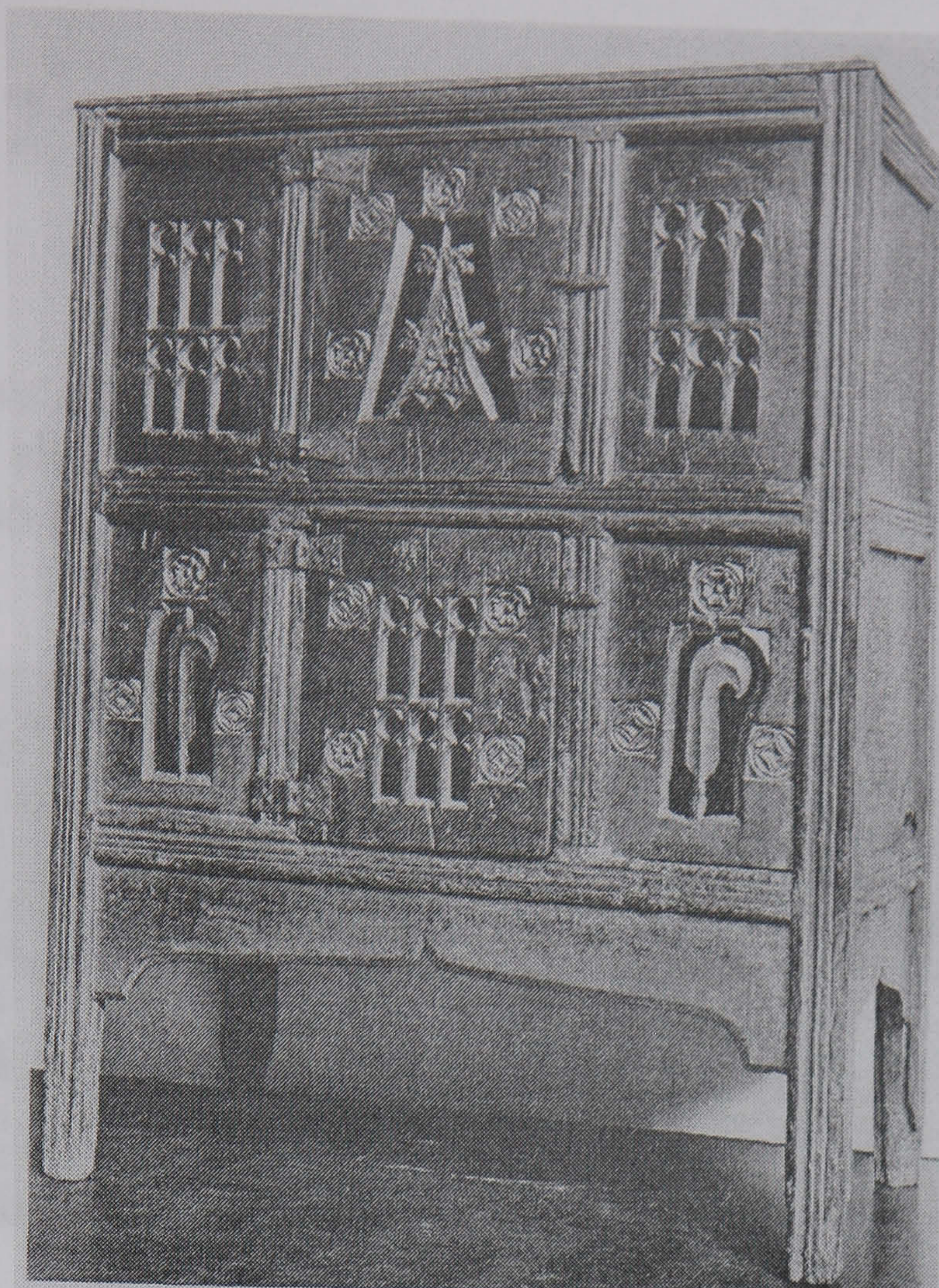
Oak table and form (with later draw top), table 2'10 1/2'' high, 5'2'' long, 1'8 1/2'' deep. Apart from the draw top, such a table with its surrounding forms would have been seen in the vast majority of halls, although perhaps not with such complicated shaped edges.



Higher-status oak table with modern top and rail cappings, 8'8'' width, 2'10'' deep, 2'9'' high, late sixteenth century. The length and decoration of this piece of furniture suggest the size and status of the room for which it is designed, and the amount of people which it was intended to seat.



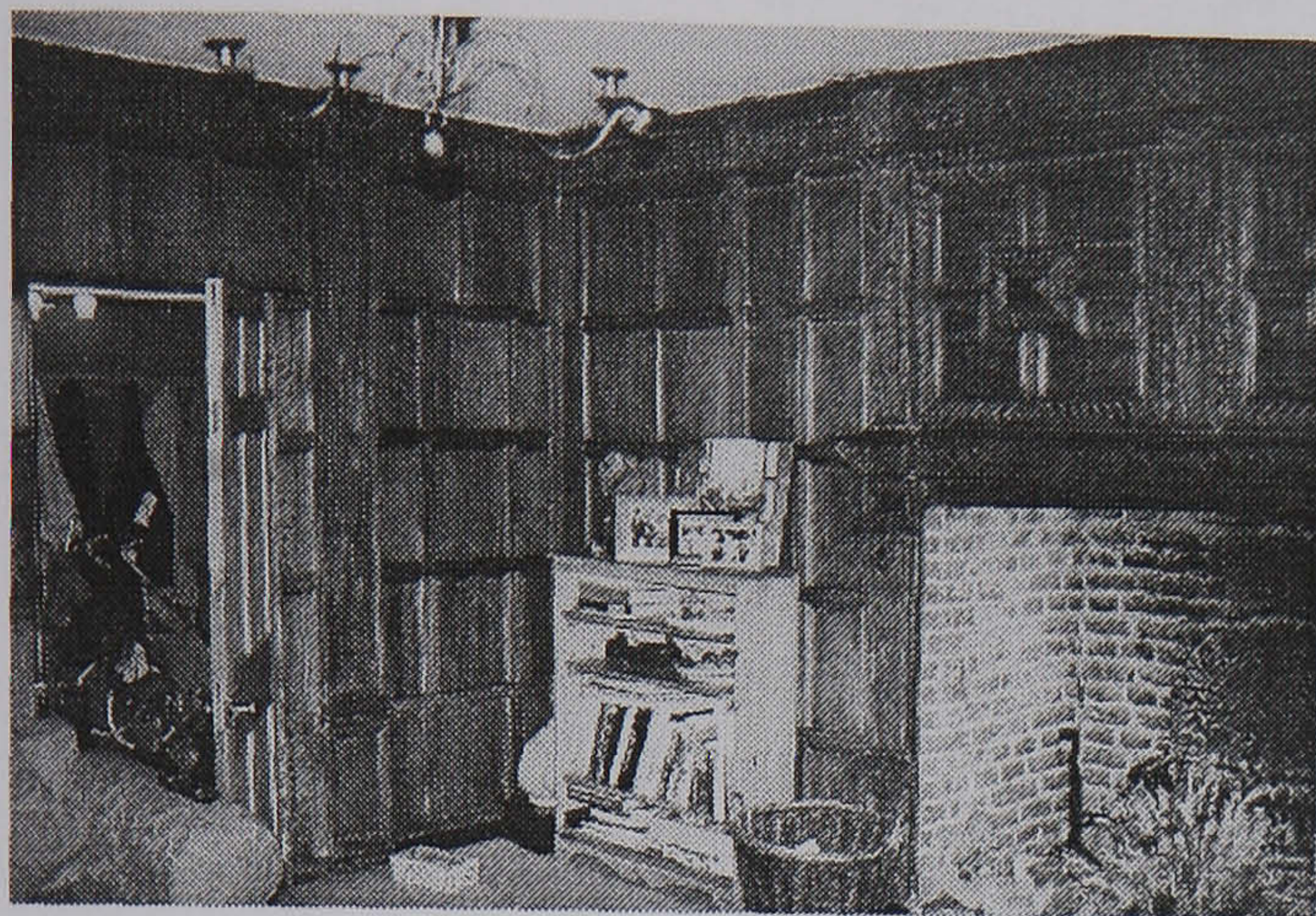
Oak chest, late sixteenth-century. The shape of such objects, like the stools, changes little with status and wealth, but carving like this would be found only at the higher end of the economic scale.



Oak standing cupboard 5'4 1/2'' high, 4'2'' wide, 2' deep, mid sixteenth-century. Again the carving is indicative of status, and in this case visual access to the contents is fairly limited. The size of the piece is clear, though, as is the surface area of the head of it, which is covered with objects in the hall.

Appendix 2: Pictures of sixteenth-century rooms

The following images are of extant sixteenth-century rooms in Faversham and Sandwich. They are all reproduced with the kind permission of the owners, and with many thanks to Sarah Pearson for explaining the architectural features of the properties.



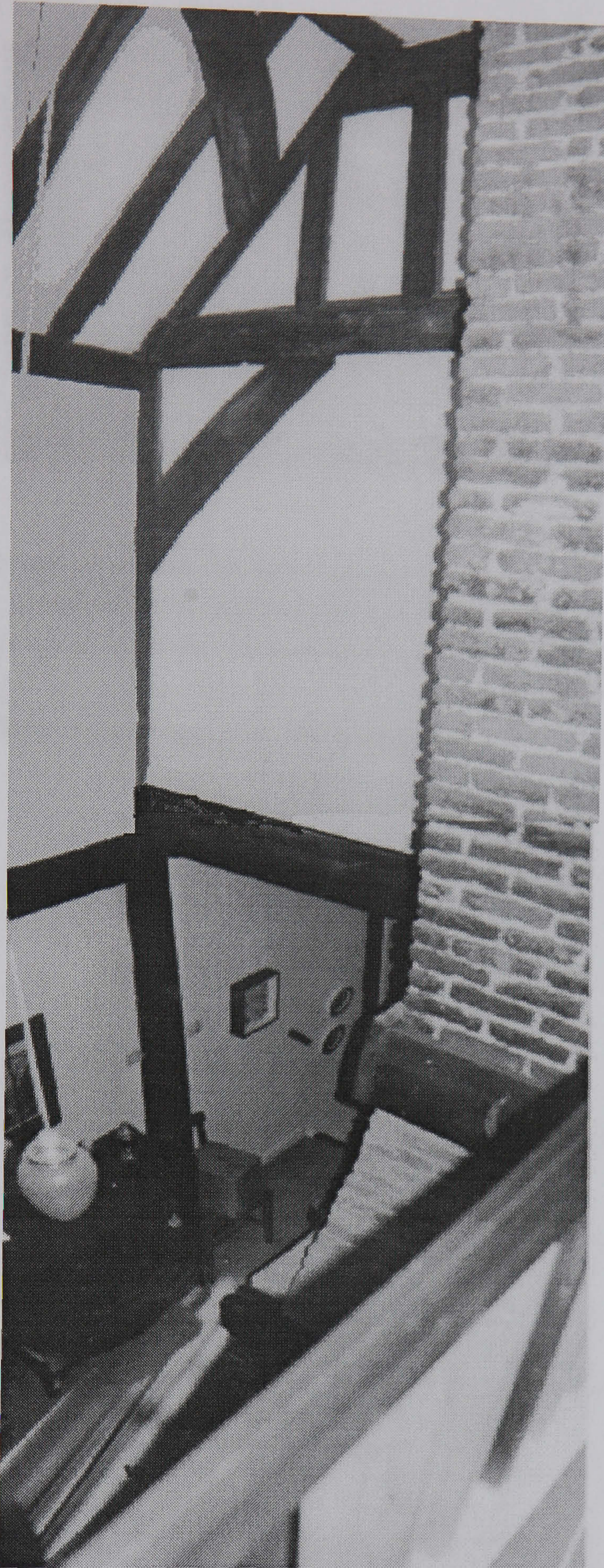
Parlour of the house of Henry Saker, mayor of Faversham, Abbey Street. This enormous house was built by the mayor in 1598, and is unusual because the hall lays lengthways along the street. This parlour is at the rear of the property, not far from the Abbey grounds owned by Thomas Arden. The 1601 inventory of the property lists a drawing table (like the one shown in appendix 1), seven stools, a cupboard, a chair and some fire equipment in this room. The quality of the panelling and the carving over the mantelpiece are very fine indeed. On 8th March 1595 Saker is recorded as having paid Essex's Men 10s for playing in the town. See Dawson, 'Records of Plays and Players in Kent'.



Chamber of No. 25 Court Street Faversham. The town sold the property in 1586 to finance repairs to the parish church to George Bennet, who was a ship-master who traded up the coast with London. In 1635 it belonged to John Trowtes, a jurat, and an inventory survives for it. This room, the chamber over the hall, on the corner of two streets, contained a curtained bedstead, a trucklebed, a court cupboard, a wicker chair, three joined chairs and a table, a chest and fire equipment. See Michael Laithwaite, 'A ship-master's house at Faversham, Kent', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 2, 1968, pp. 150-162.



Hall of 39 Strand Street, Sandwich. Strand Street was on the waterfront of the sixteenth-century town, and the majority of its properties are three storeys high. This property has a hall behind the shop. The following illustration is of one of the properties whose hall was still open for the whole height of the building in the late sixteenth century. Although it is now floored over at first-floor height, the insertion of a gallery so that rooms at the rear can be reached from the front of the house makes it possible to look down through two of the original three levels. These houses are most unusual in the country as a whole, but they make it possible to see the difference which flooring the hall must have made to the nature of the room-space, to heating, and to the experience even of speaking within such a space. The house below is two doors up from the Three Kings, one of the largest inns in the town, mentioned in Chapter 3.

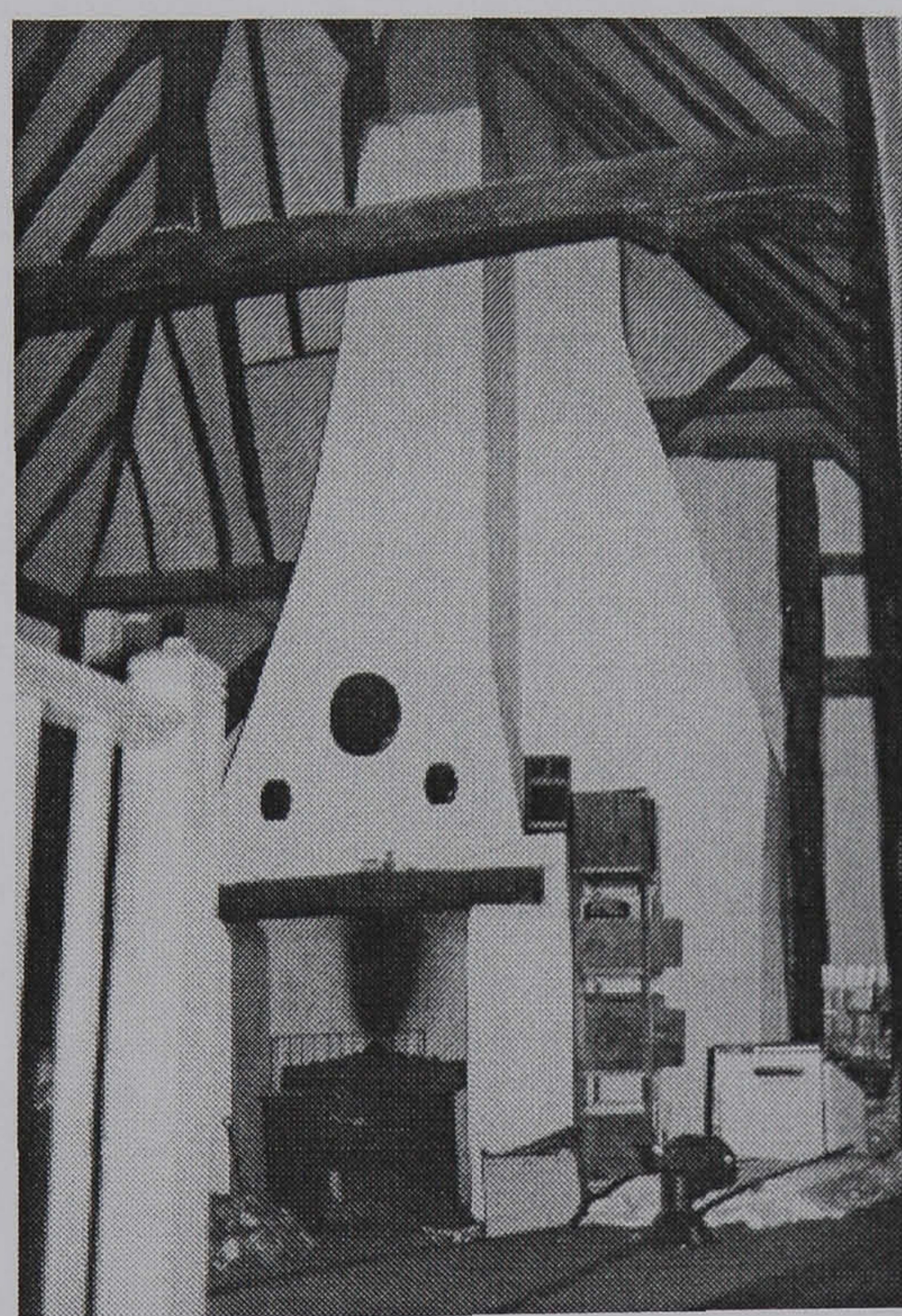


Hall, originally covering three stories, first storey floored over in the seventeenth century, 5 Strand Street, Sandwich. Below: floor-space of the high hall.





Hall window, three storeys from the hall floor in a similar property, No. 3, Strand Street. The window is quite elaborately moulded, despite being very high above the heads of those in the room below. It must have provided the only source of natural light in the room, giving some idea of the constraints on lighting in such tightly-packed urban properties, where one's next-door neighbour's house abutted one's own directly.



Upper chamber in 39 Strand Street, Sandwich. After the insertion of chimneys earlier in the sixteenth century, upper chambers too could be heated by taking advantage of the brick stack.

Appendix 3: Objects in urban and rural rooms

Table 1 sets out the items in each of the three main rooms of the rural house. The total in the right-hand column represents those items which are listed without being placed within a room. The information is based on information from 62 chambers, 71 halls and 40 parlours. Table 2 shows the same information for the urban rooms, where the sample represents 802 chambers, 756 halls and 424 parlours.

Type in rural inventories	Total numbers in the three rooms	No. in chamber as % of total no. of item	No. in hall as % of total no. of item	No. in parlour as % of total no. of item	Total data not included as not in a named room
Bedstead	228	75 (171)	13.16 (30)	11.84 (27)	188
Bed	26	84.62 (22)	3.85 (1)	11.54 (3)	22
Trucklebed	22	95.45 (21)	0.00	4.55 (1)	4
Total beds	276	77.54 (214)	11.23 (31)	11.23 (31)	214
Book	5	0.00	40.00 (2)	60.00 (3)	27
Tables (playing)	2	0.00	50.00 (1)	50.00 (1)	2
Instrument		0.00	0.00	0.00	9
Trendle	23	34.78 (8)	65.22 (15)	0.00	86
Wheel	19	36.84 (7)	63.16 (12)	0.00	30
Sum of wheel & trendle	42	35.71 (15)	64.28 (27)	0.00	116
Plate	9	44.44 (4)	0.00	55.56 (5)	3
Table cloth	242	61.57 (149)	11.57 (28)	26.86 (65)	215
Spoon	34	61.76 (21)	0.00	38.24 (13)	29
Total apparel	67	35.82 (24)	49.25 (33)	14.93 (10)	547
Hangings	19	47.37 (9)	42.11 (8)	10.53 (2)	17
Painted cloths	46	50.00 (23)	34.78 (16)	15.22 (7)	30
Sum of cloths	65	49.23 (32)	36.92 (24)	13.85 (9)	47
Cupboard cloth	26	34.62 (9)	30.77 (8)	34.62 (9)	6
Total embellishment	91	45.05 (41)	35.16 (32)	19.78 (18)	53
Table	163	23.31 (38)	60.12 (98)	16.56 (27)	141
Bench	18	0.00	83.33 (15)	16.67 (3)	2
Chair	133	13.53 (18)	74.44 (99)	12.03 (16)	118
Form	118	14.41 (17)	70.34 (83)	15.25 (18)	114
Stool	134	12.69 (17)	54.48 (73)	32.84 (44)	102
Settle	17	17.65 (3)	47.06 (8)	35.29 (6)	6
Total seating	420	13.10 (55)	66.19 (278)	20.71 (87)	342
Cupboard	87	8.05 (7)	68.97 (60)	22.99 (20)	80
Coffer	1	100.00 (1)	0.00	0.00	2
Chest	292	67.12 (196)	9.93 (29)	22.95 (67)	337
Press	12	8.33 (1)	33.33 (4)	58.33 (7)	3
Storage	18	38.89 (7)	55.56 (10)	5.56 (1)	26
Total storage	410	51.71 (212)	25.12 (103)	23.17 (95)	448

Table 1: Items in rural inventories as % of chamber, parlour, hall (number).

Type in urban inventories	Total No.	No. in chamber as % of total no. of item	No. in hall as % of total no. of item	No. in parlour as % of total no. of item	Total not included because not in named room
Bedstead	2571	86.85 (2233)	1.94 (50)	11.20 (288)	576
Bed	325	86.46 (281)	2.77 (9)	10.77 (35)	115
Trucklebed	734	80.65 (592)	3.13 (23)	16.21 (119)	114
Total beds	3630	85.56 (3106)	2.26 (82)	12.18 (442)	805
Book	483	32.30 (156)	47.62 (230)	20.08 (97)	535
Instrument (playing)	38	18.42 (7)	44.74 (17)	36.84 (14)	15
Tables	116	6.03 (7)	59.48 (69)	34.48 (40)	21
Looking glass	70	42.86 (30)	32.86 (23)	24.29 (17)	14
Trendle	58	58.62 (34)	32.76 (19)	8.62 (5)	77
Wheel	200	65.00 (130)	31.00 (62)	4.00 (8)	303
Sum trendle & wheel	258	63.57 (164)	31.40 (81)	5.04 (13)	380
Table	2429	37.26 (905)	41.46 (1007)	21.28 (517)	739
Storage	440	71.14 (313)	16.82 (74)	12.05 (53)	195
Cupboard	1432	27.93 (400)	49.30 (706)	22.77 (326)	462
Coffer	177	75.14 (133)	8.47 (15)	16.38 (29)	63
Chest	3680	82.17 (3024)	4.38 (161)	13.45 (495)	1269
Press	319	53.61 (171)	32.60 (104)	13.79 (44)	99
Total Storage	6048	66.82 (4041)	17.53 (1060)	15.66 (947)	4210
Spoon	813	61.50 (500)	13.16 (107)	25.34 (206)	1768
Table cloth	3340	82.75 (2764)	2.99 (100)	14.25 (476)	1838
Plate	267	63.30 (169)	10.86 (29)	25.84 (69)	604
Total Apparel	3043	73.25 (2229)	7.30 (222)	19.45 (592)	4484
Painted cloths	1191	55.33 (659)	27.62 (329)	17.04 (203)	237
Hangings	411	60.83 (250)	19.22 (79)	19.95 (82)	35
Sum of cloths	1602	56.74 (909)	25.47 (408)	17.79 (285)	38
Picture	357	26.61 (95)	35.01 (125)	38.38 (137)	112
Cupboard cloth	853	43.49 (371)	34.11 (291)	22.39 (191)	211
Total embellishments	2812	48.90 (1375)	29.30 (824)	21.80 (613)	595
Bench	92	32.61 (30)	54.35 (50)	13.04 (12)	25
Chair	2426	30.54 (741)	50.12 (1216)	19.33 (469)	678
Form	1602	36.33 (582)	43.32 (694)	20.35 (326)	410
Stool	4103	21.96 (901)	45.09 (1850)	32.95 (1352)	825
Settle	440	28.64 (126)	46.36 (204)	25.00 (110)	95
Total seating	8663	27.47 (2380)	46.33 (4014)	26.19 (2269)	2019

Table 2: Items in urban chamber, parlour, hall as % of three (number).

Bedding

The parlour provides roughly the same proportion of bedding in both kinds of house, at between 11% and 12%. The rural hall has over 11% of the total beds, as opposed to just over 2% in the urban equivalent, and there is a concomitant shift in the percentages in the chamber, the former falling to 78% and the latter rising to 86%.

Storage

The town chamber contains more storage facilities than its village counterpart, 67% as opposed to 52%, but again the other rooms differ. The rural hall has many more places to store goods than the urban hall, and the same is true of the parlour. Storage is therefore more evenly spread across the three rooms in the village than it is in the town. Chests follow the general trend in both places, but the press is most likely to be found in the rural parlour, followed by the hall, whereas in the urban house it is most common in the chamber, followed again by the hall. There are more cupboards in rural halls (69%), and then in parlours, whereas there is a more even distribution in urban rooms, with only 49% in the hall, and the chamber being the next most significant room.

Household stores

Plate is mainly listed without reference to the room in which it is kept in the rural inventory, but that which is specified is to be found in the parlour in slightly more cases than in the chamber, and is not present in the hall at all. In the town, silverware is most commonly kept in the chamber, followed by the parlour, and there are much smaller amounts in the hall. Spoons are most common in the rural chamber, then the parlour, and are once again absent in the hall. Their distribution in towns closely follows that of general silverware.

Table cloths are most commonly found in rural chambers, but there are substantial concentrations in parlours and even halls. In the urban house the number in the chamber is much larger, and this is at the expense of both the other rooms. This hierarchy is maintained in the storage of apparel within towns, but in villages the largest concentration is to be found in the hall at 49%, followed by the chamber and then the parlour.

Seating

The provision of seating in urban chambers and parlours is very similar, and the largest concentration is in the hall (46%). In rural houses the hall's share is higher at 66%, and the other two rooms are lower, and more clearly differentiated, with the parlour having a larger percentage of the total amount of seats. The largest numbers of stools are in the hall, followed by the parlour and then the chamber in both urban and rural inventories. Chairs and forms, however, are considerably more common in the rural hall than they are in the urban, at 74% and 70% respectively as opposed to 50% and 43%. The remaining chairs and forms are more commonly kept in the urban chamber than the parlour, but in the case of the rural sample there is little difference between the figures for the additional items. The table is most common in the rural hall, followed by the chamber and then the parlour; an order which is maintained in the urban rooms, but with a much smaller percentage in the hall, 41% as opposed to 60%, and a concomitant increase in the share in both of the other rooms.

Working equipment

The working equipment which wheels and trendles represent is entirely absent from the rural parlour, divided instead between hall and chamber in a ratio of approximately two thirds to one third. The urban parlour has a very small percentage of such items, and the others are divided in the opposite way, with two thirds in the chamber and one third in the hall.

Leisure items

The items associated with leisure activities are even more noticeably absent from the lists of rooms in the rural inventory than many of the other categories. While there are only nine instruments to be found in the whole sample, there are substantial numbers of books and playing tables, but only five and two respectively in named rooms. The faint impression given by these few objects is that they are in parlours and halls rather than chambers. In the urban house, by contrast, the chamber contains more books than the parlour, although less than the hall. Playing tables are mainly to be found in halls too, with more in parlours than chambers, and the same is true of musical instruments, which are only present in very small numbers in the urban chamber. However this latter room has the majority of the looking glasses, followed by hall and then parlour.

There are no such objects to be found within the rural inventories at all.

Embellishment

Embellishment in the rural inventories is once again shown in rather limited numbers. The largest numbers of hangings and painted cloths are in the chamber, followed by the hall and then the parlour. This order is followed in the urban statistics, but as the chamber has a larger percentage (57 as opposed to 49), the number in the hall is considerably lower, whilst that of the parlour is actually larger than the rural sample. Rural cupboard cloths are to be found in equal numbers in chamber and parlour, and are slightly less common in halls. In towns they are most common in chambers, followed by halls and then parlours mirroring the positioning of the hangings. This gives a more unified character to the distribution of embellishments which is only disrupted by the fact that the majority of pictures are in parlours, and the rest are more common within halls than chambers, a pattern which neatly and confusingly reverses that of the other items. Once again, there are no pictures at all to be found within the rural sample.

Appendix 4: Numbers of rooms in all Sandwich houses

A count of the most common number of rooms in Sandwich houses is shown in Table 1. Houses with one and two rooms are in the main produced by inventories where only a small amount of the material has been listed under room headings. This factor also affects houses higher up the scale to a greater or lesser extent. When this is taken into consideration, the main groupings of inventories can be seen to fall between four and six rooms. Bearing in mind Ollerenshaw's identification of the average household size in Sandwich in the late sixteenth century as comprising 4.75 people, the low numbers of rooms give some idea of multiple occupancy, and of the employment of the numbers of beds to be found in each room.¹

Number of rooms	Number of houses
1	20
2	25
3	21
4	25
5	21
6	23
7	15
8	13
9	11
10	8
11	10
12	4
13	1
14 - 23	9

Table 1: Numbers of houses with each number of rooms.

Table 2 shows a count of the rooms found within the most common, middle band of properties, and refers to 69 houses. It can immediately be seen that nearly every house has a hall,² just under half have a separate kitchen, and almost the same number possess a buttery. The chamber is much more prevalent than this Table might suggest, as it has been listed separately under several different headings dependant upon its

¹ Ollerenshaw 'Civic Elite of Sandwich' p.23.

² Those houses whose inventories do not list a hall probably possessed one, but the goods within it were itemised without a heading.

position within the house. The category of 'additional chamber', which covers such rooms as 'the second chamber', is clearly of importance here, as many of these houses have more than one such room. If all the chambers are added together there are 111. and if lofts and garrets are added the number rises to 128, almost twice the number of houses. 39% of the houses had a parlour, slightly more had a shop, and 29% contained a specifically identified chamber over the hall.

Most common rooms in Sandwich houses with 4,5,6 rooms	No. of instances of rooms
Hall	63
Chambers with no position stated	50
Kitchen	31
Buttery	29
Parlour	27
Shop	21
Additional chamber	22
Chamber over hall	20
Loft	10
Garret	7
Backside	6
Chamber over parlour	6
Chamber over buttry	5
Outhouse	4
Servants' chamber	4
Chamber over shop	4

Table 2: Most common rooms in the middle band of Sandwich houses.

A high percentage of the people who lived in this middle range of houses appear to have been small shopkeepers. Their houses did not contain enough rooms for some of them to be specifically designated as storage areas, so whatever businesses they were involved in cannot have carried much stock. Nor did they provide chambers exclusively for servants. 70% of the houses mention one room which we must consider to be on the second floor. This appears to characterise the houses as long, narrow and tall, in other words perfect for an urban environment.

Appendix 5: Objects in all Sandwich rooms

Type	No. in chamber as % (No.)	No. in hall as % (No.)	No. in parlour as % (No.)	Type	No. in chamber as % (No.)	No. in hall as % (No.)	No. in parlour as % (No.)
Bedstead	88.48 (453)	2.73 (14)	8.79 (45)	Table	33.27 (165)	45.16 (224)	21.57 (107)
Bedding	79.38 (77)	4.12 (4)	16.49 (16)	Close stool	92.31 (12)	0	7.69 (1)
Bed	89.36 (84)	5.32 (5)	5.32 (5)	Desk	57.14 (16)	17.86 (5)	25.00 (7)
Featherbed	83.69 (426)	3.93 (20)	12.38 (63)	Shelf	52.63 (10)	47.37 (9)	0
Flockbed	91.98 (149)	2.47 (4)	5.56 (9)				
Trucklebed	81.72 (152)	5.38 (10)	12.90 (24)	Storage (other)	79.03 (98)	12.10 (15)	8.87 (11)
Tester	78.38 (29)	5.41 (2)	16.22 (6)	Coffer	85.11 (40)	10.64 (5)	4.26 (2)
Valance	83.64 (46)	3.64 (2)	12.73 (7)	Chest	85.20 (645)	4.89 (37)	9.91 (75)
Total beds	689 (87%)	29 (4%)	74 (9%)	Cupboard	26.99 (78)	49.13 (142)	23.88 (69)
				Press	40.20 (41)	47.06 (48)	12.75 (13)
Book	29.41 (30)	56.86 (58)	13.73 (14)				
Armour	59.09 (169)	36.36 (104)	4.55 (13)	Kitchen stuff	34.88 (15)	60.47 (26)	4.65 (2)
Instrument	33.33 (2)	50.00 (3)	16.67 (1)	Gear	90.00 (18)	10.00 (2)	0
Tables	13.79 (4)	44.83 (13)	41.38 (12)	Wheel	68.09 (32)	31.91 (15)	0
Looking glass	37.93 (11)	41.38 (12)	20.69 (6)	Cloth	82.98 (39)	2.13 (1)	14.89 (7)
Fire stuff	58.88 (63)	Not recorded	28.04 (30)				
				Cupboard cloth	46.13 (125)	31.37 (85)	22.51 (61)
Total apparel	758 (74%)	114 (11%)	159 (15%)	Cushion	31.14 (336)	42.82 (462)	26.04 (281)
				Cushion (window)	100.00 (13)	0	0
Bench	41.38 (12)	55.17 (16)	3.45 (1)	Carpet	53.71 (94)	26.86 (47)	19.43 (34)
Form	35.98 (95)	46.97	17.05	Curtain	72.45	4.41	23.14 (84)

		(124)	(45)		(263)	(16)	
Chair	29.76 (150)	53.17 (268)	17.06 (86)	Curtain (window)	47.22 (17)	16.67 (6)	36.11 (13)
Stool	19.18 (210)	46.76 (510)	34.06 (373)	Hangings	68.25 (43)	15.87 (10)	15.87 (10)
Settle	25.50 (38)	56.38 (84)	18.12 (27)	Painted cloths	52.78 (114)	28.70 (62)	18.52 (40)
				Picture	32.64 (47)	42.36 (61)	25.00 (36)
Linen	64.29 (27)	21.43 (9)	14.29 (6)	Total embellish- ments	1052 (45%)	749 (32%)	559 (24%)
Table cloth	87.50 (896)	3.91 (40)	8.59 (88)				
Jewels	24.00 (12)	64.00 (3)	12.00 (6)				
Plate	68.42 (65)	9.47 (9)	22.11 (21)				
Purse	29.63 (8)	55.56 (15)	14.81 (4)				
Pewter	33.85 (22)	56.92 (37)	9.23(6)				
Spoon	61.67 (148)	12.08 (29)	26.25 (63)				

Table 1: Percentages of items in each room in Sandwich (number).

Bedding and storage

The chambers of the majority of Sandwich houses made up a larger percentage of the beds and bedding of the house as a whole than the other components of the 'model room'. There are almost four beds per chamber, whereas only just over one tenth of halls, and four fifths of parlours had a single bed. They also have more of the storage facilities in every instance except for that of the press, which is more prevalent in the hall than it was in the average distribution. In general, in the case of both bedding and storage, the chamber has increased its capacity at the expense of the parlour rather than the hall.

Household stores

Of those items which one might expect to be kept within the increased numbers of coffers and chests, the chamber has more table cloths and more silver items. However it has less jewellery and less pewter. Cloth is much more prevalent in the chamber

than in the model room, and much less concentrated in the hall. The levels of clothing in each room are about the same for the chamber, but once again there is an increase in that which is stored in the hall at the expense of the parlour.

Seating

Many of the categories of seating in Sandwich are very close indeed to the average distributions in the model rooms. In the case of benches, the parlour once again loses out to the chamber, although there are more settles to be found in halls than is generally the case, and this is in contradistinction to chambers as well as parlours. Chambers also have less tables in the town, and a greater number of them are to be found in halls.

Embellishment

On the whole, the parlour was less likely to be furnished with cloths in Sandwich, and the chamber and the hall were a little more embellished. The major difference involves window cushions, which are only to be found in chambers in the town. The chamber also has more cushions in general (to be expected with the rise in beds), more carpets, window curtains, hangings and pictures. The hall has greater numbers of cupboard cloths, carpets, window curtains, painted cloths and pictures, whereas the parlour is less likely to possess cushions, carpets, window curtains, hangings and pictures, and only has a greater number of painted cloths than the average.

Working equipment

There are far less cloth-working tools to be found in the town of Sandwich than there were in the model rooms, and some categories do not figure at all. However, under the category of gear, which is to be found in greatly increased numbers in chambers to the detriment of halls, there are a certain amount of stock cards, as well as distillatories and fishing equipment. Many more cooking utensils are to be found in halls than was the case in the model room, which ties in with the greater amounts of pewter there. This suggests a redistribution of practices between rooms, in which the extra chambers are being used for storage and production purposes, and the fires in halls, now in chimney places as ceilings are put in, are being used for at least some of the cooking activities of the household.

Leisure items

Finally the parlour loses ground in terms of provision for leisure activities, with less books – now more commonly found in halls; less playing tables and instruments (although the latter sample is very small) – now more frequent in chambers than they were, although most common in halls. There are also less looking glasses, which are most commonly found in halls. Armour is most common in Sandwich in the chamber, and much less so in the parlour than is the case in the model room. Even the relationship between the amounts of fire equipment found in chamber and parlour has changed, the former having a greater share than in the model.

Chamber

To briefly characterise each room in Sandwich then: the chamber has a greater share of the beds and the storage facilities than the average shown in the model room, and in the latter, it houses a larger percentage of the table cloths, armour, silver plate and cloth of the house. It has more benches, but less tables, more working gear suggestive of production, and the only specifically identified window curtains in the house. The division between working chambers or storage lofts and bed chambers noted in the sample as a whole seems to be maintained in Sandwich. The smaller amount of tables might be related to a lack of need for eating facilities in the chamber.

Hall

The hall in Sandwich contains a greater proportion of the presses, in which more cloth, pewter and apparel is stored. There are more settles around more tables, and more cooking utensils, more books and more looking glasses than the model hall. The room in Sandwich appears to be much more multi-functional than its model, and more central to every aspect of the life of the house. In many houses it offers a space to both cook and eat. It also provides for the leisure activities of a greater number of houses, suggesting that most of the daylight hours would be spent within the room. As more of the household valuables are kept there it seems as though the hall in Sandwich provides almost every amenity except that supplied by the chamber. This would make sense in the light of the concentration of households in properties with 4-6 rooms, more than one of which was a chamber.

Parlour

The parlour is used less for sleeping and for storage in Sandwich, and as a result is less intensively furnished, has less evidence of a hearth, and contains less leisure equipment, less looking glasses and less window curtains. These erosions of its function might represent a wider division in which a large proportion of parlours are at the very front of houses, and effectively function as some kind of entry from which the street can be viewed. The beds and storage facilities which do appear in depleted numbers would therefore be concentrated mainly in the back parlours.

Appendix 6: Objects in Sandwich office-holders' rooms

Type in Sandwich office-holders' rooms	Total no. in three rooms	No. in chamber as % (No.)	No. in hall as % (No.)	No. in parlour as % (No.)	Total items not included as not listed in 3 rooms
Bedstead	209	89.95 (188)	1.91 (4)	8.13 (17)	12
Bedding	41	78.05 (32)	4.88 (2)	17.07 (7)	6
Bed	21	100 (21)	0.00	0.00	0
Featherbed	235	88.09 (207)	3.40 (8)	8.51 (20)	22
Flockbed	57	96.49 (55)	1.75 (1)	1.75 (1)	10
Trucklebed	81	86.42 (70)	6.17 (5)	7.41 (6)	3
Tester	15	80.00 (12)	6.67 (1)	13.33 (2)	0
Valance	28	85.71 (24)	7.14 (2)	7.14 (2)	0
Bench	10	60.00 (6)	40.00 (4)	0.00	4
Chair	197	37.56 (74)	42.64 (84)	19.80 (39)	30
Settle	49	20.41 (10)	51.02 (25)	28.57 (14)	10
Form	84	35.71 (30)	42.86 (36)	21.43 (18)	13
Stool	442	14.71 (65)	42.31 (167)	42.99 (190)	62
Cupboard	114	35.96 (41)	34.21 (39)	29.82 (34)	21
Coffer	24	87.50 (21)	12.50 (3)	0.00	6
Chest	275	90.18 (248)	1.82 (5)	8.00 (22)	33
Storage	38	76.32 (29)	10.53 (4)	13.16 (5)	1
Press	42	47.62 (20)	40.48 (17)	11.90 (5)	5
Close stool	7	100.00 (7)	0.00	0.00	4
Desk	11	54.55 (6)	27.27 (3)	18.18 (2)	1
Table	189	35.98 (68)	38.62 (73)	25.40 (48)	27
Shelf	3	66.67 (2)	33.33 (1)	0.00	1
Hangings	31	70.97 (22)	12.90 (4)	16.13 (5)	3
Painted cloths	74	56.76 (42)	21.62 (16)	21.62 (16)	5
Picture	95	40.00 (38)	38.95 (37)	21.05 (20)	10
Cupboard cloths	119	43.70 (52)	30.25 (36)	26.05 (31)	28
Looking glass	10	30.00 (3)	50.00 (5)	20.00 (2)	1
Cushion	527	27.13 (143)	43.83 (231)	29.03 (153)	35
Cushion (window)	11	100.00 (11)	0.00	0.00	0
Carpet	111	56.76 (63)	22.52 (25)	20.72 (23)	3
Curtain	168	78.57 (132)	4.17 (7)	17.26 (29)	0
Curtain (window)	22	31.82 (7)	22.73 (5)	45.45 (10)	0

Linen	17	70.59 (12)	0.00	29.41 (5)	13
Plate	41	73.17 (30)	12.20 (5)	14.63 (6)	77
Jewels	33	9.09 (3)	90.91 (30)	0.00	12
Purse	5	40.00 (2)	60.00 (3)	0.00	37
Pewter	13	38.46 (5)	38.46 (5)	23.08 (3)	40
Spoon	95	65.26 (62)	17.89 (17)	16.84 (16)	203
Table cloths	420	90.24 (379)	1.90 (8)	7.86 (33)	165
Cloth	15	100.00 (15)	0.00	0.00	4
Total apparel	305	93.11 (284)	5.57 (17)	1.31 (4)	1334
Gear	4	100.00 (4)	0.00	0.00	15
Kitchen stuff	9	44.44 (4)	44.44 (4)	11.11 (1)	30
Tools	2	100.00 (2)	0.00	0.00	0
Trendle	1	100.00 (1)	0.00	0.00	1
Wheel	14	92.86 (13)	7.14 (1)	0.00	14
Book	40	0.00	85.00 (34)	15.00 (6)	12
Tables	13	15.38 (2)	23.08 (3)	61.54 (8)	0
Armour	71	39.44 (28)	54.93 (39)	5.63 (4)	23
Fittings	19	31.58 (6)	47.37 (9)	21.05 (4)	2
Fire stuff	49	57.14 (28)	Not recorded	36.73 (18)	0
Instrument	3	33.33 (1)	33.33 (1)	33.33 (1)	1

Table 1: Instances of items in the inventories of Sandwich office-holders per room (number).

Bedding and seating

The items which are kept in the three most prevalent rooms differ from the average for Sandwich as a whole. The one function of the rooms which remains fairly constant is the provision of beds and bedding, any changes suggesting that the chamber has a greater share of the beds, with a slight rise in trucklebeds in the hall. The parlour, however, has less than ever. The chamber has more benches and chairs at the expense of both hall and parlour, but the parlour has a considerably increased percentage of settles, forms and stools at the expense of both hall and chamber.

Storage

The chamber in the office-holder's house offers more storage facilities than is the case in the average Sandwich house; in most cases at the expense of hall and parlour, except in the case of the cupboard, which is also more prevalent in the parlour, and the category 'other storage', where the parlour increases its percentage to the detriment of both hall and chamber. However, these rises are insignificant in relation

to the overall trend, which is for less storage and bedding in hall and parlour, and the concentration of both in the chamber, a trend which was pronounced in Sandwich as a whole in comparison to the model rooms.

Storage

In the main the chamber has a larger share, especially in the case of apparel, where the share which it contains is increased to 93%. While there is a small amount of many different kinds of clothing in the hall, suggesting that it is being stored there in a few houses, the parlour has only two hats across the office-holding sample as a whole. However, considerably more pewter is being stored in the parlour, and a little more in the chamber, although there is much less in the hall. Those items not included are mainly in the kitchen. Silverware and silver spoons are all increasingly to be found in the hall, which suggests that the cupboards which were being used to display a garnish of pewter in middling halls are being used to exhibit the higher status metal-ware in the office-holders' rooms. Table cloths are being stored in slightly larger quantities in chambers but in smaller numbers in parlours and halls. The remaining items are once more to be found in kitchens, giving the impression that this room is being used to store the dining equipment which is in daily use.

Working equipment

Working equipment within the main rooms of the household is scarce in every case, reflecting the provision of specific spaces for such activities, and the clearer distinction between spaces and actions which is subsequently possible. That equipment which is to be found in the main rooms of the house, mainly the spinning wheel, is most common in the chamber.

Leisure items

The leisure items are for the most part similarly, but more surprisingly, sparse given the status of the households. There are very few instruments indeed, which is curious. There are slightly more playing tables, and here there is a definite shift from hall to parlour. A similar shift, but with a larger sample behind the percentage, is to be seen in the placing of books. The hall in these office-holders' rooms contains 85%, most of which are Bibles. There is also considerably more armour kept in halls in these

houses. That which was stored in chests in the chamber in the town as a whole is in the hall, presumably on show as there are so few storage facilities there. There is a similar shift in looking glasses from chamber to hall, although the numbers are smaller.

Embellishments

Rather surprisingly there are less hangings and painted cloths in the hall than in the sample as a whole, in contrast to a slight increase in those decorating the parlour and chamber. There are more cupboard cloths in both hall and parlour, which suggests that more are in use (in the light of the information about storage) but less carpets in the hall, which at first seems contradictory. However, as there are more carpets in parlour and chamber, and more curtains in chamber but not parlour, it seems possible that they are being kept on beds as well as tables, and the numbers are therefore reduced or inflated in relation to the position of sleeping facilities. The increase in the number of pictures in chambers also suggests that this room had a higher level of embellishment than in the town as a whole. The parlour sees an increase in cushions, which is logical in consideration of the increased provision of seating. But it also has considerably more window curtains, as does the hall. This suggests that the front parlour was a room in which it was felt necessary to cover the windows to keep in heat, and also possibly to restrict the view from the street.

Appendix 7: Rooms in all Canterbury houses

Table 1 shows the number of rooms which are listed in each of the 411 (of 580) inventories for the town which group their items by room, and indicates a concentration between four and seven rooms. This band lies in-between the considerable number of documents which do not consistently list each room and the smaller amount of very large properties and inventories which clearly list goods in more than one of the houses belonging to the deceased.

No. of rooms	No. of Canterbury houses
1	40
2	41
3	32
4	43
5	41
6	34
7	41
8	25
9	25
10	22
11	15
12	9
13	8
14	5
15	4
16	6
17	4
18	2
19	2
20	2
21	2
22	3
25	1
26	1
27	1
29	1
33	1

Table 1: Number of rooms in each inventory for Canterbury.

Table 2 lists the most common rooms within the houses and gives a broad idea of their relationship to one another. The only room which can be seen to be prevalent

enough to be common to every house is the chamber. There is a surprisingly small amount of parlours and halls in relation to the number of inventories, even given the tendency to abandon the naming of rooms half way through a document. There are 483 chambers whose position is not stated, and 544 which are on an upper floor of the house. The combined total of both types of chamber, 1027, gives 2.5 chambers per house, a number which excludes those rooms whose name suggests that they are used

Room	No. of instances in Canterbury inventories
Chamber	365
Hall	356
Parlour	255
Kitchen	239
Buttery	181
Shop	157
Storage room	150
Working room	143
Chamber over hall	126
Chamber over parlour	115
Loft	76
Chamber over shop	74
Backside	57
Chamber over kitchen	56
Yard	56
Named chamber	55
Cellar	52
Servants' chamber	44
Upper chamber	42
Room (not stated)	31
Chamber over buttery	29
Study	28
Gallery	21
Chamber over entry	19
Entry	18
His chamber	11
Her chamber	8
Chamber over another	7
School room	5
Closet	3
His parlour	2
Upper hall	2

Table 2: Type of rooms in Canterbury inventories.

as working rooms or for the storage of various stuffs. Those chambers which are

named suggest an explanation for some of the houses with large amounts of rooms, as they often belong to inns, and provide a way of distinguishing between the accommodation available for guests. The few upper rooms which are said to be over other upper rooms also indicate that some of these properties had three storeys, possibly to take account of a ground floor shop. The small number of upper halls, and parlours said to be the room in which the deceased passed away, also point to a different and complex organisation of urban domestic space.

Appendix 8: Objects in rooms in all Canterbury houses

Type in Canterbury rooms	Total no. in 3 rooms	No in chamber as % (No.)	No. in hall as % (No.)	No. in parlour as % (No.)	Data not included as not in 3 rooms
Book	260	41.54 (108)	42.31 (110)	16.15 (42)	354
Tables	56	5.36 (3)	66.07 (37)	28.57 (16)	8
Instruments	26	15.38 (4)	50.00 (13)	34.62 (9)	11
Looking glass	26	46.15 (12)	26.92 (7)	26.92 (7)	4
Wheel	104	60.58	33.65	5.77	167
Trendle	13	69.23	23.08	7.69	13
Sum wheel & trendle	117	61.54 (72)	32.48 (38)	5.98 (7)	65
Table cloth	1193	82.65 (986)	3.02 (36)	14.33 (171)	973
Spoon	323	57.28 (185)	17.65 (57)	25.08 (81)	908
Plate	107	54.21 (58)	16.82 (18)	28.97 (31)	356
Total apparel	1142	77.23 (882)	5.60 (64)	17.16 (196)	71
Hangings	179	56.42	21.79	21.79	15
Painted cloth	671	56.93	27.27	15.80	119
Sum of cloths	850	56.82 (483)	26.12 (222)	17.06 (145)	13
Picture	153	23.53 (36)	27.45 (42)	49.02 (75)	85
Cupboard cloth	373	40.21 (150)	36.19 (135)	23.59 (88)	134
Table	1174	40.37 (474)	38.67 (454)	20.95 (246)	377
Bedstead	1153	85.52 (986)	2.25 (26)	12.23 (141)	261
Bed	124	83.87 (104)	3.23 (4)	12.90 (16)	43
Trucklebed	372	79.84 (297)	2.69 (10)	17.47 (65)	61
Total beds	1649	84.11 (1387)	2.43 (40)	13.46 (222)	19
Bench	51	35.29 (18)	49.02 (25)	15.69 (8)	12
Chair	1121	35.15 (394)	44.69 (501)	20.16 (226)	339
Form	842	36.94 (311)	42.16 (355)	20.90 (176)	205
Stool	1915	23.34 (447)	43.24 (828)	33.42 (640)	434
Settle	234	31.20 (73)	44.02 (103)	24.79 (58)	54
Total seating	4163	29.86 (1243)	43.53 (1812)	26.62 (1108)	123
Press	156	61.54 (96)	24.36 (38)	14.10 (22)	58
Coffer	94	77.66 (73)	7.45 (7)	14.89 (14)	43
Cupboard	759	31.36 (238)	46.77 (355)	21.87 (166)	261
Chest	1558	82.35 (1283)	4.62 (72)	13.03 (203)	595
Storage	204	71.57 (146)	14.71 (30)	13.73 (28)	113
Total storage	2771	66.26 (146)	18.12 (30)	15.63 (28)	5550

Table 1: Type in Canterbury rooms as % of total of chamber, parlour, hall (number).

Bedding and seating

The provision of bedding in the Canterbury house is very similar to the percentages for the model rooms. There is a small drop in provision in the chamber, but this represents a small concentration of beds in kitchens rather than a change in the situation in either parlour or hall. There is a slightly more substantial drop in the seating available in the hall, and a consequent rise in the figures for the chamber, especially in the case of benches, chairs and settles; and the parlour, particularly in the provision of benches. The provision of tables is diminished in the hall, and slightly in the parlour, but is increased in the chamber.

Storage

In the case of storage the chamber increases its provision in all categories. The hall, however, significantly decreases in importance, most noticeably in the case of the press and the cupboard but also in the general category of storage (the only categories in which it showed any dominance in the model). The figures for the parlour also show a less dramatic decline in every type of storage except the general category, where there is a slight increase.

Household stores

Table cloths, some of which are being kept within kitchens and butteries in Canterbury, are slightly down in parlour and hall, but their distribution between the three rooms remains fairly close to the model. There are considerably smaller numbers of both silver spoons and other plate in chambers, larger numbers in halls, and less spoons but more silverware in parlours. The levels of apparel in the chamber are slightly higher than the model, but there is a fall off in the numbers in halls, and a larger decrease in parlours.

Working equipment

The housing of working equipment shows the chamber as the most important room in this regard with many more trendles than the model, although there are less wheels. There is a slight rise in both categories in the parlour, but a sizeable drop in the

numbers of trendles in the hall.

Leisure items

The hall in Canterbury was, however, more likely to contain both playing tables and musical instruments than the model for all places. This was at the expense of both chamber and parlour, the latter being especially affected by a decrease in tables. The chamber contained more books than the average though, and the other two rooms slightly less. There were also more looking glasses in chambers, slightly less in parlours, and considerably fewer in halls.

Embellishment

The chamber has slightly less hangings and painted cloths when the two are taken together, fewer pictures and less cupboard cloths. The hall has about the same number of hangings on average, many less pictures, but slightly more cupboard cloths. There is little variation in the hangings or cupboard cloths of the parlour, but there is a large increase in the number of pictures contained within it, making it the room most likely to contain such images.

Chamber

The chamber in Canterbury was, as in the model, the most important room for sleeping, and provided the largest amount of storage facilities. It is distinguished by the fact that it was more likely to contain working equipment and had a higher proportion of tables and seating. In addition to this, more books and looking glasses were to be found in the chamber in Canterbury, suggesting that it was a room with a much larger range of functions than the average. Its lower levels of embellishment give the impression that at least some of these chambers were more functional spaces where eating, working, dressing and some leisure activities went on.

Hall

The Canterbury hall has less tables and less seating than the model, suggesting that it was a room which was infrequently used for dining. There is less working equipment to be found there, but more playing tables, suggesting an emphasis on leisure time rather than labour. There is less storage available there, and this is reflected most

clearly in the small amounts of apparel kept in the room. However, despite having less cupboards, it has more cupboard cloths, which would seem to draw attention towards those pieces of furniture which are to be found there. Within them must be the increased numbers of silver plate and silver spoons which are kept in the hall, suggesting that this room is being used to display wealth rather than to offer a context for domestic production.

Parlour

That latter function, more prevalent in the chamber, is also a feature of the parlour where there are more wheels and trendles. However the nature of this room is otherwise confusing. There is less storage available, but, similarly to the hall, the parlour has a larger share of plate, and more cupboard cloths for its smaller amount of cupboards. Unlike the hall however, it has many more pictures, which suggests that its status is higher than that of the model room, and that it has in some cases taken over the functions of the hall. It contains a much smaller number of playing tables and instruments, and a curious assortment of more benches and less tables though. To generalise from the evidence, it is possible to suggest a room in which seating is required, but not for eating. Just over half of the rooms appear to have been heated, but as there is no evidence that either productive or leisure activities were being pursued within it, the reason for time spent there is unclear.

Appendix 9: Objects in Canterbury office-holders' rooms

Type in Canterbury office-holder's rooms	Total no. in 3 rooms	No. in chamber as % (No.)	No. in hall as % (No.)	No. in parlour as % (No.)	Total not included as not in 3 rooms
Bedstead	126	88.10 (111)	0	11.90 (15)	16
Bed	5	80.00 (4)	0	20.00 (1)	
Trucklebed	49	85.71 (42)	0	14.29 (7)	3
Total beds	180	87.22 (157)	0	12.78 (23)	19
Book	40	5.00 (2)	80 (32)	15.00 (6)	55
Instrument	2	0.00	50 (1)	50.00 (1)	
Tables	5	0.00	40 (2)	60.00 (3)	
Looking glass	3	33.33 (1)	33.33 (1)	33.33 (1)	
Trendle		0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Wheel	12	75.00 (9)	25.00 (3)	0.00	11
Sum trendle & wheel	12	75.00 (9)	25.00 (3)	0.00	12
Table	142	40.14 (57)	35.21 (50)	24.65 (35)	26
Cupboard	98	39.80 (39)	32.65 (32)	27.55 (27)	23
Coffer	3	100.00 (3)	0.00	0.00	1
Chest	195	92.31 (180)	0.51 (1)	7.18 (14)	19
Press	29	82.76 (24)	10.34 (3)	6.90 (2)	3
Storage	5	80.00 (4)	20.00 (1)	0.00	3
Total storage	330	75.76 (25)	11.21 (37)	13.03 (43)	49
Plate	29	44.83 (13)	13.79 (4)	41.38 (12)	112
Spoon	43	44.19 (19)	13.95 (6)	41.86 (18)	216
Table cloth	198	93.94 (186)	0.51 (1)	5.56 (11)	78
Total apparel	149	85.91 (128)	0.67 (1)	13.42 (20)	153
Painted cloth	73	54.79 (40)	24.66 (18)	20.55 (15)	1
Hanging	31	64.52 (20)	12.90 (4)	22.58 (7)	5
Sum of cloths	104	57.69 (60)	21.15 (22)	21.15 (22)	6
Cupboard cloth	75	49.33 (37)	32.00 (24)	18.67 (14)	18
Picture	27	0.00	44.44 (12)	55.56 (15)	5
Chair	139	46.04 (64)	27.34 (38)	26.62 (37)	23
Form	83	38.55 (32)	39.76 (33)	21.69 (18)	17
Stool	340	22.35 (76)	37.65 (128)	40.00 (136)	24
Settle	39	33.33 (13)	38.46 (15)	28.21 (11)	8
Total seating	601	30.78 (185)	35.61 (214)	33.61 (202)	72

Table 1: Items in office-holders' rooms in Canterbury as % of the three rooms (number).

Bedding and storage

The provision of bedding is more heavily concentrated in the chamber as a result of its total absence in the hall, but the numbers in the parlour are approximately the same as those for the town as a whole. In the main the spread of storage facilities follows the same pattern, with the percentages for all categories higher in the chamber. Only the general category increases in the hall, but here the numbers are very slight, and there is an increase in the numbers of cupboards in the parlour. There is a smaller percentage of all other types in both rooms.

Household stores

All categories of reserved household valuables are less commonly found in the Canterbury officers' hall. The largest amounts are therefore to be found in parlours and chambers, the former having an increased share of silverware, although still less than the latter, and the position being reversed in the case of table cloths and apparel. Despite such shifts, the chamber still contained the majority, between 44% and 94%, of all categories of valuables.

Working equipment and leisure items

Spinning wheels were also more clearly concentrated within the chamber. They were not present in the parlour at all, and only a few examples existed in the hall. All kinds of items indicative of non-working time, however, were less likely to be found in the chamber. The numbers are fairly small, but there is nevertheless a strong suggestion that books are concentrated in the hall, instruments and playing tables in the parlour. Although there are very few looking glasses in any room in these houses, the Canterbury office-holders, representing 5% of the total inventories, possessed 10% of the total mirrors, whereas in Sandwich the office-holders, representing 17% of the population, possessed 32% of the items. The figures are clearly similar, a fact which the size of the sample tends to obscure. They suggest that such a simple and convenient way of viewing the self is linked to status and wealth, rather than to location.

Seating

The levels of seating provision in the chamber remain fairly consistent with those of the town as a whole, with only a slight rise in numbers of settles, and a larger one in numbers of chairs. The percentages in the hall are reduced in all cases, most considerably in terms of chairs. The parlour sees a subsequent increase in the proportion of all types of seating except the form, the largest difference being that of the stool, where its provision rises from 33% to 40%. Tables remain fairly similar to the percentages for the whole town, with a slight rise in numbers in the parlour and a concomitant drop in the hall.

Embellishments

This same shift is seen in the provision of hangings and painted cloths. Numbers remain similar in the chamber, decrease in the hall and increase in the parlour. In the case of pictures, their absence in the chamber leads to an expansion in both other rooms. Finally, cupboard cloths are more common in the chamber, which might be a consequence of the increased storage facilities in that room, and their numbers in both other rooms dip as a result.

Appendix 10: Percentage of items in each bracket of total inventoried wealth

Inventory value	Armour % (No.)	Books % (No.)	Featherbed % (No.)	Jewels % (No.)	Looking glass % (No.)	Plate % (No.)	Spoon % (No.)	Table cloth % (No.)	Instrument % (No.)	Playing Tables % (No.)
No. of items in inventories over £500 (3% of sample)	8 (28)	7 (16)	9 (69)	12 (11)	16 (4)	17 (49)	14 (18)	7 (38)	3 (1)	6 (3)
£100-499 (15% of sample)	33 (121)	23 (51)	33 (262)	40 (36)	32 (8)	48 (140)	37 (47)	26 (132)	28 (8)	40 (21)
£50-99 (11% of sample)	16 (59)	15 (33)	14 (115)	18 (16)	12 (3)	22 (64)	21 (27)	16 (81)	21 (6)	17 (9)
£1-49 (70% of sample)	43 (159)	54 (118)	44 (349)	29 (26)	40 (10)	14 (41)	27 (34)	51 (264)	48 (14)	37 (19)

Inventory value	Cushion % (No.)	Cushion window % (No.)	Cupboard cloth % (No.)	Carpet % (No.)	Curtain % (No.)	Curtain window % (No.)	Painted cloth % [hangings %] (No.)	Picture % (No.)
No. of items in inventories over £500 (3% of sample)	9 (51)	28 (10)	12 (38)	13 (36)	11 (34)	23 (20)	[5] 6 (42)	10 (7)
£100-499 (15% of sample)	37 (199)	39 (14)	38 (120)	47 (130)	45 (134)	47 (41)	[38] 27 (173)	46 (31)
£50-99 (11% of sample)	15 (84)	11 (4)	16 (50)	16 (43)	14 (43)	18 (16)	[16] 11 (71)	21 (14)
£1-49 (70% of sample)	39 (210)	22 (8)	34 (105)	24 (65)	30 (90)	11 (10)	[42] 56 (363)	24 (16)

Note: Each instance of an item has been counted, rather than the sum of the numbers of items. The brackets of inventory value have been chosen to represent significant percentages of the total number of inventories, but also to attempt to explicate, rather than mask, differences by making the upper categories smaller. The provisos about the inaccuracy of inventoried wealth noted in the introduction to Chapter 1 should be borne in mind.

Appendix 11: Percentage of valued items in each bracket of inventoried wealth

	Armour	Books	Featherbed	Jewels	Looking glass	Plate	Spoons	Table cloth	Instrument	Playing tables
No. valued items	200	121	182	32	12	107	69	103	18	23
(no.) Range over £500 (median)	(18) 12d-£4 (26s 8d)	(9) 2s-30s (5s)	(17) 3s 4d-£7 (26s 8d)	(2) 3s-£3	(2) 20d-5s	(14) 13s 4d-£14 10s (3s)	(13) 13s 4d-£9 9s (£3 15s 10d)	(6) 6s-26s 8d (13s 8d)	(1) 13s 4d	(2) 3s-3s 4d (3s 2d)
(no.) Range £100-499 (median)	(64) 4d-£4 13s 4d (11s)	(17) 6d-£20 (8s)	(45) 5s £10 (26s 8d)	(22) 18d-£30 (20s)	(6) 18d-5s (3s)	(51) 12d-£23 5s 8d (50s)	(20) 7s-£6 (48s)	(23) 6d-53s 4d (5s)	(4) 20d-20s (13s)	(8) 8d-3s (14d)
(no.) Range £50-99 (median)	(30) 6d-£3 10s (9s 6d)	(17) 2d-£20 (6s 8d)	(15) 10s £2 (26s 8d)	(4) 3s-50s (26s)	(2) 6d-12d	(25) 8d-£7 4s 4d (30s)	(17) 3d-£4 9s 4d (30s)	(9) 5s-£5 2s 4d (10s)	(4) 2s-26s 8d (5s 6d)	(4) 2s-2s 6d (2s 3d)
(no.) Range £0-49 (median)	(88) 2d-50s (3s 4d)	(78) 4d ob.-£6 (2s 2d)	(105) 2s 6d-£2 13s (20s)	(4) 3s 4d-£4 1s (12s 8d)	(2) 6d	(17) 8d-£10 9s 2d (32s)	(19) 2d-37s 11d (18s)	(65) 3d-£3 5s 3d (5s)	(9) 12d-23s 4d (8s)	(9) 6d-12s (16d)

	Cushion	Window cushion	Cupboard cloth	Carpet	Curtain	Window curtain	Painted cloth	Picture
No. valued items	29	6	46	66	20	19	336	13
(no.) Range over £500 (median)	(1) 3s	(2) 2s-16s	(4) 20d-6s 8d (5s)	(5) 3s-50s (8s)	(3) 8d-2s (2s)	(4) 4d-2s (13d)	(22) 8d-53s 8d (10s)	(1) 3s 4d
(no.) Range £100-499 (median)	(9) 6d-5s (20d)	(1) 12d	(21) 4d-33d (19d)	(34) 12d-43s 4d (6s 8d)	(6) 10d-40s (2s)	(9) 8d-3s 6d (12d)	(80) 12d-8li 5s 6d (6s 8d)	(4) 4d-6s (1s 10d)
(no.) Range £50-99 (median)	(5) 6d-5s (3s 6d)	(2) 6s 8d-10s	(4) 10d-2s (1s 6d)	(8) 8d-13s 4d (3s)	(3) 6d-11s (2s)	(4) 4d-2s 6d (16d)	(42) 6d-13s 4d (5s)	(3) 6d-6s 8d (8d)
(no.) Range £0-49 (median)	(14) 1d ob.- 10s (8d)	(1) 20d	(17) 6d-6s 8d (12d)	(19) 6d-40s (2s ob.)	(8) 4d-16s (2s 6d)	(2) 6d-8d (7d)	(192) 4d-13s 4d (2s)	(5) 3d-2s (12d)

Notes: This table uses only those items which are priced individually. Some of the highest values are undoubtedly a result of a generic price been given, for instance to all the armour in the house. The provisos about the inaccuracy of inventoried wealth noted in the introduction to Chapter 1 should be borne in mind.

Appendix 12: Percentage of fabrics in each band of total inventoried wealth

	arras	bayes	boarded	boughton	broadcloth	buckram	canvas	carpet work	chamblet	cloth	cruel	damask	diaper
Total no. of instances	23	7	36	25	10	32	37	6	13	73	8	33	87
% over £500	4	14	11	32	0	9	3	0	8	5	13	6	14
% £100-499	52	14	22	20	30	50	32	50	15	30	63	58	32
% £50-99	30	29	6	24	20	31	22	33	8	15	0	21	21
%£0-49	13	43	61	24	50	9	43	17	69	49	25	15	33

	dornix	frise	fustian	grograin	kersey	linen	mat	mocado	needlework	russet	satin	say	silk	straw
Total no. of instances	100	53	21	33	18	87	14	20	15	20	31	116	81	24
% over £500	17	4	10	9	0	16	0	10	13	5	19	16	12	4
% £100-499	42	25	29	58	22	20	14	35	53	5	48	49	30	13
% £50-99	16	9	5	6	28	18	0	40	7	20	23	12	23	17
%£0-49	25	62	57	27	50	46	86	15	27	70	10	23	35	67

	taffeta	tapestry	turkey work	velvet	wainscot	wicker	worsted
Total no. of instances	25	98	6	60	119	66	18
% over £500	8	17	0	13	25	8	6
% £100-499	56	51	83	47	35	39	17
% £50-99	12	18	17	25	14	14	6
%£0-49	24	13	0	15	25	39	72

Notes: the figures represent the percentage of the total number of instances of each material as they appear in the inventories which have been classified by total value. The provisos about the inaccuracy of inventoried wealth noted in the introduction to Chapter 1 should be borne in mind.

Appendix 13: The differences in possession of objects over time

Most graphs show the total number of inventories per year as a long dotted line, with a fine trend line. In addition, a solid line shows the number of items each year, with a medium weight trend line, and a small dotted line shows the number of inventories which contain the items each year, with a heavy trend line superimposed over it. In cases where there are very few items per year the scale is too diverse to see what is happening if the total number of inventories is included, and it has therefore been removed.

Figure 1: Flockbeds.	Figure 14: Tablecloths.	Figure 27: Curtains.
Figure 2: Featherbeds.	Figure 15: Trendles.	Figure 28: Window Curtains.
Figure 3: Aggregate of bed, bedstead, trucklebed.	Figure 16: Spinning wheels.	Figure 29: Cushions.
Figure 4: Testers.	Figure 17: Playing tables.	Figure 30: Window Cushions.
Figure 5: Valances.	Figure 18: Musical Instruments.	Figure 31: Hangings.
Figure 6: Cupboards.	Figure 19: Books.	Figure 32: Painted Cloths.
Figure 7: Chests.	Figure 20: Looking glasses.	Figure 33: Pictures.
Figure 8: Presses.	Figure 21: Stools.	Figure 34: Cupboard Cloths.
Figure 9: Coffers.	Figure 22: Chairs.	Figure 35: Carpets.
Figure 10: Spoons.	Figure 23: Forms.	Figure 36: Fire equipment.
Figure 11: Silver plate.	Figure 24: Settles.	Figure 37: Fittings.
Figure 12: Jewellery.	Figure 25: Benches.	
Figure 13: Cloth.	Figure 26: Tables.	

Figure 1: Flockbeds over time.

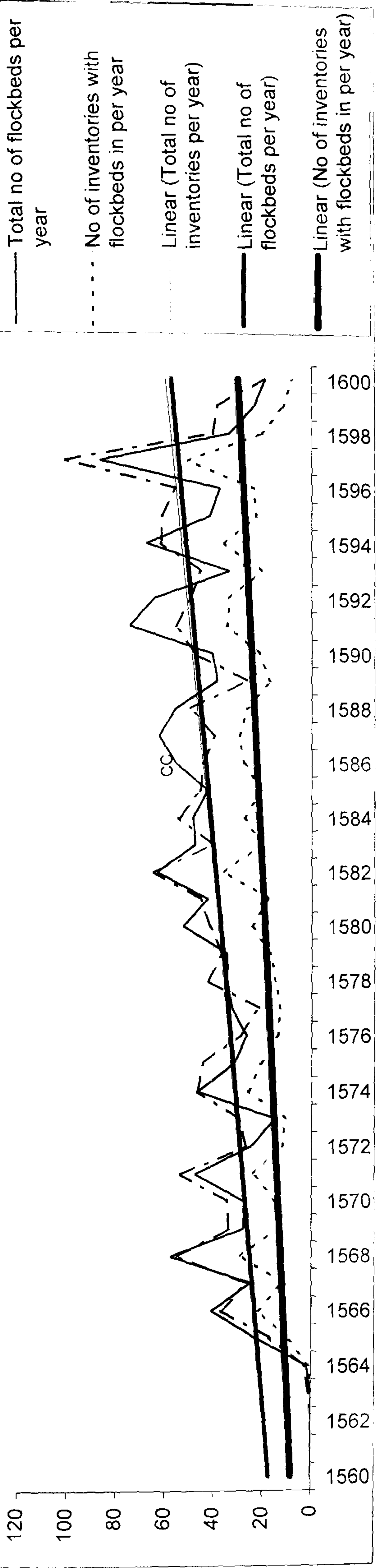


Figure 2: Featherbeds over time.

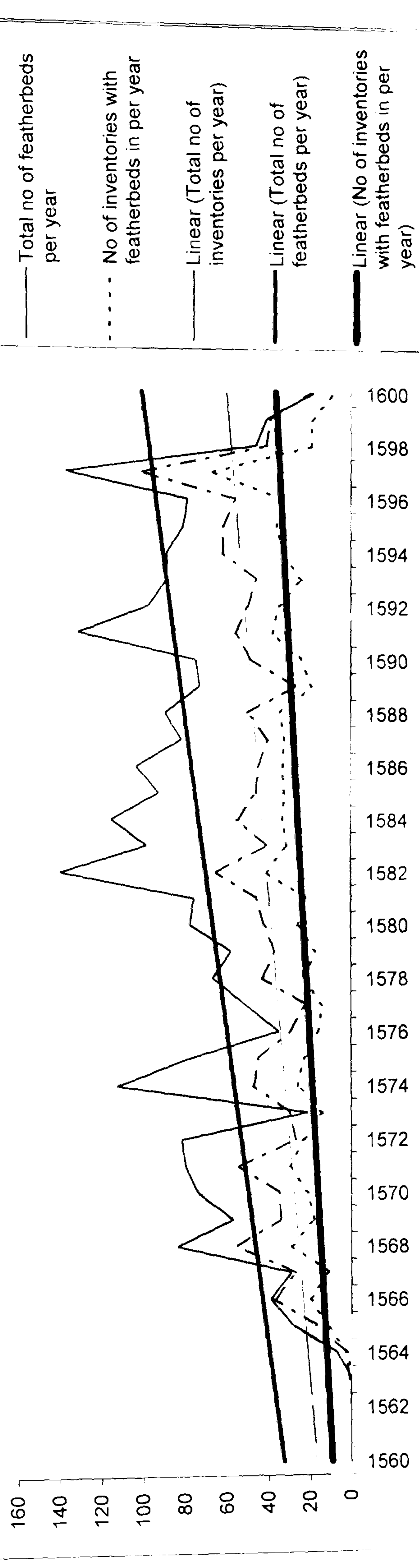


Figure 3: Aggregates of bed, bedstead and trucklebed over time.



Figure 4: Testers over time.

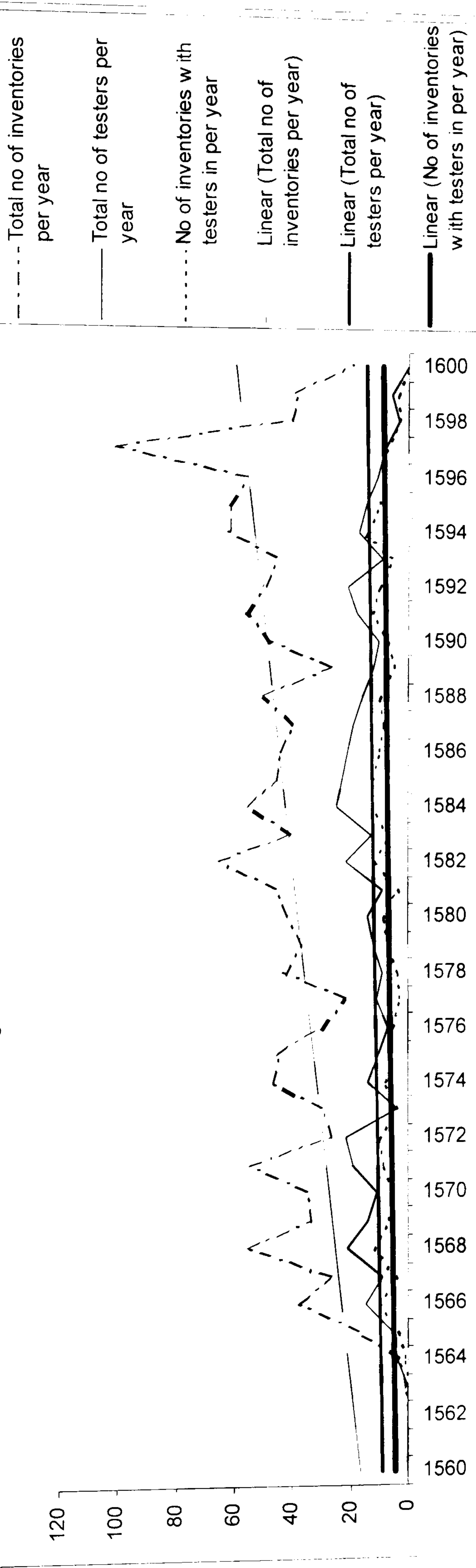


Figure 5: Valances over time.

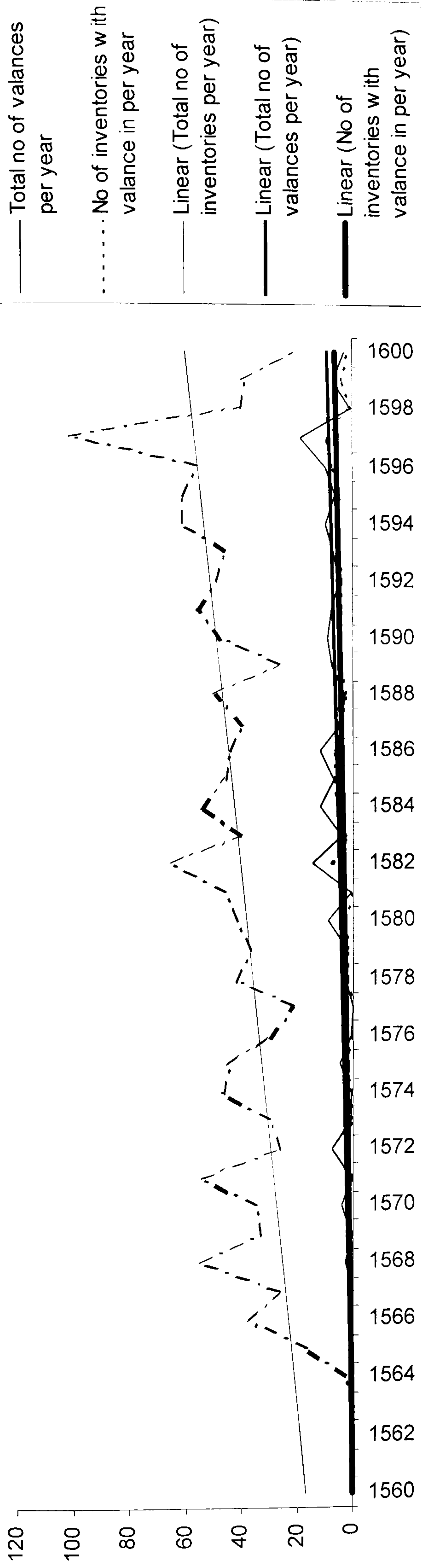


Figure 6: Cupboards over time.

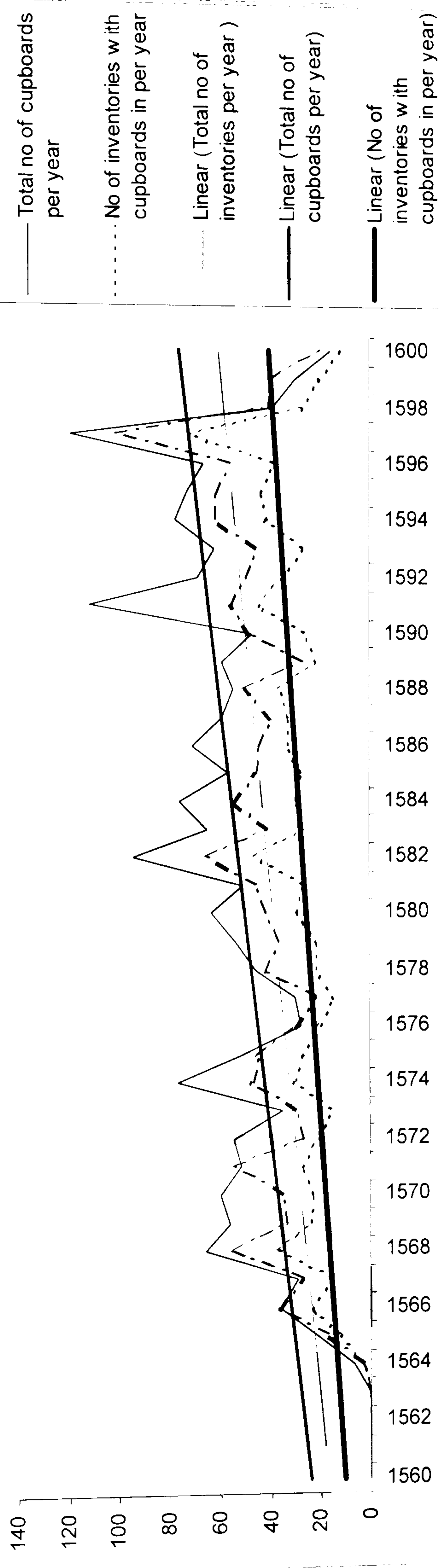


Figure 7: Chests over time.

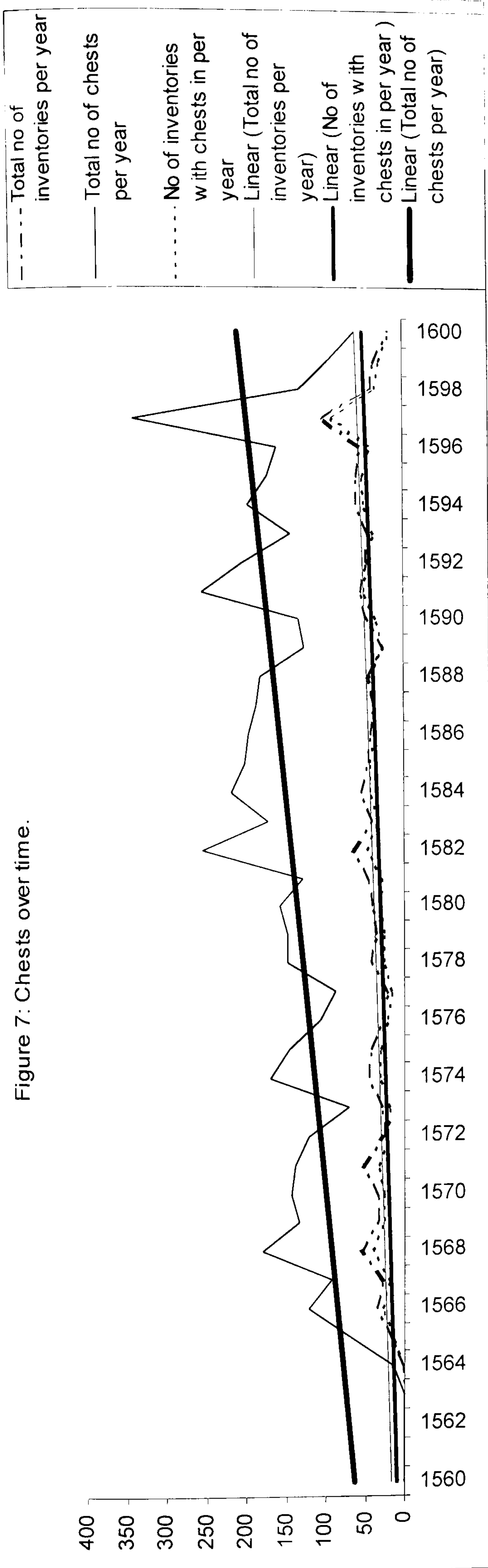


Figure 8: Presses over time.

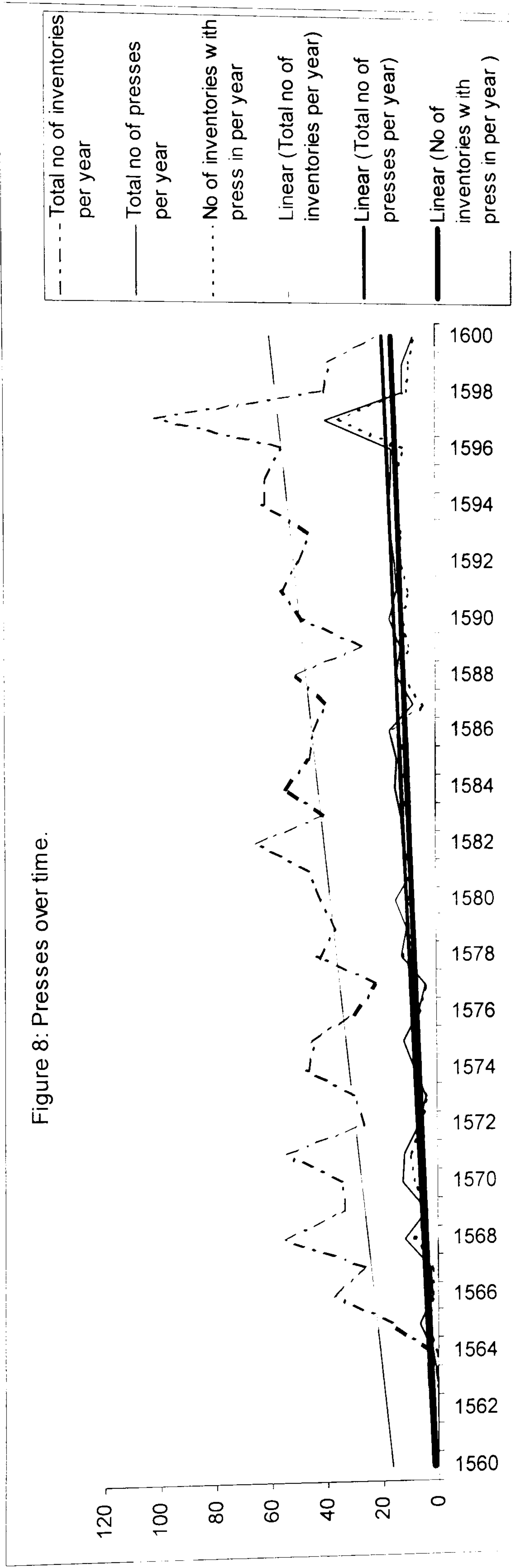


Figure 9: Coffers over time.

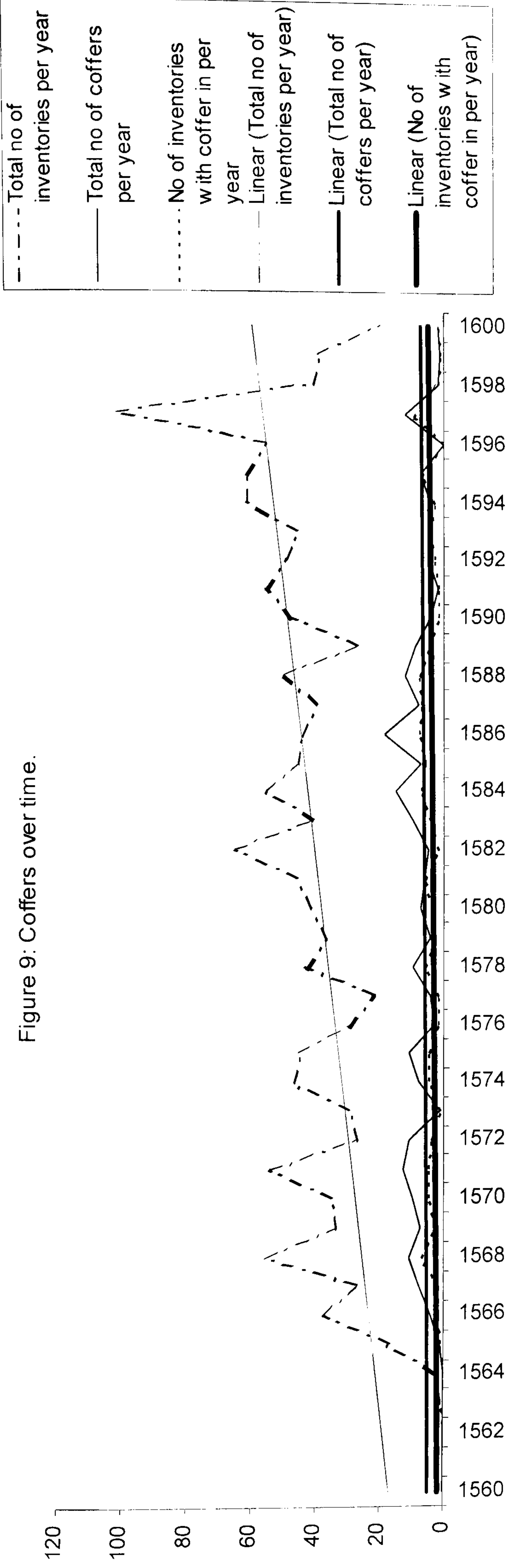


Figure 10: Spoons over time.

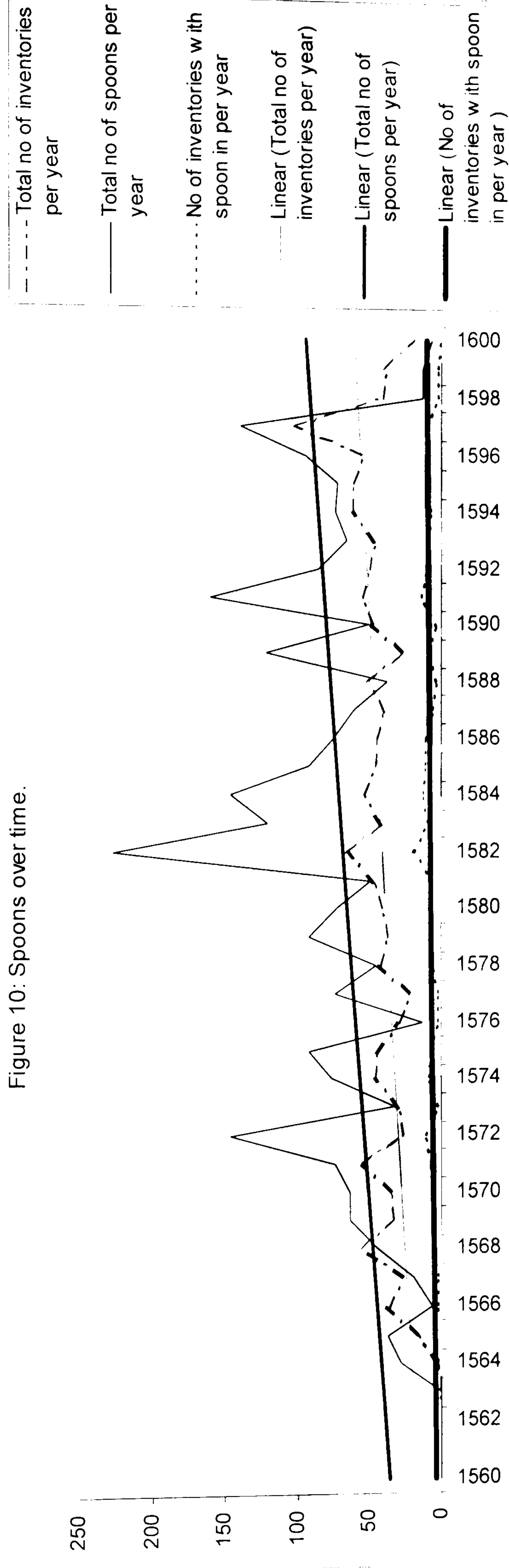


Figure 11: Silver plate over time.

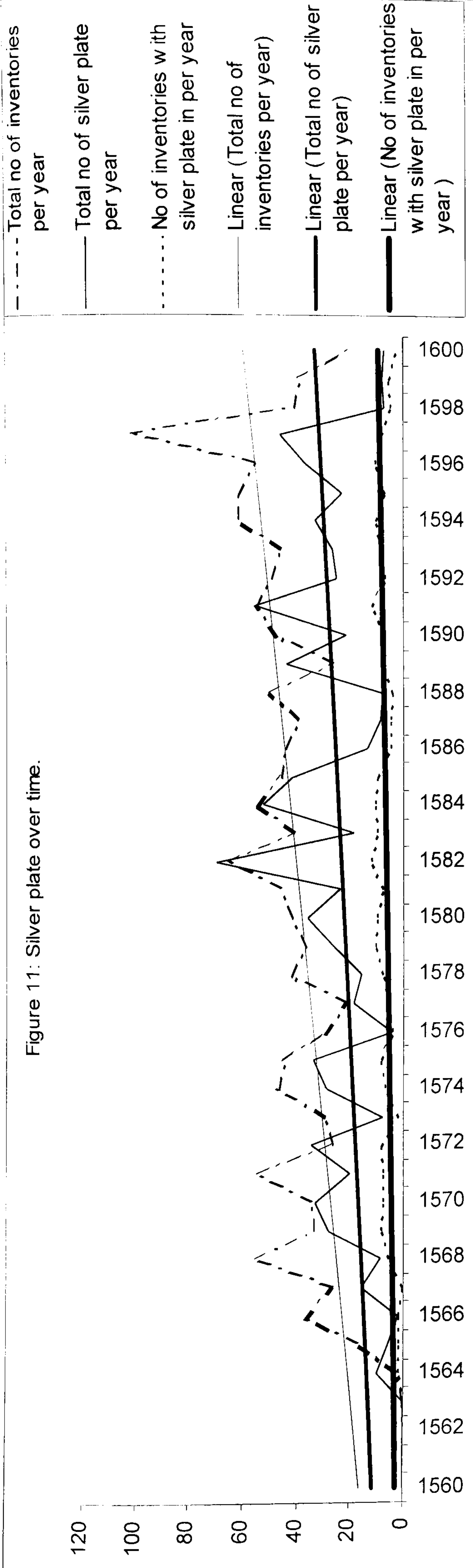


Figure 12: Jewellery over time.

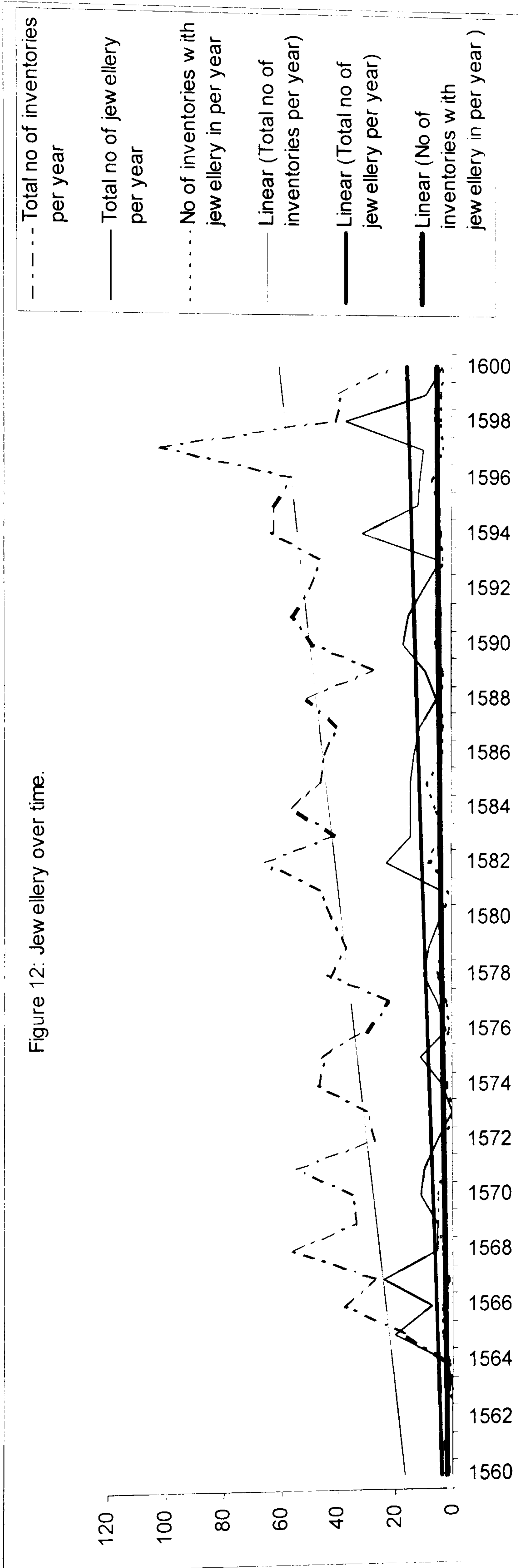


Figure 13: Cloth over time.

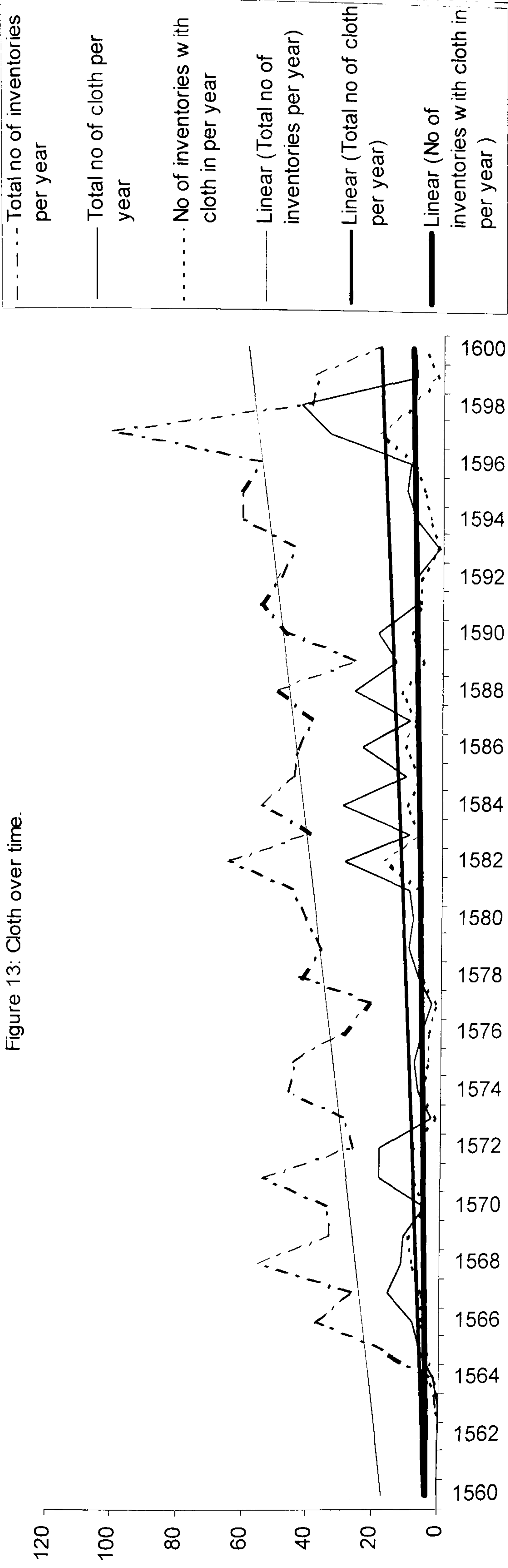
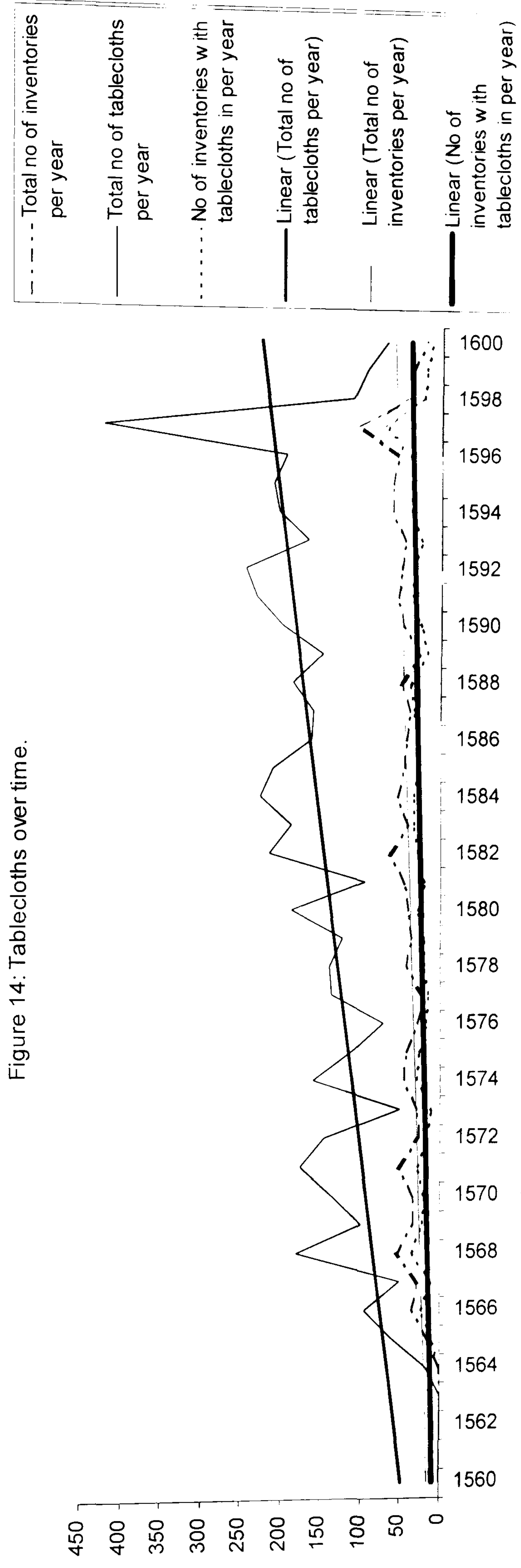


Figure 14: Tablecloths over time.



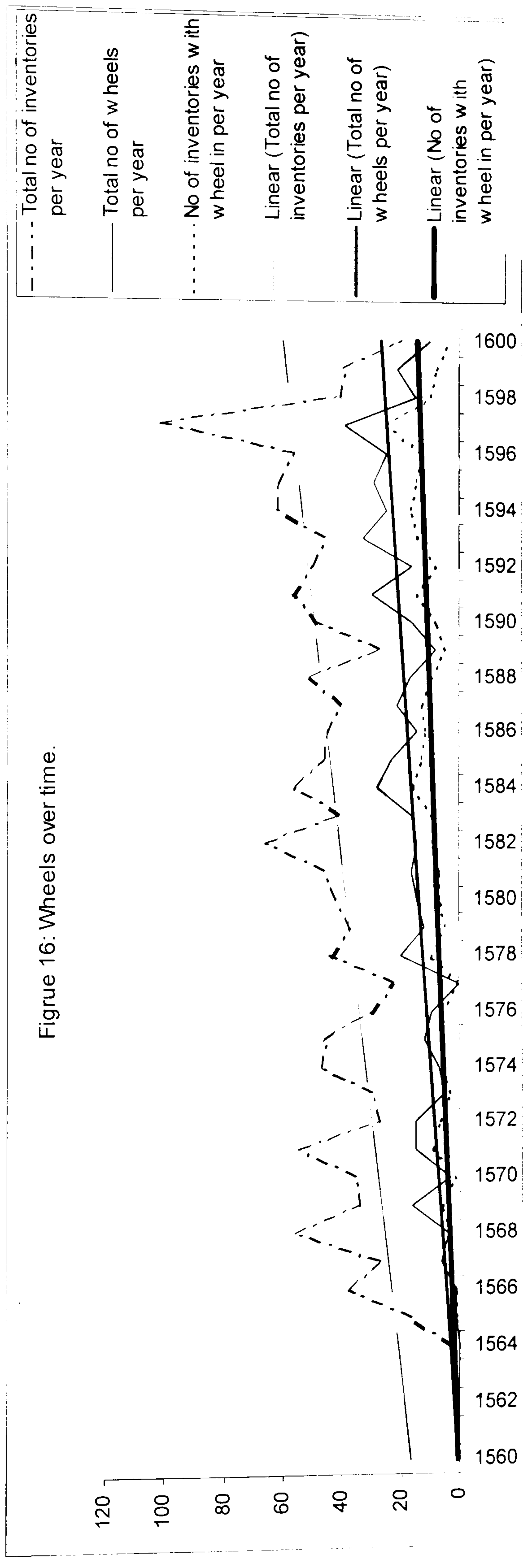
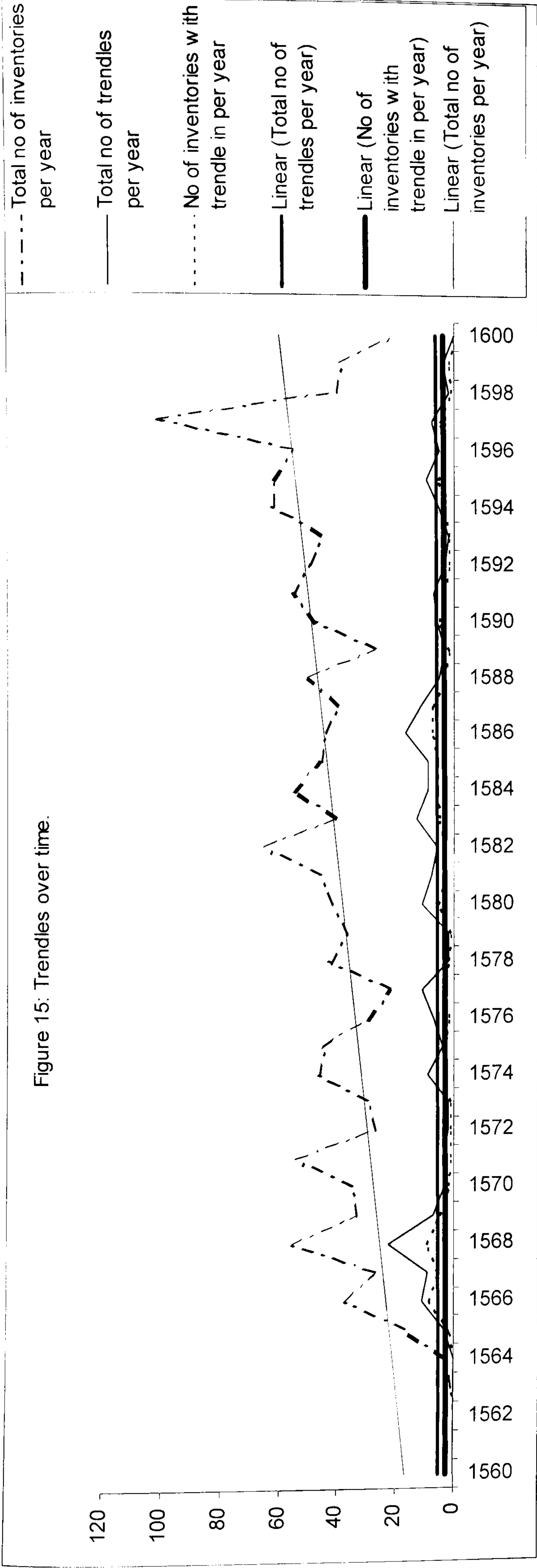


Figure 17: Playing tables over time.

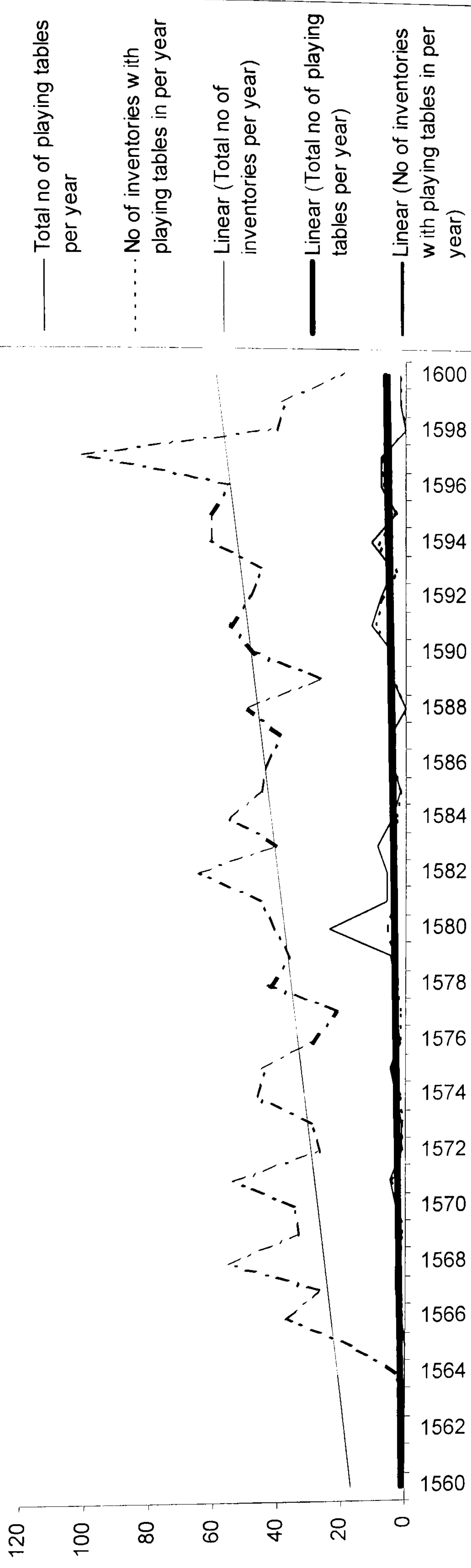


Figure 18: Instruments over time.

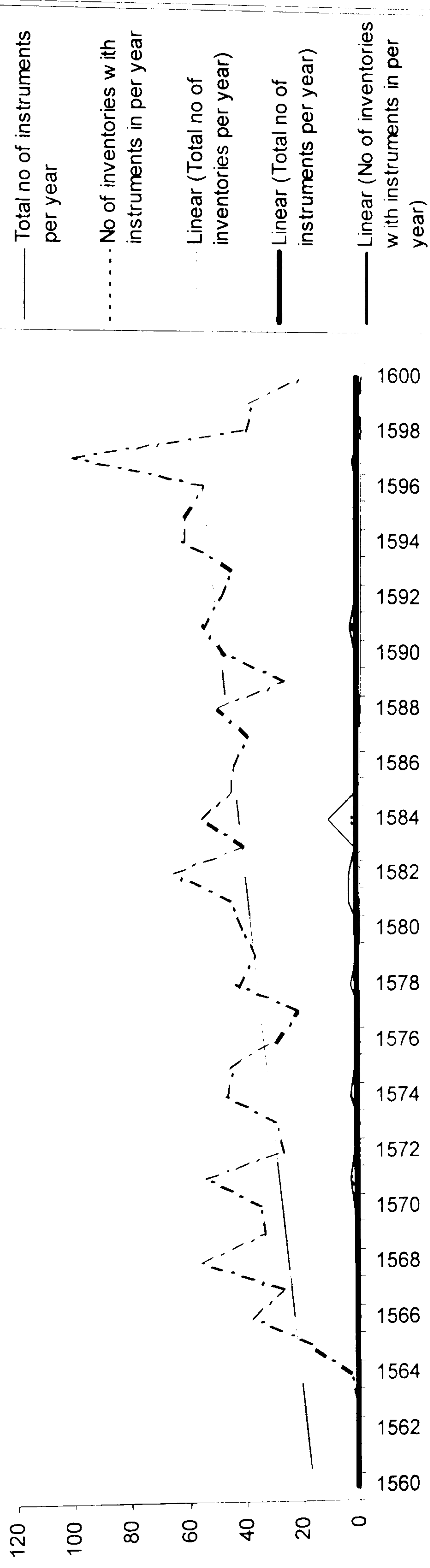


Figure 19: Books over time.

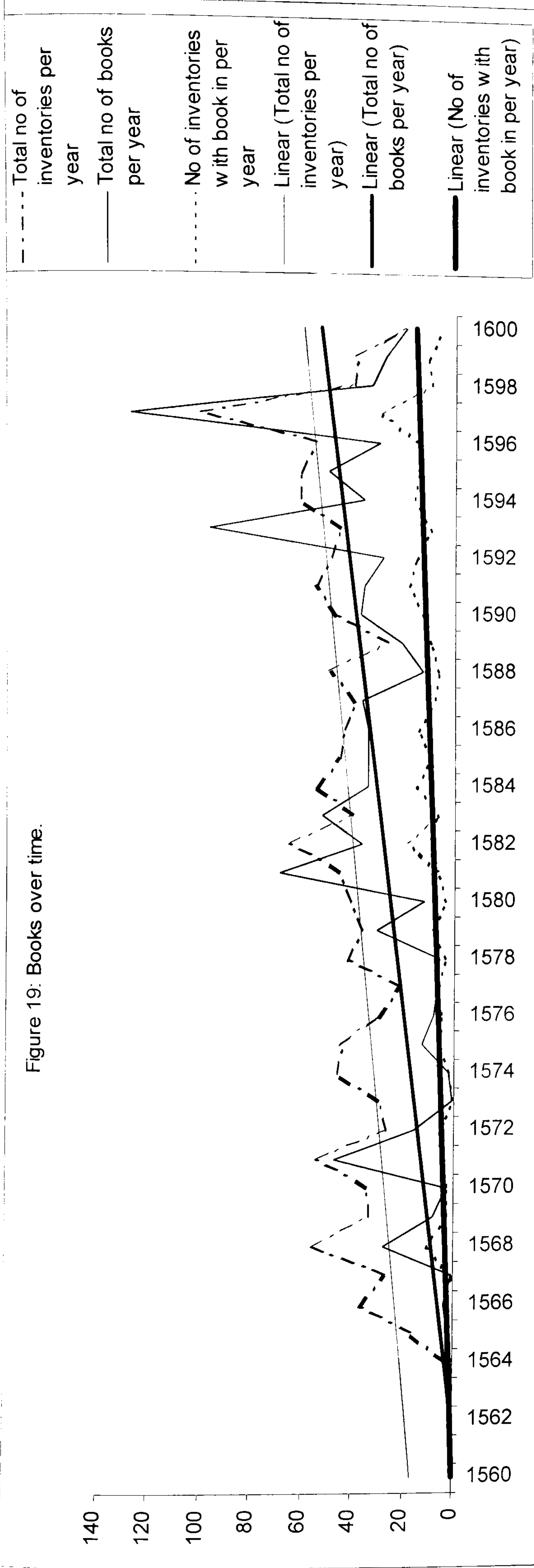


Figure 20: Looking glasses over time.

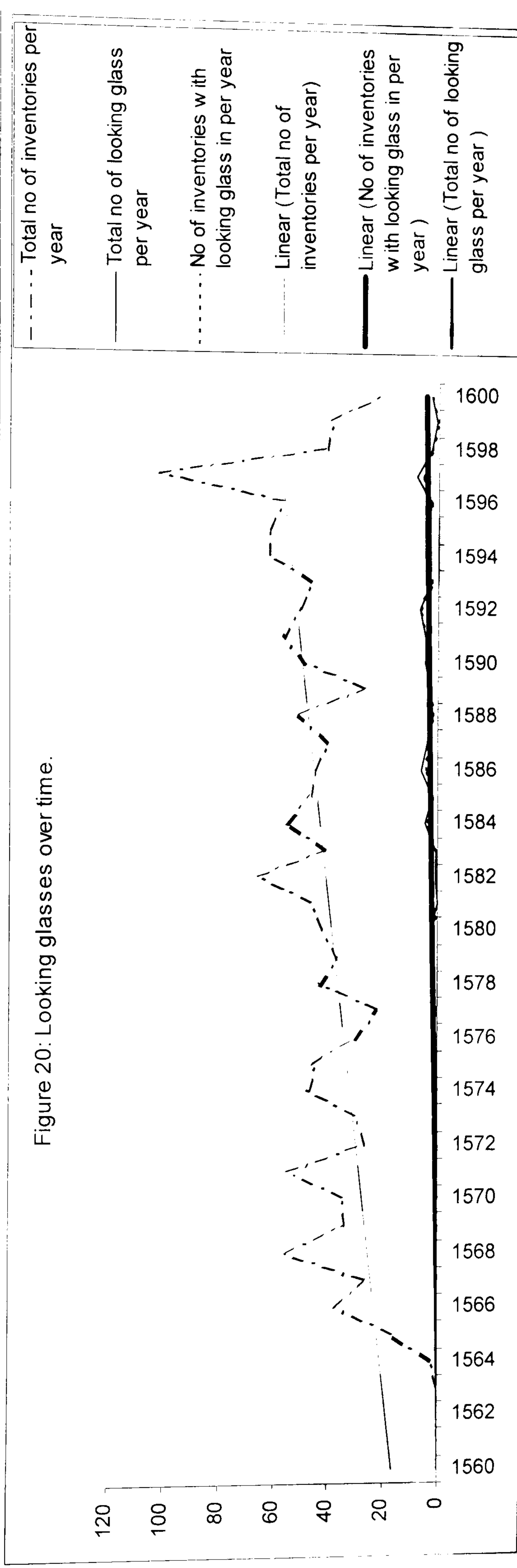


Figure 21: Stools over time.

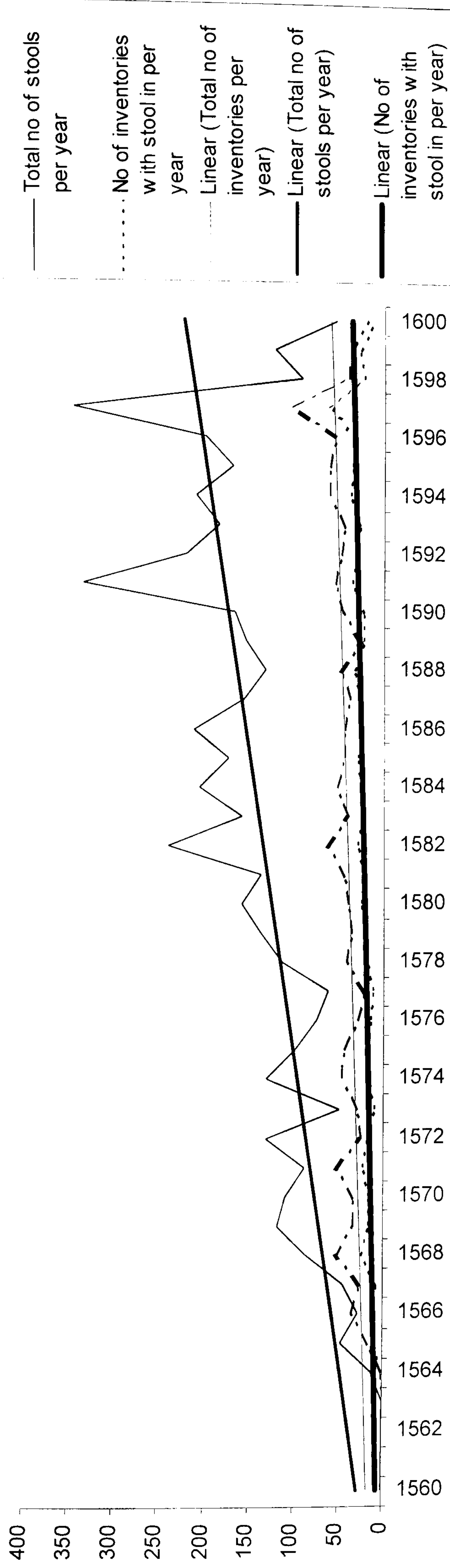


Figure 22: Chairs over time.



Figure 23: Forms over time.

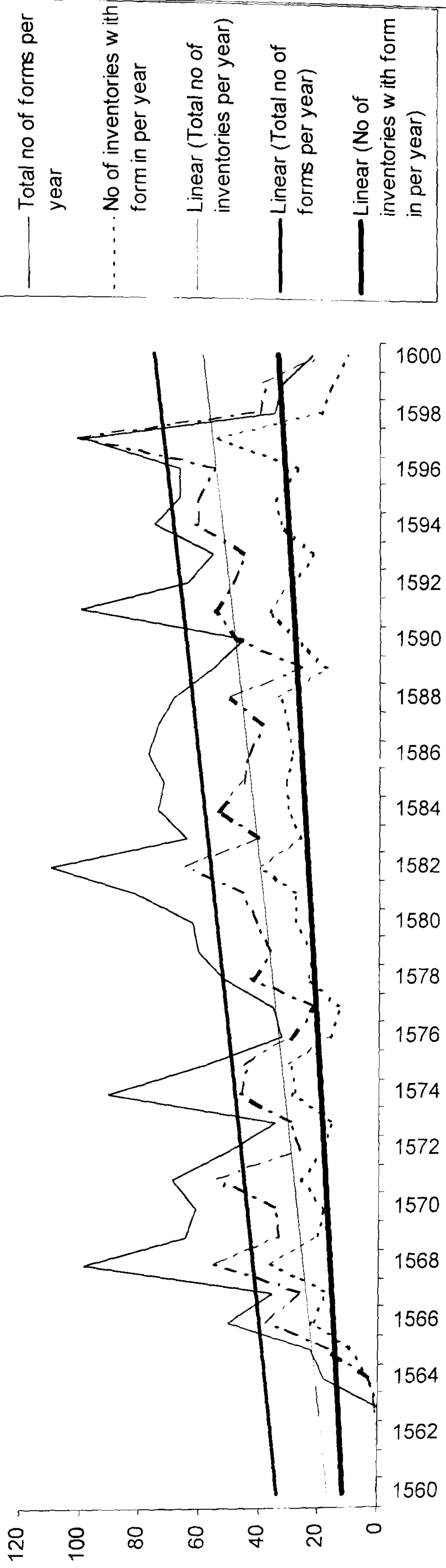


Figure 24: Settles over time.

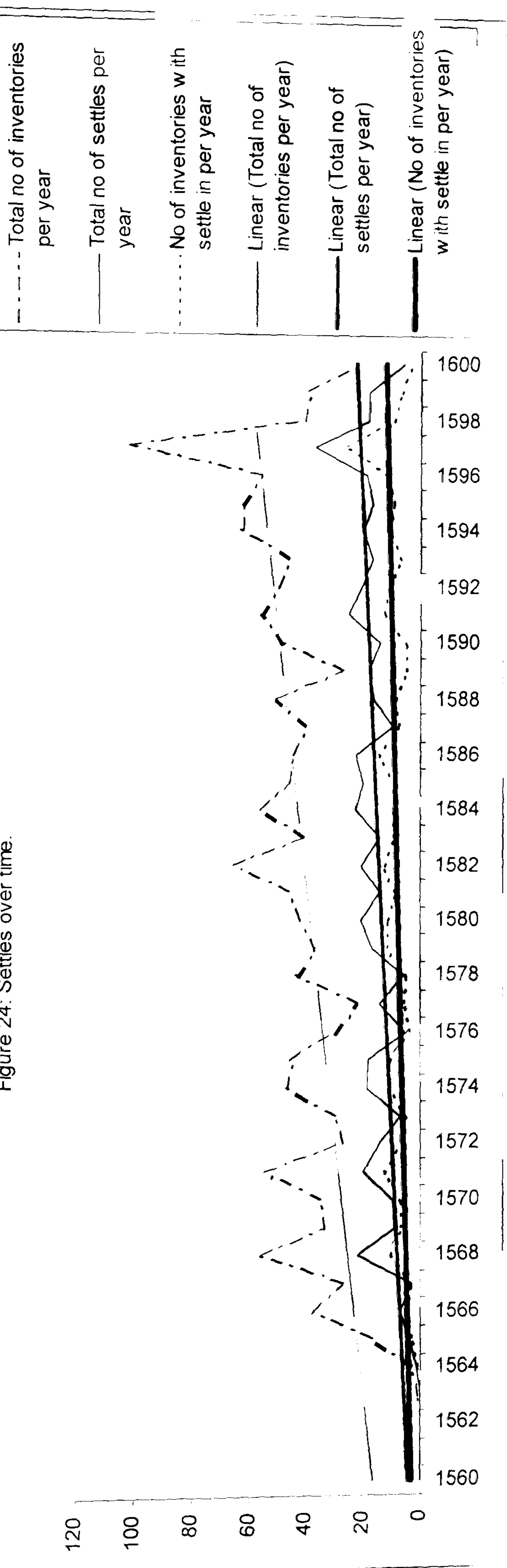


Figure 25: Benches over time.

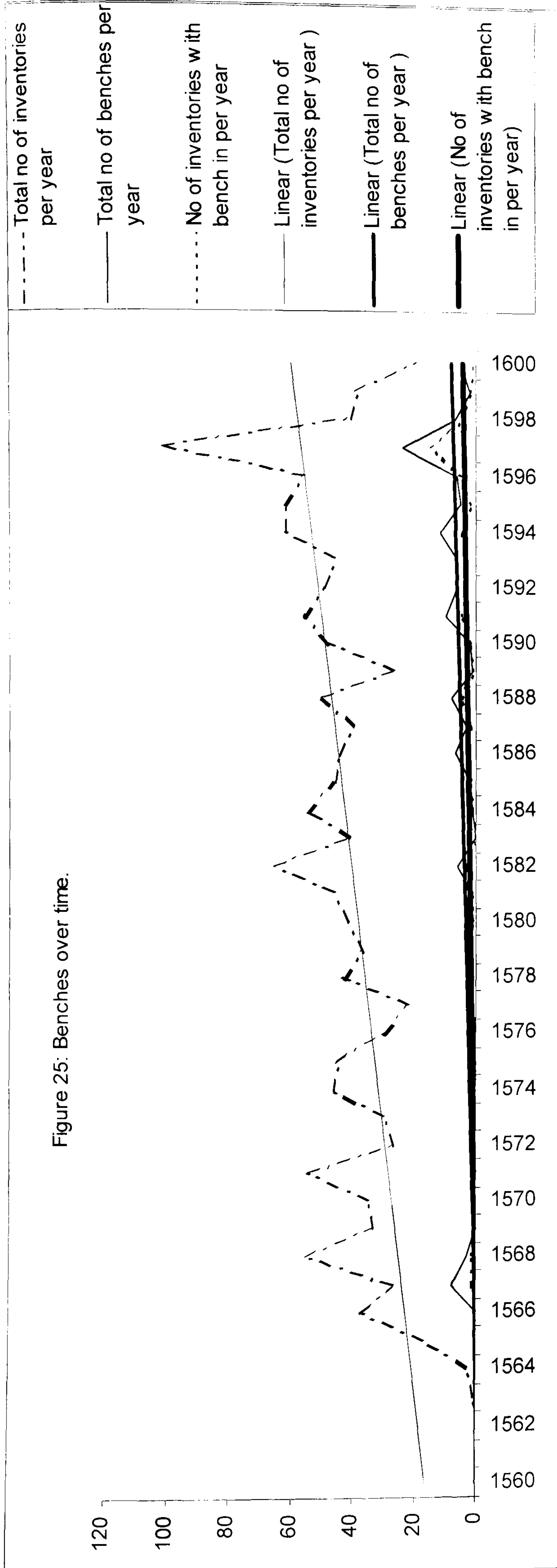


Figure 26: Tables over time.

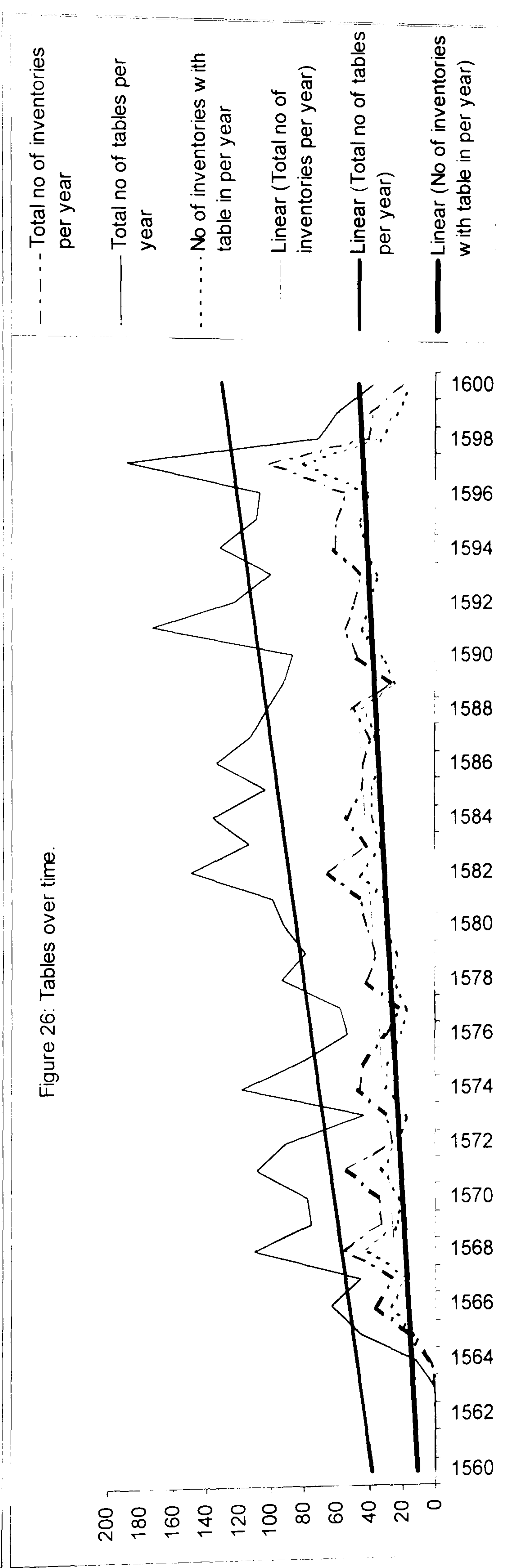


Figure 27: Curtains over time.

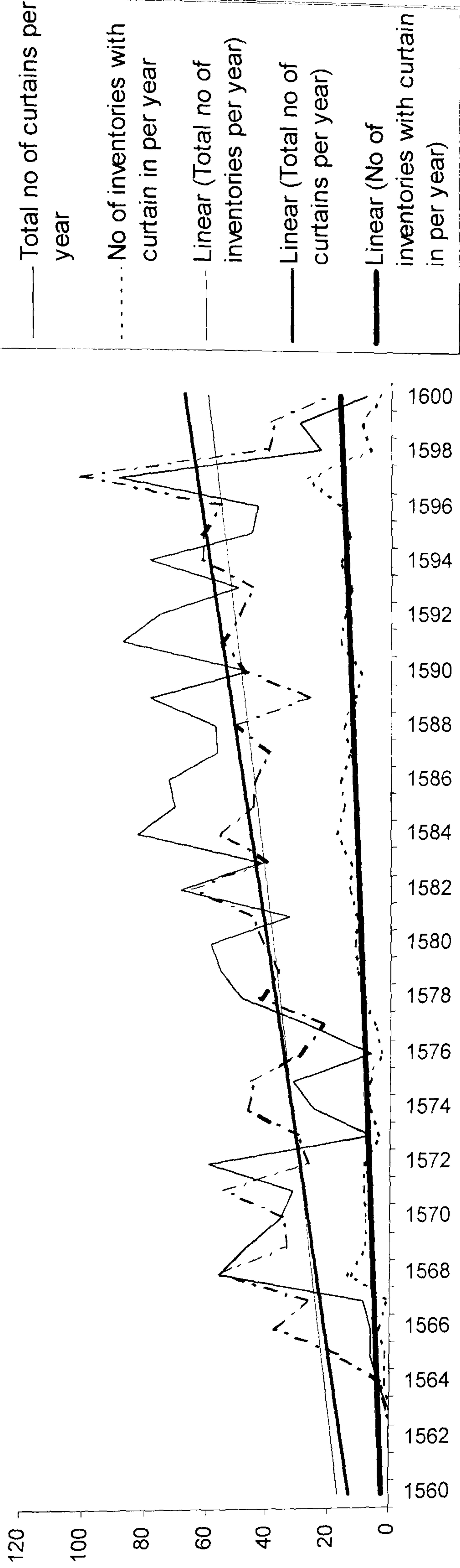


Figure 28: Window curtains over time.

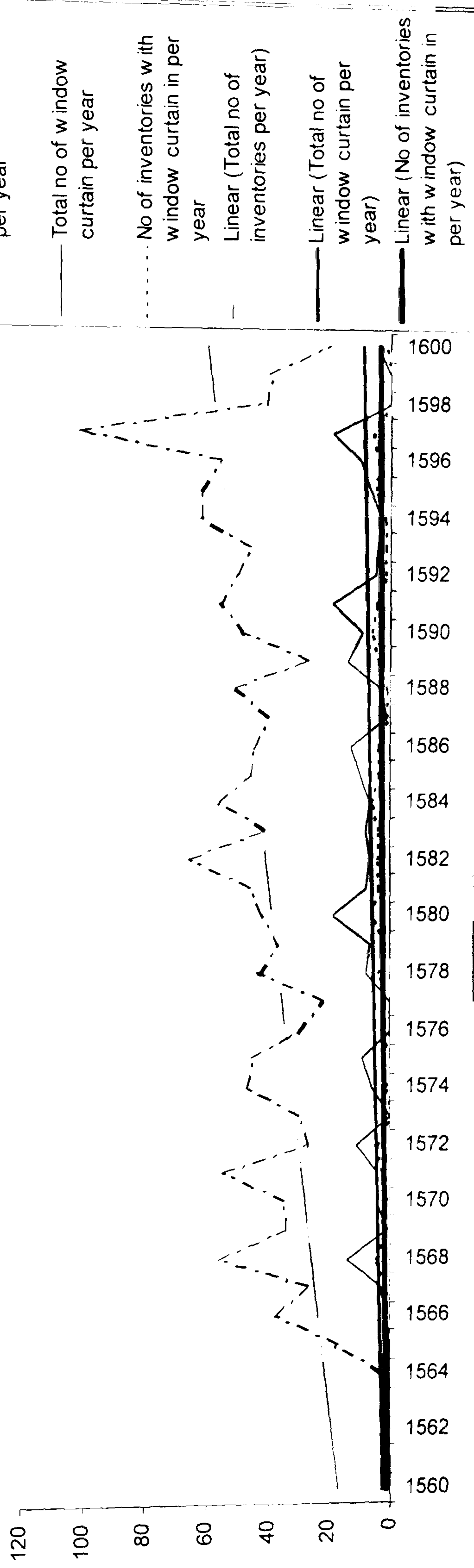


Figure 29: Cushions over time.

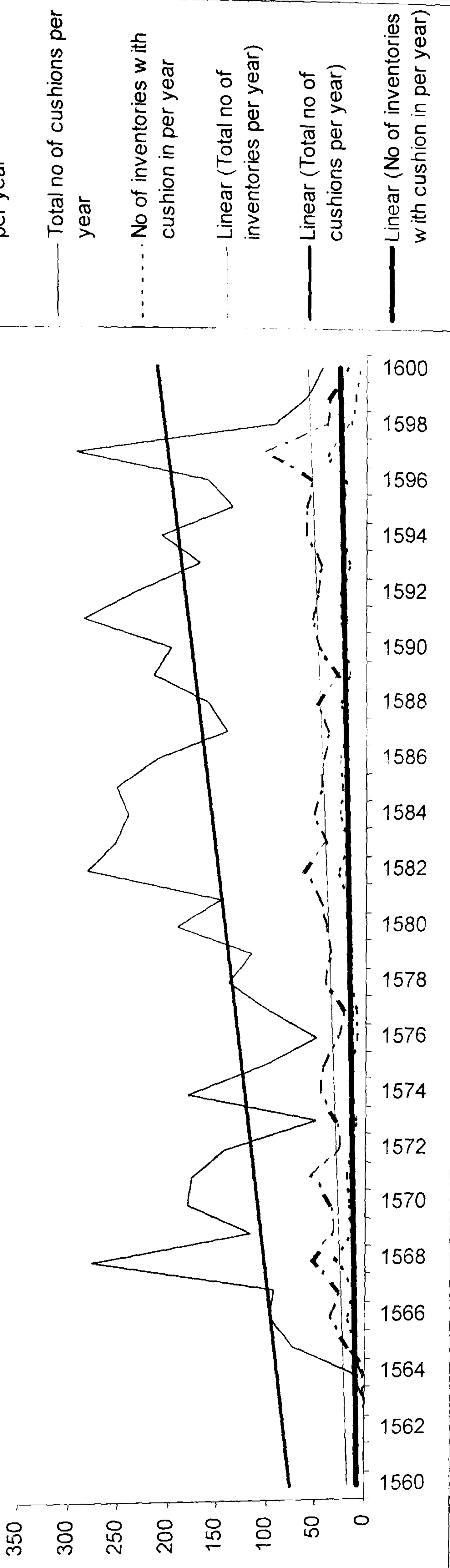


Figure 30: Window cushions over time.

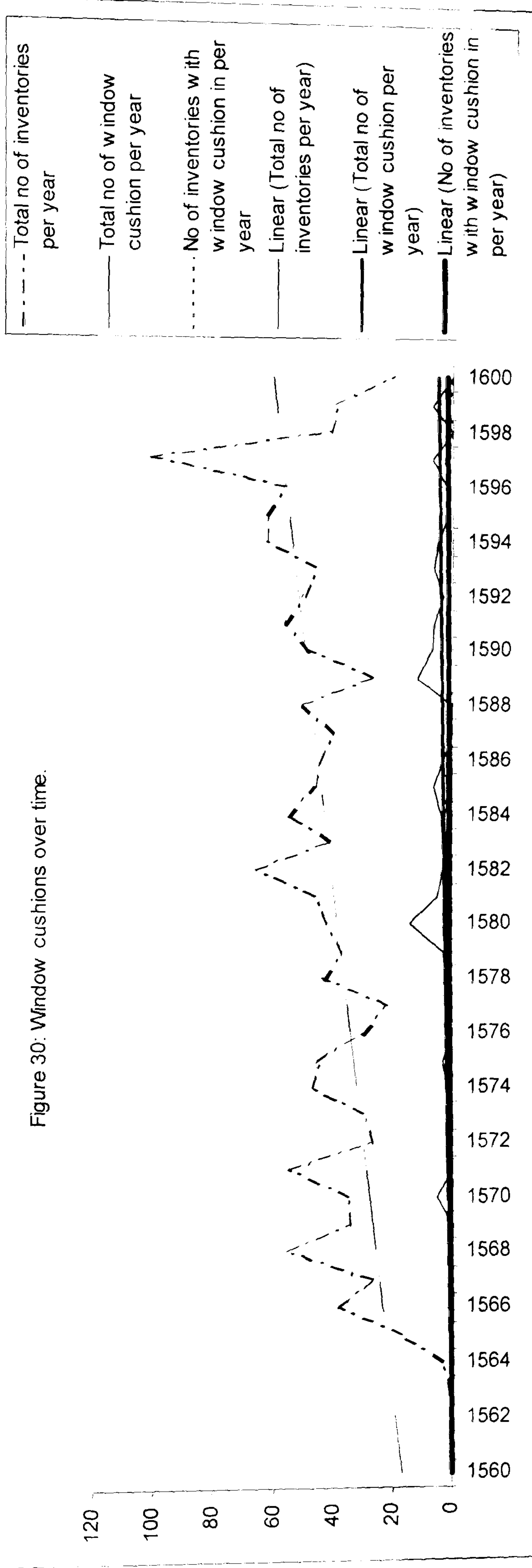


Figure 31: Hangings over time.

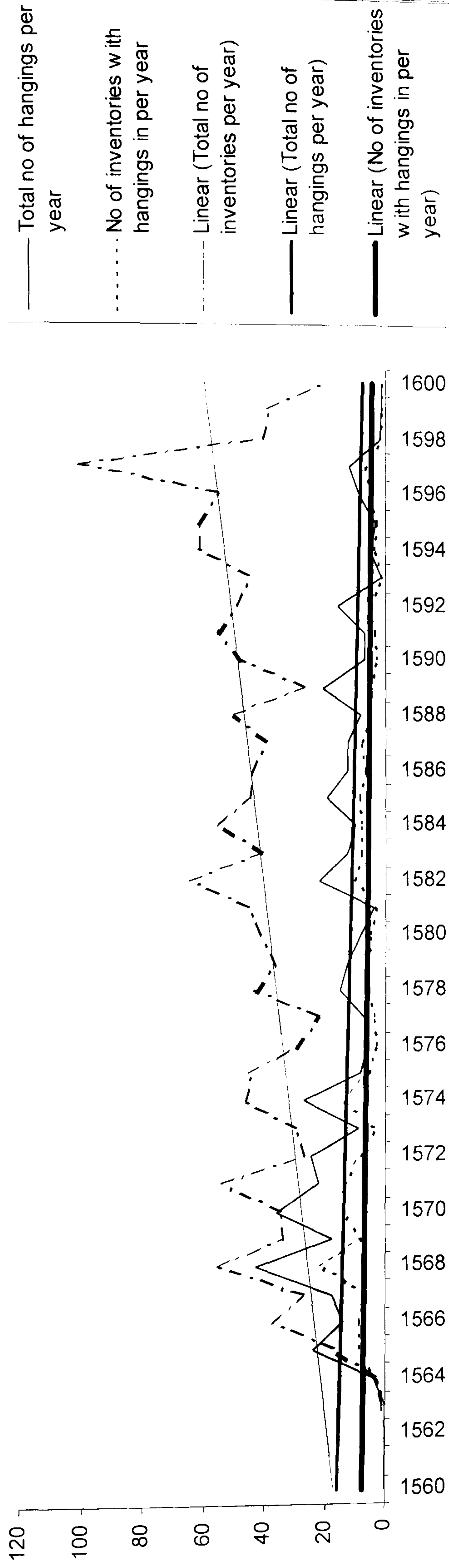


Figure 32: Painted cloths over time.

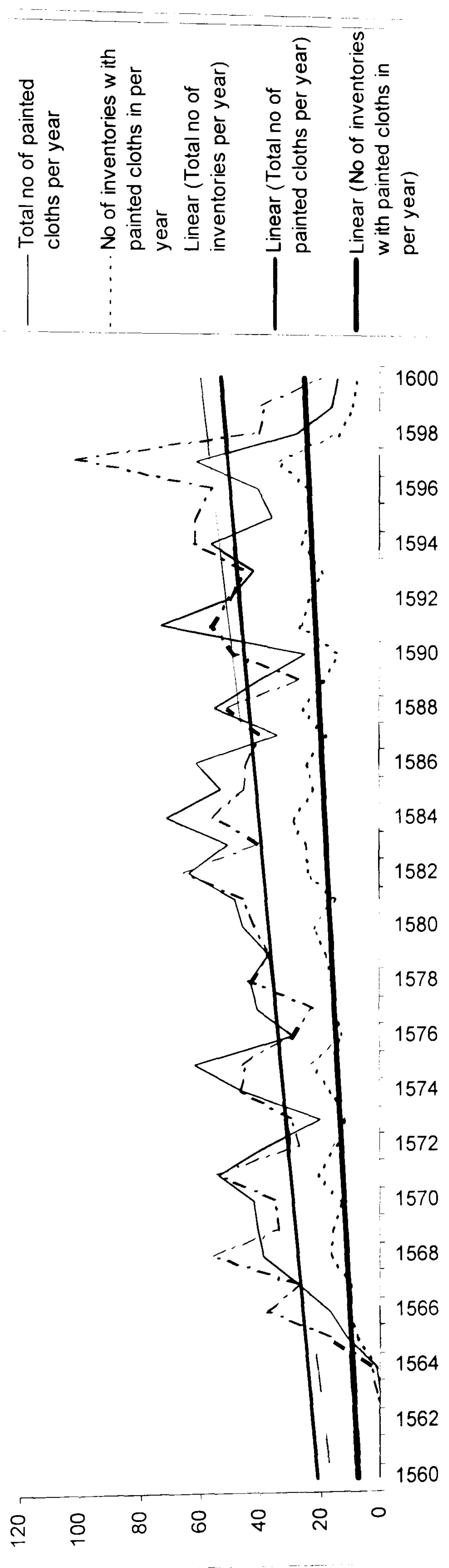


Figure 33: Pictures over time.

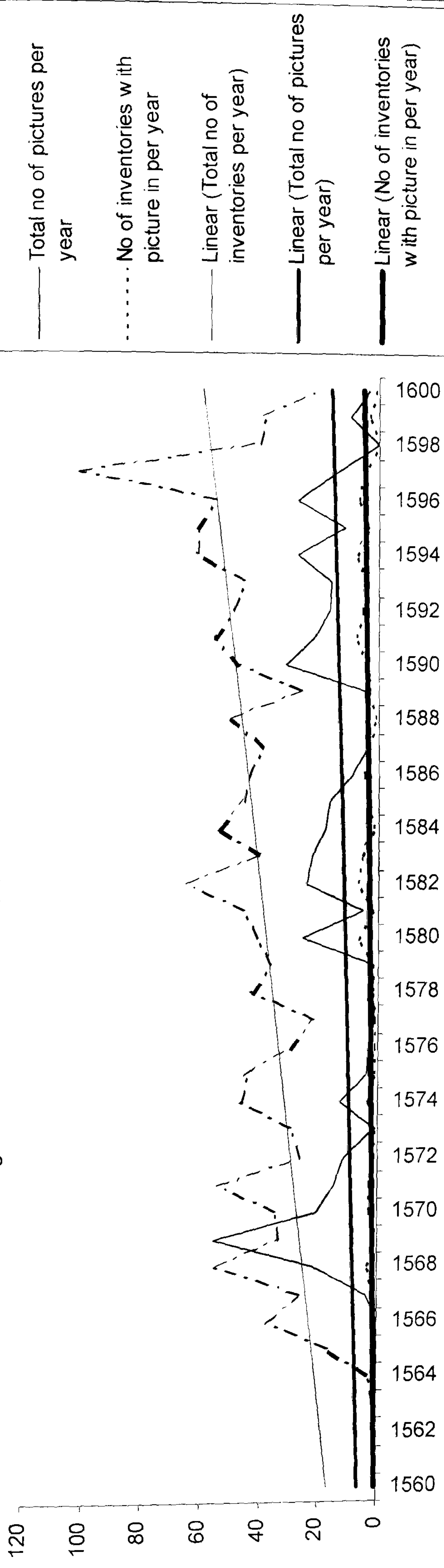


Figure 34: Cupboard cloths over time.

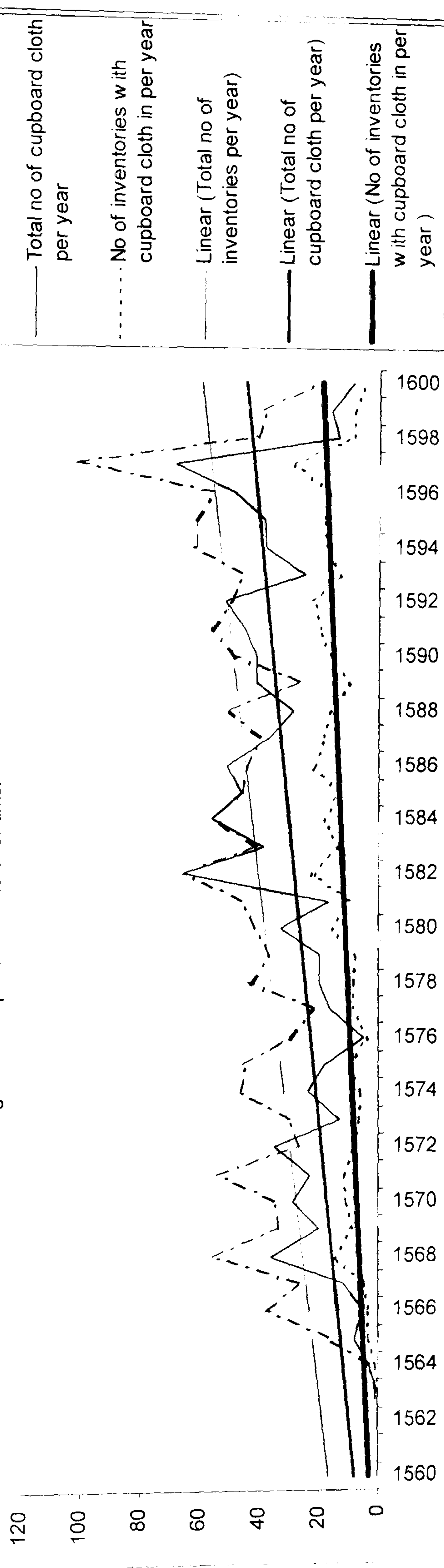
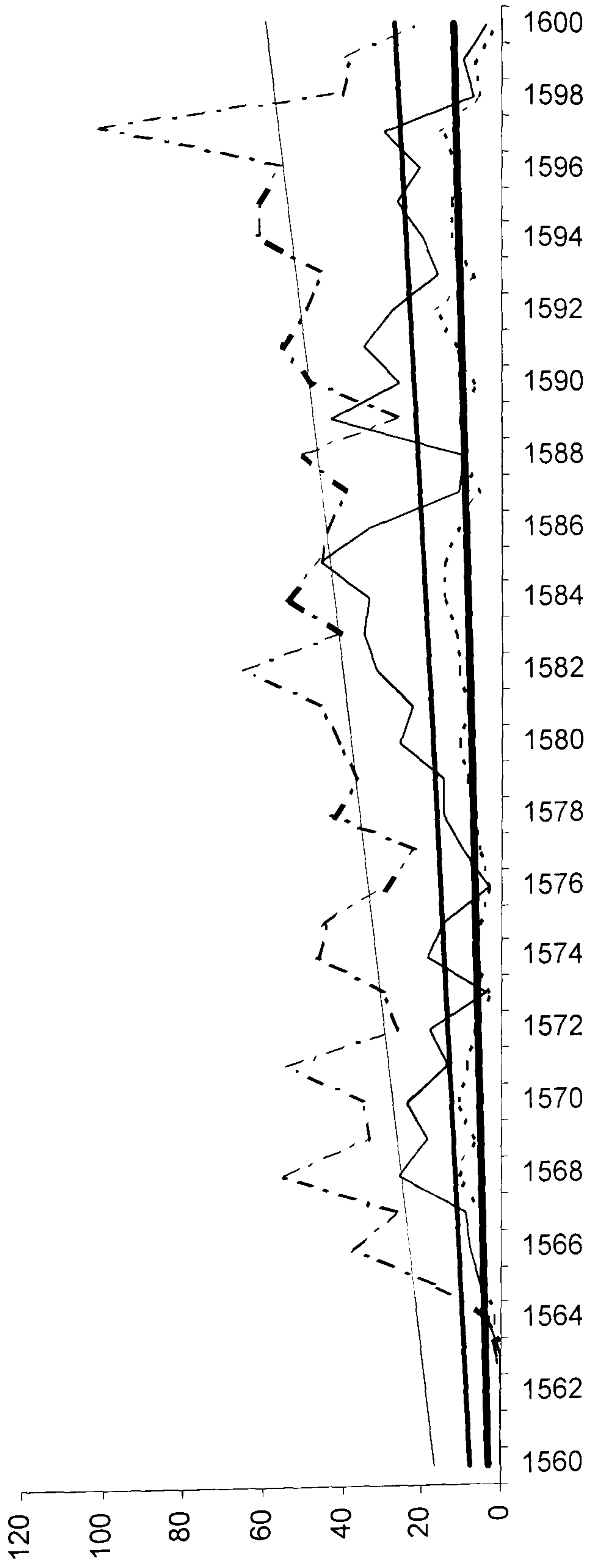


Figure 35: Carpets over time.



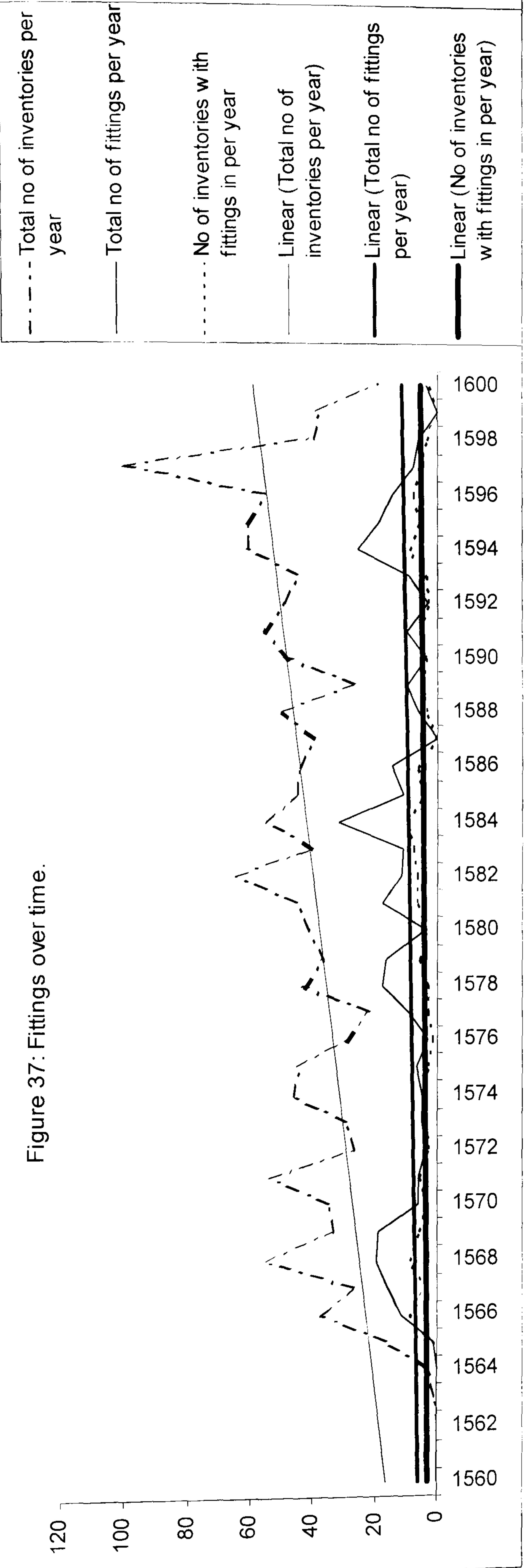
--- Total no of inventories per year
 — Total no of carpets per year
 No of inventories with carpet in per year
 -.-.- Linear (Total no of inventories per year)
 — Linear (Total no of carpets per year)
 — Linear (No of inventories with carpet in per year)

Figure 36: Fire equipment over time.



--- Total no of inventories per year
 — Total no of fire equipment per year
 No of inventories with fire equipment in per year
 -.-.- Linear (Total no of inventories per year)
 — Linear (Total no of fire equipment per year)
 — Linear (No of inventories with fire equipment in per year)

Figure 37: Fittings over time.



Appendix 14: Differences in the composition of rooms over time

Figure H1a: Beds in halls.	Figure H9a: Curtains and window curtains in halls.	Figure P7a: Books and instruments in parlours.	Figure C3b: Silver plate, silver spoons in chambers.
Figure H1b: Beds and bedding in halls.	Figure H9b: Window cushions, carpets and cupboard cloths in halls.	Figure P7b: Playing tables and looking glasses in parlours.	Figure C3c: Tablecloths in chambers.
Figure H2a: Coffers and cupboard boards in halls.	Figure H9c: Cushions in halls.	Figure P8: Hangings, painted cloths, pictures in parlours.	Figure C4a: Settles and chairs in chambers.
Figure H2b: Chests, presses and storage in halls.	Figure P1a: Bedsteads, trucklebeds, beds in parlours.	Figure P9a: Cupboard cloths and carpets in parlours.	Figure C4b: Benches, forms, stools in chambers.
Figure H3a: Cloths and tablecloths in halls.	Figure P1b: Featherbeds and flockbeds in parlours.	Figure P9b: Window cushions, curtains, window curtains in parlours.	Figure C5: Tables in chambers.
Figure H3b: Jewellery, silver plate and spoons in halls.	Figure P2a: Cupboards and coffers in parlours.	Figure P9c: Cushions in parlours.	Figure C6: Trendles and wheels in chambers.
Figure H4a: Benches and forms in halls.	Figure P2b: Chests, presses, storage in parlours.	Figure P10: Fire equipment in parlours.	Figure C7a: Instruments, playing tables, looking glasses in chambers.
Figure H4b: Chairs, stools and settles in halls.	Figure P3a: Tablecloths and cloths in parlours.	Figure C1a: Bedsteads, trucklebeds, beds in chambers.	Figure C7b: Books in chambers.
Figure H5: Tables in halls.	Figure P3b: Silver spoons, silver plate, jewellery in parlours.	Figure C1b: featherbeds and flockbeds in chambers.	Figure C8: Hangings, pictures, painted cloths in chambers.
Figure H6: Trendles and wheels in halls.	Figure P4a: Benches and chairs in parlours.	Figure C2a: Cupboards and coffers in chambers.	Figure C9a: Cupboard cloths and window cushions in chambers.
Figure H7a: Books and instruments in halls.	Figure P4b: Forms, settles and stools in parlours.	Figure C2b: Presses and storage in chambers.	Figure C9b: Carpets, curtains, window curtains in chambers.
Figure H7b: Playing tables and looking glasses in halls.	Figure P5: Tables in parlours.	Figure C2c: Chests in chambers.	Figure C9c: Cushions in chambers.
Figure H8: Hangings, painted cloths, pictures in halls.	Figure P6: Trendles and wheels in parlours.	Figure C3a: Cloths and jewellery in chambers.	Figure C10: Fire equipments and fittings in chambers.

Figure H1a: Beds in halls over time.

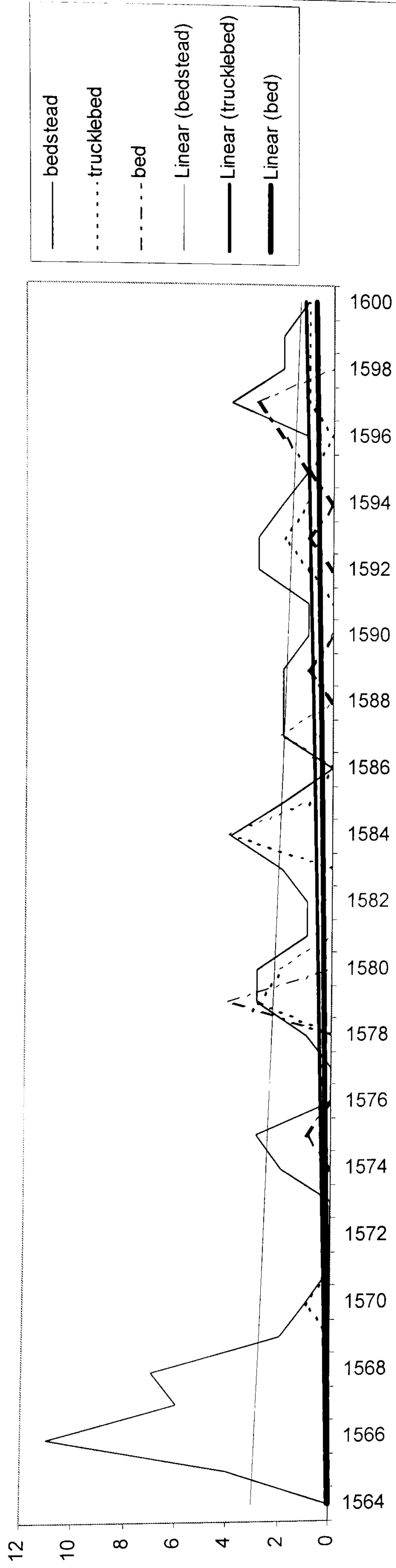


Figure H1b: Beds and bedding in halls over time.

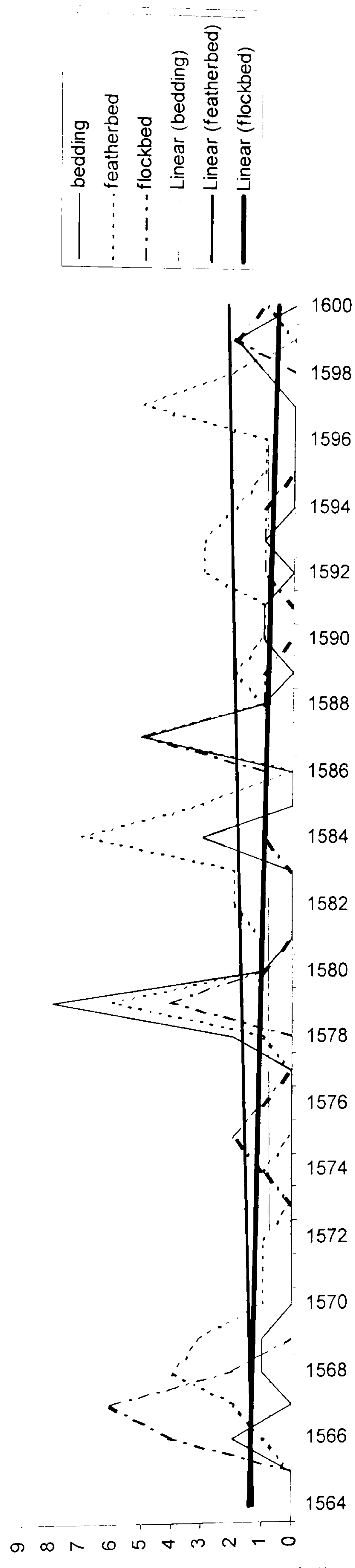


Figure H2a: Coffers and cupboards in halls over time.

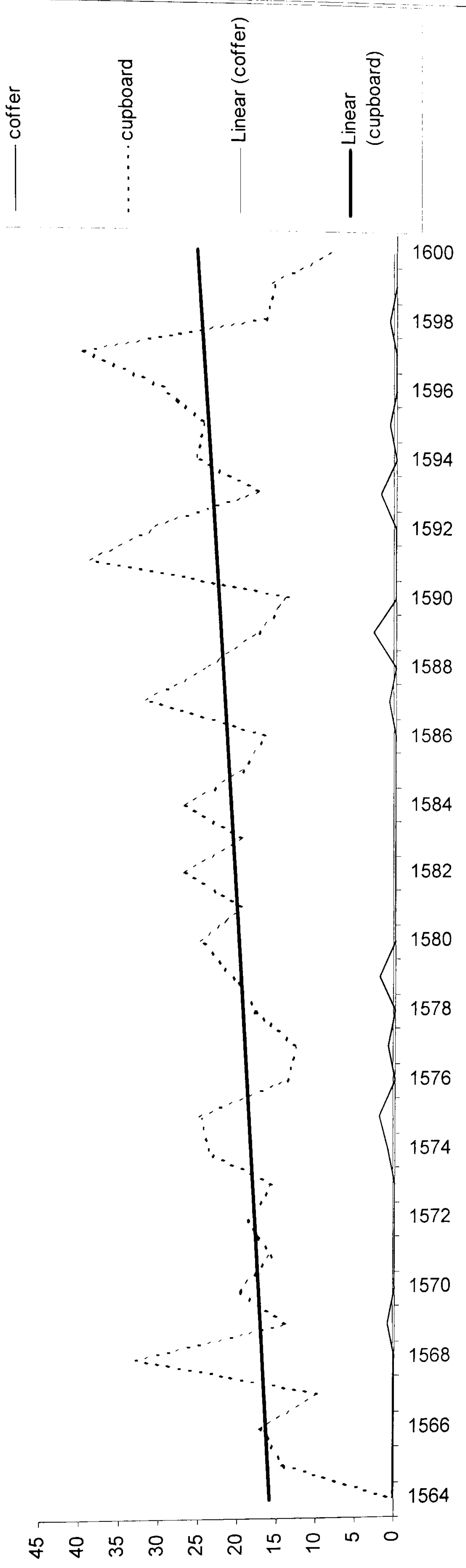


Figure H2b: Chests, presses and storage in halls over time.

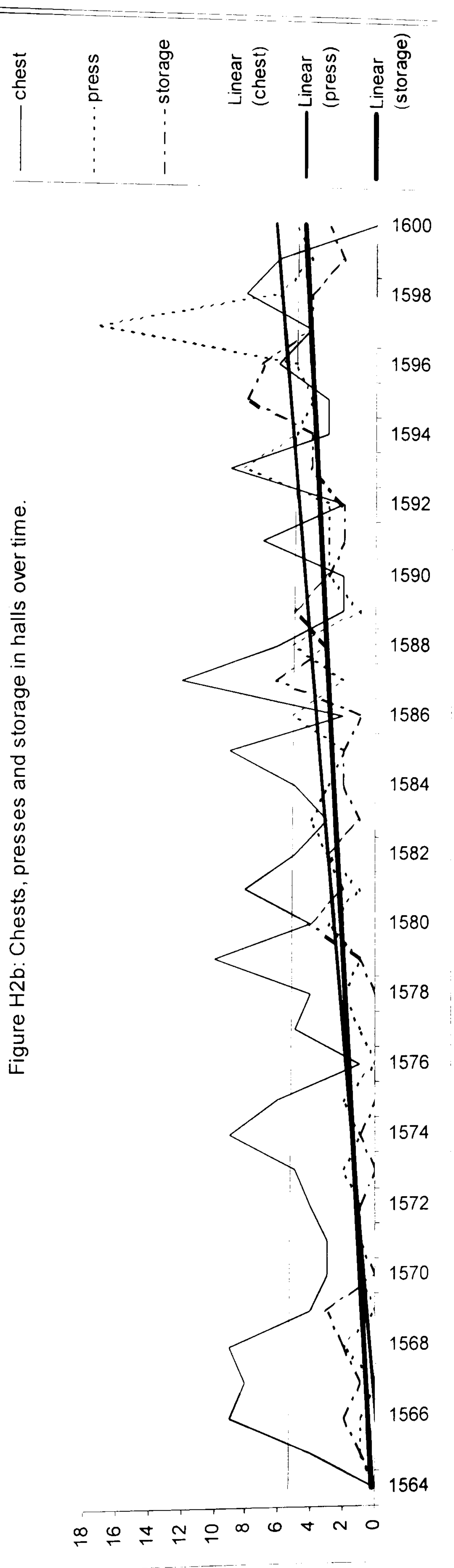


Figure H3a: Cloths and tableclothes in halls over time.

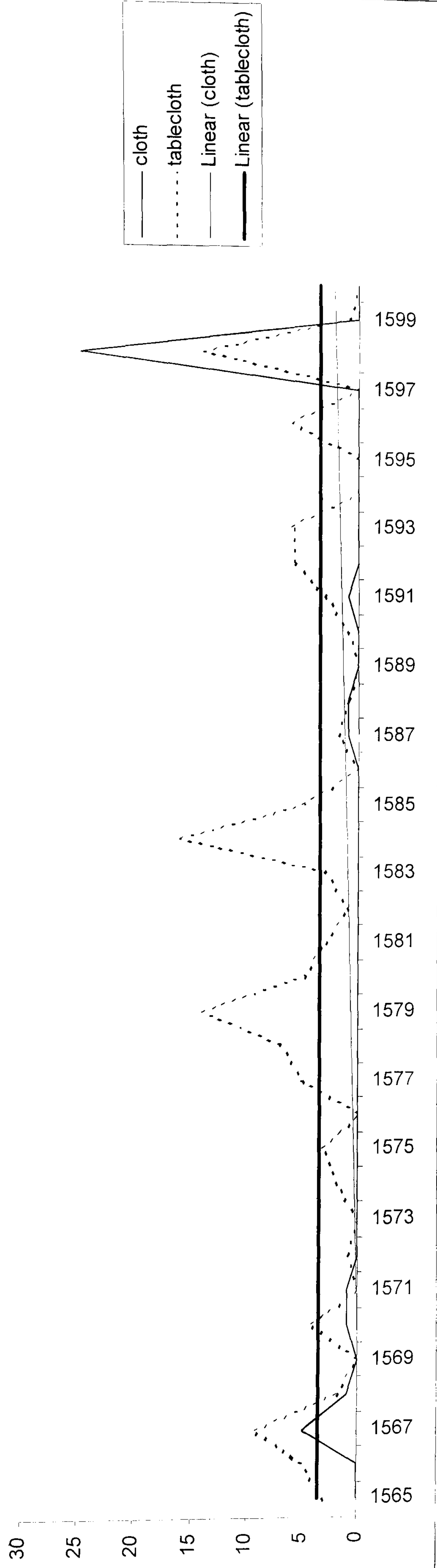


Figure H3b: Jewellery, silver plate and silver spoons in halls over time.



Figure H4a: Benches and forms in halls over time.

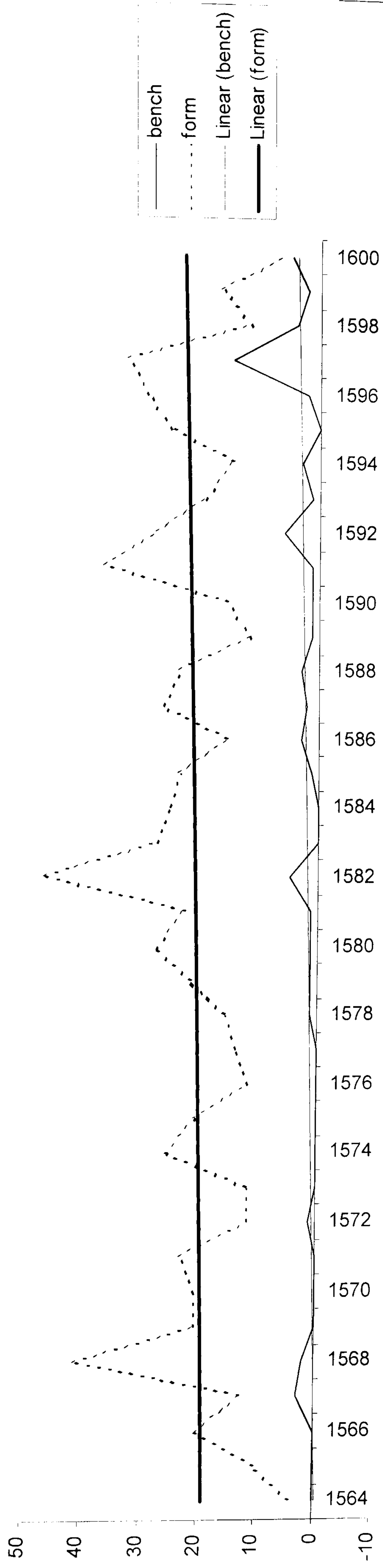


Figure H4b: Chairs, stools and settles in halls over time.

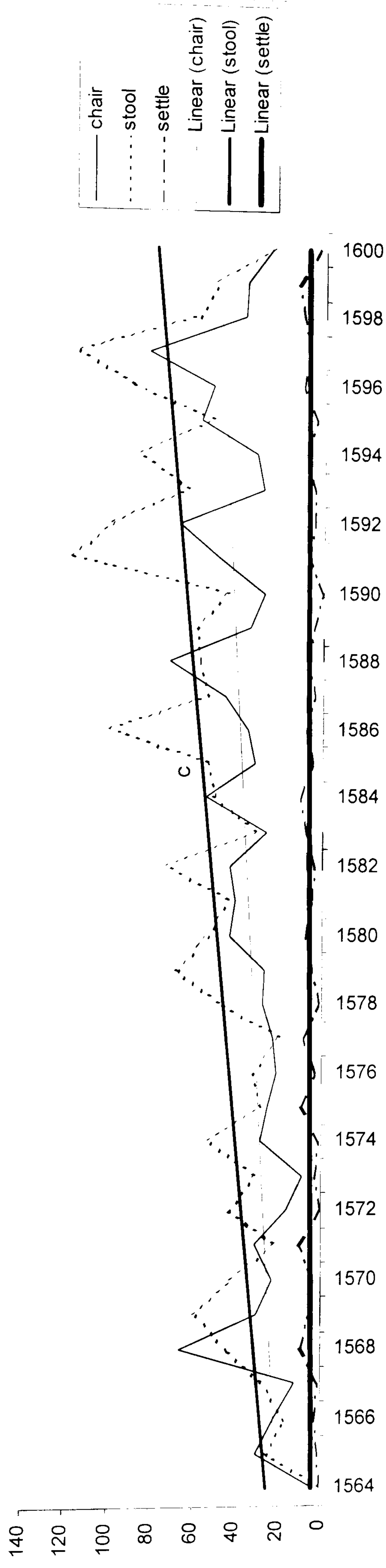


Figure H5: Tables in halls over time.

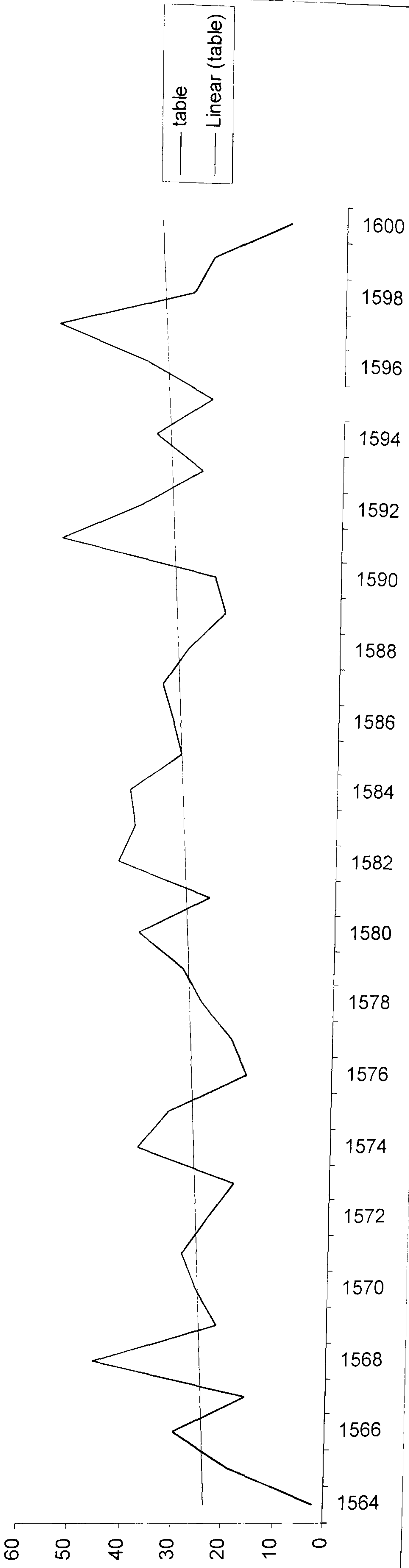


Figure H6: Trendles and wheels in halls over time.

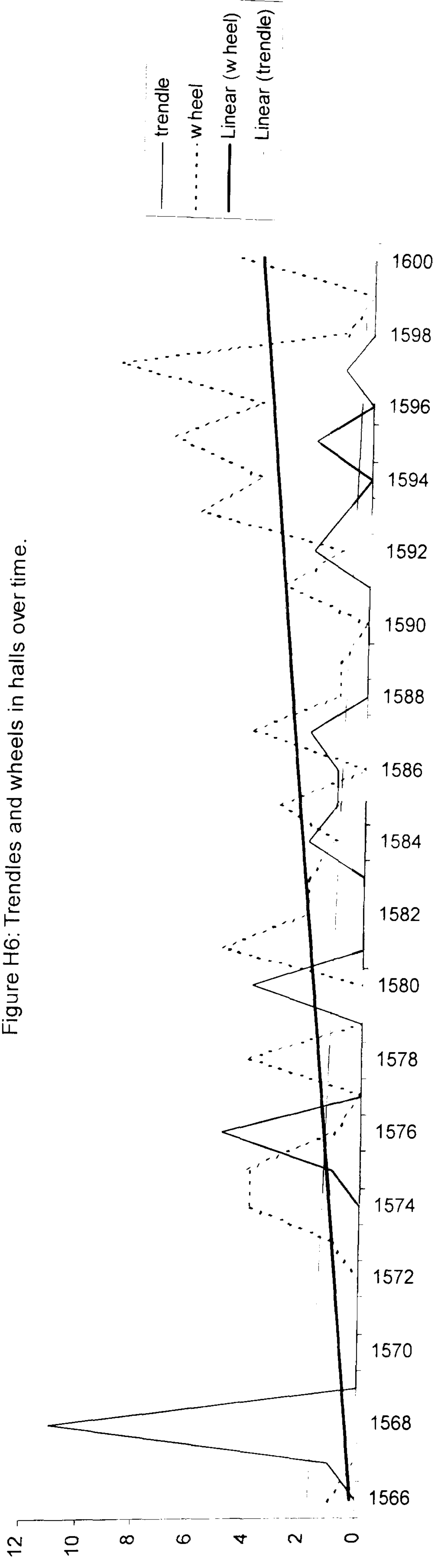


Figure H7a: Books and musical instruments in halls over time.

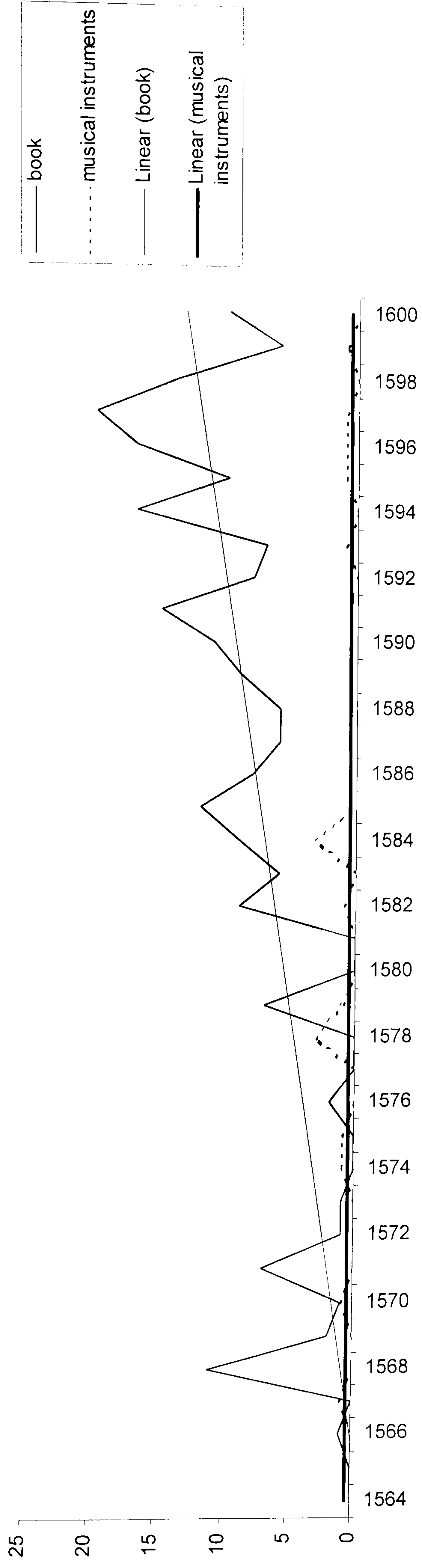


Figure H7b: Playing tables and looking glasses in halls over time.

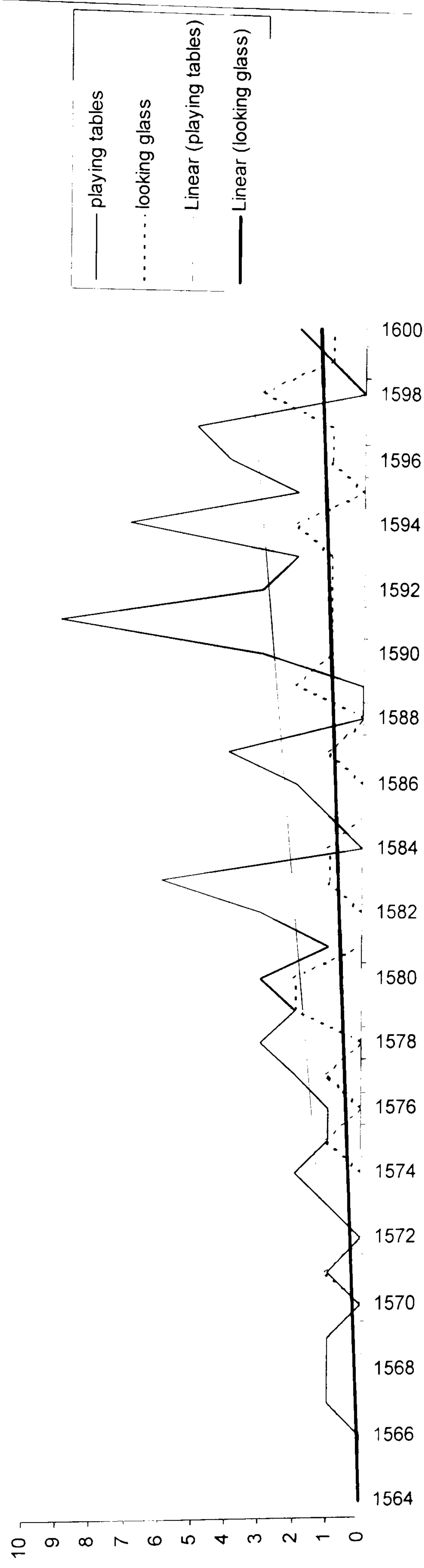


Figure H8: Hangings, painted cloths and pictures in halls over time.

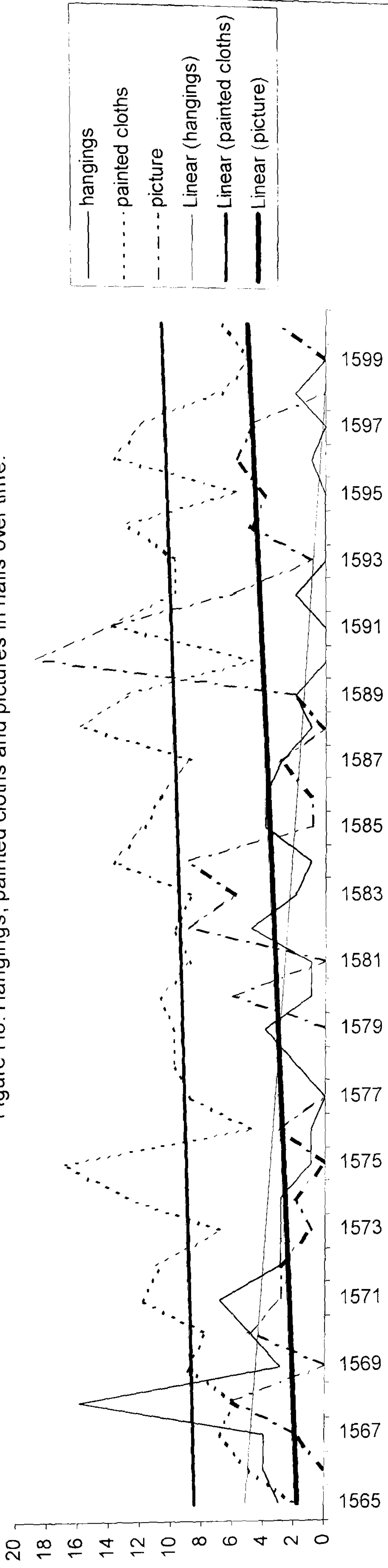


Figure H9a: Curtains and window curtains in halls over time.

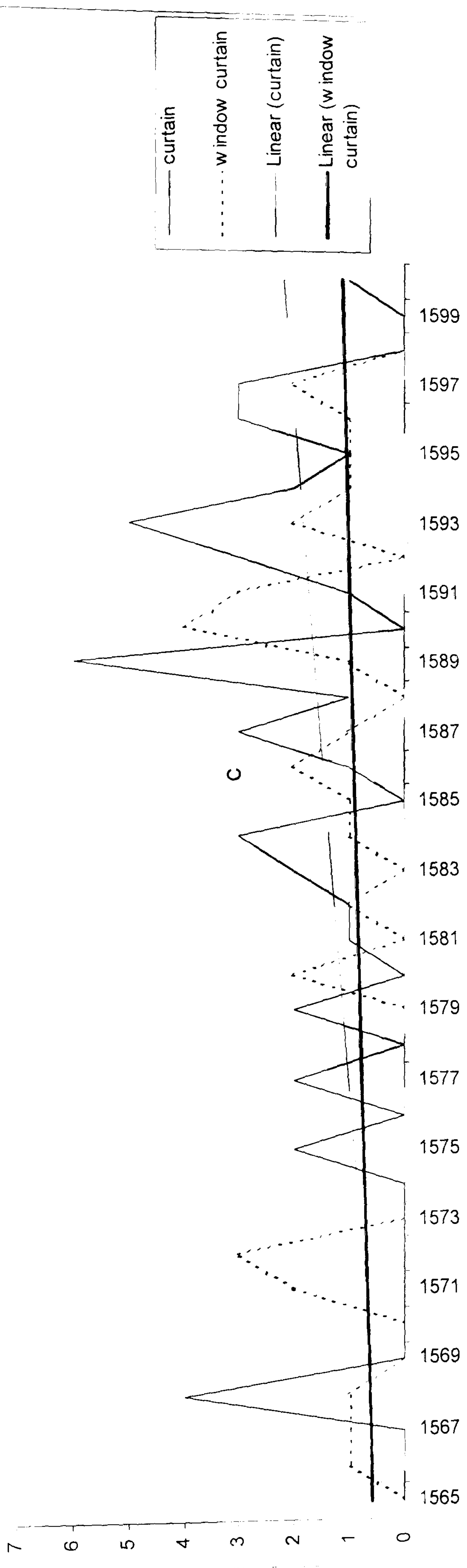


Figure H9b: Window cushions, carpets and cupboard cloths in halls over time.

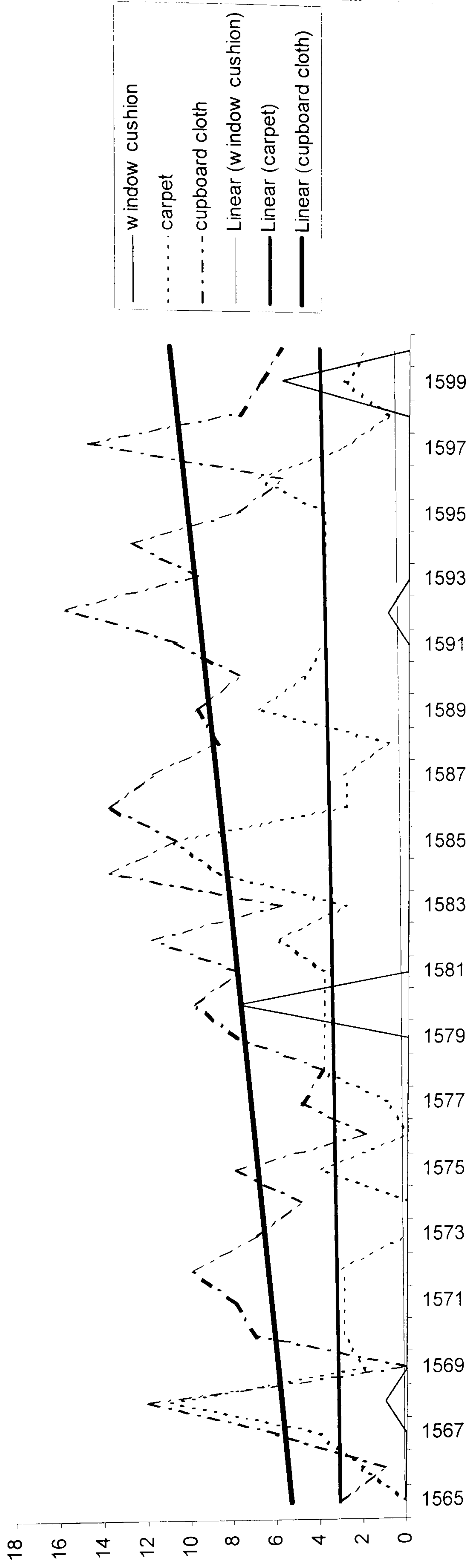


Figure H9c: Cushions in halls over time.

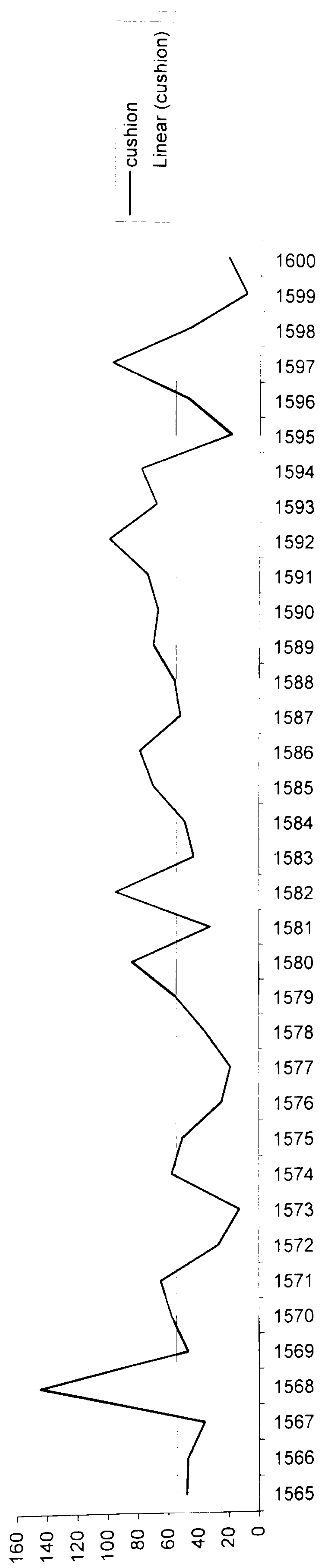


Figure P1a: Bedsteads, trucklebeds and beds in parlours over time.

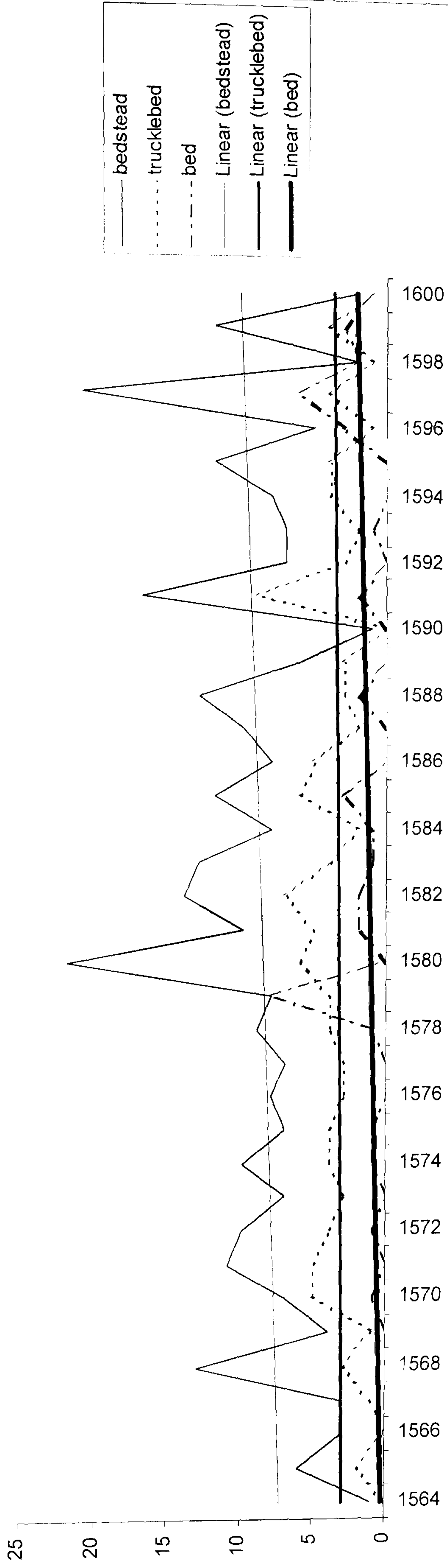


Figure P1b: Featherbeds and flockbeds in parlours over time.

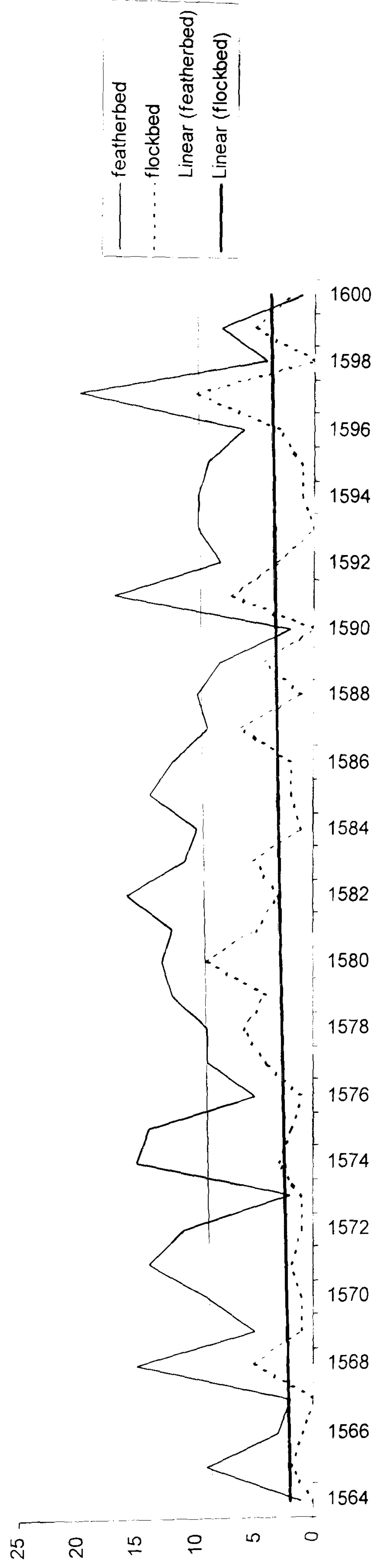


Figure P2a: Cupboards and coffer in parlours over time.

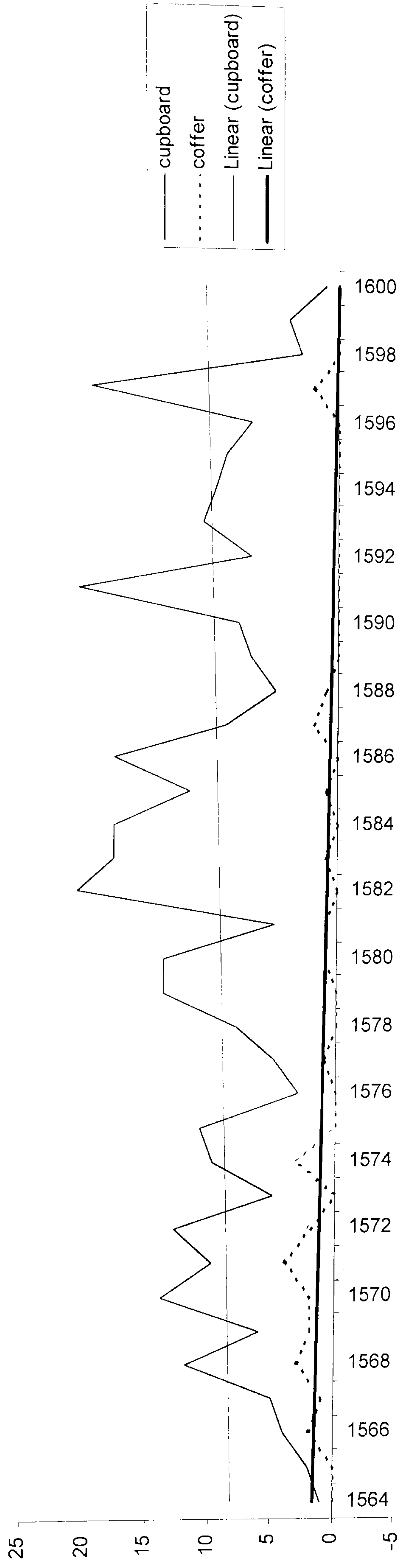


Figure P2b: Chests, presses and storage in parlours over time.

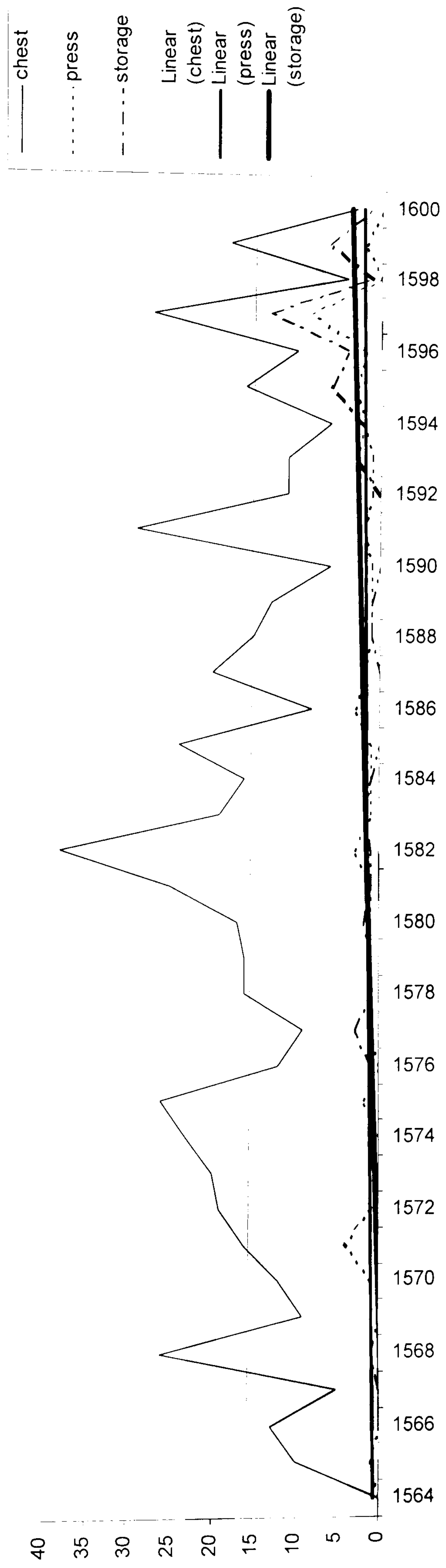


Figure P3a: Tablecloths and cloths in parlours over time.

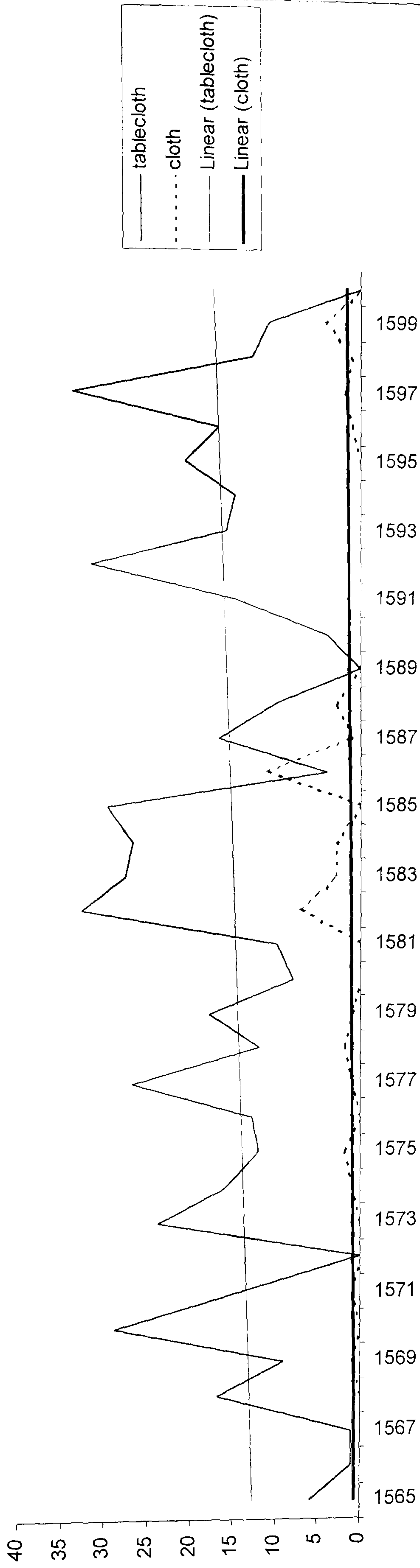


Figure P3b: Silver spoons, silver plate and jewellery in parlours over time.

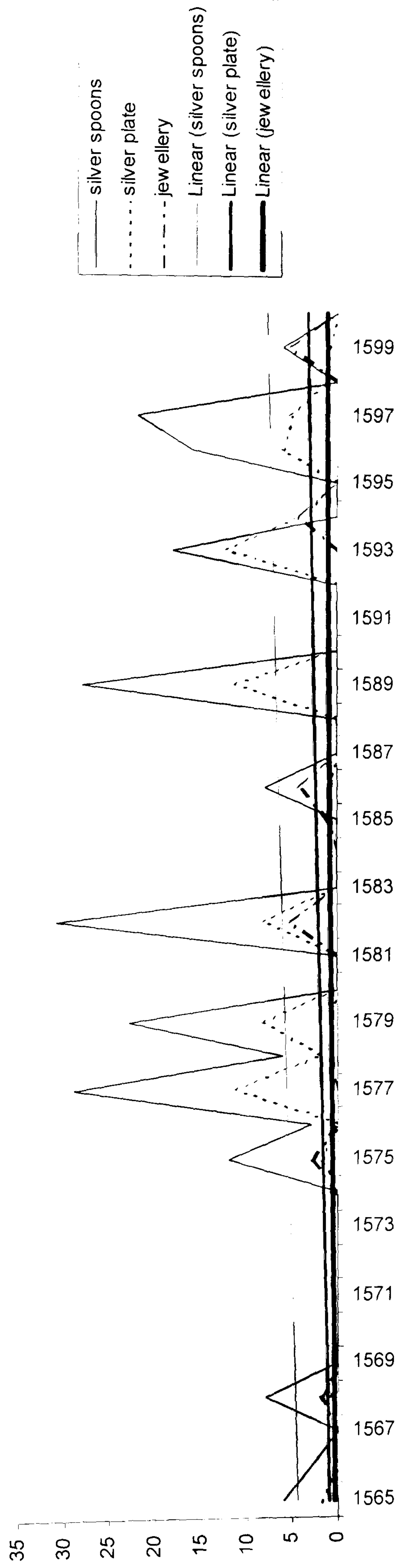


Figure P4a: Benches and chairs in parlours over time.

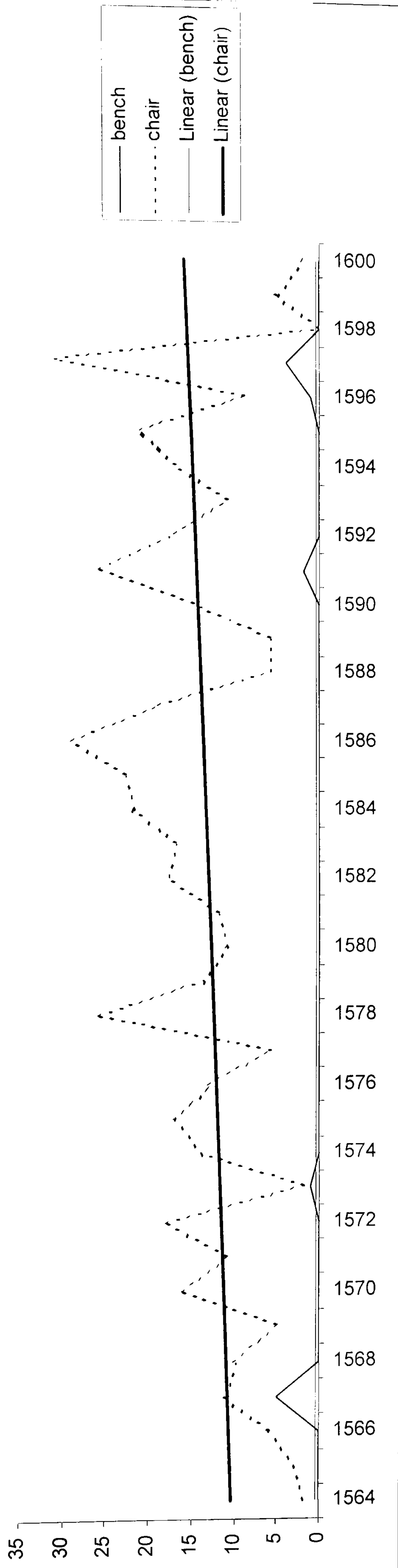


Figure P4b: Forms, settles and stools in parlours over time.

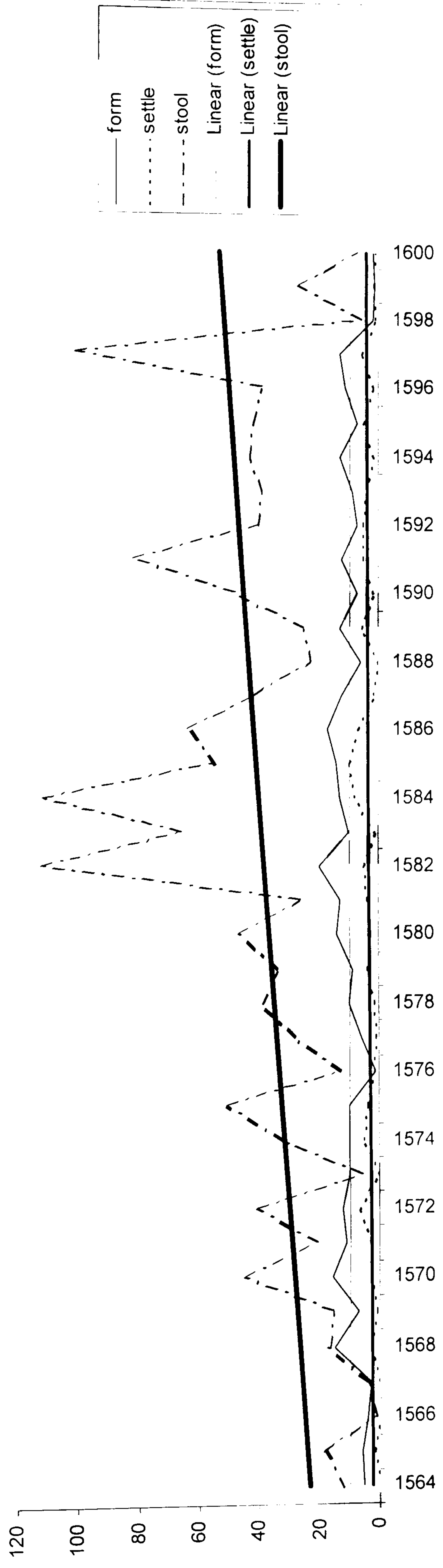


Figure P5: Tables in parlours over time.

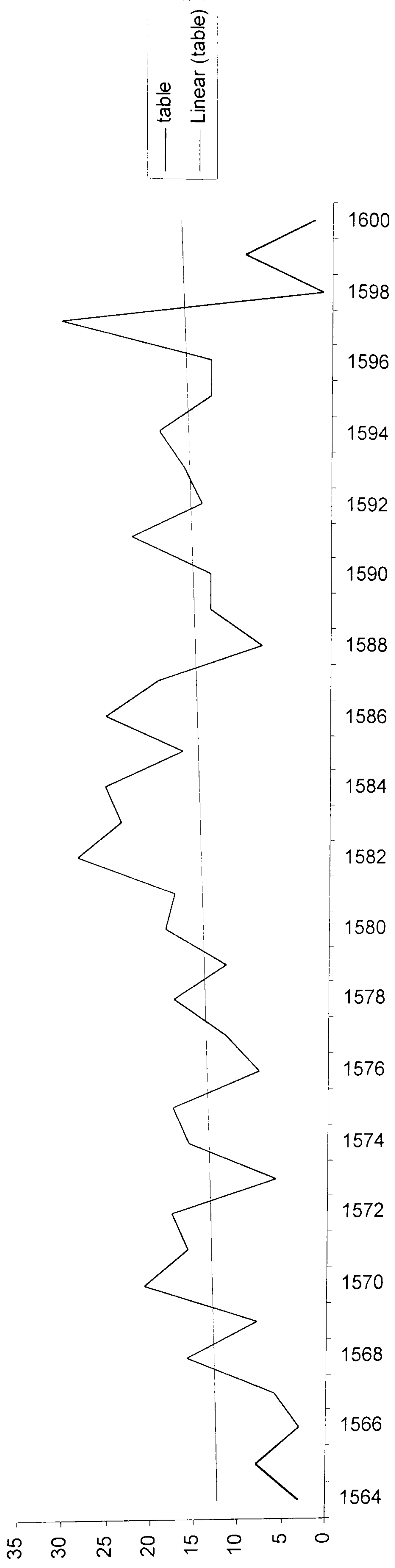


Figure P6: Trendles and wheels in parlours over time.

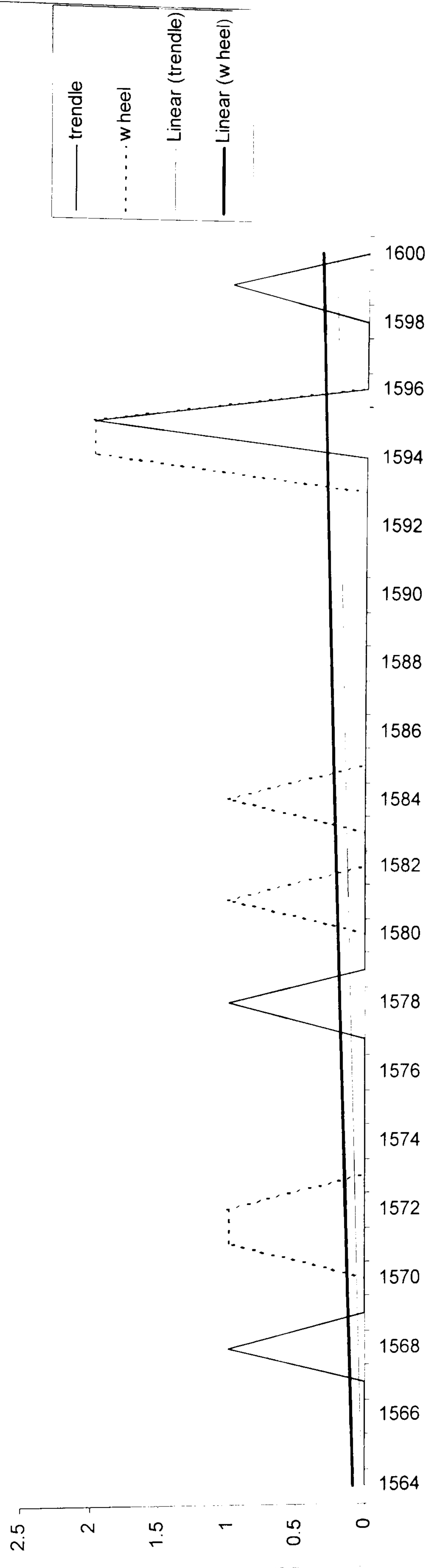


Figure P7a: Books and musical instruments in parlours over time.

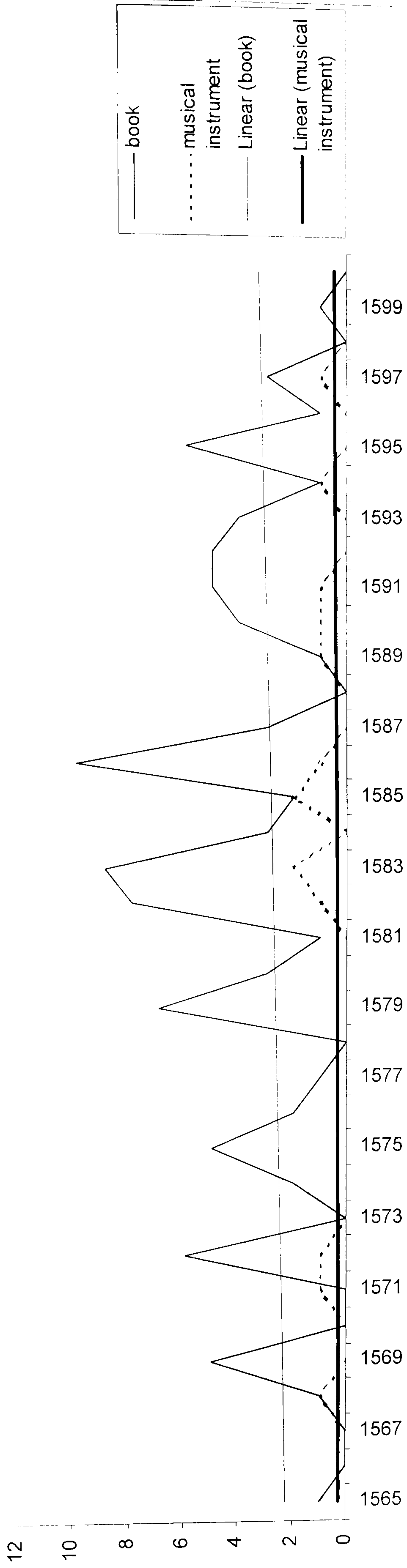


Figure P7b: Playing tables and looking glasses in parlours over time.

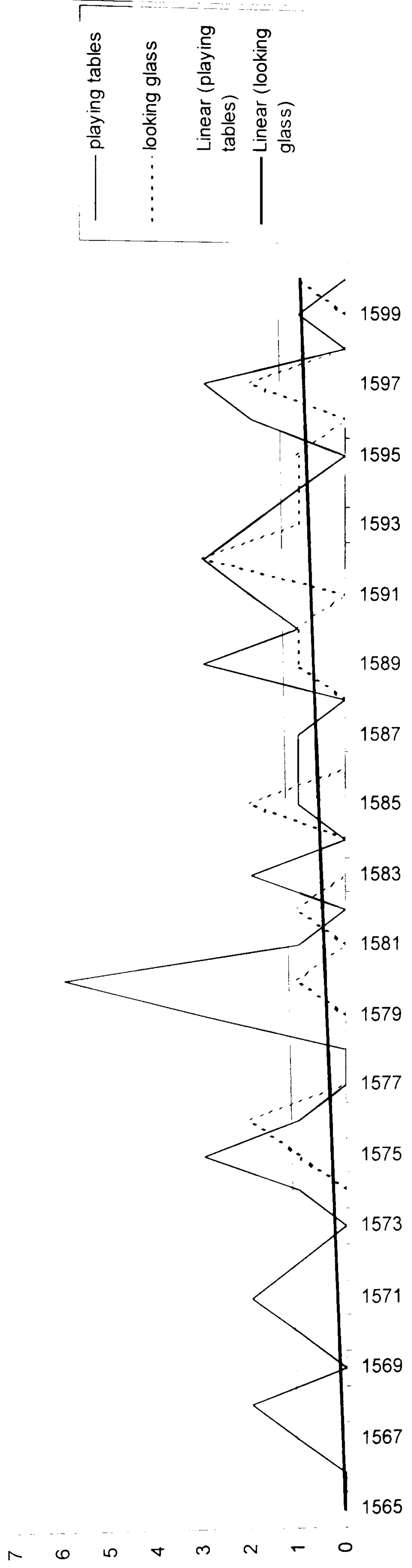


Figure P8: Hangings, painted cloths and pictures in parlours over time.

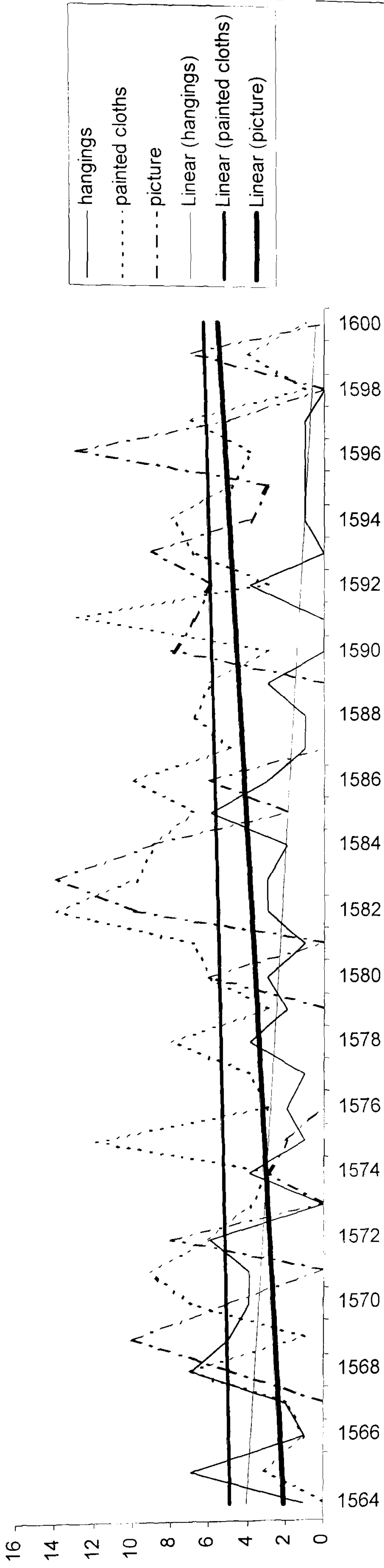


Figure P9a: Cupboard cloths and carpets in parlours over time.

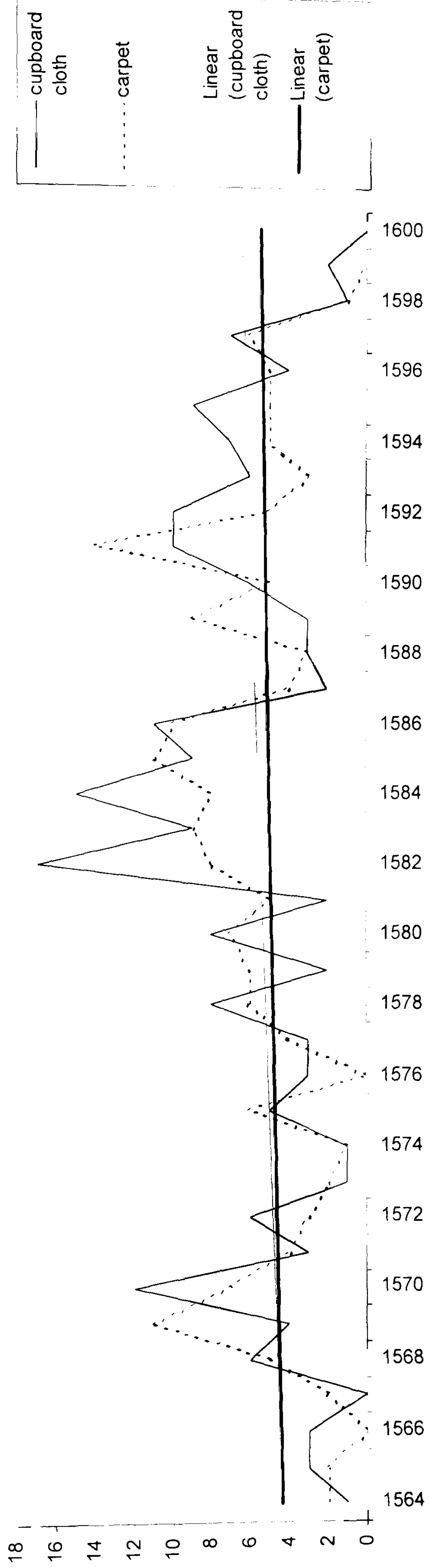


Figure P9b: Window cushions, curtains and window curtains in parlours over time.

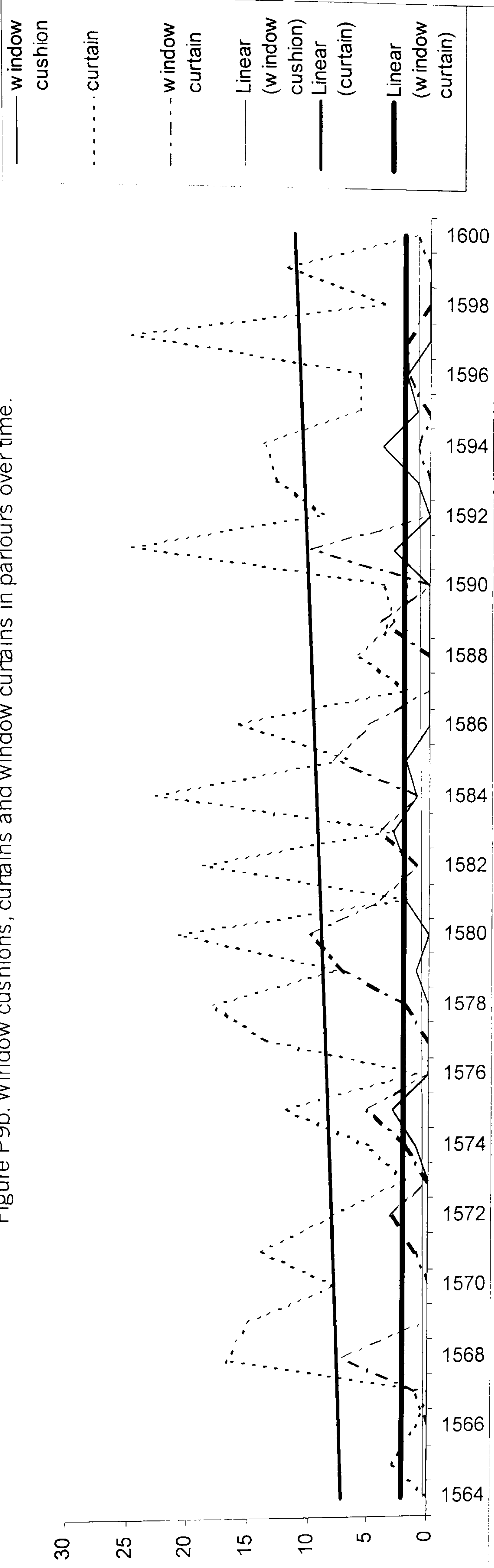


Figure P9c: Cushions in parlours over time.

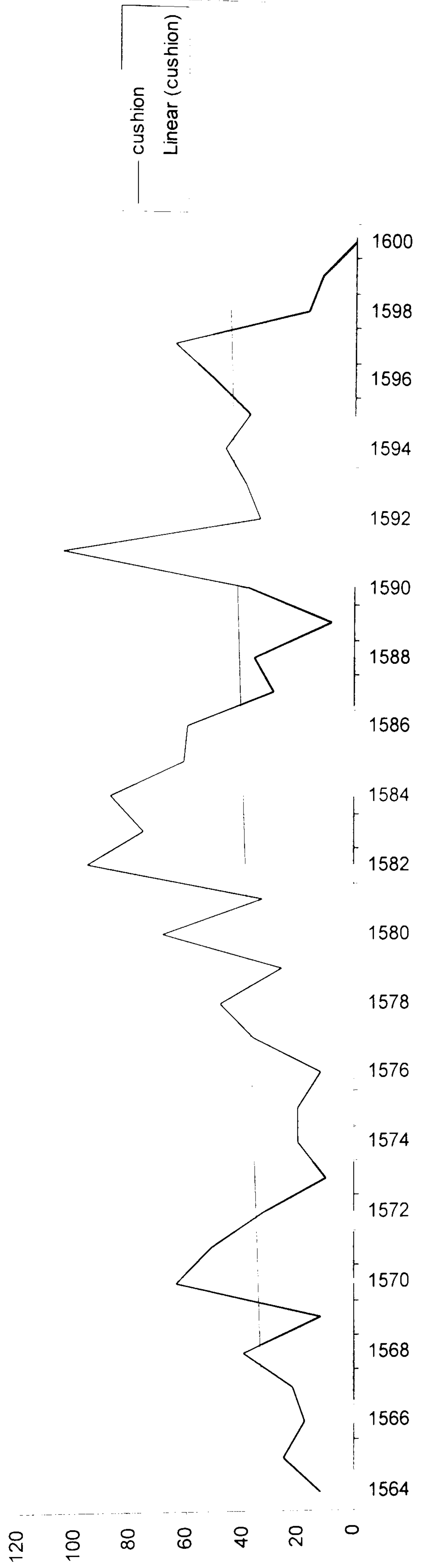
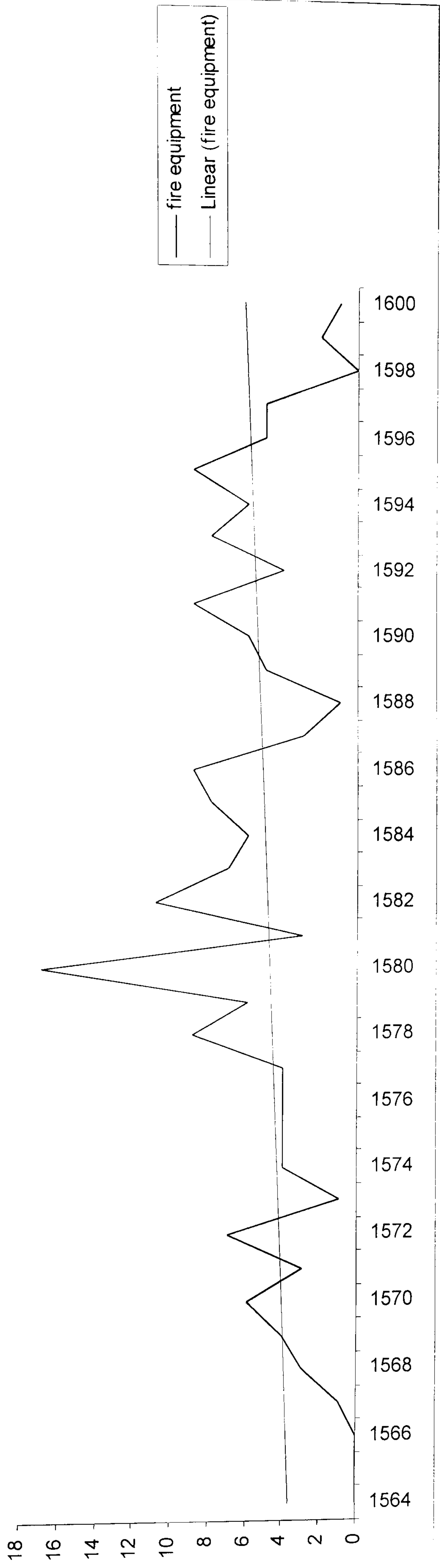


Figure P10: Fire equipment in parlours over time.



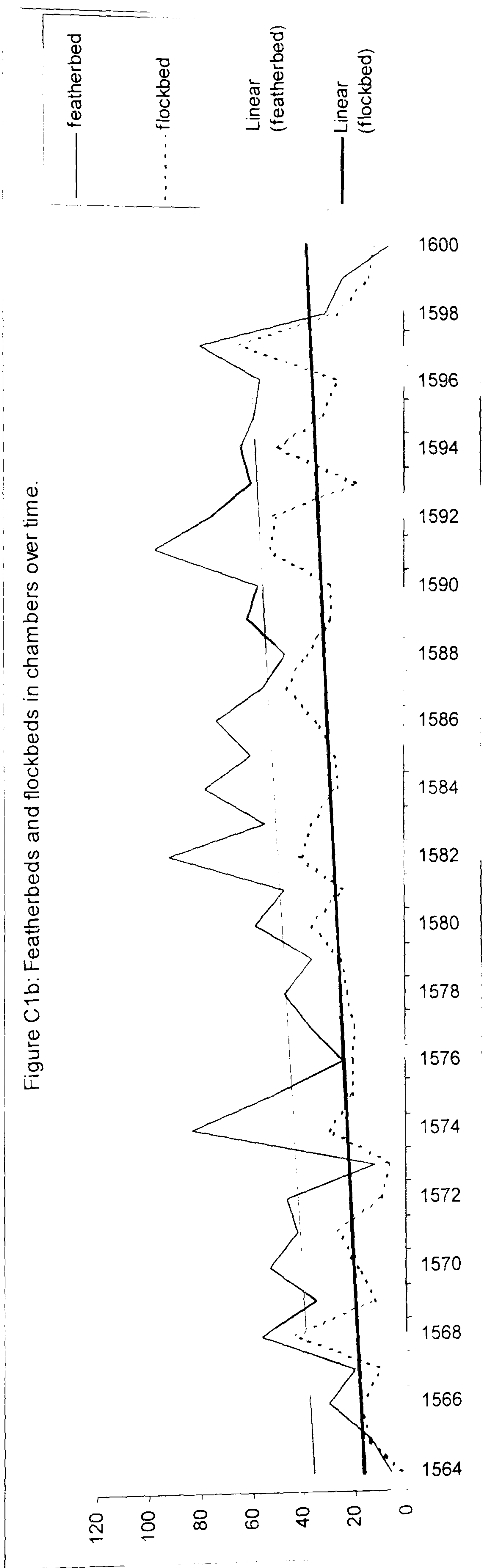
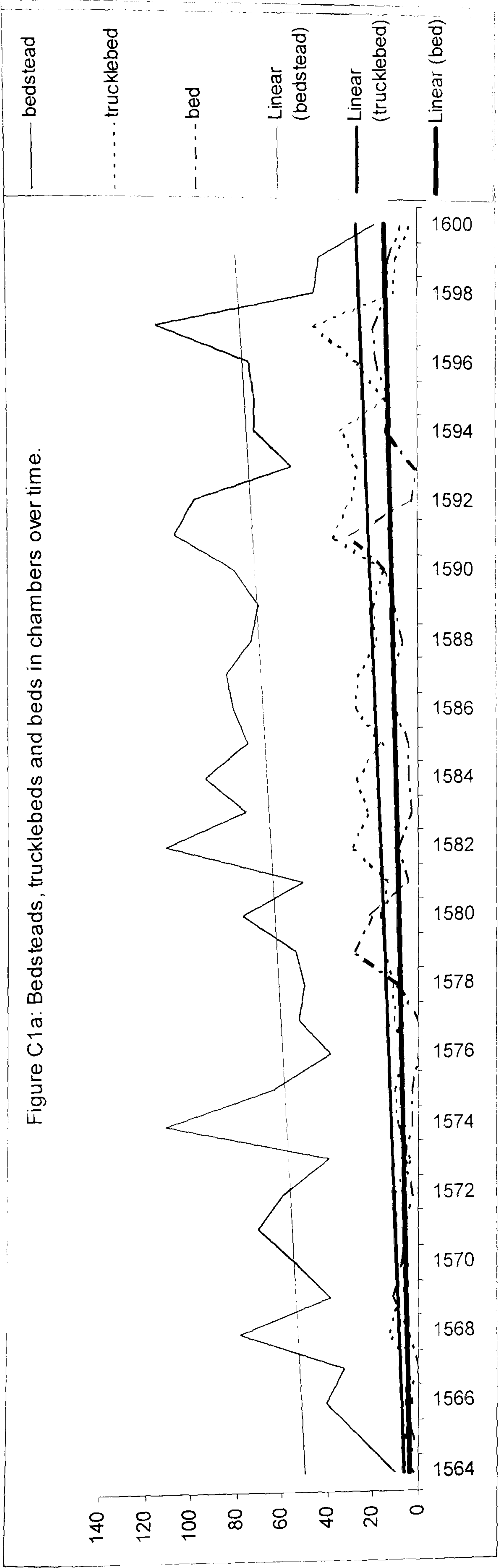


Figure C2a: Cupboards and coffer in chambers over time.

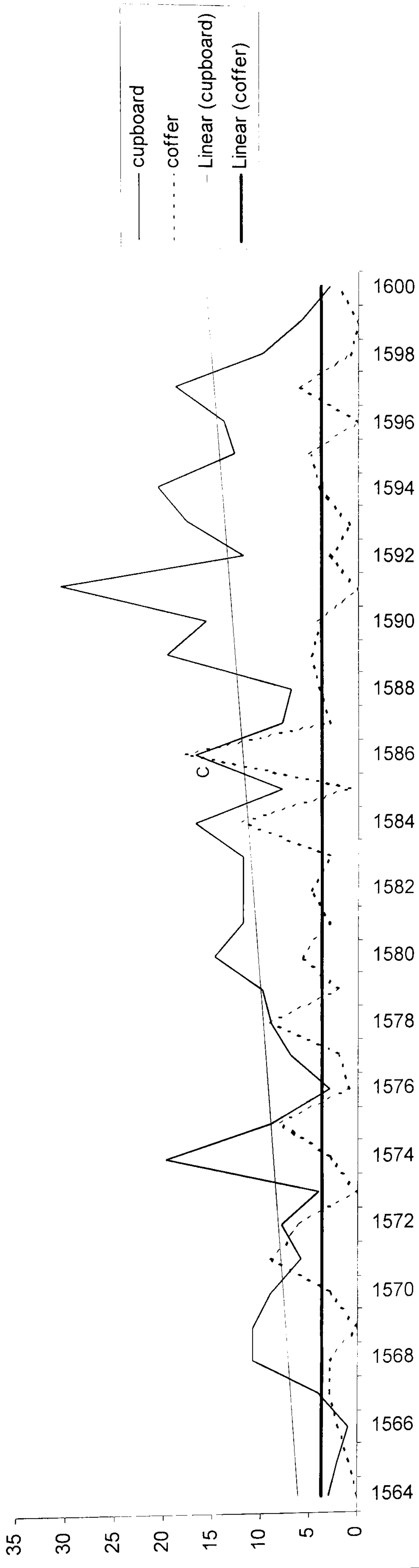


Figure C2b: Presses and storage in chambers over time.

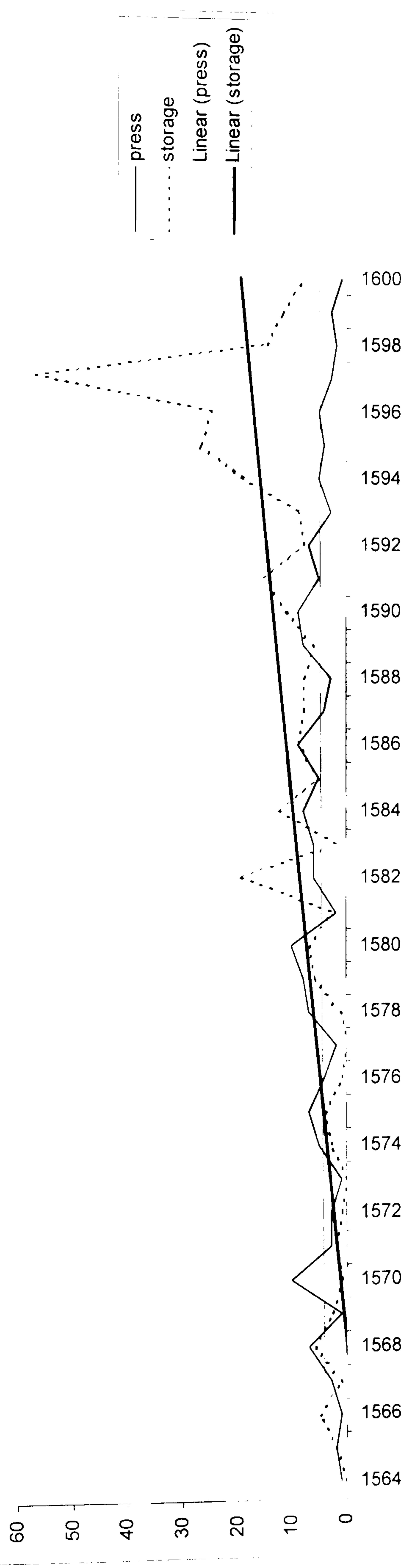


Figure C2c: Chests in chambers over time.

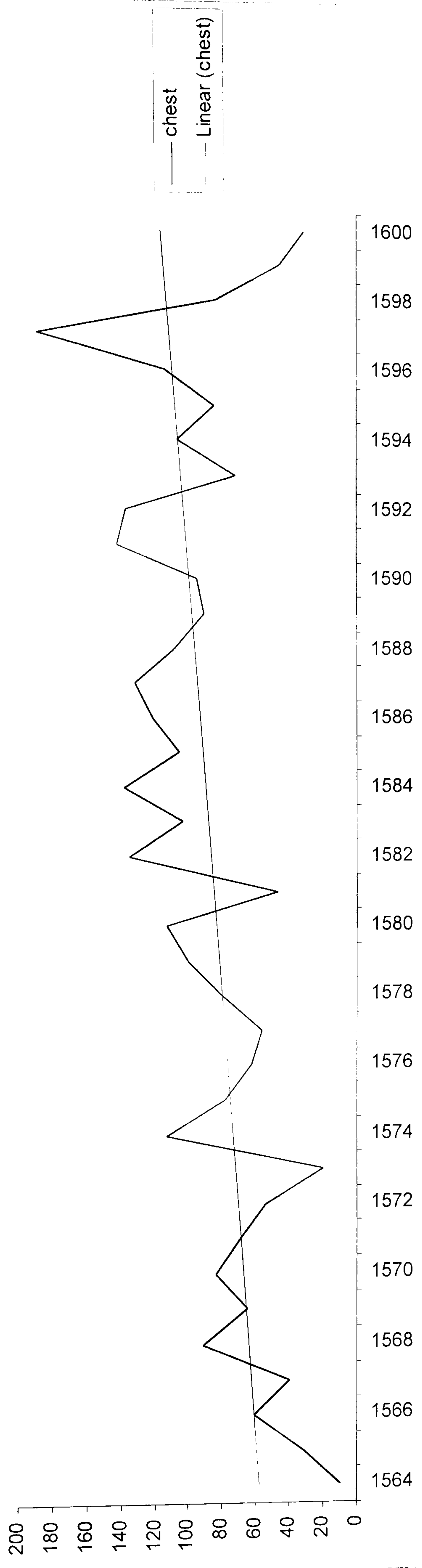


Figure C3a: Cloths and jewellery in chambers over time.

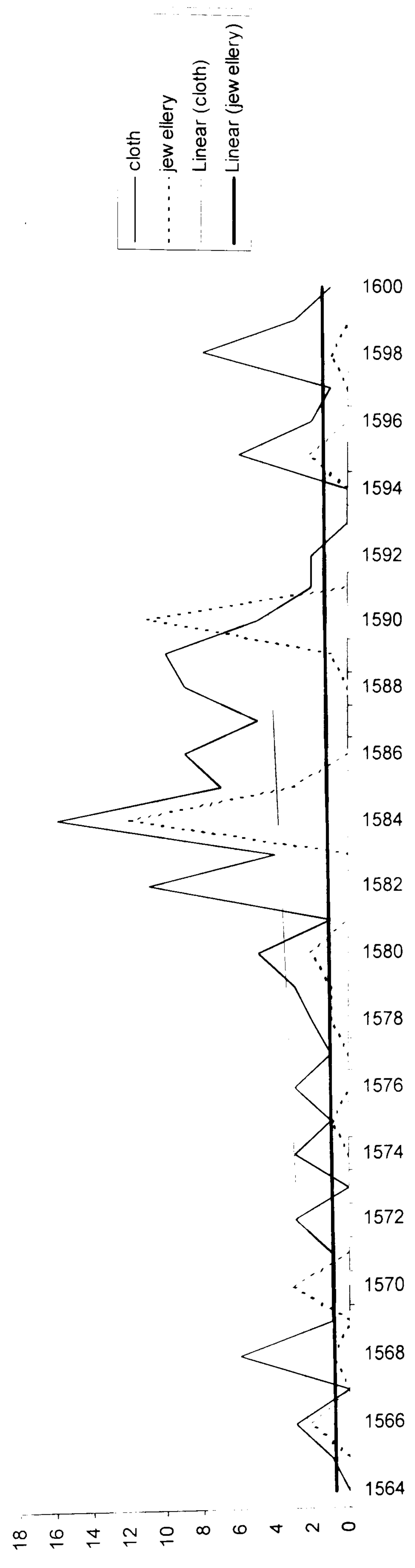


Figure C3b: Silver plate and silver spoons in chambers over time.

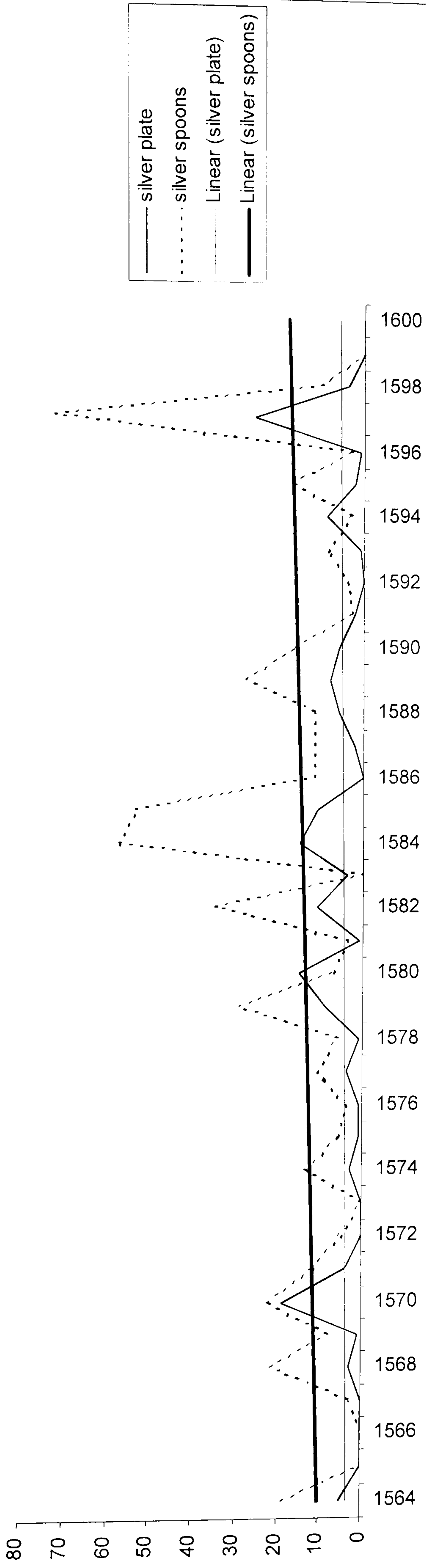


Figure C3c: Tablecloths in chambers over time.

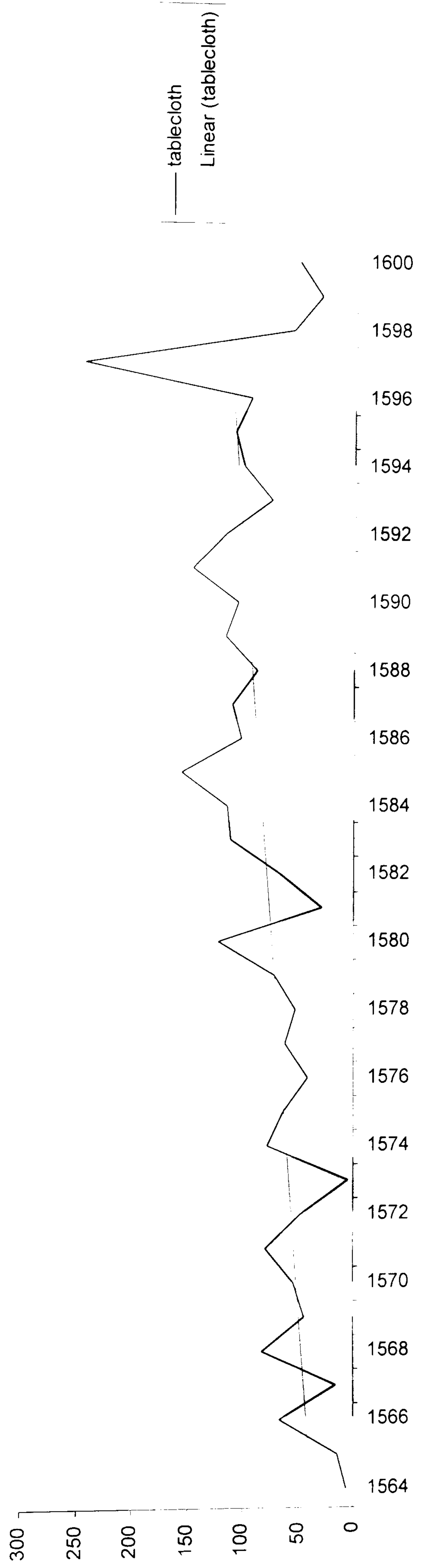


Figure C4a: Settles and chairs in chambers over time.

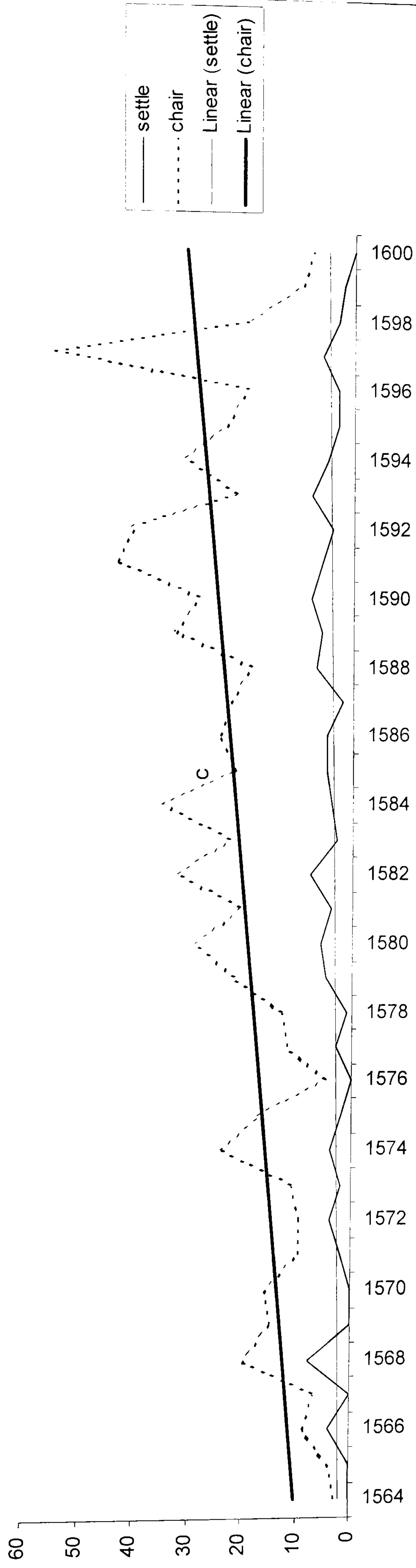


Figure C4b: Benches, forms and stools in chambers over time.



Figure C5: Tables in chambers over time.

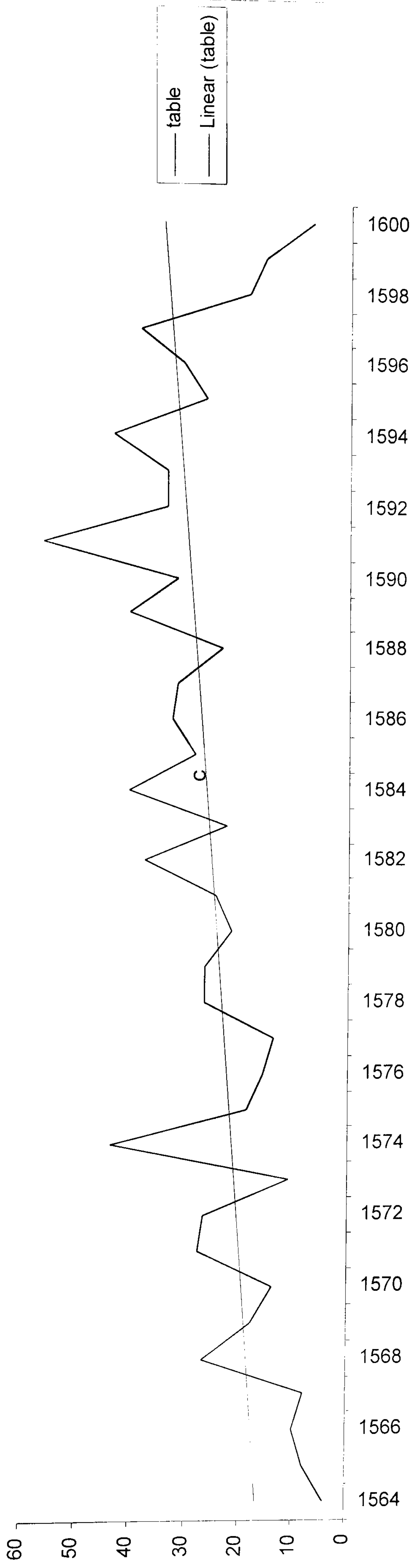


Figure C6: Trendles and wheels in chambers over time.

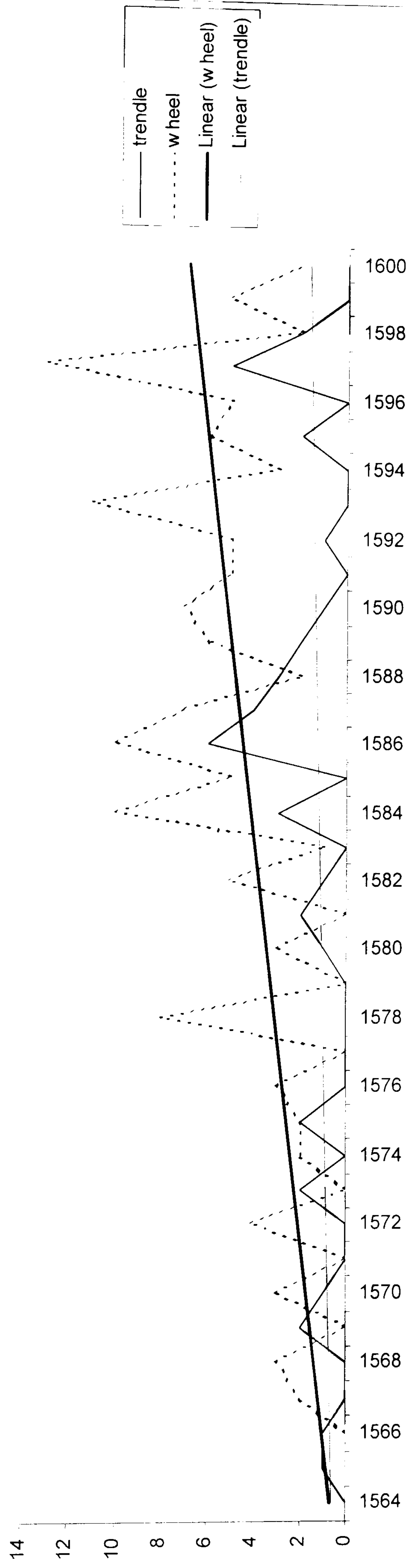


Figure C7a: Musical instruments, playing tables and looking glasses in chambers over time.

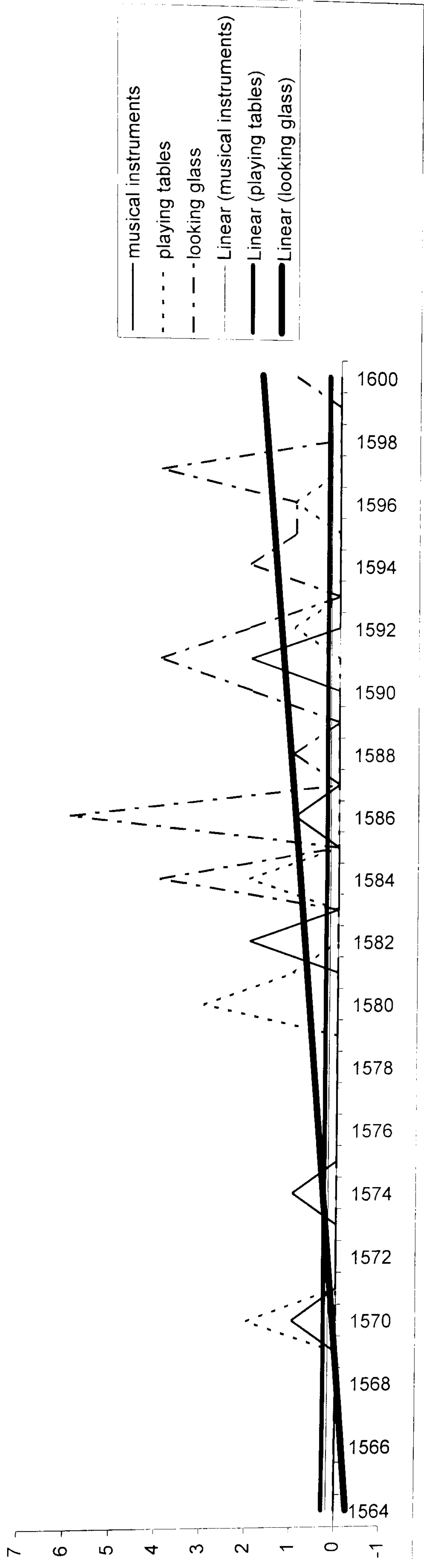


Figure C7b: Books in chambers over time.

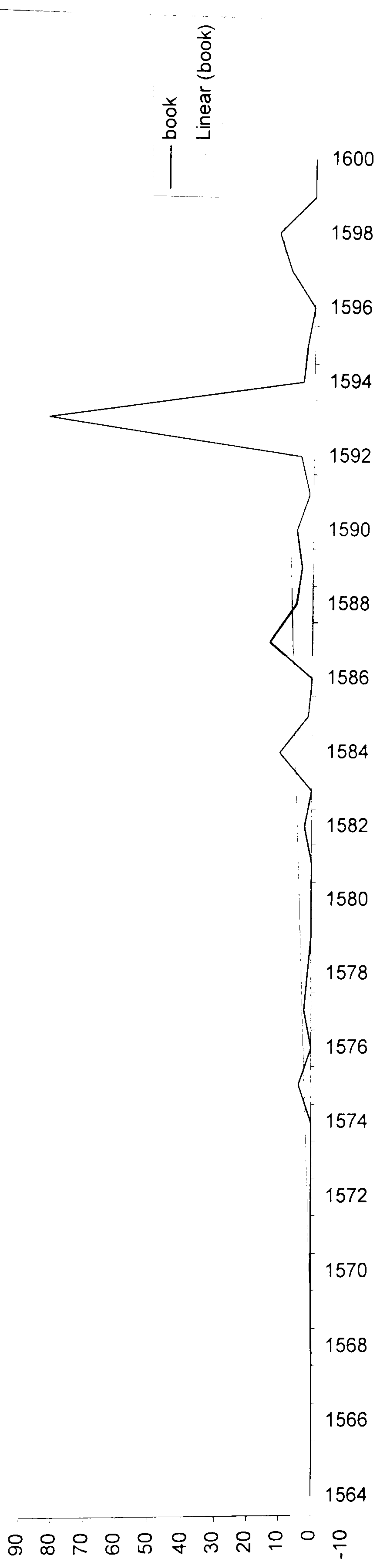


Figure C8: Hangings, pictures and painted cloths in chambers over time.

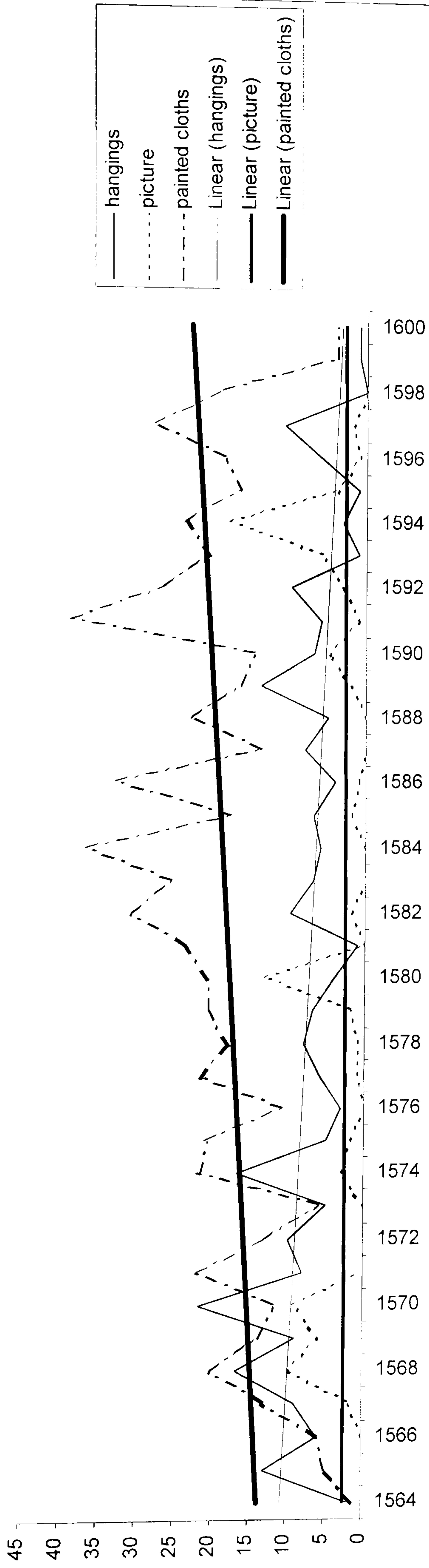


Figure C9a: Cupboard cloths and window cushions in chambers over time.

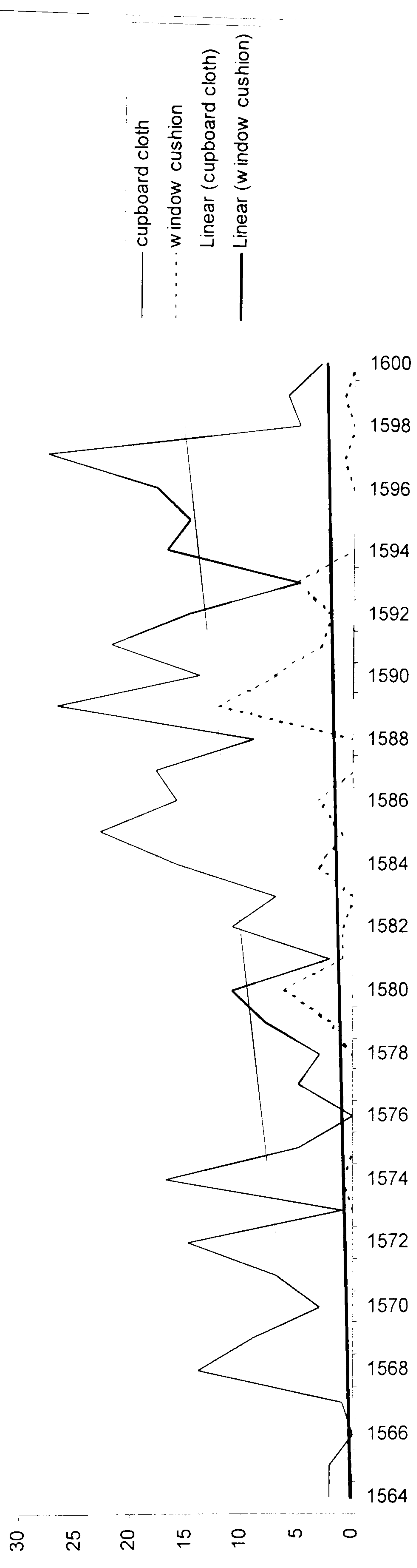


Figure C9b: Carpets, curtains and window curtains in chambers over time.

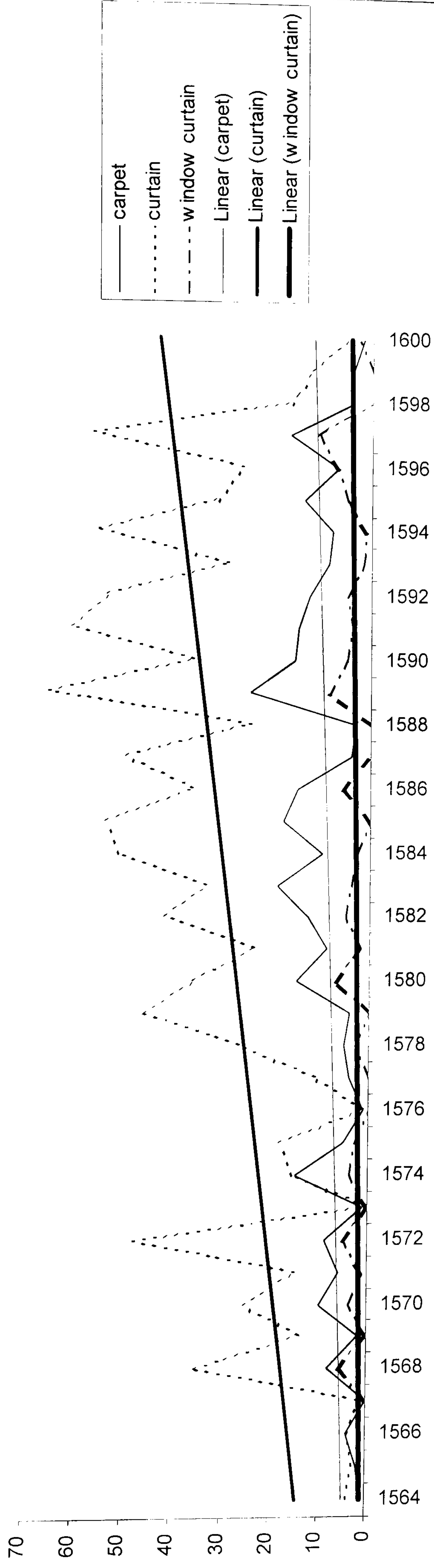


Figure C9c: Cushions in chambers over time.

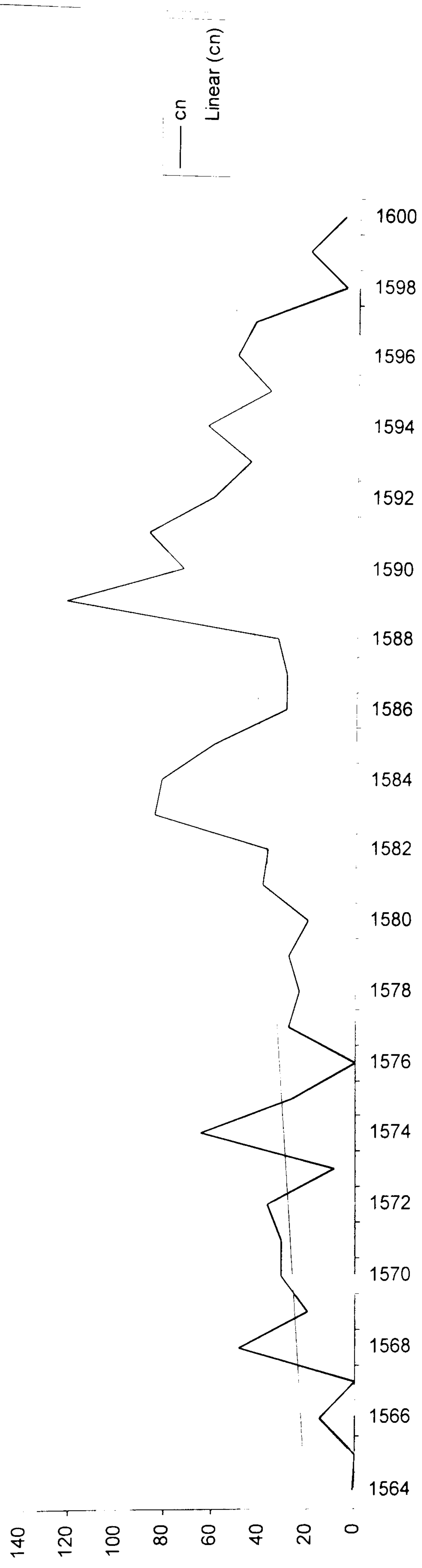
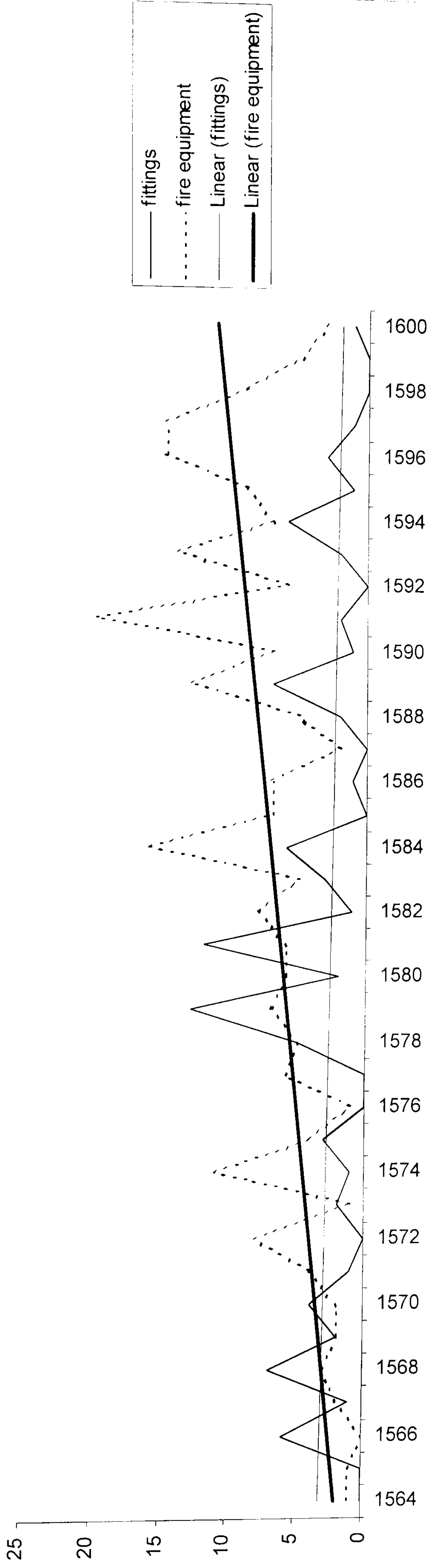


Figure C.10: Fire equipment and fittings in chambers over time.



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X. 10. 2	1541-44
X. 10. 3	1545-48
X. 10. 4	1548-51
X. 10. 5	1551-52
X. 10. 6	1552-59
X. 10. 7	1559-61 & 1567-8
X. 10. 8	1562
X. 10. 9	1563-64
X. 10. 10	1563-64
X. 10. 11	1569-70
X. 10. 12	1565-66
X. 10. 13	1570-71
X. 10. 14	1571-73
X. 10. 15	1566-67
X. 10. 16	1574-77
X. 10. 17	1573-74
X. 10. 18	1577-80
X. 10. 19	1583-85
X. 10. 20	1581-83
X. 10. 21	1580-81
X. 11. 1	1585-89
X. 11. 2	1589-92
X. 11. 3	1598-1600

Deposition Books, Consistory Court:

PRC 39. 1	1555
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PRC 39.11	1584-86
PRC 39.12	1586-88

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PRC 39.17	1593-95
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PRC 39.23	1599-1601
PRC 39.24	1599-1602

Registers of Wills, Archdeaconry Court:

PRC 17. 17
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PRC 17. 44
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PRC 17. 48
PRC 17. 49
PRC 17. 50
PRC 17. 51

Inventory Registers, Consistory Court:

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PRC 21. 11
PRC 21. 12
PRC 21. 13
PRC 21. 14
PRC 21. 15

PRC 28. 1
PRC 28. 2
PRC 28. 3

Chamberlain's Accounts for Canterbury

FA 11
FA 12
FA 13
FA 14
FA 15
FA 16
FA 17

Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone

Inventory Registers, Archdeaconry Court:

PRC 10. 1
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