THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE HOUSEHOLD: CONSUMPTION AND DOMESTIC ECONOMY IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES

Barbara Caddick BA(Hons)

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Abstract

Research into the material culture of the household and the domestic interior has increased rapidly during recent years. It has primarily focused on the appearance and use of domestic space leaving household management and maintenance a neglected area of study. Furthermore the relationship between the ownership of goods, the domestic interior and the use of the home has not been studied in conjunction with the management and maintenance of the household. Additionally, research into the material culture of the household has predominantly focused on quantitative changes experienced during the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth. It has long been established that the ownership of household goods increased in this period, but similar research has not taken place to explore the nature of these goods, nor to extend this work to the subsequent period.

This thesis brings these aspects of research together for the first time to create a synthesis between the ownership of goods and the changing nature and use of the home and household maintenance and management. The argument proposed here suggests that the changing nature of the material culture of the household and developments to the use of the home had an impact upon the way that the household was managed and maintained. The complex inter-woven relationship between the material culture of the domestic interior and the ways in which it was maintained and managed reveals that both elements were a part of an emerging middle class culture of domesticity. Therefore, this thesis makes a significant contribution to a holistic understanding of the household by looking at the ownership of goods and the use of domestic space within the context of maintenance and management.
**Contents:**

Acknowledgements p.i
List of Illustrations p.iii

**Introduction**

- Material culture and consumption p.2
- The domestic interior p.16
- Household management and maintenance p.20
- The middling sorts and the middle class p.28
- Methodology p.33
- Introduction to sources p.37
- Inventories and catalogues p.38
- Advice literature and household management books p.40
- Newspaper advertisements p.42
- Personal letters and diaries p.43
- Household account books p.45
- Aims and structure p.46
- Contribution to knowledge p.48

**Part 1: The Domestic Environment** p.50

**Chapter 1: The Material Culture of the Household** p.53
- The ownership of domestic and household goods p.53
- The increase in ownership and the changing nature of household goods p.55
- Material culture within the context of the home p.69
- Conclusion p.84

**Chapter 2: Using Domestic Space** p.85
- Room use in the eighteenth century p.85
- The development of a space for social activities p.89
- The division of space within the home p.91
- The home as a private refuge p.99
- Room use and domestic rituals p.102
- Decoration and room function p.110
Chapter 3: Consumption and the Home

- Viewing and imagining domestic material culture
- Shop and showroom contextual displays
- Retail advertisements
- Household sales and associated catalogues
- Shopping for the home: Furnishing and decorating
- Advice on domestic furnishing choices

Part 2: Household Management and Maintenance

Chapter 4: Household Maintenance

- Housework as household maintenance
- The threat of damage by vermin
- Caring for domestic furniture and furnishings
- Care of furniture
- Specialised cleaning equipment
- Specialised treatment for furniture
- Laundering
- Sourcing and treating water
- Soap
- The process of washing
- Professional care
- New technology: The washing machine

Chapter 5: Household Management and Organisation

- The role of the housewife as household manager
- Household management books
- Domestic organisation
- Servants
- Finding servants
- Managing servants
- The servant problem
- Household accounts
What did women feel about their role as housewife?  p.216

Conclusion  p.218

**Conclusion**  p.219

**Bibliography**  p.232
  - Manuscript primary sources  p.232
  - Printed primary sources  p.233
  - Online databases  p.236
  - Electronic resources  p.236
  - Secondary sources  p.237
  - Unpublished dissertations  p.251
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List of Illustrations

Figure 1: ‘Pellet and Green’ 1809, Rudolph Ackerman, Plate from the Repository of Arts, reproduced in, http://www.georgianindex.net/Shop/glass/p-glassmakers.html, By kind permission of the British Museum (ref: Heal, 66.60AN418142).

Figure 2: Wedgwood, reproduced in, http://www.georgianindex.net/Shop/wedgwood/Wedgwood.html


Figure 4: Shropshire Archives, 665/4/146, Eyton Family part 4, Auctioneers catalogue of the late Mrs Mary Eggliston 1829. By kind permission of the trustees of the Eyton collection held at Shropshire Record Office.

Figure 5: ‘Mrs Sperling murdering flies, assisted by her maid who received the dead and wounded’, reproduced in Longford, Elizabeth (1981), Mrs Hurst Dancing & Other Scenes from Regency Life, 1821-1823, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, plate 49. By kind permission of Victor Gollancz, an imprint of The Orion Publishing Group, London.

Figure 6: Boycott Instructions. Shropshire Record Office, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798, paper from the Boycott account book. By kind permission of Shropshire Record Office.


Figure 9: Boycott Account Book. Shropshire Record Office, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798, Boycott account book. By kind permission of Shropshire Record Office.
**Introduction**

The household was a dynamic space that underwent many changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the middle sections of society the household was a site of consumption that was heavily invested with material goods during the period. At the same time, the domestic interior changed and became a more comfortable, often decoratively furnished space. The way that the house was used and its wider cultural role both reflected and shaped these changes. The home had a complex relationship with the world of goods and interior decoration. It was a fluid space, a locus of consumption and simultaneously a space for the display and use of commodities. It was also an arena for the dissemination of social and cultural values and at the same time a place that created work for its inhabitants. As it became enriched with decoration and furniture this work to clean and maintain the home increased. New patterns of social use punctuated the life of the household. Cyclical maintenance routines were instigated to support and serve these new activities. Each home was individual, but the concept of home was shared. By the nineteenth century the home had a central role in the cultural world of the middle class that was expressed through a distinct domestic ideology, which incorporated the material culture of the household and its management and maintenance. This thesis is a study of the relationship between the domestic interior, the changing nature of the home and its maintenance and management between 1700 and 1830. It is an exploration of how the material culture of the home changed and the inter-woven relationship that the ownership and use of goods had with household management and maintenance during this period. Furthermore, it is a study of how these material possessions came to shape and embody social and cultural concepts and how through the ownership, use and care of household goods the home developed a distinct cultural identity.

The work presented in this thesis is informed by three distinct areas of research, material culture and consumption, the domestic interior and household maintenance and management. All three of these areas are concerned with the home but each approaches its study from a slightly different perspective. This thesis brings these areas of study together and it becomes clear that these have rarely been combined.
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

The following historiography is split into three sections to enable the literature of each to be discussed in turn.

Material culture and consumption

The work presented in this thesis is rooted in the study of material culture and consumption. However, a review reveals that very little of this work is concerned with the relationship between the ownership of goods and the management and maintenance of the household. This thesis builds on the existing research in this field, but takes it in a different direction to bring into focus the maintenance and management of household, alongside the study of domestic material culture.

There is a wide range of literature concerned with the study of consumption and consumerism. This genre of study is not restricted to the discipline of history as contributions have been made from researchers in the fields of sociology, anthropology and cultural theory. The ever growing literature covers research into a variety of topics, times and places and is navigated in the historiographical surveys provided by Sara Pennell, and more recently by Frank Trentmann and by Jonathan White.1 In addition to providing summaries, these three essays also highlight the disparity within the genre of historical studies of consumption. Each essay reviews either slightly different literature or interprets it from a different perspective. Pennell’s survey in 1999 focuses specifically on the issues and concerns relating to consumption and consumerism in early modern England.2 In contrast Trentmann’s essay has a much wider remit and chooses to review literature surrounding ahistorical theories of Consumption, but relates this specifically to consumption practice in post nineteenth century society.3 White’s essay focuses likewise on the overriding theories of consumption.4 These three essays reveal how disparate the genre of consumption

2 Pennell (1999), ‘Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England’, pp.549-64
3 Trentmann (2004), ‘Beyond Consumerism’, pp.373-401
4 Trentmann (2004), ‘Beyond Consumerism’, pp.373-401
is even within the field of history. The genres of consumption and material culture straddle the awkward and often conflicting triumvirate of economic, social and cultural fields of historical research.

The origins of the historiography of consumption are tied within the history of production. Though these issues are not the direct focus of this thesis, they have helped shape the landscape of historical literature informing studies of consumption, and so need to be recognised here. Early economic history focused predominantly on production and the increased output of goods during the eighteenth century in the period traditionally described as the ‘industrial revolution’. Harold Perkin proposed, ‘At the bottom the key to the Industrial Revolution was the infinitely elastic home demand for mass consumer goods.’ The simple maxim that increased supply created demand was accepted as the substantive explanation for increased levels of production. Whilst the manufacture and production of goods was explored in depth, the question of who was purchasing such items and why, was not fully considered. In part this was due to the relative lack of academic interest in consumption activity.

Similarly production has been viewed as the key indicator of the transition to capitalism in early modern England. For Karl Marx the unequal ownership of the means of production was central to the emergence of a capitalistic structure. Marx dismissed consumption as subordinate (and debased) to production; his labour theory of value stipulated that production was the proper form of human self-fulfilment. If production was the route to human self-fulfilment, then consumption as its antithesis was inevitably the route to dissatisfaction. Production and consumption became polarised and moralised as such; production was classed as creative and worthwhile, whereas in contrast, consumption was pointless and parasitical. Similarly, Max Weber considered production as key to the emergence of a capitalist society in his thesis of the ‘Protestant work ethic’. Here he argued that modern capitalism was

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6 Overton, Mark, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750, Routledge, London.
characterised by a distinctive work ethic where work was undertaken for its own sake. Increased work would have lead to increased earnings allowing for increased levels of consumption, but Weber did not make this link and did not extend his thesis to examine the relationship of this work ethic to consumption.  

Consumption and production may be linked, but consumption has its own separate dynamic. The independent dynamics of consumption make it possible to study consumption activities and consumer behaviour without reference to production. In response to the comparative neglect of consumption, Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John Plumb’s 1982 text turned scholarly attention away from production. In what launched the major debate over early modern consumption in England, McKendrick claimed that consumption was in fact the driving force behind production. He argued that there was a ‘consumer revolution’ during the third quarter of the eighteenth century and that this convulsion on the demand side caused the ‘industrial revolution’. The eighteenth century ‘birth of a consumer society’ was the key to stimulating increased levels of production and ultimately the economy. In parallel with Marxist theory this interpretation stipulates that production and consumption had a symbiotic relationship. Whereas Marx proposed that consumption was the reciprocal subordinate part of production, the shift in impetus suggested by McKendrick gives consumption precedence over production.

McKendrick makes bold statements about the nature of consumption during the eighteenth century. Firstly, he proposes that a consumer revolution occurred because items that had previously been available only to the privileged elite became widely available during the second half of the eighteenth century, a process he identified as the ‘commercialisation of society’. Secondly, he argues that the consumer revolution was fuelled by emulative consumption where the aristocracy lead the way. The middle ranks of society emulated the consumption activities of their social

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12 McKendrick in McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), The Birth of a Consumer Society, p.11
superiors in the hope of achieving upwards social-mobility.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, social emulation coupled with a desire to ‘out do’ social peers was the driving force behind increased levels of consumption. The crux of his theory rested on this trickle-down model of emulation as the sole motivation for consumption during the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{15} Thirdly, McKendrick claims that consumer demand was created and controlled by manufacturers. New consumer markets were developed by manufacturers based on the power of emulative consumption. Led by his work on Wedgwood he concluded that consumers were easily manipulated by ‘commercial propaganda’ written by manufacturers and suppliers who ‘helped to boost the demand side and who succeeded in exciting new wants’.\textsuperscript{16} McKendrick’s claims have since been challenged but his work led to a refocusing of historical study towards the theme of consumption and stimulated new research. For example, the publication of two edited volumes from the early 1990s revealed the range and depth of work concerned with aspects of consumption followed in the wake of McKendrick’s crucial study.\textsuperscript{17}

The ownership of household goods reveals a slightly different picture of consumer behaviour by revealing that new consumer goods were present in the household before the eighteenth century. A number of studies have looked at the material culture of the household through the medium of probate inventories. Such inventories list the moveable goods within the household that belonged to the deceased, making them a useful source for charting a history of the ownership of goods. Probate inventories were commonly taken from the Middle Ages until the early eighteenth century, with an Act of 1529 legalizing this already well established process.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{mckendrick} McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), \textit{The Birth of a Consumer Society}, p.10
\bibitem{mckendrick2} He states, ‘The rich of course led the way… In imitation of the rich the middle ranks spent more frequently than ever before, and in imitation of them the rest of society joined in as best they might.’ McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), \textit{The Birth of a Consumer Society}, p.10
\bibitem{mckendrick3} McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), \textit{The Birth of a Consumer Society}, p.5
Although taking an inventory applied theoretically to all estates, in practice this was rarely enforced for the poor, particularly those who died worth less than £5 and the poor are therefore underrepresented. The survival of aristocratic inventories is poor in official depositories meaning that the survival of probate inventories is skewed towards the middle sections of society. Therefore, they are representative of the possessions of the social group that McKendrick charged with causing a consumer revolution through their ability to imitate the consumption practices of their social superiors. Lorna Weatherill employed a new methodology of quantitative analysis applied to large quantities of probate inventories. Her sample of nearly three thousand inventories from eight regions across the country revealed for the first time the ownership of goods in large enough quantities to identify distinct patterns and trends. Through the use of probate inventories to study their possessions the focus of research is shifted to an early period and to a specific social group. Weatherill’s key study published in 1988 was followed a year later by the work of Carole Shammas and has more recently been joined in 2004 by Mark Overton et al’s research.20

Weatherill’s study demonstrated that the ownership of household goods increased significantly between 1675 and 1725.21 New consumer goods were present in the homes of the middling consumer before 1725.22 In support of this, Shammas found similar results in her study of pre-industrial consumers in England and the United States of America. This identification of an increased ownership of consumer goods during the late seventeenth century weakens McKendrick’s assertion that there was a radical boom in consumption during the mid-eighteenth century and shifts any consumer boom that may have occurred back to the late seventeenth century. Furthermore, revisions of the traditional interpretation of the industrial revolution suggest that industrialisation was characterised by slow growth rather than a radical

22 A definition and discussion of the middling sort can be found later in this thesis on page 26
break with tradition.\textsuperscript{23} This suggestion further weakens the theory of a radical revolutionary increase in consumer demand and activity suggesting instead a trend of slow and gradual change over a longer time period.\textsuperscript{24} The changing time scale of the ‘birth of a consumer society’ has led researchers to reject the utility of the concept and its acceptance of the traditional chronology of economic take off altogether.\textsuperscript{25}

On the surface the identification of an increase in household possessions specifically amongst the middle sections of society adds support to McKendrick’s work. Heavily reliant on the work of Thorstein Veblen, McKendrick proposed that eighteenth century consumption followed an emulative trickle-down pattern from the aristocratic elites to the middling ranks.\textsuperscript{26} He argues that servants were an important channel for spreading new fashions from the elites down the social hierarchy as they were exposed to elite fashions. The evidence provided by probate inventories suggests that this was not the case. Weatherill identified seventeen types of goods that were key indicators of changes in patterns of consumption.\textsuperscript{27} She found that new and decorative goods were more frequently present in the probate inventories of urban tradesmen than in those of their social superiors, the rural gentry. Weatherill’s consumption hierarchy, based on the ownership of key consumer goods in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, was not the same as the social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{28} Those higher up the social hierarchy did not necessarily own new and decorative goods more frequently and were not the most innovative consumers. For emulation to be the model of consumer motivation the gentry would have been expected to be amongst the first to own such goods. This was not the case.\textsuperscript{29} However, probate inventories reveal the bare facts of ownership and consequently they do not explain how and why goods were acquired.

\textsuperscript{26} McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), \textit{The Birth of a Consumer Society}, p.10.
\textsuperscript{27} These were; tables, cooking pots, saucepans, pewter, pewter dishes and plates, earthenware, knives and forks, china, utensils for hot drinks, window curtains, table linen, looking glasses, pictures, books, clocks, silver. Weatherill (1988), \textit{Consumer Behaviour}, table 2.1 and pp.203-207.
\textsuperscript{28} Weatherill (1988), \textit{Consumer Behaviour}, p.185 and table 8.2.
Through his work into social behaviour, Colin Campbell has attacked the use of emulation as an explanation for consumption, stating that imitation is an act and not a motive. At the outset he remarks that just because members of the middling groups were able to purchase goods that had previously been only available to the aristocracy, does not necessarily mean that they hoped to imitate an aristocratic lifestyle. He states, ‘Behaviour which is imitative is not necessarily also emulative’. Many new goods could be desired for their own sake and not simply for any prestige that was attached to them. By drinking and eating consumables that were newly available to the middle ranks of society, imitation of the aristocracy was present. However, this does not necessarily mean that those consuming such goods did so because they aspired to an aristocratic lifestyle. Goods could be desired and purchased for a range of reasons; for their function, their design, and the social and cultural meanings that they conveyed. This range of meanings suggests that consumer motivation was a complicated process that can not be explained fully by one model. The concept of a consumer revolution being led by the elite and driven by the emulative consumption by the middling sorts is no longer deemed a satisfactory explanation of consumer behaviour and activity during the eighteenth century.

McKendrick’s work initially suggested a shift in emphasis from production to consumption. To inform his work about the distribution of goods he studied the activities of manufacturers and retailers, in particular the large scale national successes of Josiah Wedgwood and George Packwood. This coupled with his use of a theory of social emulation as the motivation for consumption led McKendrick to view the middling sorts as a naïve market that was easily manipulated by suppliers. He proclaims that Wedgwood had an awareness of the social aspirations of the middling ranks and through the exploitation of imitative consumption was able to create a market for his goods amongst this group. By making his goods available to middle rank consumers he was able to ‘milk the effects of social emulation and emulative

31 Berg points out that ‘Assumptions of an emulative bourgeois culture leading the way to modern mass consumerism are no longer satisfactory’, Berg, Maxine and Helen Clifford (eds) (1999), Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650 – 1850, Manchester University Press, Manchester, p.2
spending’. However, his focus on the power of manufacturers to manipulate the desires and purchases of the consumer provides a study that has less to do with the role of the consumer and has more in common with a study of production and supply. Agnew criticises McKendrick for this stating that his thesis could easily be applied to the argument in favour of England’s industrial revolution because it remained ‘fixed on the supply side of the ledger, with the mechanics of demand-stimulation now included in the costs of production’. McKendrick’s focus on the manufacturers’ control of consumer demand was an argument explaining increased levels of production and not consumption.

Implicit within McKendricks’ work was the assumption that shopping was a distinctly feminine activity. He describes social emulation in gendered terms arguing that women were more likely to imitate their social superiors than men were. The suggestion that consumption was distinctly gendered has led historians to explore whether there was a gendered subculture of the ownership of goods. Weatherill found that a higher proportion of women had more of certain decorative goods recorded in their probate inventories than men from similar backgrounds. Pictures were more frequently recorded in the inventories of women, but the differences were small, for example; 36% of women owned looking glasses compared with 32% of men. The biggest difference was in the ownership of silver with 34% of women owning silver goods compared with 22% of men. This variation in the number of goods was too small to argue that there was a gendered subculture, leading to the conclusion that women were consumers primarily for their family and household. Shammas argues that such a distinction could never be made from probate inventories because the documents exist in insufficient numbers and are not representative of women. Female ownership of goods was only recorded through the probate inventories of spinsters and widows. Once married a woman’s possessions belonged to her husband and any purchases that were made by married women would be reflected in the inventory of

32 McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), The Birth of a Consumer Society, p.72
her husband. To overcome the shortcomings of probate inventories Maxine Berg suggests that inventories should be used in conjunction with wills. She argues that the information they contain is more descriptive than the information in inventories. In addition, they were written by the owner of the goods and can reveal the testator or testatrix’s feelings towards the goods and the people to which they bequeathed them. Bequests made in wills demonstrate the types of goods that contemporaries thought were significant and demonstrate that relationships were sometimes expressed through specific goods. Using wills in addition to probate inventories Berg identified distinct gender differences towards consumption and the relationship with the world of goods in Birmingham and Sheffield. In their bequests women more frequently attached social significance to their possessions than men did. They frequently attached value and emotional significance to the goods that comprised their bequest, suggesting that these possessions embodied these values and played an important role in their personal relationships. Although wills reveal that women in particular had complicated relationships with their possessions, they do not reveal consumer motivation and to that end whether men and women were motivated to consume in different ways.

In contrast to this Amanda Vickery has argued against the use of probate records to analyse consumer motivation because they do not contain the necessary information. She states, ‘Social meaning cannot be read off the bare fact of ownership. Probate inventories offer little or no insight into motives for acquisition.’ Quantitative analysis of thousands of probate inventories can only ever reveal patterns and trends of ownership. Statistical findings need to be combined with qualitative evidence from a range of sources to reveal explanations of consumer behaviour. Vickery attempts to achieve this by undertaking a qualitative study based on the unusually detailed diaries and personal papers of the gentlewoman Elizabeth Shackleton. The information contained within Shackleton’s diaries is unusual in its detail as it reveals the thoughts

36 Shammas (1990), The Pre-Industrial Consumer, pp.180-181
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

and actions of a consumer in the late eighteenth century. Vickery’s research into the life of Shackleton led her to conclude that consumption was gendered; female consumption was ‘repetitive and mundane’ and related to the household and the family’s daily needs, whereas male consumption was ‘occasional and impulsive’, yet also expensive. Vickery has since taken her study further using the household accounts of four gentry families and identified that women had distinct material responsibilities. Whilst recognising that men were consumers of a variety of goods, she concludes that in their role as consumers for the household women continued to make purchases for their husbands and sons. The accounts ‘chart a story of emotional responsibility and consumer service’. Margot Finn has studied men and consumption through the diaries of four male consumers spanning from the mid-eighteenth to the early-nineteenth century. She identified that Georgian men were also consumers of a wide range of goods. Similarly recent work by David Hussey, again using the diaries of Georgian men, stresses that men engaged with the world of goods as active consumers of a variety of items.

42 Pennell (1999), ‘Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England’, p.554
It has been suggested above that consumer motivation could not be explained by a single motive because goods could be desired and purchased for a range of reasons. A further key development in the study of household goods is the exploration of the meanings that were imbued and invested in consumer goods.\(^\text{47}\) Goods conveyed a range of meanings. The work of anthropologists has been employed to extend the debate; here goods are regarded as cultural signifiers. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood state that goods have symbolic meanings that give them social value. They suggest that consumption plays a vital role in the formation of culture, stating ‘Consumption is the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape…choices express and generate culture.’\(^\text{48}\) In support of this Berg states that culture, taste and style were pursued through commodities and the meanings that the object conveyed became more significant than the object itself.\(^\text{49}\) Goods were desired and purchased primarily because of the meanings that they conveyed about the owners’ character and cultural identity. Goods therefore had a fixed visible system of meaning.\(^\text{50}\) However, Breen has questioned whether objects had fixed meanings, suggesting that meanings were subjective and linked in to wider variables. Vickery proposes that goods took on a system of meanings once they entered the home based on her findings that in the eighteenth century Elizabeth Shackleton did not explain in her diaries why she purchased goods, but she did document their arrival and often their use within her home.\(^\text{51}\) Nancy Cox is slightly critical of Vickery’s suggestion that goods only acquired meaning once they had been purchased and installed in their owner’s home. She proposes that goods acquired a range of meanings through many different processes even before they were purchased:

\(^{49}\) Berg and Clifford (eds) (1999), *Consumers and Luxury*, p.8
\(^{50}\) Dant (1999), *Material Culture in the Social World*, p.23
‘Meaning came to shop goods through the collective experiences of individual consumers and retailers, through fashion publications, newspaper advertisements, trade cards and pattern cards and countless other ways.’

Goods had a multitude of meanings for different people at different times. These meanings could alter throughout the lifecycle of the object and were often closely related to the context within which the item was located. Building on Breen’s suggestion that the meanings of goods were dependent upon their context, Cox suggests that the meanings expressed by goods were ‘mutually understood markers of identity and status’. An object may have uniform social and cultural meanings that were widely understood, but could take on an additional system of meanings through use as well as conveying a host of individualistic connotations. Goods had to have some standard mutually understood meanings before they were purchased in order to make them an attractive commodity to instigate their sale.

Studies using probate inventories have revealed a great deal of information about the changing use of domestic space in the early modern period. Penelope Corfield and Ursula Priestly’s study of room use in Norwich housing between 1580 and 1730 revealed substantial changes in the way that household rooms were used. Firstly their research demonstrated an increase in the number of rooms labelled in their inventory sample as a parlour. Secondly, their sample revealed a significant change in the way that the parlour was used. For the period between 1580 and 1604 just over half the parlours contained beds, whereas this had decreased to 18% by the early eighteenth century. The works of Weatherill and later Overton et al demonstrate a similar change.

Weatherill suggests that space within houses was used in ‘socially meaningful ways’, interiors were constructed to convey social meanings and as consumer goods were

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54 Corfield, Penelope J. and Ursula Priestley (1982), ‘Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730’, Post-Medieval Archaeology, 16, pp.93-123
55 Corfield and Priestley (1982), ‘Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing’, p.109, table 7
located within the household they helped to construct such spaces.\textsuperscript{56} She suggests that material goods, such as furnishings not only made household life more comfortable, they also made visible statements ‘about accepted values and expected behaviour’.\textsuperscript{57} Taking this further she uses the work of Erving Goffman to explain the division of space within the household. Using symbolic interaction to explain individual behaviour, Goffman suggests that the subconscious presentation of the self to others was a construct and dependent on distinct situations. When applied to the division of space in the home, ‘front-stage’ rooms, such as the parlour, were for the purpose of entertaining others and as such were an arena for the promotion of the self to a public audience. ‘Back-stage’ relates to more private spaces of the home such as bedrooms that were not used for the reception of guests. Thus, when participating in ‘front stage’ public activities an individual performed to engineer and perpetuate a self image that was socially acceptable.\textsuperscript{58} Rooms were furnished and decorated along these divisions of space; more decorative items were displayed in the ‘front-stage’ social reception rooms and more mundane, quotidian artefacts were relegated to ‘back-stage’ locations.\textsuperscript{59} Therefore the acquisition of goods was influenced by the motivation to display the appropriate goods in the correct rooms of one’s house to ensure that visitors saw them.

The notion of ‘back stage’ and ‘front stage’ divisions in behaviour and the use and appearance of domestic space suggests that behaviour was socially driven. People only performed when they had an audience to perform to; display was heavily invested in reception rooms only. This does not explain why certain activities were also carried out in private, and why ‘back stage’ rooms became more decorative as the eighteenth century progressed. As Campbell states ‘The Goffmanesque perspective does not help to explain how people conduct themselves when not subject to the scrutiny of others’.\textsuperscript{60} Providing an alternative explanation for social behaviour, Campbell goes on to suggest that individuals acted in certain ways to reinforce to themselves that they possessed the correct attributes of conduct. Instead of performing for others to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate conduct he

\textsuperscript{56} Weatherill (1988), \textit{Consumer Behaviour}, p.6 and p.8  
\textsuperscript{57} Weatherill (1988), \textit{Consumer Behaviour}, p.9  
\textsuperscript{58} Goffman, Erving (1959), \textit{The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life}, Harmondsworth, USA.  
\textsuperscript{59} Weatherill (1988), \textit{Consumer Behaviour}, p.9  
suggests that by conducting themselves in the correct way individuals confirmed to themselves that they possessed the ideal social characteristics. The need to reinforce and to justify behaviour to one’s self can explain private behaviour as well as public conduct. For example, the domestic ritual of taking tea could be either public with the attendance of social peers, or private with the attendance of the family. When public it was a perfect opportunity to demonstrate an understanding and internalisation of the correct social codes through conduct and the ownership, use and display of appropriate tea paraphernalia. If the ritual were merely for the benefit of others it would not have taken place in private, or would have taken a different format. If the ritual and associated conduct was carried out to reinforce the individual’s self-confidence that they understood the ideal behaviour then carrying it out in private was no different to public as it served the same purpose.

In addition to social meaning, domestic space conveyed a whole a range of cultural messages. Carl Estabrook takes this further, arguing that material culture and the ownership of consumer goods demonstrate a fundamental difference between urbane and rustic culture. He suggests the reason that urban tradesmen were more frequently the owners of new and decorative goods was because they were living in an urban environment. This was not just due to the increased availability of such consumer goods in towns and cities, but because the goods and their display were an essential part of urban life. In an urban setting the purchase and ownership of goods was an investment in cultural and social capital. Therefore within towns and cities an urban culture of display motivated consumer behaviour. In their study of the ownership of goods, Overton et al identified that in Cornwall the ownership of goods did not increase at the same rate as it did in Kent and for some goods there was a significant decrease. Overton et al state that in Cornish homes between 1600 and 1749 ‘The material culture of many households became poorer’. Estabrook’s theory of distinct urbane and rustic culture’s expressed through the ownership and use of decorative and hospitality goods can be used to explain this. New and decorative consumer goods were available within Cornwall but it would appear that its residents were choosing

61 Estabrook, Carl B. (1998), Urbane and Rustic England: Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces, 1660-1780, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp.140-141
62 Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.175
63 Estabrook (1998), Urbane and Rustic England, pp.140-141
not to purchase them.\textsuperscript{64} It could be suggested that these items did not play a role in the social or cultural lives of the majority of Cornwall’s residents during these periods. These items were not purchased because they were not significant to people’s lives.

**The domestic interior**

A survey of the study of the domestic interior is essential to understand how the home changed during the period. The majority of work in this area has been particularly concerned with the development of the decorative and furnished domestic interior. This reveals that the domestic interior changed significantly during this period, but the links between these developments and mundane household management and maintenance have been neglected. Similarly, the study of the use of mundane domestic space has rarely been the focus of academic study.

The study of the domestic interior originated with architectural and art historians who focused largely on the significance of the decorative aspects of the interior.\textsuperscript{65} Charles Saumarez-Smith and Peter Thornton have both looked into design and decorative aspects of the domestic interior during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{66} Naturally, the homes of the elite have been studied in detail, largely due to the significance of the individuals who inhabited them and to survival of these buildings. Traditionally the study of the domestic interior tended to focus on the role of individual designers, such as Robert Adam, resulting in a study of the country houses and elite town houses that he was commissioned to re-design and decorate. Mark Girouard’s work first combined architectural study with social history, focusing on the nature of the country house as a functional lived in space, a family home.\textsuperscript{67} Until relatively recently studies of the historic domestic interior have tended to focus purely on decoration rather than meaning. The fragmentary nature of analytical historical

\textsuperscript{64} Overton et al (2004), *Production and Consumption in English Households*, p.176
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

Research of the domestic interior means that there is not a significant body of literature associated with it.

Research into the ownership of domestic goods revealed that the home was heavily invested in as a site for the display of material culture. Goods were purchased with the intention that they would be used and displayed within the home. The construction, decoration and furnishing of the domestic interior formed identities and influenced the identities of inhabitants. Initially, studies focused on the nineteenth century interior, with the collection of edited essays compiled by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd leading the way. Their volume seeks to challenge the preconception of the nineteenth century domestic interior as a distinctly feminine ‘sphere’ separate from the public world of work. Building on this, and moving away from a nineteenth century focus, Susie McKellar and Penny Sparke’s 2004 collection of essays intends to draw together disparate research by focusing on a central theme of ‘interior design and identity’. The construction of the domestic interior reflected cultural and personal identity and goods played a vital role in this. Consumer goods were purchased to be displayed or used within the household and as such they enhanced domestic decoration (and life) and were used to construct identity. Aware of this McKellar and Sparke’s volume was compiled with the ‘desire to penetrate the complex aesthetic and symbolic world of the interior as it has been constructed by professionals and amateurs both inside and outside the home’.

The relationship between people and their homes was fluid and dynamic and subject to a multiplicity of variables and influences.

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68 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, pp.5-6
69 Weatherill has identified that the household was the locus of consumption. She suggests that the household was the most important area of consumption because it was heavily invested in as an area for the display of material culture. Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, pp.5-8
70 Estabrook (1998), Urbane and Rustic England, p.129
71 Bryden, Inga and Janet Floyd (eds) (1999), Domestic Space; Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
75 McKellar and Sparke (eds) (2004), Interior Design and Identity, p.1
Social status plays an essential role in the study of the domestic interior; Sparke suggests that in some instances it 'constitutes the dominant socio-cultural force behind the formation of the domestic interior.' Economic resources naturally dictated domestic accommodation and also defined the amount of money, time and effort that was invested in the construction of the domestic interior. However, its construction played a vital role in class or social identity for the aristocracy and middle ranks of society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The country houses of the elite had long played a role as a social symbol of status, power and wealth. They served as a visual reminder in the justification of the aristocracy’s position at the top of the social hierarchy and secured their power as rightful rulers of the country. Similarly the culture of domesticity that emerged during the eighteenth century and came to fruition during the nineteenth was distinctly associated with the middle sections of society. Furthermore, Hannah Greig found that for middle rank consumers in London during the second half of the eighteenth century, the domestic interior became linked to sociability and politeness. The domestic interior disseminated shared social values, as well as an individual understanding of those values. Amanda Girling-Budd suggests that during the mid-nineteenth century the construction of the domestic interior was a crucial part of middle class culture. Her research into the upper middle class customers of furniture manufacture ‘Gillows’ led her to conclude that furnishings were ‘both a manifestation of rank and a reinforcement of social hierarchies.’ The interiors constructed by the Lancashire families in her study were ‘modest, conservative, not overly influenced by fashion and governed by the notion of propriety’. The homes of these upper middle class families were constructed to create and foster a distinct identity. Similarly, Margaret Ponsonby suggests that it was important for middle rank homeowners in the provinces to construct a distinctly provincial interior. She goes on to state that location and

75 McKellar and Sparke (eds) (2004), *Interior Design and Identity*, p.3
status, within the middling sort, played an influential role in homemaking strategies, suggesting that cultural identity was formed and reflected through the domestic interior.\textsuperscript{80} Domesticity was embedded within middle class culture and at the same time middle class ideology was embedded deeply within the domestic interior.\textsuperscript{81} The cultural and symbolic meanings imbued within the creation of the domestic interior were often dictated through social status and reflected an understanding and a belonging to a distinct social group. Hence, it can be argued that social identity was mediated through the domestic interior.

It was during the eighteenth century that the domestic interior was first represented extensively in both image and text.\textsuperscript{82} The increased number of paintings featuring the domestic interior demonstrates the significance of the interior in culture and imagination. The visual representations of the middle rank domestic interior in paintings are loaded with messages that reflect its contemporary symbolic social and cultural meanings.\textsuperscript{83} The importance of the appearance and construction of cultural identity through the domestic interior is made evident through the role it played in contemporary art and literature; imagined interiors became as important as actual lived-in spaces. The interior as an imagined space, as a space that was depicted in fictional representations and as a space that individuals imagined privately has recently become a subject of study. The collection of essays collated by Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant focus on the theme of ‘imagined interiors’ and aims to reconcile representations of the domestic interior to actual lived experience.\textsuperscript{84} As Greig suggests ‘Representations of interiors reflected and also shaped the new consumer culture and new conceptions of property’.\textsuperscript{85} Imagining domestic space and consuming idealised representations of the domestic interior led homemakers physically to construct their own version through the ownership, display and use of

\textsuperscript{81} Ponsonby, Margaret (2007), \textit{Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850}, Ashgate, Aldershot.
\textsuperscript{84} Aynsley and Grant (eds) (2006), \textit{Imagined Interiors}, pp.10-19
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

tangible ‘real’ goods within their own houses. Edwards suggests that the abstract notion of ‘home’ that was constructed in the minds of consumers was made tangible within their houses through the ownership of furniture and domestic furnishings.  

Household management and maintenance

In contrast to the growing historiography relating to the domestic interior and its material culture there is only a small body of work concerned with household management and maintenance. Concurrently there is nothing much that deals with the material culture of the household, the changing nature of the domestic interior and its management and maintenance. The two previous sections demonstrate that the home underwent significant changes during this period and these developments must have had an impact on the maintenance and management of the home. It is a dualistic aim of this thesis to improve understanding of how the household was managed and maintained and also to explore how this developed in response to the changing material culture and use of the home.

Most of these few texts focus on housework and the housewife and are largely descriptive. Similarly, a number of equally descriptive studies have focused on the household management of the large country house estates of the aristocratic elite. Such texts are usually concerned with the management of one specific household, or focus on one element of household management within a group of country houses. These houses were so large and had such distinct functions that the ways in which they were managed and maintained can only be generalised with difficulty. Studies that focus on the experience of the majority are often either largely descriptive of activities or provide a general overview of activity during a long time period.

Examples of such studies are provided by Caroline Davidson’s study of the history of housework in Britain from 1650 to 1950 and Una Robertson’s exploration of the history of the housewife during the same period. These volumes reveal broad changes that occurred to housework and housewifery over a long period of time. Robertson looks specifically at the longer term change in the perception of housewifery. Her principal aim is to question why the role of the housewife became perceived in a negative way from the mid twentieth century. At the start of her period, and for the majority of it, the role of the housewife was valued to the extent that the housewife was the ‘central figure’ around which domestic life revolved. In complete contrast by the 1970s being a full time housewife was perceived in a negative way and no longer considered a credible role. Instead waged labour outside of the household was viewed as a job of far greater worth. Davidson’s comprehensive longitudinal study of housework looked at models of change and continuity. She concludes that the introduction of piped water directly to houses was the most important change to housework within the timescale of her study. Studies with such long timescales provide a general overview of activity and change. Yet, as Robertson states, ‘with so many permutations to choose from it is only possible to offer a generalized picture’. Such work also provides a long term context for more specialised studies of housework and the role of housewife. A generalised understanding of what housework was and how it was carried out is essential because it underpins further analysis of its significance.

The house was a workplace for a large section of the population during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For women of middling status their own home was frequently their unpaid workplace. Despite this it has not received the same level, or

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90 Robertson (1997, 1999), *The Illustrated History of the Housewife*, p.x


92 Davidson (1982), *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, p.3

93 Robertson (1997, 1999), *The Illustrated History of the Housewife*, p.x
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

type, of attention from social historians as have other places of work.\textsuperscript{94} Where the household has been considered a workplace it is usually considered in terms of change from the pre-industrial self sufficient family unit to modern wage labour. This theory is often described as the male breadwinner family where men went out to work for a wage with wives’ and children remaining at home as dependants.\textsuperscript{95} House based work is used to highlight the differences between the early modern domestic economy and the post-industrial household. Alice Clark suggested that in the pre-industrial household women undertook a huge range of work within the house and actively made a positive contribution to the household’s economy.\textsuperscript{96} She suggests that during industrialisation the importance of this role was eroded and along with this the importance of women to the household was significantly reduced. Using Clark’s work, Overton \textit{et al} comment that in the pre-industrial household women did not ‘restrict themselves largely to household maintenance…’\textsuperscript{97} Interestingly, even here, housework is viewed with negative connotations suggesting that it was of less value and significance to the well-being of the household and family.

This interpretation suggests that because women were involved in producing goods or processing goods either for sale or use within their home that their role was of much greater importance to the economy of the household. Overton \textit{et al} suggest that in the pre-industrial household women played a more important role simply because they did not restrict their domestic labour to ‘housework’.\textsuperscript{98} Further to this he states, ‘within the household decisions had to be made to use time either for production or leisure (which often involved consumption).’\textsuperscript{99} When this binary interpretation is applied to housework it suggests that because the activity was no longer linked to production it had to be linked to leisure. How far this interpretation reflects the experience of middling status women during the period of study is questionable. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{94} Hill also comments that social historians have regarded housework as an unimportant field of research. Although she was writing in 1989 the number of studies has not dramatically increased. Hill, Bridget (1994, first published 1989), \textit{Women Work and Sexual Politics}, p.123
\item \textsuperscript{95} This is the theory that industrialisation affected the family unit by creating the male bread winner family, where the male was the primary (or only) wage earner who laboured outside of the home. The wife and children remained at home and became dependants. A concise summery is provided by Humphries, Jane (1995), ‘From Work to Dependence? Women’s Experience of Industrialisation in Britain’, \textit{REFRESH}, 21, pp.5-8
\item \textsuperscript{97} Overton \textit{et al} (2004), \textit{Production and Consumption in English Households}, p5
\item \textsuperscript{98} Overton \textit{et al} (2004), \textit{Production and Consumption in English Households}, p.5
\item \textsuperscript{99} Overton \textit{et al} (2004), \textit{Production and Consumption in English Households}, p.7
\end{itemize}
changing nature of women’s work both within and outside the household is itself a field of study and too complicated a topic to cover in any detail here and consequently it sits outside of the scope of this thesis.  

Domestic service has received more attention than other elements of household management and maintenance, but this attention is restricted to a small and infrequent number of studies. In 1965 Jean Hecht turned attention to the work and life of servants during the eighteenth century for the first time. Following this, in 1996 Bridget Hill published her comprehensive study of eighteenth century domestics in England, where she sought to challenge the stereotype that servants were predominantly male and worked in large houses in rigid highly organised hierarchical structures. Each study differs in approach, but both agree that there were huge numbers employed as domestic servants during the eighteenth century. Hecht suggests that the numbers employed as domestic servants were so vast that by the eighteenth century this was the largest occupational group in England. He proposes that this was a direct response to the demands of the growing middling sorts. Contemporary estimations reinforce the claim that a large proportion of the population were employed as servants throughout the eighteenth century. For example, a contemporary estimation in 1767 proposed that 1 in 13 of London’s population were employed as servants, rising to 1 in 8 ten years later. In support of this, Lawrence Stone claims that in the period from the early sixteenth century to the

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104 Hecht (1965), The Domestic Servant Class, p.1; Hill, (1996), Servants, p.6

105 Hecht (1965), The Domestic Servant Class, p.1

106 Letters on the Importance of Preserving the Rising Generation of the Labouring Poor of our Fellow Subjects, (1767) 2 volumes, ii, p.158 quoted in Hill (1996), Servants, p.6
mid-nineteenth about one third or more of all households contained living in servants.\textsuperscript{107}

Two later studies focus on an earlier period bringing fresh light to the subject of servants. Timothy Meldrum’s research focuses on the earlier period of 1650 to 1750 and places the work of domestic servants within the wider framework of housework and the role of the housewife.\textsuperscript{108} Yet similarly to Hill his work focused on the experience of domestic servants in London. Breaking away from the metropolitan experience, Leonard Schwarz’s research challenges the long accepted notion that the number of live in servants increased dramatically in the nineteenth century. Instead he suggests that the numbers employed as live in servants decreased during the nineteenth century, suggesting that this started during the latter part of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{109} The rate of decline varied across regions and occupations with numbers falling slowest in London. This explains why previous studies did not reveal this decrease in numbers; they were based solely on the metropolitan experience and evidence of a decline does not become evident until other parts of the country are taken into account.\textsuperscript{110} At the same time he suggests that there was an increase in the number of labourers and charwomen providing assistance to families from outside the home. These outside labourers took on work and roles that are traditionally considered as domestic service, but contrast with the stereotypical interpretation of a domestic servant because they did not live in their employer’s home.\textsuperscript{111} The growing domestic needs of the middling sorts were frequently met by day labourers and charwomen rather than live-in domestics.\textsuperscript{112} Workers living in their own homes who were employed as domestic labourers were not legally classed as servants even

\textsuperscript{107} Stone, Lawrence (1977), The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500 – 1800, pp.27-28
\textsuperscript{109} He states that there were ‘proportionately more domestic servants…during the eighteenth century than subsequently and there may have been more at the beginning of the eighteenth century than at its end.’ Schwarz, Leonard (1999), ‘English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, Economic History Review, LII, pp.253
\textsuperscript{110} After this decline he tentatively suggests that an increase occurred between 1851 and 1871. Schwarz, Leonard (1999), ‘English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, Economic History Review, LII, pp.253
\textsuperscript{111} Schwarz (1999), ‘English Servants and their Employers’, pp.254–255
\textsuperscript{112} He proposes an increase occurred before 1700, so that there were proportionally more live-in servants at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He then argues that the numbers employed as live-in servants outside of London decreased during the later part of the eighteenth century and this continued during the first part of the nineteenth. Schwarz (1999), ‘English Servants and their Employers’, p.253
though they undertook the same work as servants.\textsuperscript{113} As a result such work has been under recorded and consequently overlooked by historians.

Regardless of whether they were employed as live-in servants, or domestic day workers, by the end of the eighteenth century the majority of this occupational group were female. For example, Patty Seleski estimates that at this time over 50\% of London’s female workforce may have been employed as domestic servants.\textsuperscript{114} Further to this, in 1806 a contemporary estimate put the ratio of male to female servants at 1:7.\textsuperscript{115} Domestic service was the largest employer of women, making the household a workplace of both paid and unpaid labour for the majority of women.

Evidence suggests that this trend continued well into the nineteenth century, as the 1851 the census reveals that 13.9\% of women aged 15 and over were employed as domestic workers in some capacity.\textsuperscript{116}

Women’s work and more specifically the role of women in the household are integral themes within the field of women’s history, and have been since the 1970s.\textsuperscript{117} Conversely most studies of women’s history are set in the nineteenth century and early twentieth and focus on women’s activities outside the home, or the status and role of women within the family. Interestingly, what housework was and what it meant to women is very rarely considered. Studies of working class women have a tendency to concentrate on women’s experience of paid labour outside the home, and those of middle class women address their philanthropic or reform work.\textsuperscript{118} In depth studies of the role of the housewife and in particular of housework are rare and

\textsuperscript{113} Steedman (2004), ‘The servant’s Labour’, p.11
\textsuperscript{115} It is likely that this is an under estimation as much of this work could be part time, temporary and seasonal, so under recorded by the census. Hill (1996), \textit{Servants}, p.4; Colquhoun, quoted in Schwarz (1999), ‘English Servants and their Employers’, p.237
\textsuperscript{116} When laundresses and charwomen (who can be classed as domestic labourers living outside of the home) are added to the figures they rise to 13.9\%. Schwarz (1999), ‘English Servants and their Employers’, p.237
\textsuperscript{117} For a historiography of women’s history see: Purvis, June (ed.) (1995) \textit{Women's History: Britain 1850-1945 An Introduction}, University College London, London; Barker and Chalus (eds) (2005), \textit{Women's History}.
\textsuperscript{118} Philanthropic and reform work could take place within the household, but it is still emphasising women’s interaction with the public world outside of the household. Examples of such research include: Purvis (ed.) (1995) \textit{Women's History}.
especially so for the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{119} Sometimes such studies have strong feminist overtones, usually using history to explore the oppression of women. Ann Oakley’s work for example focuses on the relationship between women and housework. She is particularly concerned with what she calls the ‘social trivialisation of housework’ that occurred in nineteenth century England and America. She explores this shift in perception to view housework as low status menial work and the effect that this trivialisation had on women.\textsuperscript{120}

A larger body of work focuses on the social roles and relationship of men and women during the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{121} In particular, research has focused on the effect of industrialisation on the family and the gendered nature of social roles that developed as a consequence.\textsuperscript{122} It has long been accepted that the separation of the home and workplace was a consequence of industrialisation.\textsuperscript{123} Contemporaries described society as being split into two distinct spheres of the public and the private.

Historians have used these spheres as categories of analysis, suggesting that these spheres were further defined by gender; men inhabited the public world of work and women were confined to the private realm of the domestic.\textsuperscript{124} Initially historians adopted the ideology of separate spheres as the model of social behaviour and gender relations during the nineteenth century and projected its origins backwards to the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{125} The traditional view is that some time during or shortly after industrialisation women retreated from the public world of work to inhabit the private

\textsuperscript{119} Studies can be found in for example: Hill (1994, first published 1989), Women Work and Sexual Politics; Mackie and Pattullo (1977), Women at Work.

\textsuperscript{120} Oakley, Ann (1974), Housewife: High Value-Low Cost, Allen Lane, London, p.6

\textsuperscript{121} Essays setting out the historiography of Women’s History, Feminist History and Gender History can be found in the following texts: Sharpe (ed.) (1998), Women’s Work. In particular the following essays illustrate the debate surrounding the nature of Women’s History; Sharpe (1998), ‘Continuity and Change: Women’s History and Economic History in Britain’, pp.23-42; Hill, Bridget (1998), ‘Women’s History: A Study in Change, Continuity or Standing Still?’, pp.42-58; Bennett, Judith (1998), ‘Women’s History: A Study in Continuity and Change’, pp.58-68


\textsuperscript{123} Berg (1991), ‘Women’s Work and the Industrial Revolution’, p.1

\textsuperscript{124} Humphries (1995), ‘From Work to Dependence?’, p.5


domestic sphere and to aspire to a life of leisure.\textsuperscript{126} A large body of research, including work by Berg and later by Pat Hudson, has suggested that on the contrary women, especially working class women, took part in regular paid employment outside the home.\textsuperscript{127} It is more likely that the doctrine of separate spheres has a much greater resonance with the middle class experience and view of society. Further to this Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall suggest that the separate sphere’s ideology was a distinct and intentional part of middle class culture that contributed to the formation of a unique middle class identity by the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{128} The inflexibility of the model for women of the middling sort has been investigated and the rigid organisation of society along gender divisions has been challenged. Vickery, for example, has questioned just how useful this model is for explaining behaviour during the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{129} Public and private are still considered useful categories of distinction, but the theory that each gender was polarised to a distinct sphere has largely been discredited.\textsuperscript{130} Both men and women inhabited public and private spaces and interacted with each other; it must be remembered that men and women lived within houses together and interacted with each other on a regular basis.

Despite the extensive literature, many questions remain regarding the household and its relationship with the ownership of domestic goods. This thesis aims to explore the relationship between the ownership of goods, the domestic interior, and how the household was used, managed and maintained during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. My thesis will question the impact that the ownership of household goods had upon the appearance of the domestic interior, the use of domestic space and the management and maintenance of the home. In this, my research will bring together the furnishing and decoration of domestic interior with its mundane administration, demonstrating that the two were connected by a complicated inter-relationship that has been artificially divided by existing research.

\textsuperscript{126} Pinchbeck (1930, new edition 1981), \textit{Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850}.
\textsuperscript{128} Davidoff and Hall (1987 reprinted 1992), \textit{Family Fortunes}, in particular p.319
\textsuperscript{130} Shoemaker and Vincent (eds) (1998), \textit{Gender and History in Western Europe}; McKellar and Sparke (eds) (2004), \textit{Interior Design and Identity}. 

27
The Middling Sorts and the Middle Class

Existing research has demonstrated that increased levels of consumer activity were located within the middle sections of society. In addition, the wider changes to the domestic interior and the household itself were also felt most strongly by the same people. As a result of this the focus of the research presented here will be concentrated on this social group. Attention must now turn to understanding what this group was, who belonged in it and how it changed and developed during the period.

Providing a definition of this group for the period covered by this thesis is problematic as society changed significantly between 1700 and 1830. At the beginning of the period and for the majority of the eighteenth century, historians generally prefer to talk of society being split into ‘groups’, ‘ranks’ or ‘sorts’. Rosemary Sweet points out that these terms were commonly used by contemporaries who showed a preference to ‘to talk in terms of the middling sort, ranks, interests or classes’. Peter Earle defined the middling sorts rather simplistically as all those who fell between the labouring poor and the aristocratic elite. This definition is widely adopted by historians of the early modern period. Sweet for example provides a useful, but slightly narrow guideline for identifying this group stating, ‘Typically, the middling sort were buyers and sellers and providers of services – quite literally the ‘middle-men’’. Weatherill’s study adopts a slightly wider interpretation defining the middle ranks as ‘the lesser gentry, professions, merchants, shopkeepers, farmers, yeoman, husbandmen, and craftsmen.’ With such a broad definition, it is not surprising that Weatherill estimates that in the late seventeenth century about half of the households in the country could be described as middling sort and the number may have risen appreciably by the eighteenth century. In many respects the middling sorts were defined by the clear social differences that divided them from the labouring poor who fell below them and the aristocratic elites who were situated above them.

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133 Sweet (1999), The English Town 1680 – 1840, pp.179-180
135 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.14
During the second half of the eighteenth century society underwent considerable change and during the nineteenth century a class based structure emerged with a distinct and self conscious ‘middle class’. Whilst the middle class of the early nineteenth century were very different from the middling sorts of the early eighteenth century it was a gradual change. The middle class in the early nineteenth century remained fragmented and was not defined by the unified class consciousness characteristic of Victorian society. Many historians have focused on the evolution of a class system. Edward Thompson, for example, subscribes to a model whereby the ‘middle class’ emerged in the late eighteenth century and reached maturity in the nineteenth. The focus on these changes occurring in a short period of time between 1780 and 1850 infers a very rapid change to the social structure. This interpretation has, however, been challenged in recent years. When the eighteenth century social structure is taken into account it becomes clear that many members of the middle class had their roots in the middling sorts, suggesting a continuation with the previous social structure. Vickery argues that the development of a ‘middle class’ was a gradual process implying that there was much continuity in social structure from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. As with much recent research, this thesis adopts an interpretation of gradual societal change.

None the less it must be noted that the middling sort was not a homogenous group during the eighteenth century, and remained similarly differentiated during the early part of the nineteenth. As the definition provided earlier demonstrates, it was a large group made up of many different types of people. Eighteenth century society can be roughly divided into three social groups consisting of the aristocracy, the middling sort and the poor. Furthermore there was blurring between the edges of each group and a level of differentiation within each group. Although this research embraces a wide definition of the middling sort, it must take into account the range of difference

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138 This fits in with other related work, as this interpretation of societal change has been adopted by Ponsonby. Ponsonby (2001), *Consumption of Furniture and Furnishings for the Home*, p.94
that this group encompassed. The financial range was huge and the amount of disposable income obviously affected the consumption choices of a household. Earle suggests that the minimum annual income for a member of the middle sort in London in the mid seventeenth century was £50.140 This is reinforced by Sweet who suggests that by the eighteenth century an annual income of £50 for the provinces and £80 for the metropolis marked the lower band of middling status.141 In comparison this annual income was four or five times that of a labourer. This income would have allowed a family to live in reasonable comfort and to maintain an appropriate household and lifestyle. For the majority of the middling sort, the average annual income would have been between £150 and £200.142 At the other end of the scale, Sweet argues that this was capped by an upper limit of £2000 per annum for households in the provinces. Davidoff and Hall suggest for the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century a middle ranking family had an annual income ranging from £100 a year to a few thousand a year.143 There would have been considerable blurring both at the top and bottom end of the average annual income, where people earning either more or less could still have been identified as middling sort. In addition to annual income, the personal wealth of this group has also been a focus for study, again revealing wide financial differences. Earle suggests that personal wealth of between £1000 and £2000 represented the average fortune of the London middling sort during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. However, a significant number of London middling rank families had fortunes over £10,000, and a few had ‘scores of thousands’.144 It is clear that this social group cannot be defined solely on a financial basis during the period covered by this thesis.

The middling sorts comprised a wide range of different occupations again demonstrating the various levels of contrast within this social grouping. The occupations included in Weatherill’s middling sorts, for example, included those who carried out manual tasks through to professionals and clergymen.145 Exclusion from the middling sorts was not defined by occupation during the early part of the period of study. In contrast, by the late eighteenth century as opinions of the nature of work

141 Sweet (1999), The English Town 1680 – 1840, p.180
142 Sweet (1999), The English Town 1680 – 1840, p.180
143 Sweet (1999), The English Town 1680 – 1840, p.180
145 Davidoff and Hall (1987 reprinted 1992), Family Fortunes, p.23
began to change, the type of work or occupation became more significant when defining social status. Davidoff and Hall suggest that one of the changes that helped to construct the middle class in the early nineteenth century was how attitudes to work and manual labour were increasingly viewed in a negative light.\textsuperscript{146} As a result, the middle class came to construct itself in opposition to manual tasks and physical exertion. This interpretation of class leads Davidoff and Hall to a rather narrower definition than that provided by Weatherill, but rather usefully they do identify that the middle class was divisible into two groupings; ‘higher middling’ and ‘lower middling’.\textsuperscript{147} This category of analysis was utilised by Ponsonby who was able to divide her sample of inventories into these rough groupings, enabling her to explore the household consumption patterns of individual homemakers by taking account of the differences within the larger social group.\textsuperscript{148} Ponsonby’s research reveals that there was a difference in the households and homemaking strategies of these two middling groups. Whilst this thesis does not focus explicitly on the differences between the groups of people who comprised the middling sort, this differentiation and the effect that this would have had on the individual household must be made clear and taken into account.

So it becomes clear that the middling sorts of the eighteenth century and the fledgling middle class of the early nineteenth cannot be defined solely by financial means, or through occupation. This social group was brought together through a combination of finance, occupation and a shared understanding of a distinct culture. This cultural element threads together the middling sorts of the eighteenth century through to the middle class of the early nineteenth. The culture developed and became more distinct in that time, but a shared understanding of culture is a consistent theme for these social groups throughout the period of study. The disparate nature of the middling sort was given structure and coherence during the eighteenth century by the culture of politeness.\textsuperscript{149} This social code of manners dominated the lives of both the elite and middling sorts. The model of polite behaviour suggested how people should behave alone, when in the company of others and towards others. It promoted openness and

\textsuperscript{146} Davidoff and Hall (1987 reprinted 1992), \textit{Family Fortunes}, p.22
\textsuperscript{147} Davidoff and Hall (1987 reprinted 1992), \textit{Family Fortunes}, pp.23-24
\textsuperscript{148} Ponsonby (2001), \textit{Consumption of Furniture and Furnishings for the Home}, pp.94-98
accessibility, but at the same time set demanding standards. Lawrence Klein argues that the term had a wide range of uses in the period, but that it ultimately represented ‘the submission of the self to the disciplines of social interaction’. Paul Langford makes an interesting comment that politeness was in fact a fluid term, as what was classed as polite depended on where the term was being used. For example, what was polite in the provinces may not have been classed as polite in London. He argues that the vagueness of the term ‘polite’ was an advantage as it allowed contemporaries to attribute a number of values, attitudes and ideas to it. The adoption of politeness by both the elite and middling sort does not, however, provide evidence of emulative behaviour. On the contrary, politeness was differentiated both theoretically and physically. For example, at Bath and Tunbridge Wells two sets of social walks were laid out using height to differentiate between them, the higher one was for the upper echelons of society consisting of the ruling elite and aristocracy and considered as the ‘better sort’, and the lower was to be used by the ‘common sort’, those belonging to the middling sections of society. Both walks served the same purpose and both walks were considered to be ‘polite’ by their users within their social groupings. As Klein states, ‘Politeness arose in both quarters’. The concept existed in both the aristocratic elite and the middling sort, but was used in different ways and had different cultural meanings.

As the eighteenth century progressed the culture of politeness was adopted by those of middling status, and as such was honed and developed as the appropriate mode of behaviour for this social group. Importantly it defined the middling sorts as different from the labouring poor below them who could not participate in the activities that defined this culture. Simultaneously, through measured balances, most notably a

moralistic code and language of appropriateness, it was distinct to the lavish excesses and luxury associated with the aristocratic elites. Central to this middling culture was a changing attitude to the nature of home. As the home became a more comfortable space to spend time in, it developed a new social role, with activities such as taking tea, and dining occurring frequently with visitors from outside the household. Coupled with this the domestic interior was the arena that the middling sorts expressed their consumption and taste, therefore it was within the domestic arena that this culture was reflected. By the early nineteenth century a member of the middle class could have a greater income than a social superior, but it was how he chose to behave and how he chose to invest his money that defined his social status. This later developed into a culture of domesticity that defined the middle class during the second half of the nineteenth century. The middle class culture of domesticity, infused with notions of morality and propriety, has its origins in the early nineteenth century but was more clearly articulated by the Victorians.

Methodology

The thesis is rooted in the social and cultural history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and draws heavily upon studies of historical material culture and consumption. The majority of research concerned with the material culture of the household has taken a quantitative approach, enumerating the frequency with which goods appear in probate inventories. Weatherills’ seminal study with its groundbreaking quantitative methodology, focused principally on probate inventories; other studies have followed, all utilising a similar methodology. Consequently, there is an established body of quantitative data on the material culture of the household, providing an essential overview of the changes that took place. A similarly quantitative approach was initially considered for this thesis, but after engaging with the source material it was decided that a more profitable line of enquiry was to broaden study to include textual data provided by non-quantifiable sources. In addition, a qualitative methodology has been successfully used in more recent studies

158 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, pp.1-22 and pp.201-207
of the household with their roots in social and cultural history. The social and cultural background has lead to the employment of a qualitative methodological approach here that is different to the quantitative studies that are grounded in economic history. This thesis aims to move the focus away from a quantitative and statistical understanding of the domestic to a much more qualitative and descriptive perspective. At the crux of this thesis is the suggestion that previous studies of domestic material culture have focused too much on the household purely as a site of consumption and as an arena for the display of goods. This understanding of the material culture of the household for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is intrinsically linked to a reliance on probate inventories as the key source and the employment of a quantitative methodology. This thesis proposes that, if a qualitative and more holistic methodological approach is taken, the material culture of the household can be viewed in a different way. The role of domestic material culture in daily life, the context of the use of the domestic interior and the impact that furniture and furnishings had upon the household can be brought into focus. A probate inventory reveals merely a ‘snapshot’ of household possessions and therefore a study focused solely on probate inventories can only provide a static understanding of material culture. The inclusion in this thesis of advice literature relating to use and interaction within the domestic environment reveals a different perspective where directions are provided for the mundane use and maintenance of household goods. Through the combination of these sources, the relationship between domestic material culture and the way the home was used and managed is glimpsed.

The reliance on the quantification of probate inventories for the study of domestic material culture has skewed research in a number of ways. Firstly, a quantitative approach is limited by its reliance on the availability of a large dataset of appropriate primary material which must be a uniform source that lends itself to statistical analysis to produce meaningful data; in this case the probate inventory. The listing of goods provides information that can be converted to numbers, which allows inventories to be used for quantitative study. However, the probate inventory is not a particularly easy source to analyse statistically as information needs to be extracted and quantified before analysis can be undertaken. For the early modern period it is

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The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

perhaps the only source of its type that survives in large enough quantities, nationwide to enable such study. Due to this there has been a trend for quantitative analysis and less attention to how difficult probate inventories are as a source for statistical analysis.

This dependence on the quantitative analysis of probate inventories as the way to understand the material culture of the household has meant that other, non-quantifiable sources have been largely overlooked. The result is that our understanding of the material culture of the household is largely restricted to the numerical information contained in inventories. A quantitative methodological approach can only ever reveal averages and percentages expressed numerically, which are useful for a large scale comparative study, but reduce the material culture of the household to a list of averages. It is for this reason that quantitative studies have received criticism for providing limited conclusions.\(^\text{160}\) For instance, as John Styles points out, the enumeration of the contents of probate inventories can only ever explain patterns and trends of ownership. The individual details of objects, their various shapes, colours and styles are often overlooked by quantification.\(^\text{161}\) Such details invariably had a meaning or some sort of significance to their owners. However, in defence information can only be included in a study when it is present in a source and probate inventories often lack this. Furthermore, statistical analysis removes material culture from its context of the household reducing them to an abstract list of the ownership of goods. As Ponsonby demonstrates, a qualitative approach can redress this balance by enabling the study of the consumer as an individual. In this sense quantification provides a macro overview, whilst qualitative methodology can complement this by delivering a more micro understanding from the perspective of the individual and the household. This, as Ponsonby argues, ‘encourages the particular circumstances of consumption to be taken into consideration, ascertaining the meaning of homemaking practices for individuals, rather than stereotypical conclusions’.\(^\text{162}\)

\(^{160}\) For example, Pennell (1999), ‘Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England’, pp.549-64
\(^{162}\) Ponsonby (2001), Consumption of Furniture and Furnishings for the Home, p.91
Secondly, the use of probate inventories as the key source for the study of domestic material culture has distorted research by focusing heavily on the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Probate inventories become scarce after 1720 making it difficult to collate a large dataset for the later period from which to draw a robust sample for meaningful statistical analysis. The constraints caused by dwindling numbers of surviving probate inventories has suggested that there was a break in continuity between early consumption and that experienced by nineteenth century households. This division is most certainly artificial, but a longitudinal study has not yet been carried out.\(^{163}\) The qualitative methodology employed within this thesis minimises this issue as it is not dependent on a large sample of uniform data for meaningful analysis. The data set of probate inventories used here has been enhanced by the inclusion of sales and auction catalogues, a comparable source for the later period. This enables the period of study to be extended throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century.

Frequently sources relating to the household are of a fragmentary or ephemeral nature and are often overlooked. Information gaps can be bridged by using probate inventories in conjunction with a number of other sources to provide additional and enhanced detail that is not present in inventories alone and for this reason this thesis uses a multi-source methodology. A wide range of sources reference many different aspects of the household, its material culture and domestic life, yet these are often inconsistent and fragmentary in their nature. Therefore different methods of analysis are required and a key aspect of this methodology is to ensure that these fragmentary wisps of information are woven into our understanding of the material culture of the household.

The key overarching question of this thesis is whether there was a relationship between changes in household furnishings, both in both quantity and physical attributes, and new methods of household maintenance and management. Any hint of such a relationship is not obvious from the study of the household through established methods. It requires the combination of a range of sources and a qualitative approach and as such these form the methodology of this thesis. It is only when several types of source are taken in to consideration that the key research question emerges and it is for this reason that this thesis enlists a multi-source approach. The key sources of use are probate inventories, sales catalogues and domestic advice literature. Information from more fragmentary and ephemeral sources, such as newspaper advertisements, informal manuscript directives, letters and instructions will be added to these key sources where possible to enrich the discussion of the household. The sources that have been selected are largely representative of the middling sorts throughout the period of study, although no single source covers the whole period. In some circumstances these sources extend the analysis from the upper middling sorts to the gentry, but as their contents provided a key resonance with wider household practice, they were deemed too valuable to the overall discussion to discount. A number of sources have been selected from the archive of the Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1800, a resource that has generated a wealth of data on the material culture of the home. In particular, the material is heavily representative of trade and also of tradesmen meaning that it is located amongst the practices of the middling sorts. The Dictionary, but not the archive, is now an online resource providing definitions for words in use in trade and commerce from 1550 to 1820. It must be remembered that the sources stored within the Dictionary Archive are stored there because they were selected to match the criteria of that research project, primarily for links to trade or goods. Their inclusion in the Dictionary Archive has meant that almost all of the inventories are detailed in respect of trade and goods. The

165 The inventories used here were selected from the wider collection of 1228 in the Dictionary Archive and the newspaper advertisements from the collection of 1545. The online resources is a ‘dictionary of nearly 4,000 terms found used in documents relating to trade and retail in early modern Britain’, Cox and Dannehl (eds) (2007), http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=739 The Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1820 (accessed 28th September 2008)
household goods are not necessarily as detailed and as such they provide a representative selection of typical inventories of their type and time. The use of this repository has enabled this thesis to access a wider range of sources and documents than would have been possible through traditional archival research using manuscript sources.

The following section introduces the main sources of study informing this research:

Inventories and catalogues

Probate inventories listing household goods or stock were commonly taken throughout Europe from the middle ages to the early eighteenth century. Their survival in relatively large quantities has made them an invaluable source for historians studying a range of topics, more recently material culture, consumption patterns, the layout of buildings and domestic economic activities. Probate inventories were legal documents that listed the moveable goods belonging to an individual at death, a well established practice that was standardised in an Act of 1529. The inventory was taken shortly after death by at least one appraiser who was usually a neighbour, a relative or a member of the same occupational group as the deceased. It was not uncommon for a specialist to be brought in to assist with the appraisal, especially if the deceased had been a tradesman in which case the specialist was needed to appraise shop stock, or even a specialist collection. Inventories were not taken for everyone that died. Labourers’ inventories for example are scarce and the very poor even more so. As a result probate inventories are slanted towards the middling sorts of the population; however this makes them an excellent tool for

169 Estabrook (1998), Urbane and Rustic England, pp.130
studying the material possessions of this social group.\textsuperscript{171} There was no standardised set of instructions for appraisers to follow, the legal text detailed that anything that was considered to be fixed should not be included in the inventory. Of course, such a stipulation was reliant on the appraiser’s subjective opinion of what he perceived to be moveable. Over time, opinions and interpretations of what constituted a moveable changed and developed. For example, doors, hearths and wainscot gradually became regarded as part of the fixtures of a property and not as moveable goods. The survival of probate inventories gradually begins to decrease from the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Either the custom of taking probate inventories began to decline, or they were not retained at the ecclesiastical court. The dataset is extended here by the inclusion of probate inventories from the peculiar of Bridgnorth a market town in Shropshire where inventories survive well into the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{172}

Sales catalogues and auctioneers’ lists take two forms; the catalogue (usually purchased in advance or at the sale itself) and sales lists printed as newspaper advertisements. These newspaper sales lists are again slightly different from the sales catalogues as they were written to advertise the sale and encourage people to attend. Like probate inventories, auctioneers’ and sales catalogues listed household goods for house sales and auctions. Normally the goods of house sales were listed room by room, but valuations of the room’s contents were not made or included in the catalogue. However, in contrast to probate inventories, they were often compiled by salesmen who would personally be responsible for the sale of the household goods. Auctioneers’ and sales catalogues listed household goods for house sales and auctions, as did announcements of sales in newspaper advertisements. They supplement and compliment inventories for the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Even though they contain information similar to probate inventories they are underused for the study of the household and as such a historiography of their use is lacking. However, they have been used consistently by Ponsonby to inform her recent work on homemaking in the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth.\textsuperscript{173} Building on this successful use of sales catalogues to study

\textsuperscript{171} Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.3
\textsuperscript{172} A peculiar is an ecclesiastical unit that in this respect was outside of the jurisdiction of the Bishops Court.
\textsuperscript{173} Ponsonby has used sale lists and auctioneers catalogues for the study of the domestic interior and to study the second hand furniture trade. Ponsonby, Margaret (2001), Consumption of Furniture and
the home; in this thesis auctioneers’ and sales catalogues have been used to extend the probate inventory collection and to extend the study of the material culture of the household into the nineteenth century.

This thesis uses a dataset of 174 probate inventories and 29 sales catalogues covering the period 1685-1838. Geographically the sample focuses on the counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire. The dataset of probate inventories covers the full period due to the inclusion of a number of late inventories from the peculiar of Bridgnorth in Shropshire and Wolverhampton in Staffordshire where inventories continued to be taken (or later inventories survive) well into the nineteenth century. A selection of probate inventories were selected from the archive of the ‘Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1820’. This selection was based on their date and geographical location.\textsuperscript{174} Although this means that the inventory sample is more heavily representative of tradesmen, this is useful because they were members of the middling sort throughout the eighteenth century, and belonged to the early middle class during the first three decades of the nineteenth.\textsuperscript{175} Added to the probate inventories are 29 sales catalogues covering the period 1770 – 1836. The addition of the sales catalogues, combined with the late probate inventories enables a continuous exploration of the ownership of household goods from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth. This pushes the study of domestic material culture beyond its accepted time boundaries.

Advice literature and household management books

Advice literature offered information on a range of domestic issues including household management, cooking, washing, cleaning and even advice to servants.\textsuperscript{176}

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\textsuperscript{174} These were selected from the wider sample of 1227 probate inventories stored within the Dictionary Archive. Without the accessibility of inventories through the Dictionary Archive, this thesis would not have been able to utilize the same number of inventories.

\textsuperscript{175} Definition and discussion of the terms middling sorts and middle class can be found on pages 26-32

\textsuperscript{176} For a brief, yet rich bibliographical essay of a selection of advice literature from the early eighteenth century to the twentieth century see: Hardyment, Christina (ed.) (2000), \textit{The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman 1776-1800}, The National Trust, pp.6-17
These books described how things could be done in an idealised format, yet to some extent they had to reflect the social conventions of the context within which they were written. The books intended to influence the way that women organised and managed their homes, but the books themselves must have reflected aspects at least of the realities of household management. As these are a printed, published source many of which have survived, this study has focused on a selection that is representative of the period and genre. Twenty-four of these texts were consulted and are the key source of study informing Part 2 of this thesis, since they provide a framework for analysing the ideology of household management and maintenance.

Household management books appeared in the seventeenth century, perhaps developing out of earlier conduct books, and reached their pinnacle during the nineteenth century. Advice literature was popular during the period with volumes published and sold in large quantities; many were reprinted and added to several times. Initially the style of these books was that of gentle advice as a friendly source of information. As the period progressed this began to change subtly and by the early nineteenth century much of this literature was prescriptive in style offering instruction rather than suggestion. As a genre advice books were written in many different ways and for different audiences, from servants to the newly married to the established household. However, they all offered advice on at least one aspect of household management. In addition, these published instruction manuals existed alongside personal and often private manuscript books written or compiled by individuals for their own private use. Not so many of these have survived (and it is impossible to know how many were written), but where found they have been included.

179 Some were written for servants, for example: Servant-Maid (1700 sixth edition with Additions), The Compleat Servant-Maid OR The Young Maidens Tutor, Printed for Eben Tracy, at the Three Bible on London-Bridge, London. Some were written for newly married ladies; Parkes, Frances (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Young Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, and the Regulation of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London.
184 Strachan, John (2004), ‘For the Ladies’, in History Today, Volume 54/4, April 2004, pp.21-26,  
185 For the purpose of this thesis the latter advert type will be classed as a sales catalogue.
Personal letters and diaries

Personal letters, diaries and other such sources have been widely used by historians for research into many subject areas, most notably for studies focusing on consumer motivation. They are unique, personal sources that disclose another facet of the household, revealing and discussing the authors’ problems and aspects of how they managed and organised their individual households. Vickery drew on surviving private papers, personal account books and diaries for her study into the life of Elizabeth Shackleton. Whilst such studies have suggested important modes of behaviour, a case study methodology of the personal papers of an individual can and have been criticised when the conclusions have been applied to wider society. Whilst care should be taken when expanding and generalising the activities and experiences of an individual to a wider group, the evidence from individuals cannot be discounted. There is a fine line to be drawn when using the experience of an individual to inform research, but in many cases this is the only surviving record of its type and the lack of survival of any comparative evidence does not make a record any less significant or useful. How such sources are used should be evaluated on a case by case basis. This thesis attempts to overcome some of these issues by delicately weaving together fragmentary pieces of personal (and often anecdotal evidence) into a much wider framework, provided through the use of a range of different sources.

Similarly personal papers from a range of families have been consulted to add a dimension of individual experience to the theoretical framework provided by published domestic advice literature. The most notable of these are the housekeeping book of Susanna Whatman and the Purefoy letters. Both families were wealthy and occupied large houses, but they provide useful and rare accounts into the minutia of household management and the mundane aspects of daily life. These experiences would have been shared by members of the middling sorts often on a smaller scale. Mrs Whatman compiled her own management book for use within her household at

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187 It is not a collection of all of Shackletons personal papers as not all of them survive. Shackleton also records in her diaries about the disposal of highly private and personal documents. Vickery (1998), *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England*.  
188 Pennell (1999), ‘Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England’, pp.549-64
Vinters in Kent. The Whatmans were very wealthy with incomings of over £6,000 a year and outgoings of only £1532. James Whatman drew a large proportion of his income from his paper mills. Susanna was the eldest of six children, and took on the responsibilities of running her father’s household at the age of 15 when her mother died. In 1776 she married James Whatman and moved to his home at Turkey Court in Kent where they lived for eleven years and she began compiling notes for household management, and more specifically for her servants. The household consisted of James, his two daughters from a previous marriage (Laetitia and Camilla aged five and two in 1776) and a seventeen year-old apprentice, William Balston. Nine months after their marriage Susanna gave birth to her only child, James, and in 1778 a governess was employed for the two girls. In 1787 the family moved to Vinters a large house with 86 acres of land that adjoined the Turkey Mill Estate. James had purchased the house some years earlier and had instructed improvements to the building before moving his family there. Their move meant that Susannah had a much larger house to manage, and she began adding to her original notes which grew into her household management book. In 1790 James suffered a paralysing stroke which permanently affected his health until his death in 1798 aged 56. He left Vinters to Susanna where she remained until 1811 when her son James married and she handed the estate over to him. Susannah’s housekeeping book is interesting because it provides information regarding the management and running of an actual household. However, the book is still a guide to how Susanna wanted her household to be managed and as such it does not necessarily describe actual practice. It is full of information specific to the running of Vinters and is informed by Susanna’s experience revealing previous problems and how she overcame these. The Whatman’s were wealthy, and Susanna was running a large home. Her experience can be applied to the experience of the middling sort as she experienced similar problems and issues to the majority of households during the period, all though on a slightly larger scale. The fact that a wealthy housewife such as Susanna was familiar with the minutia of mundane household management stresses just how important

successful household management was to women of the middling sorts during the period.

The Purefoy letters are used throughout the thesis. The Purefoy household was unusual as it consisted of the widowed Elizabeth and her unmarried son Henry. The information used here has been drawn from letters written by both Elizabeth and Henry Purefoy between 1735 and 1753. Their letters include extensive correspondence with a range of tradesmen covering purchases ranging from household furniture and furnishings to groceries. Members of the landed gentry, they lived together at Shalstone Manor in Buckinghamshire. Their letters are used to inform this study because they provide details of everyday life that would have been shared by the majority of the middling sorts in a similar form. The contents of their letters reveal reasoning and rationale that influenced decision making in the consumption process. Such aspects of everyday life are rarely glimpsed, but are crucial for informing and enhancing our understanding of the minutia of everyday life.

**Household account books**

Household account books generally consist of a list of goods or services purchased on a certain date. Some give quantities of commodities purchased; others just simply list the commodity’s name and the amount of money paid. Personal and unique to each household, they provide insight into the running of a particular household. Surviving account books are quite uncommon and even more so for the middling sections of society. Weatherill, for example, used the account book of Richard Latham, a Yeoman in Lancashire in the first half of the eighteenth century, to gain an understanding of mundane household expenditure. More recently Beverley Lemire and Vickery have independently used account books to gain an understanding of

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household accountancy in greater detail in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A number of account books have been consulted for this thesis but the Boycott account book from Shropshire is the principal one used in the following chapters. This account book covers only the early part of the period and no equivalent books of middling status were located for the later period of study. The Boycott family lived at Rudge Hall in Shropshire and were landed gentry. The account book provides a list of household expenditure during the period 1704-1707 and was probably compiled by Mrs Elizabeth Boycott who died in 1727. Although outside of the middling sorts, the account book is an invaluable source for understanding household expenditure on mundane purchases, especially those relating to the maintenance of the household. Consequently, the sorts of expenditure detailed by Boycott would have been common amongst members of the middling sort. The account book also provides a regional example of household management through account keeping.

**Aims and structure**

The key aim is to establish a relationship between the changing material culture of the household and mundane domestic management and maintenance. The study of the ownership of household goods and the domestic interior are established, whereas the study of household maintenance and management is lacking in comparison. It is already recognised that the material culture of the household underwent significant changes during this period; to this extent the focus of this thesis is to understand the effects that these changes had on household maintenance and management. Here maintenance and management are considered alongside the ownership of goods, the domestic interior and the way that the home was used. By re-adjusting the focus in this way the changing nature of the household is seen in a new way producing

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196 Shropshire Archives, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798: 330/6 and Directions on bed linen, N.D: 330/07
different conclusions. The way that the household was furnished changed during the period and at the same time the way that domestic space was used and thought about in middling culture began to change too. These changes had an impact on the management and maintenance of the household which was essential for its success and recognition as a middling home. This thesis brings these aspects of the household together and creates a synthesis between the decorative domestic interior, its use and household management.

The methodology and use of sources is reflected in the structure of the thesis. In order to explore the research question fully the work is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the material culture of the household through an exploration the domestic interior. Here, inventories of household goods (comprising both probate inventories and sales catalogues) play a prominent role in order to explore how the physical household changed during the period. The aim of the first chapter is to establish that the material culture of the household expanded during the period for the middling sorts and to identify the key goods and how they changed. The goods that people owned were often made from different materials, or were new and different from those of an earlier period and reflected lifestyle and cultural changes. Alongside this the chapter explores the changing nature of this material culture and the changing construction and appearance of the domestic interior. These themes are developed in Chapter 2, which focuses on the changing understanding of the home and the way that domestic space was used. It investigates how material culture affected the use of domestic space and how the changing social role of the household affected the cultural understanding of a home. The third chapter concentrates on cultural knowledge and how household goods were encountered and purchased. The first aim is to gain an understanding of the ways in which consumers were exposed to new goods and were able to learn about them before deciding what to purchase. Secondly, the focus turns to gaining an understanding of consumer motivations and the decision making of the middling homemaker.

The second part of the thesis focuses on domestic economy, exploring how the maintenance and organisation of the household changed during the period. Household management books are the key source in this section and are used to explore the advice literature that was available to aid domestic organisation and
management. My aim is to consider the impact that the changes to the household highlighted in Part 1 of the thesis had upon household management and organisation. The increased ownership of domestic goods had a striking impact upon mundane household life, as did the increasing social use of the home. These changes affected the way that the housewife operated and the ways in which household maintenance tasks were carried out. Chapter 4 focuses on housework and domestic maintenance. The aim is to question how the nature of this work was affected by the increase in the ownership of household goods and the changing use of the household. The work needed to maintain the household is explored in relation to the changes that were identified in Part 1 of the thesis, with a focus on the care of textiles and furniture in particular. The increase in domestic material furnishings obviously meant that there was more work to do as there was simply more to look after. The nature of these goods, the designs and the materials that they were made from often dictated their own specific care regimes which were not previously needed and had to be undertaken if the domestic interior was to be maintained in a useable and presentable way. Following this, Chapter 5 turns to focus on the role of the housewife with the aim of understanding the impact that the changes to the home and its maintenance had upon the role of the housewife. The key focus of this chapter is to explore how the changing household created the role of household manager. The work needed to maintain the household increased significantly and the changing social use of the home meant that this work needed to be undertaken in a shorter space of time. The role of the housewife had to adapt to a more managerial role to ensure that the work was carried out to the required standard in an appropriate timescale to enable her to participate in domestic social activities.

**Contribution to knowledge**

The research brings together the study of the material culture of the domestic interior and the way that the household was maintained and managed in a way that has not previously been undertaken. This thesis proposes that the material culture of the household had a profound relationship with the way that the home was managed and by bringing these two elements together this can be made visible. The thesis formalises the relationship by demonstrating how changes to the domestic interior, the
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

way that it was furnished and used, had an impact on the way that the household was maintained and managed. As the household became increasingly better furnished and domestic space used for more social activities the work needed to maintain it and ensure that it functioned correctly increased.

The key is to establish a relationship between the changing material culture of the household and mundane domestic management and maintenance. The way that the household was furnished changed during the period and at the same time the way that domestic space was used and thought about in middling culture began to change too. These changes had an impact on the management and maintenance of the household which was essential for its success and recognition as a middling home. These changes were also linked into an emerging middle class cultural identity that centred on the home.
Part 1: Domestic Environment

Part 1 of this research is concerned predominantly with the domestic environment. This term is used here as an inclusive construct to encompass the material culture of the household and the appearance and use of domestic space. There is a growing volume of research centred on the household; it is split between studies of domestic material culture and the domestic interior. Both prongs of this study have the household at the centre of research but approach it from slightly different perspectives. The body of research focusing on the ownership of goods has demonstrated that the ownership of items for the household increased during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The majority of this work employs probate inventories as the key source for revealing the material culture of the household.¹ Recent research has demonstrated that for many people and especially those of middling status, the household was the locus of consumption. By the late seventeenth century many members of the middling sort were investing significantly in material culture for their homes. As the ownership of household goods increased, the furnishing of the domestic interior was enhanced, in terms of decoration and of comfort.² Simultaneously, the way that domestic space was divided and used began to change giving the household a new role. The home became both a comfortable

¹ This approach is led by three key studies spearheaded by Weatherill’s 1988 text, followed shortly by Shammas’s contribution in 1990 and more recently added to in 2004 by Overton et al. Weatherill, Lorna (1988), Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in England 1660–1760, Routledge, London; Shammas, Carole (1990), The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America, Clarendon Press, Oxford; Overton, Mark, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750, Routledge, London; Estabrooks study of Bristol could also be included here, but due to its slightly different focus it has been omitted. Estabrook, Carl B. (1998), Urbane and Rustic England: Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces, 1660-1780, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

refuge from the outside world, and an arena for social entertainment. I suggest that the increased ownership of household goods made the home a much more appealing place to spend time both alone and with company.

The qualitative use of a sample of probate inventories here will be placed into the quantitative framework provided by the studies of Weatherill, Shammas and Overton et al. Weatherill’s sample consists of nearly three thousand probate inventories taken from eight English counties. In addition to this sample, Weatherill used a further 300 inventories from the Court of Orphans in London giving her a control group of very wealthy consumers. Her inventories are from the period 1675 to 1725, with selected inventories being taken from the middle year of each decade. Shammas collated a slightly smaller sample of just over two thousand probate inventories. Shammas’s study had a wider range as she included parts of North America in her sample group alongside three areas in England. Her inventory sample covers a wider time period ranging from 1550 – 1774. Overton et al’s study is the largest sample group consisting of around 8000 inventories but at the same time it is the smallest study in geographical range as it focuses exclusively on Kent and Cornwall and covers the period 1660 to 1750. My thesis inventory sample is much smaller by comparison consisting of 197 probate inventories and sales catalogues covering the period 1700 to 1838. This is enhanced by the addition of six earlier inventories (1662 – 1699) allowing for comparison with the previous period, taking the total to 203. For the purpose of providing comparison between my thesis sample group and the findings of Weatherill, Shammas and Overton et al the inventories were roughly aligned into three groups representative of the time period covered by this thesis. The qualitative findings from this sample will be placed within the quantitative framework provided by the key studies.

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7 The thesis sample of probate inventories is explained in detail in the previous chapter, see page 38.
8 Early period (1680-1709) 39 inventories; Mid-period (1710-1769) 117 inventories; Late period (1770 – 1835) 25 inventories.
Part 1 of the thesis has been split into three chapters to deal with three main areas of concern, the material culture of the household, the changing use of the home, and the acquisition of domestic furnishings. Chapter 1 is concerned with the presence of goods within the household and the appearance of the domestic interior. It aims to investigate how material culture changed during the period and to understand the domestic interior. In Chapter 2 the focus moves away from goods to explore the ways in which domestic space was used. The aim is to understand how material culture and the domestic interior reflected and influenced the way that the home was used and thought about. Chapter 3 explores the acquisition of household goods and furnishings considering the range of consumer motivations that influenced purchases. It investigates the ways that goods could be experienced and learnt about in order to influence their purchase. By focusing on the material culture and the physical construct of the home in the first part, I lay the foundations for an examination of how this affected the management and maintenance of the household in the second part.
Chapter 1: The Material Culture of the Household

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the material culture of the household changed during the period. The focus will be on establishing what people owned, identifying the increased ownership of domestic goods during this period and investigating what these items were. The chapter will enhance our understanding of domestic material culture by using the quantitative findings of previous research as a framework to support qualitative exploration. This will allow the changing nature of the material culture of the household to be explored, rather than the changing frequency of the ownership of specific items. What follows is an exploration of how the home was changed through the ownership of goods and interior decoration. Both the presence of an increasing quantity of domestic goods and the changing physical attributes of furniture and furnishings will be investigated. This chapter provides the foundations for further chapters which explore how domestic space was used, and investigate how it was decorated and furnished.

The ownership of domestic and household goods

Probate inventories have played a crucial role in the study of historical material culture. The format of probate inventories as a list of the type and number of goods left at death has allowed them to be analysed in a quantitative way. Both Weatherill and Shammas have used large data sets of probate inventories to look in detail at the goods people owned.¹ These large scale quantitative studies revealed the widespread ownership of sufficient quantities of goods to suggest patterns of ownership and acquisition which would otherwise have remained undetected. Weatherill's study of probate inventories revealed that there was an increase in the ownership of what she described as consumer goods and durables during the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth. A large proportion of these new consumer goods were found in the home, demonstrating that a significant proportion of the population that had

disposable income were choosing to invest in a range of household goods to enhance their domestic environment.

In general terms, Weatherill’s research reveals the frequency that a selection of key consumer durables including decorative goods, were recorded in probate inventories. She identified sixteen types of goods that she claimed were key indicators of changes in patterns of consumption; these were tables, cooking pots, saucepans, pewter dishes, pewter plates, earthenware, knives and forks, china, utensils for hot drinks, window curtains, table linen, looking glasses, pictures, books, clocks, silver. Her work demonstrates that the ownership of these goods rose significantly from 1675 to 1725. For example, the ownership of pictures rose from 7% of the sample in 1675 to 21% by 1725. In addition, the frequency of the ownership of looking glasses rose from 22% in 1675 to 40% in 1725. Increases also occurred in the ownership of more mundane goods, for example the frequency in the ownership of saucepans rose from 2% in 1675 to 23% by 1725. It was the frequency in the ownership of new consumer goods that had a dualistic role, as both functional and decorative, that saw the sharpest increase. This has been reinforced by similar work carried out by Shammas, Berg, Estabrook and Overton et al, who have all used large datasets of probate material and subjected it to quantitative analysis. These studies reveal a general trend that the overall ownership of domestic material goods increased during the late seventeenth century so that by the early eighteenth century the middling household had been enhanced by an increased number of domestic goods. This trend continued throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century.

The intention here is to look at the ownership of goods from a slightly different perspective and for a slightly later period (1700 – 1830). A more textual reading of probate inventories enables us to understand that not only was there generally an increase in the ownership (or frequency) of certain goods throughout this period, but also that the very nature of these goods changed and developed during this time.

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2 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, table 2.1, p.26
Part I: The Domestic Environment
Chapter 1: The Material Culture of the Household

Furniture provides a good example. In a quantitative study the number of tables that were present in a household might be recorded, but the material that these were made from is not considered. Nor is the visual impact considered that the changing appearance of such items could have had upon the household. This section aims to explore the changing nature of goods, focusing on changes to the materials they were made from and to their overall appearance. The motivation of this work is to explore the impact that the changes to domestic material culture had on the way that the household was maintained and managed. To this extent, this chapter is concerned with laying a foundation for understanding the increase in the ownership of goods and the changing nature of goods so that the effect of these changes to household maintenance and management can be fully understood in the second part of the thesis.

The increase in ownership and the changing nature of household goods

The following section simultaneously investigates two key changes to household goods during the period. These are the increase in the ownership of domestic material goods and the ways in which the physical attributes of these goods changed. Both of these are significant developments for our understanding of the changing nature of the home. The focus here is primarily on furniture, through the ownership of tables and seating and on the use of textiles in domestic furnishing. To a lesser extent the ownership of decorative goods is also commented upon. The qualitative reading of probate inventories allows the increase in the ownership of goods to be investigated whilst at the same time exploring how these goods changed. The sample of 203 inventories (comprising probate and sales lists) was divided into three time period groups roughly aligned to those covered by the quantitative research carried out by the individual studies of Weatherill, Shammas and Overton et al. This was to enable comparison between the thesis sample and the findings of previous large scale quantitative research. The qualitative findings from this sample will be placed within the quantitative framework provided by these key studies.

For the period 1600 – 1719 Overton et al found a significant increase in the ownership of furniture in Kent and in comparison the thesis sample reflects a similar
trend. Out of the case study of thirty-eight inventories from the West Midlands for the early period, thirty (over three-quarters) owned at least one table and seating for more than one person. The following extract from the 1693 probate inventory of John Bayley, a brazier from the town of Wolverhampton, provides an example of the typical ownership of goods in the late-seventeenth century. Although his domestic decorative possessions were minimal he had invested in a quantity of furniture. On the first floor he had two tables with four stools and a further four chairs, suggesting that he could easily accommodate a number of people should the occasion arise, or he and his family had a choice of where to sit. In addition he owned at least one decorative item, a looking glass.

in the Dwelling House three quarters & fourteen pound
of old pewter 02 17 02
forty pound of Household --as 01 06 08
a furnace 01 00 00
two stans 01 08 00
one oval Table one little side table four Join Stooles 01 00 00
doure seg Chairs bras bench a Jack a Land Iron fire shovel & toungs 00 16 06
a frying pan two spits a chafeing Dish a pare of Bellows and a dripping pan 00 06 00
a wooden Bowl & a Tray & trenchers 00 02 00
[a musket & a sword & a dag--- & --- all deleted]
a warming pan & Looking glass 00 03 00

This extract from Bayley’s inventory reveals something of the nature of the furniture in his house. For example, the two tables that he owned were different, an oval table and a little side table. In addition there was a range of different types of seating in his house consisting of a mixture of joined stools and seg chairs. This textual reading of probate inventories allows access to such details that would otherwise be lost in large

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4 The median number of furniture items increased from 12 in 1600-1629 to 23 by 1690-1719. Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.91
5 The Dictionary Archive, Bayley John of Wolverhampton, Staffs, Brazier, 1693
6 Seg chairs probably means rush seated.
scale quantitative analysis. It becomes clear that the furniture in his house was made up of a range of different styles and types.

Similarly, the 1700 probate inventory of Roger Rea’s possessions reveals that the Worcester stationer owned a substantial amount of furniture and a few key decorative goods such as a looking glass and some earthenware. Again, the inventory provides additional descriptive information about the nature of the goods that were present in Rea’s house. For example, there was a feather bed with a joined bedstead and a red rug. He owned a little table and a little cupboard and a whole range of pewter from small dishes to candlesticks and cooking equipment.

In the Chamber over the Kitchen
One Joyne Bedd with the Bedsteed feather bedd
one flock bedd one Redd Rugg with th[e] app[ur]ten[en]ces 02 01 06
one looking Glasse at 00 02 00
Two warmeing Panns & other small brasseware 00 05 06
six old Chaires at 00 01 06
one little Table one little Cupboard at 00 01 08
Twelve small Pewter Dishes Seaven Pewter Plates two Pewter Candlesticks one Pewter fflaggon six Pewter Porrengers two Pewter panns /two deleted/ one Pewter Basein/s deleted/ 04 06 08
Tinn & earthen ware at 00 03 06
one little old Jack three spitts one Iron Grate one fire shovell two paire of Tongues at 00 10 00
one Clever two paire of Bellowes & odd Iron ware 00 05 00

Each of the inventories cited above reveal that at the time of their deaths Bayley and Rea had invested in and assembled comfortable and relatively well furnished households. Of the remaining nine inventories from the West Midlands where tables and seating were not recorded, one inventory alluded to the presence of a table at some point in the lifecycle of the household. The 1707 inventory of Thomas

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7 The Dictionary Project Archive, Rea Roger of Wribbenhall, Worcs, Stationer, 1700
8 The Dictionary Project Archive, Bayley John of Wolverhampton, Staffs, Brazier, 1693
Part I: The Domestic Environment
Chapter 1: The Material Culture of the Household

Haughton from Wolverhampton listed amongst his household possessions chairs and ‘2 table Cloths’ but no table.⁹ This suggests that at some stage he could have owned a table, as the ownership of table linen alone would be unnecessary. The two final inventories both recorded the ownership of seating but not of tables. John Billingsley of Birmingham, whose inventory was made in 1702 owned ‘Six Wooden Chaires’, but no table, similarly the 1708 inventory of Thomas Pitchford from Shrewsbury, revealed that he owned an ‘arm Chaire & one close Stoole’ but no table. The lack of reference to tables in these probate inventories does not mean that they did not own a table during their lifetime, inventories simply record what was present in the house and available to be sold after death. The lack of tables could be explained simply by their tables not being in saleable condition, or that they had bequeathed their tables through their wills. Concurrently, the tables within the household could have been owned by another occupant living within the house and used by the entire household. An inventory only recorded ownership, not access to use. Cox and Cox explain that items bequeathed through the deceased’s will (providing that the individual had died testate) were not necessarily recorded in probate inventories, even if they remained in the deceased’s house at the time the inventory was taken.¹⁰ This could also be the case in the probate inventory for Mrs Jones from Wolverhampton, her household goods were partially listed, then crossed through, presumably by an appraiser or perhaps an executor of her will who realised that her household goods had already been bequeathed and the new owner had taken possession.¹¹ Alternatively, she may have shared her living space with someone else and the household goods belonged to them and not to her.

Two inventories were not very descriptive of household furniture and grouped items together instead of listing them individually. For example the inventory of Richard Cox from Shrewsbury had generic listings of ‘Pewterers Whare’ in the Kitchen, and ‘All sorts of Apolstery Whare’ and ‘all sorts Joyners Whare’ for most other rooms in his house.¹² In a similar way furniture for each room was grouped together by the

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⁹ The Dictionary project Archive, Billingsley John of Birmingham, Bellowsmaker, 1702. The Dictionary project Archive, Pitchford Thomas of Shrewsbury, Salop, Last Maker, 1708. The Dictionary project Archive, Haughton Thomas of Wolverhampton, Staffs, Threadman, 1707
¹¹ The Dictionary Archive, Jones Mrs of Wolverhampton, Staffs, chandlery, 1695
¹² The Dictionary Archive, Cox Richard of Shrewsbury, Salop, toys, 1706
appraisers in the inventory of John Moulton’s possessions, ‘The Furniture of The Kitchen’ and ‘the furniture of the Roome’. The lack of detail in these inventories could be an indication of an increase in the ownership of household goods. Perhaps the rooms contained plenty of goods, too many for the appraiser to bother listing individual items. The appraisers of William Baker’s possessions were equally vague, lumping all of his possessions into four categories:

‘Imprimis viollins strings wood
   for Instruments and ould Instruments       03 05 00
Bedsteds beds and furniture About them       03 03 06
Brass pautter and wooden weare                 01 08 00
Things forgotten & out of sight               00 03 06
his wearing Apparel and Linen                 01 19 06’

The remaining inventory where tables and seating were not recorded did however contain decorative personal goods. The inventory for Zachary Turnpenny, a barber surgeon in Wolverhampton, taken in 1694 suggests that he lived as a lodger perhaps in the house of a relative. The inventory lists his goods associated with his trade, then goes on to list the goods he owned ‘At John Turnepennys house’. The only household goods listed relate to bedding, ‘One feather bed 2 boulsters 2 blanketts one cover bedstead matt & cord Curtains & vallent & 2 paire of Sheets all’. He owned a quantity of personal decorative goods, such as ‘A Tortishell tobacco box with the kings picture on it’, ‘A Studded Watch’ and a ‘paire of buckles’. His ownership of these goods suggests that he had chosen to invest in personal decorative goods, rather than household goods. His possessions are representative of those of an unmarried relatively young man. Unfortunately there is no information detailing his age at death to substantiate this claim. His investment in personal possessions rather than household goods could be a consequence of his living conditions. Because he was a lodger in someone else’s house, he would have had no need to invest in household goods and he clearly had sufficient expendable income to enable him to invest in personal decorative goods.

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13 The Dictionary Archive, Moulton John of Shrewsbury, Salop, Clothier, 1705
14 The Dictionary Archive, Baker William of Shrewsbury, Instrument maker, 1705
15 The Dictionary Archive, Turnpenny Zachary of Wolverhampton, Barber Surgeon, 1694
Attention now turns to the mid-period group of inventories. Quantitative studies demonstrate that by mid-eighteenth century many houses in provincial locations were beginning to show signs of investment in not only functional household goods such as furniture, but also new decorative domestic goods. Not all homes contained a large quantity of furniture and multiple decorative goods, but ownership of perhaps one decorative item was becoming more frequent. Naturally the choice to invest in different sorts of goods matched the needs and circumstances of each household and the level, quantity and style of furniture varied throughout the period. Choices could be influenced by occupation, location, gender or any combination of these. Qualitative analysis of probate inventories reminds us that houses were individualistic. This is often lost in quantitative studies using large samples of inventories where the ownership of household goods is reduced to general trends within a number of variables.  

The mid-period group of inventories will again be examined and referred back to the framework provided by previous quantitative research. Inventories singled out here for analysis are from the second quarter to the middle of the century (1733-1755), leaving a gap of just under twenty years from the inventories analysed in the early sample. Forty-six inventories from the middle thesis sample fall into this date range. Firstly, the 1733 inventory of John Edwards of Birmingham reveals that the Toyman owned of a large quantity of furniture, and records the presence of some decorative items;

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In the Roome or'e ye Shopp

a looking glasse w'th sconces                      00 16 00
6 old cane Cheers                                  00 07 06
A ovill table                                      00 07 00
A ovill stand                                      00 07 00
a stafford grate & fender                          00 06 00
7 small Tea spoons & strainer                      00 06 00
3 large Silver spoons 8 oz @ 5s                   02 00 00
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In total, he owned four tables, and twelve chairs, six of which were described as being made from leather and were also labelled as ‘old’. Regarding his ownership of decorative items his house contained ten small pictures and two looking glasses, the one with sconces detailed above and one small looking glass. The total value of his inventory was £180 04s 08d, but the total for his household goods was £52 16s. The furniture and decorative items in his household make up nearly 30% of the value of his household goods. The 1741 inventory of Richard Holdcroft, huckster of Shrewsbury, showed that he owned four tables, thirteen chairs and two mirrors. His inventory did not list any other decorative goods amongst his possessions. In contrast to John Edwards, the total value of Richard Holdcroft’s inventory was £41 05s 08d. Similarly the 1742 inventory of William Dickinson, a leather dresser, from Bridgnorth showed that he owned a substantial amount of furniture, and two looking glasses. The inventory of Henry Adams from Birmingham revealed ownership of an array of furniture for example, five tables and twelve chairs. In addition he owned decorative goods, such as a small looking glass, five pictures and china. Alongside this he also owned a coffeepot and tea paraphernalia including eight small spoons and a pair of tea tongs all made of silver. Amongst her possessions at her death in 1748 Mary Brown a widow with a grocery shop in Bewdley had seven tables and thirty-four chairs, twelve of which were leather. In addition she owned a large range of decorative goods, such as, three mirrors (although one of which was listed as broken) and twenty-one pictures. She also owned tea paraphernalia, ‘1 Silver Pint 3 large Spoons 6 Tea Spoons 1 pair of Tea Tongs Wt 16 oz 3d weight at 5/ p’…A Parcell of China Ware & a Tea Table’ Decorative goods, hospitality items and furniture formed a large proportion of the contents of her inventory. The total value of her inventory was £109 15s 04½, her decorative goods accounted for over a third, or 34% of the total

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17 The Dictionary Archive, Edwards John, Birmingham, Warks, Toyman, 1733
18 £127 08s 08d of his inventory was shop stock.
19 The Dictionary Archive, Holdcroft Richard of Shrewsbury, Salop, Huckster, 1741
20 The Dictionary Archive, Dickinson William of Bridgnorth, Salop, Leatherdresser, 1742
21 The value of his goods, including his shop goods was £223 03s 06d. The Dictionary Archive, Adams Henry of Birmingham, Brush maker, 1745
22 The Dictionary Archive, Brown Mary of Bewdley, Worcs, grocery, 1748
value of her household goods, suggesting significant investment in domestic material possessions, beyond the basic necessities.\(^{23}\)

The 1751 probate inventory of William Whitehead a grocer in the town of Bridgnorth revealed the ownership of five tables and twenty chairs and an array of decorative goods including three looking glasses and at least three pictures.\(^{24}\) In addition he owned a quantity of silver, consisting of a ‘Tankard & Pint Cup Silver…8 large & 11 small spoons 2…Salts & Shovels & a half…Pint Mug…Buckles & Spurs…a Silver Watch’ and a ‘china hardboard Brush’, as well as a coffeepot and tea kettle suggesting that someone within the house owned the necessary equipage to enable the consumption of either of those hot beverages.\(^{25}\) The total value of Whitehead’s inventory was a substantial £410 00s 05d. The inventory of Richard Malpas, a glove maker also resident in Bridgnorth provides an interesting comparison to Whitehead. Malpas’s inventory taken in 1754 demonstrates the ownership of similar goods to Whitehead, but the total vale of his inventory was a mere £17 06s 08d. His inventory demonstrates ownership of five tables and fifteen chairs. The chairs were ascribed with a greater level of detail, six of which were described as kitchen chairs perhaps due to their location, however the remaining two chairs located there were not described as such, instead being labelled ‘Elbow chair’ and ‘a Little Chair’. Perhaps the title of ‘kitchen chair’ signifies the beginnings of specialisation in furniture dependant upon its use. Six other chairs were simply described as such and not labelled by the room they occupied, in this case the parlour. The final chair was an ‘easy chair’, suggesting comfort and relaxation. Malpas had only one looking glass listed amongst his possessions and he too owned a parcel of pictures. His inventory listed goods associated with preparing and consuming hot drinks; alongside his coffeepot and tea kettle, he also owned a tea chest, a tea table and a handboard.\(^{26}\) The increased ownership of items associated with hot drinks conforms to the framework provided by earlier research. Weatherill records the frequency in ownership of china

\(^{23}\) Total inventory value £109 15s 04d, household goods totalled £28 18s 03d, the remaining goods were grocery shop stock.
\(^{24}\) Listed as ‘Pictures’ and ‘2 pictures’, The Dictionary Archive, Whitehead William of Bridgnorth, Salop, Grocer 1751
\(^{25}\) The Dictionary Archive, Whitehead William of Bridgnorth, Salop, Grocer 1751
\(^{26}\) The Dictionary Archive, Malpas Richard of Bridgnorth, Salop, gloves, 1754
increasing from 1% in 1685 to 9% by 1725. This is supported by Shammas’s research as she found a drop in the ownership of brass and pewter that occurred at some time after the mid seventeenth century. She explains this drop by suggesting that those wanting an investment chose plate and those wanting cheapness and utility chose tin, glass and ceramics. The dramatic rise in the ownership of ceramics during the early eighteenth century can partly be explained by the material’s emergence as the appropriate material for vessels used to serve hot caffeine drinks. Estabrook found that in Bristol there was a large increase in the ownership of goods associated with tea, coffee and chocolate in the period 1720-1780 compared with the frequency that such goods were recorded in the period 1660-1719.

In comparison with the earlier examples from the late seventeenth century, the thesis group of inventories reveal that by the mid eighteenth century the ownership of furniture, such as tables and chairs, had continued to increase. As Overton et al suggest increased levels of consumption did not necessarily have to mean the acquisition of new or different consumer goods, or even a broader range of goods, often this could simply be amassing more of the same. The decorative goods that occasionally appeared in the early inventories were beginning to appear more frequently and in larger numbers by the mid eighteenth century, suggesting that owning at least one decorative piece was becoming a staple in the middling sort household.

Attention now turns to the final group of inventories, those for the late period of 1770 to 1835. Forty-six inventories and catalogues fall into this category, with twenty-five of these being either probate inventories or full sales catalogues. The remaining catalogues consist of edited highlights from newspaper advertisements, where items from household sales were selected to feature in the advertisement for the sale. These are useful as they detail what contemporaries viewed as the most desirable of second-

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27 China was not recorded in her 1675 sample at all. Table 2.1 Frequencies of ownership of selected household goods in a sample of inventories from England, 1675-1725, Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.26
28 Shammas (1990), The Pre-Industrial Consumer, p.173
29 Shammas (1990), The Pre-Industrial Consumer, p.173
30 1660-1719 – 7.8% of those who owned luxury goods also owned goods associated with hot drinks (tea, chocolate and coffee), for the period 1720-1780 this had increased to 47.9%. Estabrook (1998), Urbane and Rustic England, p.149
31 Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.89
hand household goods and will be returned to as a source of study later in the thesis. For now focus will turn to the twenty-five full inventories and catalogues. In keeping with the general increase in the ownership of goods between the early and the mid-period, the majority of the late period inventories demonstrate an ownership of tables, chairs and a range of decorative items. This suggests that by the late period the ownership of such goods for the middling section of society had become almost common practice.

Turning first to explore the ownership of decorative goods, in contrast to the mid-period sample and in sharp contrast to the early period group, twenty of the inventories in the late group recorded the ownership of a looking glass. Of the five where a looking glass was not recorded three did not provide any details of the household goods at all. Looking glasses were not the only decorative goods that started to feature frequently in the houses of the late-period inventories. For example, the 1772 inventory of Jonathon Hodgkin’s possessions reveals that the Birmingham brush maker owned a range of decorative goods alongside his only ‘small looking glass’. This extract from his inventory demonstrates the array of other decorative goods that enhanced his house:

```
China and Plate
Six China Dishes and Saucers A Slop Bason Sugar Dish and a Common
  Cream Colour’d Teapot  00 06 03
  Blue and White China Pint  00 00 10
  A Small Mahogany Tea Board  00 05 00
  Earthen Cups and Platters  00 02 00
  Ffour Drinking Glasses  00 00 09
  An Old Watch with a Silver Case valued at  02 06 00
  A Small pair of Old Silver Shoe buckles and Small Stock Buckles
  Six Silver Small Tea Spoons and pair of Tea Tongs and two
  Small Table Spoons
    Valued at  01 11 00
  Two Old Tin Tea Canisters  00 00 03
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32 *The Dictionary Archive*, Hodgkins Jonathan of Birmingham, Warks, Brush maker, 1772
In this inventory, most of the decorative items that Hodgkins owned at death seem to have been grouped together by the appraisers. The ownership of a decorative china tea set, and such specific tea paraphernalia suggest that he, or someone within his household, had invested in tea drinking. Tea drinking and the more general changing social uses of the household will be discussed in much more detail in the following chapter.  

Not all of the inventories in the late-period group demonstrate the ownership of decorative goods as this example from the inventory of Sarah Lloyd demonstrates. Taken in 1778 it simply lists her household goods as thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goods and Household Furniture</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Beds 1 pair Bedsteads Bed Cloths &amp;c</td>
<td>03 00 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest &amp; Boxes</td>
<td>01 00 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs 12 &amp; 2 Barrels</td>
<td>00 12 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Stands &amp; Table</td>
<td>00 10 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewter Dishes Plates</td>
<td>00 18 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warming Pan</td>
<td>00 04 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grate &amp;c &amp;c</td>
<td>00 15 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Over Iron Heaters</td>
<td>29 11 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Cattle Pots &amp;c</td>
<td>30 18 30½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron furnace Tubs &amp;c</td>
<td>19 01 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to her household goods, the shop goods in her inventory were listed in much greater detail, suggesting that perhaps the primary aim here was to record the value of the remaining stock at her death. As Giorgio Riello points out, it is worth remembering that probate inventories were primarily legal documentation, and as such they were taken for a specific reason to identify and list the saleable goods of the deceased. 

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33 See Chapter 2
34 *The Dictionary Archive*, Lloyd Sarah of Ellesmere, Salop, general shop, 1778
In the late group of inventories a looking glass or mirror was one of a whole host of other decorative items recorded in the inventories as present in people’s homes. For example, the list of decorative items found in the 1780 inventory of James Eykyn an upholsterer in Wolverhampton is both extensive and impressive. His inventory lists that at the time of his death there were 108 looking glasses and 88 pictures within his house. Although he made mirrors, it is unclear how many of these were a part of his private house and how many were linked to his business as an upholsterer. The inventory certainly suggests that his home was used to support his business. However, the majority of these decorative items were not located in the shop or in any of the workshop rooms. Due to his trade Eykyn would have been exposed to decorative goods on a regular basis and this may have affected his choice to purchase and decorate his home with such items. It is also worth noting that even the looking glasses found within his house were of an enhanced level of decoration, with many different shapes such as ovals, squares and of a range of sizes and some surrounded by glided or carved frames. This suggests that an enhanced level of decorative goods were available to purchase by those who had the necessary level of disposable income. Alongside these purely decorative items Eykyns inventory also reveals the ownership of a substantial amount of glass, china and silver ware, the likes of which could have had a practical function and yet at the same time be highly decorative as the following examples reveal. Amongst his glassware were; ‘A Glass salver 3 Glass salts and a pair of Glass Candle- sticks 54 Ale and wine Glasses 3 Glass Jugs 9 Jelly Glasses and a parcel of Odments of Glass’. Items of chinaware within his house included, ‘22 China plates 4 China sallad Dishes and 2 China Salts’ and ‘5 Collard Breakfast Tea Cups and six saucers 6 Blue and White Tea Cups and 6 saucers 6 do and 6 Saucers’. Lastly, amongst his silver items he owned ‘a Silver Coffee Pott’. It was not just the ownership of decorative goods that became common or continued to increase in the late-period group of inventories. The ownership of standard items of furniture such as tables and seating, were frequently present within the houses of

36 Eykyns house contained a silvering room for the manufacture of mirrors.
37 Ponsonby points out that Eykyns household was a mixture of personal domestic goods and those that were associated with his business. His family home was ‘an extension of his shop, workshop and showroom’. Ponsonby (2007), Stories from Home, pp.106-107. The showroom aspect of Eykyns house will be returned too and explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.
38 The Dictionary Archive, Eykyn, James, Upholsterer, Wolverhampton, Staffs, 1780
this group of inventories. For example, twenty-two of these inventories had seating and at least one table listed as present within the household. The three inventories where the specific ownership of tables and chairs was not listed are examples of inventories where household goods were not itemised and were simply hidden under the heading of ‘household goods and furniture’. In a similar way to the increased ownership of decorative goods, the ownership of many tables and chairs dramatically increased in this sample group. Twenty-one of the inventories recorded ownership of more than one table and only eight inventories documented the ownership of less than ten chairs (three of these were none itemised inventories). For example the sales catalogue of Mrs Whitehead’s household goods reveals that her Bridgnorth house was extremely well furnished with seven tables and twenty two types of seating. These included ‘six chairs’ in her kitchen, ‘six mahogany chairs and elbow to match hair seats brass nails…mahogany dining table…two mahogany claw tables, Mahogany folding table, two stools’ in her parlour, ‘three chairs’ in her yellow room which was a bedroom, and a further four chairs in her blue room which was another bedroom.39

The ownership of many of the same type of item, (but perhaps in several different variations) and sets of items, such as tables and chairs, is perhaps one of the most significant changes in the ownership of domestic material culture during the late period. It was no longer simply a case of recording the appearance of an item in an inventory; instead it became a matter of recording the quantity of certain items and perhaps further categorising them by type (for example, material, design, colour, pattern).

Some additional details and information about household furnishings can be gleaned from sales catalogues and inventories because many of the later inventories provide more detailed descriptions of goods. Sales lists were generally descriptive, most likely reflecting their purpose to entice consumers and instigate purchase. The inclusion of such detail suggests that the properties of these items were important features that would appeal to consumers and perhaps enhance their re-sale value. It is likely that the inventories where detailed descriptions where made were taken as a response to a dispute and were instructed to form a challenge by an interested party. At the same time, many inventories included summary totals room by room with no

39 Shropshire Archives, 6001/4/4645-4647, Whitehead, Mrs, Bridgnorth, Salop, 1810
detail at all, suggesting that there were too many goods for the appraiser to have time to describe each item. Whatever the reason many of the later inventories used here provide greater detail about the nature of household goods.40 In the early and mid period it was very common for furniture to be listed simply as the type of furniture it was, as these examples from 1700 and 1751 demonstrate, ‘It. 2 tables… It.11 cheares and stoolees’ and ‘7 Chairs… 2 Tables’.41 In the late period group of inventories furniture was frequently enhanced with additional descriptive information. Returning to the 1772 probate inventory of Jonathon Hodgkins we learn that his household goods were made from a variety of materials, were an assortment of sizes and that some were intended for specific usage. Amongst the Birmingham Brushmaker’s possessions were ‘8 ash chairs…one dale writing desk…one small oak chest of drawers…’ Other goods were described by their size, such as his ‘large square dinning table’, the description of other items were further embellished by intended use such as his ‘small stand table for a candle’ and ‘large stand tea table’.42 Likewise the goods in Samuel Cracknell’s 1794 Birmingham probate inventory are described in much greater detail than the inventories of previous years. Cracknell owned, ‘An Oak dressing Table with Drawers, two Glass Goblets and four metal Spoons…A mahogany two leaf dining table…Six mahogany Chairs with Hair Seats’ and ‘Swing looking Glass & mahogany frame’.43 Furniture was now made from a variety of different woods, in a range of sizes and styles and pieces were specifically designed for a distinct use. Each type would require specific care and treatment to preserve and maintain them. This suggests that by the late period there was a great deal more variety in the types of household goods that were available to homemakers for furnishing their houses.

The inventory of Mr Sing Sen from Bridgnorth in 1810 reveals that he owned items of furniture that were enhanced to be decorative pieces, for example ‘eight day clock painted case…handsome pier glass guilt frame 25 by 19 Inches…six painted chairs’.44 Here the description suggests that not only had his decorative looking glass been

40 These inventories were not selected because they described goods in greater detail it is good fortune that the listings provide more detailed description.
41 The Dictionary Archive, Millward, Robert, Newport, Salop, 1700; The Dictionary Archive, Whitehead, William, Bridgnorth, Salop, 1751
42 The Dictionary Archive, Hodgkins Jonathan of Birmingham, Warks, Brush maker, 1772
43 The Dictionary Archive, Cracknell Samuel of Birmingham, Plated Wire goods Maker, 1794
44 Shropshire Archives, 6001/4/4645-4647, Sing Sen, Mr, Bridgnorth, Salop, 1810
further enhanced by a guilt frame, but also some of his chairs were enriched by paint or varnish to make them decorative and functional items. This trend continued throughout the nineteenth century with inventories and catalogues, providing descriptions of functional items of furniture being enhanced decoratively by paint or carving. The 1829 sales catalogue of Mrs Mary Eggliston’s household goods reveals that her Bridgnorth home contained a plethora of decorative functional household furnishings. For example, ‘[a] painted dressing table…two painted chairs…handsome set of mahogany dining tables on pillar claws and castors…square sofa with squab seat and bolsters and chintz cover…oval mahogany Pembroke table with leather cover.’ This range of items suggests that design and decoration were now common features of functional items in many middling households. Auctioneer’s catalogues describe goods in greater detail because they were advertisements for the goods. The inclusion of descriptive features in this way is useful as it reveals that many standard items of furniture had themselves become decorative items, or were enhanced by decorative features by the late period.

In summary, domestic goods were owned in much greater quantities than at the beginning of the period and they were increasingly enhanced through the addition of decorative detail, upholstery and the use of different materials. As the ownership of goods increased, the physical attributes of these goods also changed. This leaves the question of how did the increase in material culture interact within the household? Where were these goods located and how did they interrelate to each other and the household? In the next section attention turns to exploring goods within the context of the home and exploring how the appearance of the domestic interior changed during the period.

**Material culture within the context of the home**

The previous section focused purely on gaining an understanding of how domestic goods changed, and how the ownership of such items increased during the period. Alongside this the domestic environment changed, and as this was the context for

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45 *Shropshire Archives, 665/4/146, Mrs Mary Eggliston, 1829, Auctioneers catalogue.*
household goods it is important to understand this space as a whole. Goods were not owned in isolation they were a part of the domestic interior and were themselves used to construct that interior. Consumer durables such as furniture and decorative items interacted and related to each other and to their surroundings. Many studies of the ownership of goods remove items from their context by studying them in isolation and recording frequencies and trends of ownership. Breen criticises the use of inventories in this way stating that they ‘show us decontextualised things’. However, when inventories are used as a whole they can reveal a great deal about the domestic environment and allow goods to be studied within their context. This next section focuses on the domestic environment in order to gain an understanding of how it changed during the period.

Frequently inventory lists were subdivided into rooms and the goods found in each room by the appraiser were listed under that heading. The appraiser walked from room to room listing the goods for each room in the order that the rooms were entered. Due to this, probate inventories provide an opportunity to access information about the historical domestic interior. The use of probate inventories in this way provides an understanding of the context of material culture and allows items to be considered in relation to other items, their location within a room and more generally within the household. The domestic interior was significantly changed through interior decoration by non-movable goods, spaces were created by fixed materials and walls were made out of materials that, whether they were decorated or not, had their own properties and colour. As many of these features were fixed goods they were often not recorded in probate inventories. Changes to walls and flooring would have had a significant impact on domestic space. Changes to the whole of the domestic interior were just as significant as the increasing ownership of goods.

Textiles were used to enhance domestic space in a number of ways from early in the period. However, textile manufacture and production underwent a myriad of changes during the period which had an impact on their uses within the home. The impact of the changes in the cotton industry was reflected in the domestic interior most notably

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through the domination of cottons in new colours and machine printed highly decorative patterns during the early nineteenth century. Mary Schoeser and Celia Rufey suggest that the industrialisation of textile production at the end of the eighteenth century brought substantial changes to the furnishing of interiors.47 The two main changes to the textiles industry were the manufacture of cotton items, and the second was the printing of designs and colours onto fabrics. Imported hand painted cottons were imitated and produced for the domestic market by British manufacturers. This made a range of decorative textiles affordable and readily available to the middling sorts. By the late eighteenth century the industrialisation of textile production drastically increased the quantity and availability of textile goods.48 Large scale production meant that prices were kept low and increased the range of patterns and designs that were available. In addition to these changes to production, the fashion system underwent a radical change where the pace accelerated from a thirty year lifespan in the late seventeenth century, to roughly a seven year lifespan by the late nineteenth century.49 It is not the intention here to enter into a discussion of the industrialization of textile manufacture and production, instead the focus here is to consider the changes to domestic textile furnishings and the impact that they had on the domestic interior. Cotton cloths with coloured stripes, or checks were woven and chintzes were printed and both were used frequently as furnishing fabrics.50 There are references to the presence of such fabrics throughout the inventories in the thesis sample, some of which will be highlighted in the following section. Coloured and patterned fabrics would have had a visual impact on the domestic interior that it is difficult to understand fully and appreciate through inventories and sales catalogues.

The middling sorts’ household in 1720 looked very different to its equivalent from the late seventeenth century and this trend continued throughout the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century. A comparison of inventories throughout the period provides snap shots that illustrate these changes and adds another level to the findings from statistical analysis. The probate inventory of Priscilla Pugh in 1724 provides a

48 A comprehensive history can be found in Lemire, Beverley (1991), Fashion’s Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain 1660-1800, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
49 Schoeser and Rufey (1989), English and American Textiles, p.10
good example of the domestic interior in the early eighteenth century. Although the inventory does not specify her occupation, she was the widow of an upholsterer and her shop was stocked with a substantial amount of fabric. Pugh occupied a nine room house in Shrewsbury that was spread over three or possibly four floors and included a cellar and shop. There were two rooms on the ground floor, the kitchen and parlour, there was a room directly above the parlour and its contents suggest that it was solely used as a bedroom and as a place for the storage of personal goods as it contained for example a chest with drawers. Starting on the ground floor, Pugh’s kitchen was well equipped with cooking equipment and furniture. Amongst other things it contained two tables, three chairs and pewter and brass implements for food preparation and cooking. The absence of storage for her cooking equipment can be explained in a number of ways. Kitchen equipment could have been stored on shelves fixed to the walls and the shelves might not have been of enough value to be worth listing in the inventory. Interestingly she owned a copper chocolate pot and two coffee pots. From its contents the parlour appears to have been furnished in a decorative way. It contained a looking glass and a corner cupboard presumably enabling the display of other decorative items. In addition it contained a round table, twelve chairs and two tea tables suggesting that it must have been a fairly large space to contain such a quantity of furniture. The room would have seated up to twelve people at any one time suggesting that it could have been used for dining, taking tea or receiving a number of guests.

In the early eighteenth century many middling houses were starting to be enhanced with interior features. Bare walls or parts above wooden panelling were often painted in a neutral colour. Floors were usually either bare wooden floorboards or stone (flagstones) in this period. Inventories do not provide this information, yet this added to the overall context of the domestic interior. Wainscot and wooden panelled walls were increasingly common features of the middling house’s domestic interior, but they are not often recorded in probate inventories. Cox and Cox found that in the early-seventeenth century items such as wainscoted walls and window glass were listed in probate inventories as movable goods. These items were new and this type of panelling was not fixed permanently when it was first introduced, hence the initial

51 The Dictionary Archive, Pugh Priscilla of Shrewsbury, Salop, upholsterer, 1724
52 The Dictionary Archive.
Part I: The Domestic Environment
Chapter 1: The Material Culture of the Household

inclusion in inventories. Later, wainscot became a fixed architectural element of the house and as such disappeared from probate inventories. By the eighteenth century these items were rarely listed in probate inventories because they had become standard household fixtures.53 These external features improved conditions inside the building allowing the domestic interior to become a more comfortable place.

Moving upstairs Pugh’s house had three to five rooms on the upper level, two of these rooms (the feather room and the Servants room) could have been garret rooms and on the third floor, but this is not explicit in the inventory. Next to the parlour chamber was ‘The Passage room’. It is unclear whether the remaining rooms, listed as ‘The blew Room’, ‘The feather Room’ and ‘The Maids room’, were on a third storey or were above the shop space. Pugh owned four beds and in contrast to earlier examples each bedroom contained only one bed and the furnishings associated with one bed. A folding bed was situated in the ‘passage room’ with a safe, suggesting that the passage room was used for storage but could be used as a bedroom when or if it was needed. Three of the rooms containing beds also contained window curtains (the parlour chamber, the passage room and the blue room) but the servant’s room did not. The ownership of window curtains was not widespread by 1725 but this had increased since the late seventeenth century. Weatherill shows that window curtains were present in 7% of her inventory sample in 1675 and that this had risen to 21% by 1725.54 In addition to the curtains in each room, it is clear that Pugh had invested heavily in domestic textiles to furnish her bed rooms. In her ‘Parlour chamber’ the feather bed had ‘Camblet ffurniture’, which presumably matched the five chairs that were upholstered with ‘striped Camblet’. Her bed was made more comfortable and warm by the addition of a pair of blankets and a quilt. It is not clear whether these or the curtains with valance matched the other textile furnishings in the room. The second bedroom, called ‘The blew room’, also featured additional textile bed furnishings such as ‘camblet’ furniture and blankets and a quilt. However, the bedstead in this room did not feature a feather bed. The window curtains and hangings were not described in any further detail, but they were valued at half the price of those in the parlour chamber, suggesting that they were a lower quality fabric.

53 Cox, Nancy and Jeff Cox (1984) ‘Probate Inventories: the Legal Background’ Part I The Local Historian 16/2, pp. 139-140
54 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, Table 2.1, p.26
or were older and thus had a lower second-hand retail value. The textiles located in her bedrooms would have added an element of decoration through their colours and patterns, and a level of comfort through their tactility and warmth. The inventory reveals that Pugh had made significant investment to the decoration of her bedrooms which were not intended for public display.

In addition to the fabrics that enhanced her bedrooms, she owned an array of domestic textiles in unspecified locations, ‘five pair of sheets…5 of Ordinary Sheets…three fine table Clothes…4 doz & 1/2 of Napkins…one and 1/2 half of Napkins ordinary…eight table Clothes…Towels & pillow beares’. It was common for household linens to be listed together in this way. It could either have been because these goods were kept in storage together when not in use, or because it was easier for the appraisers to list them together for the purposes of re-sale. There was a level of differentiation used to describe these goods but no distinguishing features which would help us to understand what these differences were. Presumably the finer textiles were either a finer grade of cloth, or were finer in appearance through the type of fabric, the pattern or their level of use. When in use the fabrics would have added an element of decoration and colour to the interior of the room. Pugh had clearly invested heavily in domestic textiles to furnish and enhance her house. Given her links to the upholstery trade it is not surprising that she chose to invest in this way.

In the mid eighteenth century Henry Adams, a Birmingham Brush maker, lived in comfort in a very well equipped house. He occupied a house in 1745 that was split over four floors with eight rooms including the shop. The cellar was at sub-terrain, above that at ground level was the kitchen, and the parlour, on the next floor the front chamber and the back chamber and above these the front garret. Beginning with the upper floors of his house, each of the rooms located upstairs contained a bed and items related to sleep and rest. In addition they also contained storage furniture and a quantity of domestic textiles. From the location of these goods in these rooms it can be suggested that these chambers were used specifically for sleep and for the storage

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55 The Dictionary Archive, Pugh Priscilla of Shrewsbury, Salop, upholstery, 1724
56 The Dictionary Archive, Pugh Priscilla of Shrewsbury, Salop, upholstery, 1724
57 The Dictionary Archive, Pugh Priscilla of Shrewsbury, Salop, upholstery, 1724
58 The Dictionary Archive, Adams Henry of Birmingham, Staffs, Brush Maker, 1745
of goods. The front chamber contained a bed and associated textile furnishings for example, ‘One Bedstid Mat Cord and Hangings…Bed and Boulster…Two Blankets…Quilt’. There are no details of the type of material these were made from, the colour of the fabrics or whether they were decorative in anyway. The second bedroom or ‘back chamber’ contained three beds with similar textile furnishings as the front chamber. In contrast to the fabrics in the front chamber, two of these items were prefixed with the term ‘old’, an old blanket and an old coverlid, suggesting some sort of difference in condition and age between the other items. No doubt this would have affected the re-sale value. The bed hangings in the back chamber were described as ‘plodd’ hangings.\(^59\) The second room contained window curtains and again these were specified as being old. It is interesting to note that the front chamber did not have window curtains listed; curtains bring an element of privacy so it would be more common for a front street facing room to have curtains instead of a back room. The front garret contained two beds with associated textile furnishings all were described as old by the appraisers. Nonetheless it can be argued that the textiles associated with the beds in Adam’s house would have brought an element of colour through their appearance and comfort through their warmth providing properties. Both of the first floor chambers contained decorative goods. The front chamber was visually enhanced by the inclusion of a small looking glass and five old pictures and the back chamber contained a swing glass. These would have contributed to the appearance of the rooms, adding an element of decoration.

The upper chambers and garret of Adams house also contained a selection of storage furniture. The storage furniture located in the front chamber consisted of two old chests of drawers, one old trunk, an old hanging Press and a box. In the back chamber the storage furniture comprised two chests one coffer and one box. This suggests that Adams and his family had a large number of possessions that required storage space. Although the inventory does not list any storage furniture as being present in the garret it does include a quantity of textile items that were presumably stored in that room. These items consisted of ‘a piece of course ¾ Cloth 50 yd at 5d p yd…8 pair of Sheets…3 Boulster Cases…four pillow Cases…One Diaper Table Cloth and six

\(^{59}\) This almost certainly meant ‘plaid’ hangings.
Napkins…Two old Table Cloths and five old Napkins’. These were household textiles that would have been used during the lifetime of the household and returned to storage when they were not in use and had been cleaned and pressed. The bedrooms contained an array of household furniture, for example the front chamber had eight old chairs and the back chamber had a square table. These suggest an element of using the bedrooms as storage space, perhaps to store old furniture that had been replaced, or additional furniture that was occasionally used in other rooms of the house. The collection of goods in Adams’ bedrooms suggests some mismatching of household goods, hinting that the increased ownership of goods lead to some issues relating to their use and storage within the household. The upper chambers may have had a cluttered appearance with beds and their furnishings next to storage furniture and decorative goods with items of furniture being stored next to them. Of course, such storage furniture could be both functional and decorative, but the descriptions provided in the inventories do not provide any detail.

Moving down to the ground floor, his house had a kitchen and a parlour and presumably the shop was also located next to these rooms, it is not listed as next to them so it is possible that it could have been in a different premises. The kitchen was well equipped and contained storage and display furniture such as ‘A Dresser with Drawers and frames’ and practical furniture including an oval table and a small round table. These items were rather new in style for this period. The kitchen contained seating for ten and consisted of nine chairs and a small square stool. The presence of two coffee pots, one specified as a tin coffee pot, suggests that someone in the Adams’ household enjoyed drinking coffee regularly enough to justify the investment in two coffee pots. Interestingly his kitchen contained a book shelf and books, unfortunately the titles are not recorded, but clearly the books were thought of as saleable items and worth mentioning by the appraisers. His parlour contained a substantial amount of furniture, including two tables, four old chairs, and a corner cupboard. It was also enhanced by window curtains, which would have had an impact on the visual appearance of the room as well as adding to warmth by blocking draughts and helping to keep heat within the room. Adams’ parlour was also the

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60 The Dictionary Archive, Adams Henry of Birmingham, Staffs, Brush Maker, 1745
61 Domestic textiles of this type were often listed as ‘bed and table linen’.
62 The accommodation of clutter is discussed in greater detail in Ponsonby (2007), Stories from Home, pp.110-111
location of a ‘Set of Common China’. Unfortunately the individual pieces are not listed, but the presence of a silver ‘pair of Tea Tongs’ suggests that the parlour was used to take tea with pieces from the china set. The furniture and tea-equipage located in Adams’ parlour suggest a well furnished ordered space that was free from clutter and contained all of the necessary items for sitting, eating and the social activity of taking tea.\textsuperscript{63} There are unfortunately no details of the interior decoration or appearance of the room. The investment in furniture and tea equipage suggests that Adams would have decorated the interior of his parlour in some way, as by the mid eighteenth century walls were starting to be covered with decorative paper.

Wall paper itself was fashionable and widely used in London by the mid-eighteenth century and was adopted by provincial customers throughout the latter part of the century.\textsuperscript{64} Wall hangings were increasingly popular with advertisements for them featuring in local newspapers. Aris’s Birmingham Gazette featured an advertisement in 1743 for a sale that included ‘Paper for Hanging of Rooms’.\textsuperscript{65} In 1760 the Leicester and Nottingham Journal carried an advertisement featuring ‘a large Quantity of Paper Hangings, as Emboss’d Chints and Common Papers for Rooms, with great Variety for Ceilings, Halls, Staircases, &c’.\textsuperscript{66} The notion of hanging some sort of paper in a room suggests an element of decoration and colour. The second advertisement suggests that a wide variety of papers were available in a range of patterns with some imitating the designs seen on fabrics during this period. Interior decoration, such as wall coverings were not frequently recorded in inventories because they were usually fixed items, however paper hangings could potentially be removed and re-hung elsewhere which probably explains why they were occasionally listed in some probate inventories. The 1780 probate inventory of Eykyn reveals that the Wolverhampton upholsterer’s house was enhanced in many rooms by the inclusion of paper hangings, four out of his six upper rooms that were used as bedrooms and both of his parlours had paper hangings.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{63} The Dictionary Archive, Adams Henry of Birmingham, Brush maker, 1745
\textsuperscript{65} The Dictionary Archive, MY1743ABG010, Aris’s Birmingham Gazette 1743
\textsuperscript{66} The Dictionary Archive, MY1760LNJ027, Leicester and Nottingham Journal, 1760
\textsuperscript{67} The Dictionary Archive, Eykyn, James, Upholsterer, Wolverhampton, Staffs, 1780
Flooring had also undergone a substantial change. Floors were typically highly polished wooden boards often enhanced by the addition of patterned coloured carpets that did not cover the entire floor and were not fixed. Some of these began to be recorded in probate inventories and sales catalogues. For example, James Eykyn’s house had ‘2 Small Bed side Carpets’ in one of his bedrooms. Interior decoration coupled with decorative material goods demonstrates that the household was significantly different and was evolving into a more attractive space.

Moving on to the early nineteenth century, the 1810 sales catalogue of Edward Pearce’s household goods reveals that he occupied a house with ten rooms, including the shop and Bake house. His occupation is not specified, but the bake house included a ‘counter’ suggesting that it was a commercial enterprise and that Pearce was a baker. His residence in the High Street of Bridgnorth, Shropshire had eight domestic rooms that were split over two or perhaps three floors; there is a possibility that there were four first floor rooms and six on the ground floor, but it is difficult to assess this from the sales catalogue. Starting with the upper rooms, these are listed in the sales catalogue simply as ‘room 1’ through to ‘room 4’. Three of the upstairs rooms were used as bedrooms, two had one bed each, but the third may have contained two beds (it is unclear from the listing in the catalogue). Pearce had invested in textile furnishings for all of his beds in a similar way to Pugh and Adams in the earlier households that were explored previously. All three of the beds were enhanced by ‘cotton furniture’ and a multitude of blankets and quilts. Room No 1 contained a bed with associated fabric furnishings, an oak bureau, oak chest of drawers, chair and stool, a thirty hour clock with an oak case, an oval tray and waiter and a small carpet. All of the furniture was oak and would have matched together well. This creates the impression of a well furnished well organised room that contained furniture that was appropriate for a bedroom. The carpet, a further soft furnishing adds another element of comfort and warmth and hints at the notion of decoration. The furniture items suggest function as storage space for personal effects and apparel.

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68 The Dictionary Archive, Eykyn, James, Upholsterer, Wolverhampton, Staffs, 1780
69 Shropshire Archives, 6001/4/4645/4647, Pearce, Edward, Bridgnorth, 1810
The second room merely contained a bed with furnishings. Similarly to the first room, the third room was much more fully furnished. The room contained two beds as the listing states that there was a full tester bedstead with cotton furnishings and two sets of feather bed bolsters and three pillows and a press bedstead with a feather bed bolster and two pillows. The beds were further enhanced by the addition of three blankets and a quilt. The room was also well furnished with a dressing table and mirror, a chest of drawers and a large linen chest suggesting that it was used to store items such as apparel and perhaps the general household linen. The room was well serviced by the inclusion of a ‘mahogany wash hand stand’. This brings with it an element of personal comfort and cleanliness that was not present in the earlier houses. The wash hand stand is the only furniture in the room where the type of wood is specified, suggesting that the room was not as uniform as ‘room 1’. Nonetheless, the goods that it contained were related to sleep, rest and the personal needs of the room’s occupants. The soft furnishings would again have added an element of decoration and comfort. The fourth upper room seems to have been used purely as a storage room for domestic goods. It contained items related to housework such as table boxes, a clothes horse, two baskets and a line and pegs. This could have been where these items were stored when they were not in use. Alternatively it could have been used for part of the laundry process, perhaps for drying and for smoothing fabrics after washing. The room contained a large quantity of household textiles consisting of ‘curtain and a blankets, nine pair of sheets, two bed quilts, large diaper cloth, seven breakfast cloths, four napkins, 6 pillow cases’. 

Pearce’s household was well furnished with domestic textiles and it is interesting to note that the seven breakfast cloths were prefixed with a description of their intended activity for use. It is possible that these items were kept in this room in this way by the Pearce family. It does seem unusual for them to be located in this room when the other rooms contained a quantity of storage furniture and in particular the large linen chest. It is entirely possible that these goods were moved to this room by the auctioneers. Sometimes small items were listed together as a group by auctioneers and were not described in any detail or quantity.

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70 *Shropshire Archives, 6001/4/4645/4647, Pearce, Edward, Bridgnorth, 1810*
In Pearce’s house, on the ground floor there were six rooms, two parlours, a kitchen, a scullery and a bake house and shop. The kitchen was reasonably furnished with tables made from oak and deal, six chairs and an eight day clock in an oak case. The kitchen was well equipped and included items such as cutlery and earthenware for eating and drinking hot substances and glassware for imbibing colder drinks. The kitchen contained mats and presumably these were to assist with the general cleanliness of the floor space. Neither of the parlours contained a vast amount of goods. The first parlour (listed as ‘Parlour’) contained an oak table, a small chest of drawers and six chairs with worked seats. This suggests that the seats were upholstered and decorated with embroidery panels of some sort. The room may have been lightly furnished, but there is an element of decoration present through the oak table and the worked chairs. The back parlour contained more furniture suggesting that it was larger and located here was a yew dining table, a round table, a mahogany round table, as well as four chairs. There is an element of mismatch with the furniture as it seems to have been a collection of items made from several different materials. Yew and mahogany are the only two that are specified, but the round table and the chairs could have been made from a number of different woods adding to the visual appearance of the room as slightly crowded and disorganised.\footnote{Mahogany furniture will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.} There was china and glassware present in the room, but these were not described in any detail and it cannot be presumed that the china was a full tea service.\footnote{Lichfield Record Office, Pearce, Edward Bridgnorth, 1810}

An exploration of two sales catalogues from the very end of the period of study reveal that the middle class household was very different to its middling sort predecessor. The catalogues of Reverend Colley and Mary Eggliston from Shrewsbury reveal the domestic interior of the homes of two members of the upper middle class. Most of the examples used so far in this study fall into the lower middling sort. At the end of the period in 1836, Mr Tisdale an auctioneer from Shrewsbury held a sale of the household goods belonging to Reverend James Colley who was moving out of the area. The sales catalogue provides a detailed insight into Colley’s living conditions at his house in Montford in Shrewsbury prior to his relocation.\footnote{Shropshire Archives, 665/4/211, Reverend Colley, Montford (Shrewsbury), 1836 Sales Catalogue, moving sale.} He inhabited a house with eleven rooms split over two to three floors, with an underground cellar. On the
ground floor there was a dining room, a drawing room, a kitchen, a back kitchen, a pantry, and a hall. Leading from the hall were stairs to the landing on the first floor where there were three chambers and the ‘Servant Maids room’ and the ‘Servant Boys room’. It is unclear whether these rooms were on the same floor as the main chambers, or actually situated a floor above, possibly in the garrets. The three chambers on the first floor were all used as bed rooms, and contained beds and personal storage furniture. The descriptions reveal that these rooms were very well furnished in a comfortable and decorative way. Chamber number one featured a ‘neat tent bedstead with dimity hangings’, as well as an array of furniture for the storage of personal goods and clothing such as a ‘neat mahogany dressing chest of 4 drawers’, a ‘Mahogany dressing table with drawer’ and a ‘Painted oak boot and shoe rack’. In addition it contained items for personal cleanliness ‘Mahogany inclosed washstand with pot cupboard and drawer’ and a ‘Set of chamber ware’, adding an increased level of comfort. Comfort was again enhanced with the addition of soft furnishings such as ‘Hearth Rug’ and ‘Drab cotton window curtain lined & fringed’. The ‘Venetian bedround carpet’ suggests that this was a carpet specifically designed to be placed around the bed inside a bedroom. In common with the earlier houses the room contained a mirror and its frame was listed as mahogany, alongside this was seating that consisted of ‘Two painted chairs, seg seats’. Chamber number two housed similar furniture: the bed was again a neat tent bed, but this had ‘stained rosewood reeded pillars’ and again it had dimity furniture. There were also matching rosewood window curtains. The storage furniture was also very similar consisting of a mahogany chest of drawers with three drawers, and a ‘Neat painted dressing table with two drawers’. The room had more seating than the first chamber with four painted bamboo chairs with caned seats and three lengths of bed carpet. Chamber number three was perhaps the grandest based on the description of its contents listed in the sale catalogue. The description of ‘capital four post beadstead, [with] massive reeded pillars, painted rosewood cornice, chintz furniture, drab lining’ and ‘chintz window curtain to match’ is impressive. Around the bed were three pieces of ‘bedside carpet’. There was a feather bolster, a hair mattress and a flock mattress all described as ‘new’. The room had matching furniture consisting of ‘neat painted dressing table…[neat painted] wash table, raised back…oval swing glass…four neat
part I: the domestic environment
chapter 1: the material culture of the household

painted chairs…capital painted wardrobe, with 6 sliding shelves and 5 drawers under’. 74

in keeping with the furnishing of the upper rooms, the kitchen was well equipped and furnished. it contained specialist kitchen furniture, such as a capital painted kitchen press with two drawers and an oak round table, a deal dining table and four windsor chairs, suggesting that it could also be used for eating meals. the back kitchen did not contain any furniture instead it housed more kitchen and laundry equipment. it is worth noting the listing of a ‘japanned knife tray’ in the back kitchen, suggesting that even mundane storage items could now be decorative as well as functional. further storage furniture was located within the pantry, notably a ‘painted oak glass cupboard with sundry drawers under’. 75

reverend colley’s house did not have a parlour instead it had a drawing room and a dining room. the dining room was furnished with a range of mahogany furniture including a set of dining tables, a bookcase with a cupboard under it, a sideboard table with drawers, six chairs, a cupboard and a set of mahogany tables that could be used depending on the dining requirements. the room was carpeted throughout and the dimensions of the dutch carpet reveal that the room was at least 17ft by 13ft. other soft furnishings included a hearth rug and ‘handsome brown moreen window curtain, trimmed with blue silk lace and fringe, with gilt ornaments, and ten large brass rings.’ the description suggests that this room was decorated in dark colours, perhaps to match the dark mahogany wood from the furniture. the drawing room contained less furniture than the dining room as there were no listed storage facilities. the room contained a ‘spanish mahogany centre table [with a] wood border, on pillar, claws and casters’ with a painted cover and a mahogany card table with six chairs made from stained rosewood with hair cushions and a pianoforte. 76 the curtains in this room were blue silk with lace and fringe trimmings suggesting a lighter colour scheme than in the dining room. the floor was covered with a new ‘handsome printed drugget’ 12/14 ft by 13ft, and embellished with a new hearth rug.

74 shropshire archives, 665/4/211, reverend colley, montford (shrewsbury), 1836 sales catalogue, moving sale.
75 shropshire archives, 665/4/211, reverend colley, montford (shrewsbury), 1836 sales catalogue, moving sale.
76 the relation of colour schemes and furniture to a rooms function will be discussed in chapter 2
Part I: The Domestic Environment  
Chapter 1: The Material Culture of the Household

Unfortunately the large collection of china and glassware was listed separately and not within the rooms where it might have been kept.\(^{77}\) The dark colour scheme of the furnishings in his dining room, and the mahogany furniture were typical of a dining room in this period.\(^{78}\) These themes of function, furniture and decoration will be discussed in greater detail in chapters two and three.

By the nineteenth century a range of patterned and coloured wallpaper was commonly used to decorate the interior of the middling house. Full carpets were also frequently found in parlours or sitting rooms and dining rooms in upper middle class houses. The 1829 sales catalogue of Mary Eggliston’s household goods revealed that two of her downstairs rooms in her house in Shrewsbury featured carpets on the floor, in contrast, during the seventeenth century carpets were often hung on walls or sitting as a piece of furniture. The carpet in her sitting room was listed as a ‘Kidderminster carpet, 18ft by 13ft 6in’ the large dimensions suggest that the carpet covered the floor wall to wall and in her sitting room she had a ‘floor carpet’ for which no dimensions were given.\(^{79}\) Similarly, the catalogue of goods from Reverend Colley’s household sale in 1836 reveal that the floor in the dining room of his Shrewsbury home was covered by a Dutch carpet 17ft by 13ft and that in his drawing room the floor was covered by a new ‘Handsome printed Drugget’.\(^{80}\) The nineteenth century middle class home was a much more decorative and well furnished space than the early eighteenth century house. Items such as carpets and patterned walls brought an element of decoration to the interior and changes to furniture and the addition of textiles also brought a higher level of comfort.

When goods are studied within the context of the domestic interior it becomes clear that the increase in the ownership of goods and the changing nature of these items meant that the home became more densely furnished with a range of different types of furniture and furnishings. At the same time as the ownership of different types of goods increased the domestic environment was transformed by interior decoration and textile furnishings. This had a significant impact on the home.

\(^{77}\) Shropshire Archives, 665/4/211, Reverend Colley, Montford (Shrewsbury), 1836 Sales Catalogue, moving sale.  
\(^{79}\) Shropshire Archives, 665/4/146, Mrs Mary Eggliston, 1829, Auctioneers catalogue.  
\(^{80}\) The dimensions are unclear, but appear to be 12ft/14ft by 13ft.
Conclusion

This chapter has given a flavour for the changes that the domestic interior of the middling household experienced during the period. The ownership of goods continued to increase throughout the period. By the end of the period people owned an increasing number of different types of decorative goods and multiples or sets of certain items of furniture. The domestic interior changed throughout the period with additional domestic furnishings changing and shaping the household. The increase in the ownership of domestic material culture made the household a more densely furnished space with more items in each room. The increase in the ownership of material goods was not the only change that occurred, goods themselves also changed and developed during the period. By the end of the period furniture was made from a variety of woods in a number of sizes and styles. Furniture was frequently enhanced by decorative features and made more comfortable through upholstery and soft textile furnishings. These changes were enhanced by changes to the appearance of the interior shell of a house. Interior decoration such as wall coverings, changes to flooring and the increase in soft furnishings changed the domestic environment to a much more decorative and comfortable space.

The increased ownership of material goods meant that houses were more densely furnished than they had previously been. This coupled with the adoption of interior decoration to walls and floors transformed the domestic interior. The changing nature of domestic goods themselves also had an impact on the household. The production of domestic goods in a variety of materials, styles, shapes and sizes enhanced the decorative appearance of domestic space. It also ensured that the domestic environment could be constructed in a number of ways adding variety to every individual household. These changes did not just affect the appearance of the domestic interior. Ultimately they also had an impact on the maintenance and care of the household. They also had an effect on or reflected the changing use of domestic space. The next chapter moves on to study the changing use of the household and the changing role of home.
Chapter 2: Using Domestic Space

The previous chapter demonstrated that the ownership of household goods increased throughout the period. It revealed that this increase was made up of at least partly new types of goods and multiples and sets of the same type. This chapter moves on from the static information of the location of goods and interior furnishing to consider how space was used within the household. It has already been established that the growing ownership of household goods and the changing appearance of the domestic interior had an impact on the ways in which domestic space was used. The aim of this chapter is to develop this further and to begin to consider the relationship between these changes to use and the maintenance and management of domestic space. The changes to the way that domestic space was used had a significant impact on the nature of housework. This chapter will detail how the use of domestic space altered during the period, and these themes will be picked up on in the second part of the thesis. The ways in which the household was used underwent significant change during the eighteenth century, and these were further developed during the early nineteenth. Some of the changes in the early nineteenth century were only fully established in the homes of the Victorian middle class.

Room use in the eighteenth century

Probate inventories contain a wealth of information about domestic space and rooms, many appraisers listed goods by room providing a sub-heading using the name of the room before listing the goods that it contained. Listing the room’s title or name was not a legal requirement of a probate inventory and consequently there was no standard way to label rooms. Many appraisers simply listed goods without any reference to where they were situated. Therefore, it is impossible to know if an inventory included all the rooms inside a house, or even if all of the rooms listed were inside one building. In some cases it is difficult to know if rooms were within the house building or whether they were outhouses attached to or next to the dwelling. In addition probate inventories were required to list only moveable goods, so if a room was
empty it would not have been listed. As Overton *et al* points out, appraisers did not have to take specific care over the room listings, so a particularly well-furnished room could actually have been two rooms if the appraiser had forgotten to list when he had moved from one room to another.\(^1\) Taking this into account it is likely that inventories under estimate the number of rooms within a house.

There have been a number of studies of room use using probate inventories for the early modern period up to the mid eighteenth century.\(^2\) Many of these include large scale quantitative analysis and are useful here for illustrating how the use of rooms changed during the (early) eighteenth century. A study of rooms and the use of rooms in Norwich housing for 1580-1730 used a large data set of probate inventories, which were subjected to quantitative analysis to support archaeological work exploring the remains of houses from the period.\(^3\) A part of this research quantified the number of rooms per house and revealed that in their sample of inventories the most common, (or most frequently occurring) number of rooms per house was between four and six. This number of rooms was a constant throughout the period 1580 to1730, suggesting that the average number of rooms per house in Norwich remained the same throughout the period. Other researchers have found different results. Shammas, for example, found that there was a significant growth in the number of rooms per house between the sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries.\(^4\) She suggests that the changes in the number of rooms occupied become more detailed when broken down into categories of wealth, suggesting that a majority of those in her lower wealth group occupied one to three rooms throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. However, those in the medium to high-wealth category experienced a more dramatic change with the majority inhabiting houses with more than four rooms by the late seventeenth century. A substantial increase also occurred to the proportion of houses with six rooms or more, this rose from 20% to 41%.\(^5\) Overton *et al*’s data for

\(^1\) Overton, Mark, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann (2004), *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750*, Routledge, London, p.86
\(^3\) Corfield, and Priestley (1982), ‘Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730’, pp.93-123
\(^4\) Shammas (1990), *The Pre-Industrial Consumer*.
\(^5\) Shammas (1990), *The Pre-Industrial Consumer*, p.163
Kent reveals that for the period 1690 to 1749 the most frequently occurring number of rooms per house was seven to nine rooms.\(^6\) This difference suggests that the number of rooms in a house could vary from locality to locality.

It was not necessarily the size of a house or the number of rooms that it contained that had the greatest impact on domestic space in the eighteenth century; instead it was the ways in which domestic space was used. It is possible to use probate inventories to interpret room use from the type of goods that a room contained. Corfield and Priestly analysed their dataset of probate inventories in precisely this way, producing a wealth of information about Norwich houses and the use of rooms in the period. Their survey demonstrates that houses became better furnished and more comfortable between the later sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries. Alongside this it reveals that the way in which domestic space was used changed with an increasing specialisation in room use by the early eighteenth century.\(^7\) These changes in the division and use of domestic space had their origins in the seventeenth century and became more refined and pronounced during the eighteenth century, and further developed by the early nineteenth.

The development of specialisation for rooms was a significant change to the use of domestic space. Previously rooms were used indiscriminately for multiple activities, which were reflected in their contents and by the furnishings that they contained. It was not uncommon for the same room to be used for work activities, the preparation of food, dining, laundry and sitting. Even sleep and rest were not segregated to their own specific rooms. In the seventeenth century it was not uncommon for a bed to be located in the hall and even within the kitchen.\(^8\) The presence of a bed downstairs suggests that sleep and rest were not segregated activities requiring an exclusive space. The location of beds on the ground floor of houses decreased from the late seventeenth century and by 1705 in Norwich a bed was found in only 18% of parlours. Similarly, during the period 1720-1749 a bed was recorded as present in a

\(^6\) Overton \textit{et al} (2004), \textit{Production and Consumption in English Households}, p.124  
\(^7\) Corfield and Priestley (1982), ‘Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730’, p.120  
parlour in only 16% of Kent inventories.\(^9\) This change of use can be explained by a shift in contemporary thought, as by the late seventeenth century sleep within the home was considered a private activity that should take place in a dedicated space, and in separate rooms for family members.\(^10\) As a part of this, servants increasingly did not sleep in the same rooms as adult members of the family. It was acceptable for serving staff to share a bedroom, but with a separate room for male and female domestics. Accommodation for servants was an issue in middling houses as more rooms were required for live-in servants to inhabit. The use of domestic day workers provided a solution and these themes are explored in greater detail in the second part of this thesis.

In the early part of the period, furniture relating to relaxing and other domestic social activities could be located in any room of a house. Chairs and tables associated with relaxation were located in the kitchen or in an upstairs room alongside a bed or other storage items. For example, the 1700 inventory of John Smallman a tailor in Wolverhampton, describes a building that had four rooms spread over two floors. At ground level there was a kitchen and a buttery, above these were situated two rooms used as bedrooms and perhaps as storage rooms. Within his kitchen, among associated kitchen goods, he had ‘three Chairs 2 three footed stooles one Joyned Stool and one Joyn’d form one little Table’.\(^11\) This suggests that his kitchen was used for a variety of activities and not just the preparation of meals. The number of seats and the presence of a table suggest that the room could have been used for eating and could have accommodated a number of people at one time. The 1701 inventory of Philip Bezar, a mercer from Worcester, revealed a similar use of space. His kitchen had ‘3 segg chairs…2 Joynd Stooles…2 Small Tables’ in addition it also featured ‘2 wainscoat chaires & bench’, suggesting that additional seating was built into the internal architecture of the room. He would have been able to accommodate a number of seated people within his kitchen. The use of space in his house is further complicated by the inclusion of a ‘press for cloaths’, suggesting that his kitchen was used to prepare and cook meals, for sitting and dining (for a number of people) and

\(^10\) Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.160
\(^11\) The Dictionary Archive, Smallman John of Wolverhampton, Tailor, 1700
also as storage space for his clothes. The kitchen being the warmest room in the house was the most logical place to spend time.

**The development of a space for social activities**

The name of a room can sometimes be misleading about the way that it was used, the room name ‘Parlour’ provides an excellent example. The way that this room was used, determined by its contents, demonstrated a significant change. In the early seventeenth century the parlour was predominantly used as a space for sleeping. Overton *et al* found that 61% of inventories recorded that sleep related items were located within the parlour for the period 1600 to 1629. Weatherill remarks that the most interesting change in England in the late seventeenth century was the change in use of the predominantly ground floor parlour, from a best bedroom to a living room. As beds were moved out seating, tables and decorative goods were brought in. From the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the parlour was predominantly used for sitting and dining. Overton *et al* found that by the period 1720 to 1749 the frequency of sleep related items in the parlour had fallen to only 16%. Instead of containing items related to sleep during this period the parlour more frequently contained furniture related to sitting and relaxing, and decorative items such as pictures and mirrors. The specialisation of the way that rooms were used and the creation of the sitting room parlour were significant changes to the way that domestic space was used.

Whilst upper rooms were used consistently throughout the period as bedrooms, the decline of using ground floor rooms as bedrooms was much more striking. As beds were removed ground floor rooms began to be used in different ways. The 1727 inventory of Richard Ffryer suggests that he used the parlour of his Wolverhampton

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12 *The Dictionary Archive*, Bezar Philip of Worcester, Mercer, 1701
13 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.11
14 Pictures were located in parlours in 3% of inventories for 1600-29 rising to 20% in 1720-49, and mirrors rose from 2% in 1600-29 to 29% in 1720-49. Overton *et al* (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.126
15 In Norwich the percentage of parlour chambers containing beds increased only slightly rising from 83% in 1580 – 1604 to 87% in 1705 – 1730. Corfield and Priestley (1982), 'Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 16, pp.108-109
house in this way. His parlour contained a long table and two other smaller tables, eleven chairs, a clock and pictures and maps.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Robert Morrison’s 1727 inventory reveals that he used his parlour for sitting and perhaps dining too. His parlour contained two small tables and six chairs.\textsuperscript{17} The absence of decorative goods does not detract from the fact that he had a room devoted solely to sitting and eating. Similarly, Robert Morrison’s 1727 inventory reveals that he used his parlour for sitting and perhaps dining too. His parlour contained two small tables and six chairs.\textsuperscript{17} The absence of decorative goods does not detract from the fact that he had a room devoted solely to sitting and eating. In Norwich in 1680-1704 50% of parlours were used for dining and 70% were used for sitting. In the period 1705 - 1730 this trend continued with 63% of parlours being used for dining and 79% being used for sitting.\textsuperscript{18} By the mid eighteenth century the use of the parlour for sitting and relaxing rather than sleeping was firmly established.

The most significant change to the use of domestic space in the eighteenth century was the development of the parlour as a room devoted to social activities.\textsuperscript{19} Such activities could be private involving an individual or the whole family and they could also be semi-public involving the participation of invited outsiders. The development of this space, and the way that it was used had a huge impact on the way in which the household was managed and maintained. It created a space, that to fulfil its function, had to be well furnished and decorated and in addition had to be regularly cared for and maintained. The parlour provided a space within the household for private and semi-public social activities, such as tea drinking and eating. The majority of inventories and sales catalogues consulted for the late eighteenth century list at least one parlour, and sometimes two, that were devoted to this type of use.

The creation of social space did not mean that other rooms were no longer used for activities such as dining and sitting (or relaxing). Instead it suggests that it was seen as important to have a room that could be used for these activities when it was needed, but was not used for other activities. For example, a kitchen could be used for dining and sitting, but its primary function was for the preparation and cooking of food and other activities associated with the mundane running of a household. Whereas, the parlour was a space to be used for sitting and social entertaining that could also be used for taking meals. It is not surprising to discover that the use of

\textsuperscript{16} Wolverhampton archives and local studies, Fryer Richard of Wolverhampton, Staffs, 1727
\textsuperscript{17} The Dictionary Archive, Morison Robert of Drayton in Hales, Salop, Linnen Draper, 1727
\textsuperscript{18} Corfield and Priestley (1982), ‘Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730’, p.109
\textsuperscript{19} For a study of the development of the parlour during the nineteenth century see, Logan, Thad (2001, reprinted 2003), The Victorian Parlour, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
other rooms for sitting and dining had not completely vanished by the mid-eighteenth century. For example, in Norwich for the period 1705-1730, the kitchen was used for dining in 68% of inventories and for sitting in 79% of inventories. Similarly in Kent for the period 1720-1749 the kitchen was used for eating and associated activities in 59% of inventories. If the family did not use the kitchen for taking meals, undoubtedly they would be used by their servants who still needed somewhere to sit and eat.

Contemporaries used domestic space in socially meaningful ways and during the eighteenth century the domestic interior became an arena for the distillation of ‘polite’ social entertainment. As Estabrook states, sociability was mediated through dwellings and goods. Home became a focal point of polite culture and simultaneously it became a pleasant place to spend time. Many of these activities are focused on the parlour, as that is where they took place. The development of a feminine culture of house visiting, which started in the late seventeenth century, led to the advent of domestic sociability. Tea was taken during these visits linking it to the domestic realm and to women. Rachel Kennedy states that tea was particularly suitable for these occasions because it could easily be served by the mistress of the house while she and a group of female friends sat around a small intimate tea table.

The division of space within the home

The development of the specialisation of room use for specific activities rather than a multifunctional use of space was reflected in the way that rooms were furnished and decorated. The physical movement of beds to upper rooms dedicated to sleep and rest in private and the creation of the social space of a parlour downstairs formed the beginnings of a split in the public and private use of domestic space. There is an

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20 Corfield and Priestley (1982), ‘Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730’, p.107  
21 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.6  
22 Estabrook (1998), Urbane and Rustic England, p.129  
argument that certain rooms were enhanced through interior decoration and goods because they were used for more public social activities. These rooms were invested in because they were going to be seen by visitors from outside of the household. Goods were imbued with a range of social and cultural meanings and their display signalled to others that the owner understood and had internalised these meanings and values. This suggests that the development of a room for semi-public social activities was heavily invested in to promote an image to visitors. Sociologists have looked at how people fostered an identity through display. Goffman’s theory of ‘symbolic interaction’ suggests that in order to create a particular image people present themselves to others in a certain way. Occurring at a subconscious level an individual would automatically act to create a version of self that he or she felt the audience wanted to see, similarly to an actor portraying a character. Clothing, material culture and space all played a role in developing the constructed identity of an individual’s character. This behaviour does not occur all the time, but as an automatic and subconscious response; it is an everyday activity that occurs within the home and elsewhere.

Goffman and later Portnoy have applied this to the division and use of space within the household. If an individual is akin to an actor, then domestic space becomes a theatre with distinct back-stage and front-stage areas. Back-stage rooms were where more private activities were undertaken, and front-stage areas were where more public social activities were carried out. In her explanation of the division and use of domestic space in the early eighteenth century Weatherill adapts the work of Goffman and later Portnoy. She uses the theory of ‘back and front stage’ to analyse the relationship between material possessions and domestic space. Focusing on material culture and where items were located within the house, Weatherill suggests that some parts of the home were accorded more value than others. ‘Front stage’ rooms were furnished in the ways in which the occupant wanted to present him or herself to the outside world. Decorative and attractive goods were associated with the expressive front stage where social routines of entertaining and politeness took place. Whereas ‘back stage’ spaces, where mundane maintenance routines occurred, were less liable

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to change, were infrequently decorated and were not overtly expressive. Weatherill is concerned with the social roles of objects, rather than exploring the ways in which domestic space was used, stating ‘...we can attempt to interpret the social roles of some possessions by observing use of space and assessing the values that were placed on activities from the point of view of both of the kinds of goods that were found in different parts of the house and of the kinds of activities that took place there.’

However, it is not just the social role of objects that is important or interesting, the household was not static, and through different types of use, at different times and in different rooms, goods could have different meanings.

The development of the parlour provides an example of how the use of household space changed to fulfil social functions during the early eighteenth century. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, from the late seventeenth century onwards the parlour stopped being used as a bedroom and became used as a sitting room. As its use changed so did its appearance; it became furnished and decorated in an appropriate style to fulfil its new social role as a room to dispense hospitality to visitors. These visitors could have ranged from family members and friends, and in some circumstances business acquaintances. To fulfil this important function it needed to be furnished accordingly with adequate seating and tables to accommodate guests. The increase in ownership of decorative goods and their location within the ‘new’ sitting–room parlour adds weight to the theory. The parlour was used for social activities, often involving visitors, and as such it was labelled by Weatherill as a ‘front-stage’ space. During the first half of the eighteenth century new decorative items were frequently located in the parlour. Overton et al’s data reveals that for the period 1720-1749 20% of parlours contained pictures and 29% of parlours contained mirrors. In 1724, the inventory of Richard Weston’s household goods revealed that the parlour in the Birmingham jack smiths home contained ‘1 ovell table, 6 Cane Cheres, 1 Clock & Case, 1 Looking glase, pictures, White ware’. Similarly, three years later the inventory of Richard Fryer’s possessions revealed that his Wolverhampton house had a substantially furnished parlour containing ‘One Long

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26 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, p.9
27 Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, pp.126-129
This suggests that the acquisition of goods was influenced by the motivation to display and to construct an interior that presented a certain image of the household to the outside world: an image of how the household wanted to be seen by wider society.

Goods were purchased and interiors constructed for the social and cultural values that they conveyed. The creation of image was further reinforced through interaction with expressive goods whilst in the company of others. Weatherill states that people presented themselves differently when they were in the company of others, or when they were ‘actively fostering their image’. In comparison their behaviour was entirely different when they were undertaking essentially private activities. Behaviour was affected by its setting, for example, front stage behaviour took place in appropriately furnished front-stage spaces. In a house these were rooms where people presented themselves to others. As a result, there was a greater value attached to front stage rooms and activities. Weatherill argues that eating and drinking were primarily front stage activities that were valued by contemporaries because of the increased ownership and investment in associated new and decorative goods. For example, some of the most valuable and attractive household items were associated with eating and drinking, such as tables and chairs, table linen and sometimes silver table ware and later decorative ceramics.

Reinforcing their social value, meals were served in the ‘front stage’ areas of a house, surrounded by a constructed interior that through select material possessions reinforced a message of how the household wanted to be viewed. The 1724 probate inventory of Robert Carrington from Ellesmere in Shropshire for example, reveals that his parlour contained one oval table and eleven chairs, suggesting that if he needed to he could accommodate a number of guests in comfort.

Parlours were spaces for dispensing hospitality; in Kent, for example, during the period 1720-49, 13% of parlours contained items associated with hot drinks, especially the taking of tea. In Shrewsbury during the 1720s Priscilla Pugh had two tea tables in her parlour where she could have taken tea in comfort. Boiling water would have been presumably carried from the kitchen to the parlour where the

29 Weatherill (1988), Consumer Behaviour, pp.151-159  
30 The Dictionary Archive, Carrington Robert of Ellesmere, Salop, Saddler, 1724  
31 Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.126
Part 1: The Domestic Environment  
Chapter 2: Using Domestic Space

tea would have been brewed at the table by the hostess as a part of the ritual. The presence of specialist furniture suggests that the activity of drinking tea frequently took place in the front stage space of her parlour, where she had seating for up to twelve people in a space enhanced by decorative items such as a looking glass and corner cupboard. The ownership of tea-tables suggests that taking tea was important enough to Pugh to justify significant investment, both financially and spatially, in such specialised furniture. Through its furnishings and its use as a space for taking tea, Priscilla Pugh’s parlour helped her to foster an image of how she wanted her contemporaries to view her.

The theory of ‘front and back stage’ does provide a compelling explanation for the development of a domestic social space and the way that it was used for semi-public entertaining. The argument is reinforced by evidence from probate inventories which reveals that decorative goods and hospitality wares such as tea equipage and furniture were frequently located within the parlour. However, it does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the use of all domestic space. There is a significant difference between the use of space in the everyday life of a house by its occupants and the static location of material possessions. Firstly, decorative goods were not exclusively located in ‘front-stage rooms’. Bedrooms were not used for receiving guests but as the period progressed they frequently became the location for the types of decorative goods that Weatherill associated with a ‘front stage’ room. Secondly, the theory of a ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ division of space suggests that a split occurred because certain rooms were invested in with decorative goods and took on social roles associated with receiving and entertaining guests. This suggests that ‘back stage’ spaces were created by default and were defined by a lack of investment. However, as the house became more decoratively furnished and used for social activities (private and semi-public), rooms were needed to facilitate the smooth running of social domestic routines. These service spaces for mundane routine activities were significantly invested in with equipment to enable household maintenance to support the social activities of the household. Finally, ‘front-stage’ rooms were used by the family for a range of private activities in addition to semi-public social entertaining.


The Dictionary Archive, Pugh Priscilla of Shrewsbury, Salop, upholstery, 1724
Weatherill focused her attention on the increase in decorative material culture in the parlour, for which the model works well whilst the space was being used for social entertainment in the company of others. It does not explain how people interacted with their possessions and shaped the construction of their homes when they were alone. Family members often used ‘front stage’ rooms in private. These rooms were not simply shut away and ignored when they were not in use for social occasions involving guests from outside of the household.

Decorative and expressive goods that Weatherill associated with investment in ‘front stage’ spaces were frequently located in ‘back-stage’ rooms that had a primarily private function. During the second half of the eighteenth century it became increasingly common to find decorative and expressive goods located throughout the house in both ‘front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ rooms. While decorative goods still remained as a feature of the parlour they were also located in other rooms. Bedrooms were commonly invested in as a site for the display of these goods. Overton et al’s data reveals that for the period 1720-1749, 41% of chambers and 48% of great chambers contained mirrors. The location of mirrors in chambers predominantly used as bedrooms can be explained by their function of providing a reflection of the self. Mirrors were most frequently located within chambers and not inside the parlour in Kent houses during this period. The desire to check one’s reflection in a mirror is interesting as it suggests that self appearance was important even within spaces used for more private, domestic activities. Perhaps more surprising is the frequency with which mirrors were located within the kitchens of Kent households for the 1720 – 1749 sample they appeared in 12% of inventories; additionally 10% of pictures were also located there.\textsuperscript{34}

For the same period, 15% of chambers and 19% of great chambers for the Kent sample contained pictures.\textsuperscript{35} Pictures and prints were desirable commodities for their aesthetic qualities and could therefore be enjoyed alone. It is very rare for inventories to list details of paintings or prints so although their location can be charted it is unusual to identify what they depicted and to understand how far a picture related to the room within which it was situated. Estabrook suggests that there were distinctions

\textsuperscript{34} Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.129
\textsuperscript{35} Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.129
between types of paintings and where they were located within the home. For example Charles Foxell of Bristol in 1739 hung his ‘family pictures’ upstairs in bedrooms. In contrast in his parlour he kept a painting of his family coat of arms along with a depiction of the famous Methodist George Whitefield. Here at least, distinctions between public and private space or family and social space were further reinforced by his pictures.

‘Back stage’ rooms were not spaces that were created by default simply because they were not invested in. Social domestic activities and daily routines such as meals and taking tea needed to be facilitated and prepared for. The kitchen played a vital role in the success of these activities. Pennell argues that branding the kitchen as a ‘backstage’ and ‘private’ space homogenizes ‘...the variability of its location and accessibility.’ Essentially this interpretation has compromised our understanding of how contemporaries used the kitchen and the role that it played within the house and within everyday life. Pennell goes on to suggest that the kitchen continued to play a central role in household life, and was used in multiple ways by a range of different people and it was even used by visitors. Service rooms, especially the kitchen, were invested in and stocked with mundane goods and equipment. Specialist cleaning equipment and kitchenware was closely related to the changing use of domestic space as it facilitated and enabled such activities to be carried out correctly. For example, social activities such as taking tea required the necessary equipment to brew the tea as well as to serve it. Due to the growing reliance on servants for the maintenance of the household, and the provision of service for social domestic routines (of a private and semi-public nature) so called ‘back stage spaces’ would have been inhabited and visited by a number of people, and perhaps more regularly than the ‘front stage’ rooms that were intended for public use.

The theory of a front and back stage division of domestic space suggests that without an audience a decorative room and decorative goods had no purpose. While the

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37 There are very few other comparative examples to either support or undermine the way that Charles Foxall grouped his pictures. However, this example does demonstrate that even decorative goods operated on many different levels.
individual was alone and not actively fostering his or her identity the domestic ‘stage’ with its decorative ‘props’ lost its social meaning, and with that meaning its cultural significance. For this reason Campbell rejects Goffman’s theory of social behaviour due to its reliance on the presence of others. The suggestion that people wanted to present a favourable image of themselves to others is accepted, but the idea that people actively ‘presented the self’ in order to impress or to manipulate others is rejected. Campbell instead suggests that behaviour and conduct is motivated by the desire to reassure oneself. This shifts the origin of behaviour from a predominantly public basis and a dramaturgical imperative to an essentially private one, though the two can be linked, for example self reassurance can be attained by impressing others. Campbell’s theory provides an explanation for private behaviour that can also explain public conduct or social behaviour in the company of others.\(^{40}\) When applied to domestic space this suggests that rooms were furnished primarily for the appreciation and use of their owner, even though rooms such as parlours undoubtedly functioned as a location of and for polite company as situations demanded.

There are other problems with the simple binary divide between front and back stage. Rooms were used in a variety of different ways and this division of space does not take this into account. Goffman's theory of the presentation of the self as employed by Weatherill is rigid and suggests that domestic space was divided into distinct spaces that were either furnished for social activities with an audience or were essentially left for functional private practices. Overton et al reject the suggestion that domestic space was divided into ‘public’ and ‘private’ or ‘front-stage’ and ‘backstage’ declaring that these distinctions are far too simplistic and ‘too crude to capture the usages of rooms and their contents’.\(^{41}\) The use of domestic space in the eighteenth century household was more complicated than the narrow terms ‘public/private’ and ‘front-stage/backstage’ allow. These theories for the use of domestic space have in common an assertion that division of space was fixed both physically and ideologically. In contrast, rooms and their contents could be appreciated and enjoyed in a number of different ways.


\(^{41}\) Overton et al (2004), Production and Consumption in English Households, p.136
It could be suggested that the public and private nature of home was fluid and was dependent on use with some rooms fulfilling both private and public functions. For example, the parlour was used in a private way for family relaxation and comfort, but it took on public functions when receiving visitors. If goods have many different meanings depending on context as suggested by Breen, then it can be argued that rooms and interiors could also have different meanings depending on context.\(^42\) The context of goods is usually defined by their location, but use can also provide a context. The meaning and the role of an interior could change depending on how it was being used. To be a fully functioning home in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century a household had to be able to fulfil private and social functions often in the same rooms. The parlour needed to be a comfortable space for the family to spend time either together or alone as individuals, yet at the same time it had to function as a space for social entertaining providing a context to administer domestic sociability to friends, family or even business companions. Rooms needed to be furnished to enable them to fulfil these requirements, their furnishings supported their use, but often this use was transitional and a room needed to be able to function and able to operate on many different levels to suit the requirements of its user. The use of rooms suggests heterogeneity and not homogeneity and therefore did not conform to any simplistic binary division of space.

**The home as a private refuge**

During the eighteenth century there was a change in how a house was used and understood by contemporaries. The house became a refuge from the outside world with the result that it became a comfortable and pleasant space to spend time.\(^43\) Davidoff and Hall suggest that as part of the growing separation between work and home that occurred between 1780 and 1850 the home became a distinctly private space. Their thesis suggests that during this period society became divided into two distinct spheres of private and public activity. This separate spheres ideology was


central to an emerging middle class culture in which men and women adopted ‘distinctively different class identities’.\textsuperscript{44} Men were associated with the public sphere, and women with the private, their identities were defined by the sphere that they inhabited. ‘As the spatial and temporal quarantine between the public and the private grew, they were ever more identified with gender. A masculine penumbra surrounded that which was defined as public, while women were increasingly engulfed by the private realm, bounded by physical, social and psychic partitions. Men, in their privileged position, moved between both sectors.’\textsuperscript{45} The home sat within the private sphere and by the mid-nineteenth century the dominance of the split between work and home meant that the theoretical concept of separate spheres was reinforced by the physical world.\textsuperscript{46}

Davidoff and Hall state that within the home, space was organised along similar lines to society, certain rooms had a primarily public role and others maintained private functions. Activities were carried out in specific spaces that were furnished according to their use, role or function. Service spaces such as the kitchen and washrooms were used for mundane ‘private’ activities beyond the scrutiny of public gaze. Similarly, as sleep became regarded as a private activity bedrooms were moved to upper floors and became private and individual spaces. At the same time as this spatial division was meant to have occurred the home was visited by a number of outsiders. Its role as a site for the dissemination of domestic hospitality meant that it was regularly used to entertain guests who were outsiders, and yet at the same time to be able to service these activities a number of servants were required within the private realm of the household. Rather then being a private haven of tranquillity, the household was a fluid space with multiple divisions of space and meanings depending on the perspective of the individual and how they were using or interacting with the space. Some visitors only entered certain rooms of a house, for example those invited for entertainment (such as taking tea or for a diner party) would have occupied the parlour, drawing room or dining room, whereas those delivering goods to the house would have accessed only the service sections or the kitchen.

\textsuperscript{45} Davidoff and Hall (1987 reprinted 1992), \textit{Family Fortunes}, p.319
\textsuperscript{46} Davidoff and Hall (1987 reprinted 1992), \textit{Family Fortunes}, p.319 and pp.364-375
Part 1: The Domestic Environment
Chapter 2: Using Domestic Space

Servants accessed all rooms of a house in order to service the requirements of the family and to keep rooms clean, bringing the level of privacy within a household into question. Many of these tasks were never seen, and because maintenance and management were praised by their invisibility they were rarely noted.\(^{47}\) The accommodation of servants within the household posed many problems for the middling family. As housework was expected to be invisible so too were servants, (unless they were serving a meal) this meant that they required sleeping chambers away from the main family. In many houses the garrets were adapted and given over to use as servants’ sleeping quarters. For example in the 1836 sales catalogue of Reverend Colley from Shropshire the room for his ‘servant girl’ and ‘servant boy’ were in the attic of his house.\(^{48}\) Accommodation for servants is not detailed in every inventory or sales catalogue of the sample.

For many households the problem of accommodating live-in servants was acute. However, additional labour was necessary for the successful maintenance and service of the house, in these circumstances day labourers were employed.\(^{49}\) The employment of day labourers further compromised the private nature of the middling household, as these servants would have crossed the threshold between the public and private on a daily basis. As Moira Donald points out, with the employment of servants, the home was not exclusively a site for the middle class family instead it was shared with ‘those lower down the social order who serviced it’.\(^{50}\) In contrast to the middle class cultural ideal of the home as a private space from which to retire from the public world, for many people (especially women) the house was a site of work.\(^{51}\) It can be argued that maintenance and housework were a form of use and were a level of interaction with the furniture and furnishings of the domestic interior. In some

\(^{47}\) Maintenance tasks are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
\(^{48}\) The catalogue starts at the top of the house and gradually works down to the cellar. Shropshire Archives, 665/4/211, Reverend Colley, Montford (Shrewsbury)
\(^{49}\) For reasons of limited accommodation Schwartz suggests that a large proportion of servants were in fact day labourers who lived outside the household that they serviced. Schwarz, Leonard (1999) ‘English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, Economic History Review, LII. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.
cases, goods might have been interacted with more whilst they were being cleaned than at any other time.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Room use and domestic rituals}

The development of the parlour as a social space made it suitable for receiving visitors. As was mentioned earlier in the chapter, the female culture of house visiting to take tea would have taken place within the parlour. The way that the room was used was linked to its function as a space for disseminating domestic sociability. In order to administer the ritual correctly the appropriate equipage had to be owned and used in the right way. This functional equipage consisted of items that could be highly decorative, such as silver tea-caddies, tea services, sugar tongs, kettles and stands upon which to place them. Chinaware and cream coloured earthenware were used to drink from, but these goods were highly collectable as decorative items in their own right. Throughout the eighteenth century new goods were adapted and developed for the tea ritual, including Japanned trays. Women were responsible for mediating domestic sociability for the family; they had the knowledge and the power to create an environment within which that was possible. For example, when John Marsh, a gentleman musician and lawyer relocated his family to Chichester in 1787, his wife immediately set about ordering suitable furnishings for their drawing room so that they could announce the family’s arrival into local society by ‘seeing company’.\textsuperscript{53} It was essential for them successfully to announce their arrival by partaking in the polite culture of domestic sociability, but in order for that to be achieved the interior had to be redecorated in a suitably tasteful way. Having a tastefully furnished home within which to receive company demonstrated to Chichester’s middling sort that they were a part of polite society, a poorly furnished and inappropriately decorated room could have left them ostracised socially.

Social house visits to take tea formed a central part of polite culture, and they allowed women to display their taste and knowledge of socio-cultural values to others through

\textsuperscript{52} Chapter 4 details the ways in which some items of furniture and textiles were kept clean and in appropriate condition.
the ownership and use of tea accoutrements. Being able to mediate domestic sociability in the correct way demonstrated to peers the internalisation of these values and at the same time reaffirmed those values. As Clive Edwards argues, the domestic interior was one of the most important areas for the display of goods that symbolised an understanding of polite taste. Social occasions allowed the host or hostess to demonstrate an understanding of culture through the presentation of the interior.\textsuperscript{54} It was not enough simply to possess and be able to use tea equipage correctly, it had to take place with a suitable context; it was essential to have an appropriate room within which such activities could take place. Rooms furnished in the correct way disseminated to visitors that the inhabitant had an understanding of taste and appropriateness. Even more importantly the correctly furnished and appropriately decorated home demonstrated that the owner belonged to polite society. Rooms were decorated specifically to reflect their social use and this code of furniture and decoration was embedded in middling values of taste.

The development of rooms set aside for certain activities in this way continued throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. The use of a room became linked to a specific function, as Ponsonby points out ‘it was thought desirable for particular rooms to have clear uses rather than multi-functional rooms that had previously been normal’.\textsuperscript{55} In contrast to the earlier period, where probate inventories have been used to provide a dataset of information about room use, there are not any comparative quantitative studies of the use of domestic space for the later part of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth. Newspaper advertisements offering houses for sale or let provide information about the way that rooms were used. \textit{The Salopian Journal}, for example, contains hundreds of such advertisements for the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth. Two examples from 1794 suggest that the division of domestic space into rooms defined by their functions had become the standard way to both organise and describe the internal features of a house.

‘TWO DWELLING HOUSES… The front house consists of a Parlour, Kitchen four lodging rooms, with closets and Garrets, the other of a Parlour, kitchen,

\textsuperscript{55} Ponsonby, Margaret (2007), \textit{Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850}, Ashgate, Aldershot, p.13
three lodging rooms and closets with sufficient cellaring to each house. There is a pump in the court with a Brew house and other conveniences together with a new brick building fronting the street…’\textsuperscript{56}

‘…a new built Dwelling HOUSE…one of the best streets in Brecon; consisting of two Parlours, a kitchen, Drawing Room, eight good bedchambers, a Brew House and Laundry with a garden and other conveniences.’\textsuperscript{57}

Advice literature was a reflection of socio-cultural ideology and it suggests that in order to conform to middling culture the eighteenth century household had to be furnished in a specific way. Furnishings and objects were to be selected based upon the criteria of taste and appropriateness. Advice books were keen to assist and enlighten newly married housewives and uninformed homeowners of how they should furnish and decorate their homes. Some advice literature went into great detail in order to explain the type of furniture that was essential, where it should be placed in the home and the colour schemes that were most appropriate. The influence that politeness had on the appearance of the domestic interior suggests that there was a middling cultural consensus of how home should be furnished and used. This does not mean that homes were (or had to be) furnished in identical ways, or even in a generic way. Houses were a private space as well as a social arena and due to this they were also an area for personal taste and display. Due to this, many factors influenced the way that the domestic interior was furnished and decorated. However, individuals acted within the wider frameworks of polite society.

Contemporary ideology dictated that rooms should be organised to fulfil a function and clearly furnished to reflect and assist in its delivery. Although this arrangement of space was considered ideal, it was not always possible for individuals to segregate their home in this way. The structure of older houses frequently meant that domestic space could not physically be divided into a separate sitting room and dining room.\textsuperscript{58}

Sales catalogues can be used to gain an understanding of how the use of domestic

\textsuperscript{56} Shropshire Archives, Salopian Journal, September 1794
\textsuperscript{57} Shropshire Archives, Salopian Journal, August 1794
\textsuperscript{58} Ponsonby provides extensive discussion of why the household could not always be physically organized into rooms with a clear single function. Ponsonby (2007), \textit{Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors}, p.103
Part 1: The Domestic Environment
Chapter 2: Using Domestic Space

space in individual households had developed by the early nineteenth century. The 1810 sales catalogue of Mrs Whitehead’s household goods from the town of Bridgnorth in Shropshire reveals that her house contained a kitchen, brewhouse, cellar, passage, parlour, yellow room, closet and blue room.\(^{59}\) Her parlour could have been used as a comfortable sitting room, a space for dispensing domestic sociability in an appropriately decorated environment. The room was furnished with, ‘six mahogany chairs and elbow to match, hair seats, brass nails’ with two stools providing additional seating. There was a mahogany dining table for taking meals, and two mahogany claw tables which could have been used for taking tea. The room had added comfort and warmth from the 12 foot by 10½ foot carpet. The ‘pier glass in gilt frame’ brought decoration, alongside the decorative china and glassware. The 39 piece set of white and gold china and the sugar tin and mahogany tea chest confirm that the room was used as a site for taking tea. The pair of decanters and ale and wine glasses, alongside the china bowls, dishes and plates suggests that the room could have been used to entertain a number of people.

Mrs Whitehead had invested substantially in the decoration and appearance of her two bedrooms on the second floor of her house. The labels of the rooms as the ‘yellow room’ and the ‘blue room’, suggest that these rooms were colour co-ordinated. The yellow room was enhanced by yellow coloured textile bed furnishings and the blue room by blue and white coloured bed furnishings. In addition, each room contained items traditionally considered to be decorative, such as the mahogany framed pier glass in the yellow room, and the four pictures in the blue room.\(^{60}\) Mrs Whitehead had also placed considerable investment in the service areas of her household. Her kitchen was well furnished with a range of equipment, including tea and coffee urns, a deal ironing table and several different types of irons (Italian iron, 8 flat irons and stand). Her kitchen also contained six chairs and tables suggesting that this room could still be used for dining if it was required. Seating in the kitchen could have been used by servants to undertake some activities whilst sitting down, or for breaks during the work of servicing events such as taking tea or dining.

\(^{59}\) Mrs Whitehead’s possessions were referred to briefly in Chapter 1.
\(^{60}\) Shropshire Archives, Harwick Pedigrees (auctioneer notices on reverse of pages), 6001/4/4645-4647, Mrs Whitehead, Shropshire, 1810.
The 1810 sales catalogue of Mr Sing Sen’s household goods reveals that he used the domestic space of his Bridgnorth house in a similar way to that of his neighbour Mrs Whitehead. His house consisted of a brewhouse, kitchen, parlour and three bedrooms. The parlour contained three mahogany claw tables, and eight mahogany chairs (two with arms) which would have comfortably accommodated guests for a range of domestic hospitality activities. For taking tea there was a tea tray with waiter, and for entertainment there was a circular card table. The room was made comfortable and warmer by the 10 foot by 8 foot carpet and pair of window curtains, and was enhanced through the decorative features of an 8 day clock with painted case, time piece on a white marble stand and gilt framed mirror. The bedrooms in his house were well furnished and enhanced by coloured bedclothes and window curtains. Mr Sing Sen’s house was also well stocked with mundane domestic equipment to facilitate domestic routines and the care and maintenance of his household. His brewhouse was used for the storage of some kitchen equipment including saucepans and tin-ware, copper and brass pots and a frying pan. The kitchen contained amongst other things a range with hanging plates, knives and forks and a pair of flat irons. His kitchen could also be used to take meals as it contained an oak dining table, and twelve oak chairs.

In these two households there was an element of a mixed use of space, but this was very different to the multifunctional rooms found in houses in the early eighteenth century. Both of these houses could adapt to circumstances of use and function to fulfil these needs as and when required. Both Whitehead and Sing Sen did not occupy houses with separate dining and sitting rooms. The division of space was not as sophisticated as it would have been in an ideal household. However, both houses contained furniture that allowed these routines to be carried out in comfort and style as a particular activity required. The parlour could be used for sitting and relaxing and taking tea, equally the tea equipage and furniture could be ignored and the mahogany dining furniture could be used for taking a meal. When the occasion necessitated both Whitehead and Sing Sen could serve meals in their homes in a room furnished with mahogany furniture. Mahogany furniture became particularly associated with the dining room, so even though Whitehead and Sing Sen could not

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61 In Chapter 1 we visited Mr Sing Sen’s sales catalogue briefly to discuss the nature of some of his decorative furniture.
provide a separate space to take meals, they could at least use the mahogany furniture that was associated with dining, but in a different room.62

Later in the nineteenth century space became gendered and furnished to reflect its use and that of its users. For example, the dining room was a site of male dominated routine and was often decorated in dark colours to reflect its masculine identity. It is worth noting that women inhabited the room, but the social ritual of dining was a male lead domestic activity. The drawing room on the other hand was a site for female entertainment and its furnishing and decoration was much lighter to reflect its association with femininity.63 Juliet Kinchin points out that the gendered division of domestic space became increasingly defined as the nineteenth century progressed and remained present in many houses until the early twentieth century.64

One of the later sales catalogues demonstrated this sophisticated division in the use of space. The 1836 sale of Reverend James Colley’s household goods revealed that he had both a dining room and a drawing room in his Shropshire house. Colley was a member of the emerging middle class and in some ways his house had more in common with the homes of the later Victorians than it did with earlier eighteenth century houses. This demonstrates how much the use of space and domestic decoration had developed during the period. Each room was furnished in a way that was appropriate for its function, and which reflected the gendered nature of the way that the room was to be used.65 His dining room contained mahogany furniture, including a sideboard, a set of dining tables with matching chairs. The furnishings of the room were also dark in colour, with a crimson fire shade a grey drugget and ‘Handsome brown moreen window curtains, trimmed with blue silk lace and fringes, ebonized pole, with gilt ornaments and ten large brass rings’. His drawing room was suitably decorated for its use as a sitting room and a place for less formal entertainment than the dining room. The room contained some mahogany furniture but this was softened by a ‘painted cover’. The chairs in the room were not made

62 Edwards (2005), Turning Houses into Homes, p.97
63 Ponsonby (2007), Stories from Home, p.103
from mahogany, instead the six arm chairs were ‘stained rosewood’ with ‘two hair cushions’. The room was feminised by patterned textile furnishings such as a ‘handsome printed drugget’ and a ‘plaid cotton table cover’. The curtains were identical in description to the dining room curtains, except that these were described as ‘drab moreen’.\textsuperscript{66}

At the same time as the social rooms of the house developed the spaces to maintain and service these rooms and their activities also increased. To ensure that the house had the appearance of functioning smoothly without any intrusion of the labour that went into its maintenance and service these activities were kept hidden. In newly built houses purpose built service rooms increased as did a network of corridors to ensure that servants and their domestic labour remained hidden. Alongside the kitchen and pantry, rooms such as the scullery and laundry room were included in new houses. The 1810 sales catalogue for Edward Pearce reveals that his Bridgnorth house had a room labelled as a ‘scullery’. He used this room for the storage of mundane domestic equipment such as ‘3 maslin kettles, earthenware, cupboard and saucepan, tinware, garden tools, old iron’.\textsuperscript{67} It is difficult to tell how else the room could have been used from the goods that were recorded inside the scullery. In a similar way to the development of social space during this period, mundane space too developed into rooms focused on the delivery of specific tasks. The kitchen was for the preparation of meals and cooking and the laundry room was for washing, drying and smoothing fabrics. These further subdivisions of space were to aid function and to assist in the maintenance of the household. In older houses these divisions were sometimes not physically possible due to the number or layout of the rooms. Here, the kitchen took on these roles, or where possible a ‘back kitchen’, or even a cellar or the attic enabled some sort of split in the space for these mundane maintenance activities. For example, Edward Pearce had a scullery in his house in Bridgnorth in 1810, but he still needed other space to store and to execute mundane domestic tasks. An upper room in his house contained some items related to the laundry process, ‘table boxes and clothes horse…two baskets’ and a line and pegs. This suggests that these items were either stored here until they were used, or that the room was used for

\textsuperscript{66} Shropshire Archives, 665/4/211, Reverend Colley, Montford (Shrewsbury)
\textsuperscript{67} Shropshire Archives, Harwick Pedigrees (auctioneer notices on reverse of pages), 6001/4/4645-4647, Mr Edward Pearce, Shropshire, 1810.
drying washing, or for airing and smoothing it, each important parts of the laundry process. These goods were stored with a large quantity of household linen, including nine pairs of sheets, two bed quilts, seven breakfast cloths, large diaper tale cloths, four napkins and six pillow cases. Amongst these were sundry earthenware, a bird cage and waiter and a bottle rack and chest. Similarly, the sales catalogues of both Mrs Eggliston (1829) and Reverend Colley (1836) demonstrate a similar use of mundane space. Eggliston and Colley had a room called the ‘back kitchen’, and these both contained kitchen equipment and items related to laundry work. Eggliston had a ‘water tub’ and Colley a ‘clothes rack’ and ‘towel roller’, additionally it appears that Colley’s back kitchen was used for washing up crockery and cutlery as it also contained a plate rack. Further to this, both Eggliston and Colley used their cellars for washing. Eggliston’s cellar contained a copper warming pan, an ironbound and washing tub and a large washing tub and Colley’s had two washing tubs.68 Neither of these houses had a laundry room, but they both separated the tasks to specific rooms where they could be undertaken in a space designated for that particular mundane task.

The invisible nature of domestic work is also related to the function of the room. Maintenance activities had to take place in social spaces, but they were not to conflict or intrude on the use of the room. They had to facilitate the room being able to fulfil its primary function as a social comfortable space to spend time. For example, if the family required the use of the parlour or drawing room in the morning they would expect the fire to be lit and the room to be clean and tidy ready for the way in which they intended to use the room. It would not be acceptable for the family to see the fire being lit, or to enter to find that a servant had not yet prepared the room. It would however, have been perfectly acceptable for the housewife to observe the servant carrying out her work, because she would be undertaking her role of monitoring and supervising the servants work. This level of appropriateness was related to the intended use at a given time and not to a fixed use as the ‘public and private’ division of household space suggests.

68 Shropshire Archives, 665/4/146, Mrs Mary Eggliston, 1829, Auctioneers catalogue, Shropshire Archives, 665/4/211, Reverend Colley, Montford (Shrewsbury).
Decoration and room function

By the early nineteenth century a room’s intended use and its decoration reflected and supported social routines. In her household management book first published in 1825, Mrs Parkes included a chapter that explained how and why rooms should be furnished and decorated in particular ways. She made clear the link between the furnishing and decoration of a room and its intended use declaring, ‘It is evident that every room should be furnished in a style not inconsistent with the use for which it is set apart’. Parkes went into great detail instructing that rooms should be furnished according to their function, listing the equipment and furniture that they should contain and detailing appropriate colours and suitable decorative schemes.

The gendered nature of domestic space is implicit in her instruction for furnishing and decorating both the dining and drawing rooms. Here function and use began to merge with the gender of the primary user of the room. The dining room was an important space where time was of utmost importance for the serving and eating of a meal. In contrast, the drawing room was a leisured space to pass time and engage in conversation. Each room had to be furnished and decorated in a way that reflected and supported its use.

The dining room was to contain substantial functional furniture preferably mahogany that supported the ritual of dining consisting of dining chairs, a table and a sideboard. All of the furniture in the dining room related directly to the function of the room as a space for eating meals and entertaining guests. These were the items that were necessary to enable the social routine to take place. The sideboard was an essential piece of furniture for dining, as it was where the plates of food were laid out for display before the meal was served. The importance of the sideboard as a focal

69 The decision making rationale proposed by Parkes will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.  
70 Parkes, Frances (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Young Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, and the Regulation of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London, p.191  
71 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, pp.186-214  
point of the routine of dining is made clear by Parkes who stressed ‘no piece of furniture is so capable of evincing an elegant and cultivated taste’. 73

The colours proposed by Parkes for the decoration of the dining room were dark, complimenting the mahogany furniture. Curtains were to be maroon, crimson or scarlet and walls were recommended to be a deep olive, dull crimson or maroon. Her emphasis was on co-ordination and simplicity reflecting and reinforcing the importance and sober nature of the function of the room. Kinchin points out that the use of dark reds symbolised the carnivorous ritual of the male task of carving meat as part of dining. She suggests that the plain, substantial furniture of the dining room, and its plain dark decoration, reflected and enhanced the masculine nature of the room. 74

The furnishing and decoration for the drawing room proposed by Parkes was a complete contrast to the sober formal dining room. The drawing room was a space where time was passed after retiring from the dining room. As such its appearance needed to compliment its use through a less formal decorative scheme. The furniture and furnishings needed to enhance relaxation so that the users of the room were able to while away time in comfort. A greater range of wooden furniture was permissible in the drawing room than in the dining room. Parkes suggests that rose-wood and elm were suitable together with mahogany. She favoured the use of mahogany for the drawing room, picking out its durability, resistance to insect infestation and the ease at which it could be kept clean and polished in contrast to other woods. 75 Ornaments were an important feature, as Parkes suggests that a few choice items could inspire conversation and social interaction was one of the main uses of the drawing room. She cautioned her reader against an overfilled room because it could detract from the important role of inspiring social interaction, and secondly because on over crowded room further complicated by over fussy decoration would not aid in relaxation, instead it would ‘make one sometimes desire a vacant space on which to rest the eye.’ 76

73 Parkes, (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.192
75 Parkes, (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, pp.197-198
76 Parkes, (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.194
This room was to be decorated with colourful walls, and patterned rich coloured embossed papers were permitted in larger rooms. Parkes did not stipulate a set colour scheme, instead she warned that contrasts of colours should be avoided and she went into great detail describing which sets of colours complimented each other and advised that whatever the size of room ‘simplicity, lightness, and cheerfulness should prevail’. The use of colour reflected the less formal/informal nature of the room and reinforced its function as a site for relaxation, passing time and social interaction.

The furniture and decoration proposed by Parkes for the dining and drawing rooms was closely linked to the function of each room. The dining room required furniture to support the important social routine of taking meals and entertaining guests. In contrast the drawing room was more of a frivolous space where time was passed relaxing in comfortable furniture enhanced by soft furnishings and entertaining guests with the aid of carefully selected feature ornaments to inspire social interaction. Alongside this, implicit in Parkes instructions, each room began to subtly reflect and reinforce the gender of the primary user of the room. The function of the room and the appropriate behaviour for the users of the room became codified in the furniture, furnishings and decoration of the room.

At the heart of Parkes advice was the assertion that furnishing and decoration should be co-ordinated throughout the house with a premium on comfort. She stipulated that rooms that were intended to receive visitors were not to be decorated in a purely decorative way to the detriment of those rooms intended for private family use, and comfort was never to be sacrificed for aesthetic display. Display however, was not condemned entirely by Parkes instead she advised that when setting up a new household, essential furniture must be purchased first, and that these necessities needed to be based on comfort. Ornaments and items to enrich domestic space could always be purchased at a later date. She explains, ‘I should recommend every article to be first provided, upon which comfort depends, for it carries its influence through every day and moment of our lives …These embellishments, however, may always be

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77 Parkes, (1825 first edition), *Domestic Duties*, p.194
added in such degree as prudence will permit…’

Necessity is defined here by function, use and comfort not by style, decoration and fashion. She advised against those of the middling ranks blindly following fashion for economic reasons: ‘…the affluent may indulge their taste in adding ornament upon ornament, in their houses, and in refitting them according to the varying fashion, those of narrow circumstances must restrain their fancies…’ Implicit in her writing is the separation of ‘fashion’ as something decorative, from function as something ‘useful’ and this found expression in the tasteful middle class domestic interior. When purchasing furniture her reader was informed that it needed to be of a good quality, and she placed an emphasis upon its strength and durability, suggesting that it ought to be purchased to last. Only that which was ‘strictly useful’ and not ‘affected by fashion’ ought to be bought. Simplicity, she informed the reader, informed and directed good taste amongst those of ‘narrow circumstances’, undoubtedly members of the middle class.

Parkes dealt with all areas of the household. She covered rooms intended for social rituals and the reception of the public, such as the drawing room and dining room, and those that facilitated domestic sociability and the day to day running of the household, the kitchen and servants’ rooms. She also discussed bedrooms in detail as they reflected comfort for the family. Her choice to include instruction for the furnishing and decoration of rooms is interesting. It reveals that Parkes felt her reader needed direction with the decoration of these rooms, suggesting that rooms could be decorated in an inappropriate manner and that this was important enough to necessitate advice. Edwards points out that the construction of a socio-cultural ideal of good taste and the development of ‘a near-universal language of appropriateness’ meant that consumers had to seek advice in order to learn about and to purchase the correct goods. The subsequent chapter will pick up on this theme and begin to consider the decisions that affected consumers when deciding how to furnish and decorate their homes.

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78 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.186
79 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.186
80 She contrasts those of ‘narrow circumstance’ with ‘the affluent’. Parkes, (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.186
81 Edwards (2005) Turning Houses into Homes, p.77
Conclusion

The way that the household was used changed during the period with the home becoming an arena for domestic hospitality for visitors and a comfortable place to spend time for the family. A significant development was the creation of a social space within the house. During the eighteenth century the parlour played a vital role as a comfortably furnished room that was suitable for dispensing domestic sociability to the family and to guests. The demands of a well furnished decorated space that needed to be used on a regular basis, and needed to be kept clean and tidy to fulfil its function coupled with the demands of domestic social routines increased and changed the nature of housework. The division of space within the household was much more complicated than the ‘front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ division promoted by Weatherill. Rooms were used for both public and private activities and during the period ‘back-stage’ rooms for mundane household chores were also invested in. The meaning of a room was a reflection of how it was being used at the time; the same space took on different levels of meaning when it was being used by an individual, the family and by visitors and guests. These meanings were fluid and linked to the rooms function, how it was being used and who was using it.

As the period progressed the use of domestic space continued to develop. During the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth rooms were further fragmented by their association with a particular primary function. The dining room and the drawing room were further developments of domestic social space. These rooms were linked to the gender of their principal user and their decorative furnishing reflected and aided not only their function, but also their gendered nature. Advice literature propagated an ideal image of how this could, or should be achieved. A room had to be furnished correctly to enable it to perform its function, but now that function was also partially related to who occupied the room. These changes all had an impact on the way that the household needed to be maintained. The creation of social spaces meant that there were more furnishings to clean and care for, and social routines and entertainment created a need for the house to be serviced in a more formalised and routine manner.
Chapter 3: Consumption and the home

Chapters 1 and 2 have demonstrated that the contents, appearance and use of the home changed significantly between 1700 and 1830. This chapter moves on to consider the framework that influenced and informed consumer choice. Firstly, to explore the presence of an idealised domestic interior in the public world through images created and reflected through retail. Secondly, to explore the decision making process for the acquisition of domestic goods. In particular to take into account the suggestion that household maintenance and management began to influence purchasing decisions. The increase in the ownership of household goods and the development to the physical nature of these goods combined with the use of domestic space and the home had an impact on the management and maintenance of the home. The aim is to explore how the emerging culture of the home influenced consumption and to establish that the maintenance of the home affected purchasing decisions.

Viewing and imagining domestic material culture

In the previous chapter the nature of the household as a private space was discussed. Here discussion moves on to consider how the household and domestic interior was present in the public world. Throughout the period there were many opportunities for people of middling status to learn about household goods and domestic decoration. Real homes could be visited through the practise of house visiting, and an image of the homes of neighbours and strangers could easily be accessed through reading auctioneers sales catalogues and attending the subsequent sale. This exposure to the domestic interior both contributed to and reflected a culture of home and this created a framework that influenced consumption choices. Attention now turns to the artificial interiors created by retailers in their shops and through their advertisements, and to the real interiors that were presented by salesmen through sales catalogues.
Shop and showroom contextual displays

Shops displayed new consumer goods to their intended purchasers by exposing new and novel inventions and designs to the middling sorts. At the same time, the goods themselves symbolised the socio-cultural values of appropriate taste. Retailers understood this and reflected it through displaying objects in their shops that disseminated and advertised the cultural values of polite society, in some cases moulding, shaping and creating them, in other cases reflecting them back to their potential customers. Display fostered a sense of longing, desire and need in the spectator who was a potential customer: it was not just objects that were being displayed, but membership through their purchase to ‘polite society’. The display of consumer goods was built upon the culture of social improvement through the purchase of goods.

During the eighteenth century it was not uncommon for provincial tradesmen to use their own homes to showcase the goods that they sold. Often, certain clientele were served within a private space of the shop or inside the tradesman’s home. This gave them access to the tradesman’s own home and allowed them to view his sense of taste. It is unlikely that this trend continued into the early nineteenth century. Advice literature from this time certainly suggested that relationships with retailers should be mutually polite with a certain degree of professionalism between retailer and customer. The probate inventory of Samuel Hinkes, a tobacconist in Wolverhampton in 1749 had a total value of only £14, but his house still contained many decorative goods. He owned four pictures and a clock, which he kept in his ‘parlour’, ensuring that it was suitably furnished in an appropriately tasteful way for social and business

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1 Cox, Nancy (2000), The Complete Tradesman: A study of Retailing 1550-1820, Ashgate, Aldershot, pp.210-211. For a wider discussion of retailing novelty and innovation see chapter 7, pp.197-222
3 Some of Cox’s references are from the late seventeenth century, Pepys for example was writing in 1660. However, Nicholas Blundell who frequently interacted with his tradesmen on a social level was acting at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Cox (2000), The Complete Tradesman, pp.135-139
4 Parkes warned her reader against pursuing shopping as a leisure activity, and in addition suggested that tradesmen should be monitored through keeping fastidious household accounts. The latter issue will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5. Parkes, Frances (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Young Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, and the Regulation of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London, pp.371-373 and p.225
5 Wolverhampton archives and local studies, Hinkes, Samuel, Wolverhampton, 1749.
functions if and when they arose. It was important for urban provincial tradesmen to invest in or to acquire the requisite cultural capital to create the ‘correct’ image in order to entice customers. Cox states that their ownership of new and innovative consumer goods was an essential part of their trade. They forged an identity out of the possession and display of such goods in order to entice customers and to demonstrate that they had internalised the correct taste. Through purveying the correct taste retailers hoped to procure the trust of customers who would believe that by purchasing goods specifically from them they too would demonstrate ‘correct’ and appropriate taste through their own home.

As these examples reveal, many tradesmen used their homes as an extension of their shop display. In 1786 Sophie von la Roche commented that in the evening in lit streets, ‘The arrangement of shops... with their adjoining living rooms, makes a very pleasant sight. For right through the excellently illuminated shop one can see many a charming family scene enacted.’ Here shop window display and visiting a tradesman’s house blur. Windows allowed access into the supposedly private setting of the home, making this private space public at the same time. This can be seen as an extension of the viewing culture where passers by were used to looking in through windows. Innovative retailers were quick to seize to opportunity to market their goods even further by putting themselves, their family and their home on display. In an attempt to convince the onlooker, the potential customer, that he could mediate this sociability to them through the purchase of the goods that he sold. This served as an advertisement not only for the tradesman’s business, but it also reinforced his position in polite middling society through the display of his sense of taste and his domestic life.

From the mid eighteenth century it became increasingly popular for many tradesmen to display their goods within a domestic context. The desire to display household goods in this way led many retailers to acquire empty houses to use as showrooms. For example, the top quality furniture firm Linnells’ situated a showroom in a London domestic residence. The front ground floor room of their house in Berkeley Square

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6 Cox (2000), The Complete Tradesman, p.135-137
7 Description by German visitor Sophie von la Roche from Sophie in London, 1786 (translated by C. Williams in 1933), http://www.georgianindex.net/Shop/Shops.html
was used as a show room, whilst manufacture took place in workshops on the other floors and at the rear of the building. In this way the tradesman could keep separate manufacture and production from retail and consumption.\textsuperscript{8} In 1753 Thomas Chippendale leased premises that consisted of three properties that were mainly used as workshops but one of the houses was used as a showroom.\textsuperscript{9} A similar, but smaller scale, situation was displayed by James Eykyn, an upholsterer from Wolverhampton. From his 1780 probate inventory it can be gleaned that his premises and house were situated in the same building in a prominent position in the town’s main shopping street and market place.\textsuperscript{10} His house contained a shop, a silvering room and a cabinet workshop as distinct workspaces.\textsuperscript{11} It would appear that he used his dining room as a space to display a range of goods in various stages of completion. These goods were displayed within his home, reflecting the domestic context of their intended use. His ‘dining room’ contained a varied mixture of furniture

\begin{quote}
‘a parcel of Odments of Glass a China sconce 300 pieces of Paper different colours and patters A Mahogany wardrobe…A Mahogany desk and book case, Mahogany double chest of drawers…5 Oval Hanging glasses…13 square Hanging glasses 29 Square do painted frame…10 Prints Glazed 6 Carved Bracketts.’\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

In his parlours, the little parlour and large parlour, Eykyn did not store as many goods, but these rooms did contain new and decorative items, and seem to have been comfortably furnished. The small parlour contained ‘4 chairs…a mahogany square pillar table…14 large pictures Glased 5 small…a looking glass a small floor cloath’ and his large parlour contained ‘11 ornaments’.\textsuperscript{13} Eykyn furnished his house with the items that he sold displaying new and decorative goods and demonstrating his sense of style and taste. In turn it was not uncommon for a tradesman to visit his customers at their home, this in turn, allowed the tradesman to view their home and their sense

\begin{footnotes}
\item[9] Edwards (2005), \textit{Turning Houses into Homes}, p.46
\item[10] Sketchley and Adams (1770), \textit{The Wolverhampton Directory of 1770}, Wolverhampton archives and Local studies, p.9
\item[12] The Dictionary Project Archive, Eykyn, James, Upholsterer, Wolverhampton, Staffs, 1780
\item[13] The Dictionary Project Archive, Eykyn, James, Upholsterer, Wolverhampton, Staffs, 1780
\end{footnotes}
of taste. The disorganised nature of his ‘display rooms’ demonstrate a rather undeveloped understanding of showcasing products when compared to the much more ordered and organised constructed domestic interiors created by Wedgwood in his London showrooms during the same decade. Eykyn’s display room had much more in common with a storeroom, or a warehouse. Sophie von La Roche recorded in her 1786 journal a visit to the premises of the furniture producer and retailer, Seddons. She described the showroom as, ‘One large room is absolutely filled up with finished articles in this line [carved woods] while more rooms are occupied by writing-tables, cupboards, chests of drawers, charmingly fashioned desks, large and small chests, work cum toilet tables made of every possible kind of wood in every possible form’.

During the late eighteenth century a distinct style of displaying domestic goods within a constructed domestic environment emerged. In the show room goods were laid out, positioned and displayed as if they were in a home. This sort of retail display sought to imitate the intended context of domestic goods and allowed potential customers to imagine how goods would look and function when purchased and installed in their home. By constructing a physical environment, a ‘mock-up’ of domestic space, the potential customer could see how things looked and interact with them. Whilst interacting with the recreated domestic space the customer could imagine they were in a domestic setting or even their own home. The domestic ‘daydream’ could then be made into a reality by actually purchasing the goods. It also served an educative purpose for the consumer who wanted to ensure their domestic goods showed the ‘correct’ and appropriate sense of taste. Showrooms could be large extravagant spaces where furniture and furnishings were set out to enable potential customers to see how finished pieces would look.

Ackermann’s print of Pellatt and Greens’ showroom (figure 1), and Wedgwood’s show room (figure 2) provide visual descriptions of this display technique. The print of Pellatt and Greens’ depicts a large room measuring ‘57 feet long and 21 broad’, in which two large tables are positioned in the centre of the room with sets of glass

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objects arranged on them, as they would be arranged when in use. However, in the picture many designs are displayed at the same time on the same table so that they can be compared and contrasted with each other. There are pull-out drawers underneath the tables with more goods on them, probably variations in design and colour to those displayed on the table. There were glass display cases which mimicked contemporary domestic furniture; within them more glass items are arranged resembling how they could be displayed within the home. Chandeliers, though probably not appropriate for middling sort homes, were hung from the ceiling so that they could be seen as they would look in a domestic interior allowing the potential customer to imagine how they would appear in an intended room. Seating was provided in both showrooms so that customers could view goods at their comfort and leisure, enabling them to sit and visualise the goods as they would appear within their own homes. At his extensive London showrooms Wedgwood invoked a domestic setting by the inclusion of dining tables set out with his dinner services as if they were ready to be used. He explained to his friend Thomas Bentley (later his business partner) that he required a large showroom in London because it was his intention to ‘enable me to shew various Table and desert services, completely set out on two ranges of Tables’. Similarly he specified that the walls would be decorated with a ‘great variety’ of vases. To prevent this static domestic scene from going stale he employed the innovative technique of ensuring that these displays were subtly changed on a daily basis, thus ensuring constant and consistent interest from potential customers. The desire to display goods in a fabricated but realistic domestic environment was Wedgwood’s reason for procuring a new showroom.

16 Ackermann’s Repository of arts, literature, commerce, manufactures, fashions and politics (1809) The image of Messrs. Pellet and Green ‘is a representation of a shew-room, 57 feet long and 21 broad, fitted up with great taste, and forming part of the extensive premises of Messrs. Pellatt and Green, glass-makers to the king, St. Paul’s churchyard. In this room is exhibited an elegant assortment of glass, china and earthen-ware, in a word, of all those articles of humble utility, or costly decoration, which are to be found in the principal glass-shops of this metropolis.’ http://www.georgianindex.net/Shop/glass/p-glassmakers.html


Chapter 3: Consumption and the home.

Figure 1: Pellet and Green, Rudolph Ackerman, Repository of arts, literature, commerce, manufactures, fashions and politics, 1809

Figure 2: Wedgwood, London Showroom, reproduced in, http://www.georgianindex.net/Shop/wedgwood/Wedgwood.html
The show room intentionally masqueraded as domestic space in order to sell goods. Doing so allowed customers to imagine how goods would appear within their house. As Berg states the tasteful domestic contexts of display were just as important as the goods being sold; the setting was being sold too.\(^{19}\) The importance of a ‘tasteful’ home was being marketed and through shop displays retailers were in effect selling an image of home. Crucially, Ackermann states that the Pellatt and Green show room was ‘fitted up with great taste’.\(^{20}\) Potential customers were able then to put their confidence in the way the goods were displayed in the show room and transfer that back into their house. They knew that the goods that they bought were ‘tasteful’ and also that the way they were assembled, grouped and displayed was too. The show room was also a place to learn the appropriate model of behaviour for the context of the real household.\(^{21}\) Because shopping took place within the public sphere, show rooms and shops were sites of sociability; people would act out the social roles that were appropriate for the context of the room. This enabled people to learn the conventions of ‘politeness’ and to put their skills into practise in a fabricated environment.

**Retail advertisements**

Advertising in many different formats was widely used by retailers and tradesmen in the eighteenth century, for example newspaper advertisements, trade cards and handbills.\(^{22}\) According to McKendrick, advertising allowed the retailer to manipulate the consumer, placing them in control of consumption as they had the power to create

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new wants and desires. Building on this, Roy Porter describes Wedgwood as a ‘manipulator of fashion’ arguing that he ‘shamelessly exploited envy’. Advertising is interpreted as the gear for the ‘consumer revolution’. This perception of eighteenth century advertising is set within the context of consumption being driven by social emulation. McKendrick suggests that the need to imitate social superiors created some sort of ‘frenzy’ that left people susceptible to the powers of advertising, arguing that ‘men and women surrendered eagerly to the pursuit of novelty…and the enticements of persuasive commercial propaganda.’ While this creates an image of powerless consumers being manipulated by tradesmen, this was not necessarily the case. Evidence suggests that middling sort consumers did not blindly follow the trends set by the aristocracy, and that they themselves had the power to popularise goods and trends. As Cox has argued goods were not instantly accepted by consumers, they had to acquire or be given cultural significance. The proliferation of advertisements in the eighteenth century does not mean that people blindly followed them and were driven to purchase the goods that they promoted. Both text and image based advertisements played another significant cultural role; they provided the tradesman with a way of advertising taste and home, which would encourage long-term consumption of goods as consumers strove to reach the target of ‘ideal’.

Throughout the period, newspapers were filled with advertisements for household goods. These included advertisements placed by retailers for their products, shop or services and those for the sale of second hand goods through house sales and auctions. The latter included a certain amount of no doubt carefully selected goods to tantalise the prospective shopper and to entice them to visit the retailers shop, or to purchase a sales catalogue and perhaps attend the auction. Newspapers were easily accessible and widely popular as their high circulation demonstrates. The level of proliferation that they achieved led Samuel Johnson to comment ‘knowledge is diffused among our

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27 Cox (2000), The Complete Tradesman, p.222
Chapter 3: Consumption and the home.

people by the newspaper’. Provincial newspapers were widely available by the mid-eighteenth century and Porter suggests that by 1760 there were 200,000 provincial papers sold a week, rising to 400,000 by 1800. The actual readership though, would have been much more than this as a paper could have been read by many different people and not just the purchaser. Some provincial newspapers had wide geographical cover, for example, Birmingham’s ‘Aris’s Gazette’ had a distribution network that spanned most towns of the Midlands. Even a town the size of Wolverhampton that was so close to the major city of Birmingham, and fell into the distribution area of Aris’s, had its own newspaper in the late eighteenth century, surviving editions cover a short period but they may not reflect the print run.

Through their advertisements retailers employed a similar technique as they did through creating an ideal representation of the home through artificially constructed domestic interiors. As Karin Dannehl argues, retailers used the concept of ‘completeness’ as a way to sell sets of goods through their advertisement. A 1788 advertisement placed in The Times by Stone and Co. was addressed to ‘Families furnishing kitchens’ and offered to provide them with a ‘complete set of kitchen furniture’. This suggests that there was an ideal for kitchenware during the eighteenth century; the advertiser is certainly drawing on such a concept as a way to sell a ‘complete set’. The advertisement by Stone and Co. supplied the reader with an idea of what was required in a kitchen, as all of the items included in the ‘complete set’ were listed, providing the reader with this knowledge whether or not they chose to order a ‘set’ from Stone and Co. However, this list could be misleading, as it only contained items that the firm produced. Dannehl provides an interesting analysis of this advertisement and discusses the issue of ‘completeness’ and its use in a range of trade cards. She suggests that Stone and Co. manipulate the potential customer into thinking that their kitchen would be deficient and incomplete if it did not contain all the items from the ‘fictional’ complete set that they were selling. This implies that without a complete set the reader’s house would not and did not function fully, or

30 Cox (2000), The Complete Tradesman, p.108
31 Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton Chronicle, 1789
33 Dannehl (2004), A Life Cycle Study of Eighteenth-Century Metal Cooking Vessels, pp. 141-149
correctly. Without this complete set they were ‘missing out’ and ‘Completeness inevitably contains the threat of being incomplete and the challenge to achieve completeness becomes an aim that the consumer feels is attainable, and to some extent, must be achieved’. This builds upon a marketing strategy more recognisably used in the sale of luxury goods where the concept of collecting’ was exploited very successfully. Boulton and Wedgewood were well aware of the allure and power that collecting a complete series held over the consuming collector, by producing luxury items as part of a series they ensured their successful sale.

Some visual advertisements of the late eighteenth century used the idealisation of home as a selling strategy. This idealisation of home was not just about its appearance or the way that it was used, but also encompassed how it was maintained and managed. Again reinforcing the link between the material culture of the household and the way in which it was managed and maintained. Judith Williamson’s examination of twentieth century modes of advertising indicates that advertisements draw on ideological systems that exist outside the medium. Advertisements use symbols and language that have significance and meaning in the wider aspects of society and culture. She calls these ‘referent systems’ and argues that people need to draw on these, often subconsciously, to understand advertisements and to interpret the messages that they contain. Without these systems the advertisements would not exist in the state that they do as they would not have any resonance with the intended audience and would fail to encourage potential customers to buy the goods that are being advertised. Elements of Williamson’s theory of twentieth century advertising can be glimpsed in the 1790 advertisement for ‘Packers Royal Furniture gloss’ (figure 3). This pictorial advertisement suggests that, consciously or unconsciously, the advertiser was using techniques associated with a later period. An image of the domestic interior and its associated cultural connotations was being used to advertise

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34 Dannehl (2004), A Life Cycle Study of Eighteenth-Century Metal Cooking Vessels, p.145
35 ‘Boulton and Wedgewood both promoted the retail strategy of buying as collecting by developing fashionable collections of medallions, cameos and vases, with a new design, material colour or commemoration each season or year which its collector/consumers would add to their series.’ Berg (2005), Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth Century England, p.256
37 Williamson (1986), Decoding Advertisements, p.19
38 This advertisement is discussed again in a different way in Chapter 4, p.161
a product. It brings interior and maintenance together into the public world of advertising, which is doubly interesting when it is remembered that housework was meant to be invisible, and yet here it appeared in an advertisement in a public form for public view and consumption. The image depicts two ladies in a modest, yet tasteful domestic interior, perhaps a parlour. All of the appropriate furniture is present: a table, two chairs and a bureau alongside fixtures such as the fireplace and grate. These furnishings all enhanced the domestic interior by adding comfort and cleanliness. The room is depicted as being decorated with pictures on the wall, a picture or mirror above the fireplace, wall and floor decorations are hinted at. This room probably never existed in reality, but it existed in the minds of those who saw the advertisement. It allowed them to feel familiar with the situation that the picture displays. By relating to a tasteful domestic interior it enabled the reader to associate with the image, and to relay that back to their own experience of similar domestic interiors. The interior is tasteful because it draws upon the existing system of values that the objects in the scene represented. For the advertisement to be successful it had to connect and resonate with its target audience.

Figure 3: Detail from a bill for Packers Royal Furniture Gloss

40 (uniform stripes and patterned, respectively), Snodin and Styles (2001), Design and the Decorative Arts, Image 43
Household sales and associated catalogues

The above sections have demonstrated how retailers used and reflected aspects of the home in the public sphere. This was achieved through the creation of artificial interiors and through the use of elements of the domestic interior to sell household goods. Attention now turns to explore how contemporaries could access the real homes of individuals through reading sales catalogues. Such catalogues provided an insight into other people’s homes, allowing them to learn about the domestic furnishings and goods that their peers and neighbours owned. The reader could learn about the previous owners’ possessions, where they were located within their home and their taste in interior decoration. Many of these catalogues of house sales were printed in vast quantities during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some were printed in provincial newspapers and others had to be specially purchased. The name of the previous occupier of the house, whose goods were being sold, was often given at the start of the catalogue and printed in the newspaper advertisements of sales. For example, in 1770 Aris's Birmingham Gazette contained an advertisement for an ‘Auction on the premises by T Warren of Birmingham . . . All the genuine Household Furniture, Brewing Utensils etc of the late Mrs Sarah Riland of Sutton-Coldfield…’ and in 1794 the Salopian Journal carried the following, ‘ALL the neat and modern Household Furniture, China, Glass, Linen, Plate, &c. likewise the valuable Stock in trade, of Mr. Edward Edwards, Shoemaker, a Bankrupt’ and ‘Sales by Auction BY MR HILL, At the Vicarage House, in Shifnal, on the 23rd and 24th Days of July, 1794: All the genuine and elegant Household Furniture of the Rev. Mr Huntley, going to reside in Oxfordshire’. The name of the owner featured prominently in the auction catalogues and was often located at the top of the catalogue and was quite often printed in bold, or a different font, making it visually striking. In the 1829 sales catalogue for the household goods belonging to Mrs Mary Eggliston her name is featured in capital letters, although these were smaller than some of the other details of the advertisement (Figure 4). This allowed the reader to identify the

41 Sales catalogues were often the ticket to gain access to the sale. Ponsonby (2007), Stories from Home, p.88
42 The Dictionary Archive, MY1770ABG046 Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 1770
43 Shropshire Archives, Salopian Journal, 1794, Vol.1, No.20, June 11th
44 Shropshire Archives, Salopian Journal, 1794, Vol.1, No.24, July 9th
owner of the household and to know the provenance of the second hand goods that were for sale.

Figure 4: Extract from the sales catalogue of Mrs Mary Eggliston.

In most sales catalogues the goods were usually listed room by room providing the reader with an imaginary ‘map’ of the house by the goods that were in each room. Room names such as ‘attic’, ‘sitting room’, and ‘kitchen’ indicate the types of activities that took place enabling the reader of the catalogue to imagine the sorts of goods, objects and furniture that would to be located in those rooms.\textsuperscript{45} The catalogues even list spaces between rooms where items were situated. In the sales catalogue of the deceased Mrs Eggliston in 1829, for example, the lobby with its ‘Two painted chairs’ is described and the staircase with an ‘oval peir glass with gilt frame’. Her parlour contained amongst other items a ‘Spanish Mahogany Pembroke table with

\textsuperscript{45} Shropshire Archives, 665/4/146, Eyton Family part 4, Auctioneers catalogue of the late Mrs Mary Eggliston 1829
drawers on casters’ and a ‘Green and yellow table cover’. The detail of the items is striking, but it was obviously intentional in order to describe the goods as clearly as possible to instigate a sale, or at least to encourage attendance at the sale. By being so descriptive the catalogue allowed people to see what other people owned, and where these belongings were positioned within their homes, so that the reader could form a fairly accurate reconstruction of the appearance of the other person’s home. They were a reference point, a socio-cultural marker or measuring stick that allowed the reader virtual access to another person’s home through words. The reader could easily have known the person and visited their house while they were alive, or just as easily not been invited. This brings an extra dimension to the reading of sales catalogues; they were a way for people to invade and appropriate the private domestic space to which they would have otherwise had no direct access. Even if the reader had visited the house in the occupier’s lifetime it is highly unlikely that they would have been permitted to penetrate beyond formal reception rooms. The sales catalogue listed goods throughout the house, including the functional rooms such as the kitchen and the private space of the bedroom. That through reading such material a person could ‘make imaginary visits to the social worlds of others’. There are perhaps two levels to this consumption of domestic space: imagining and consuming the home of the deceased and simultaneously imagining how certain goods would fit into one’s own home, as all the goods listed were for sale. However by simply reading the text, the reader would have been on one level even perhaps subconsciously consuming an idea and representation of home.

**Shopping for the home: Furnishing and decorating**

The focus here is to explore how household goods were acquired and what motivated their purchase. Recent research has demonstrated that during the period there was a thriving retail market with many different outlets serving a range of customers with a

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46 *Shropshire Archives, 665/4/146, Eyton Family part 4, Auctioneers catalogue of the late Mrs Mary Eggliston 1829*

variety of goods. Even within provincial towns the household consumer could purchase an array of furniture and furnishings. The furniture trade expanded during the eighteenth century, with new businesses being set up and established ones expanding. Items could be commissioned from furniture makers or bought second hand at household auctions, alternatively shops could be visited in person, or goods ordered at a distance by letter. Each homemaker or consumer selected a process that was appropriate to their own personal requirements. As was made clear in the first section of this chapter, the middling homemaker could be influenced in a number of ways when deciding what to purchase for the household. This is not to say that the consumer was passive and succumbed to the will of the advertiser in the way that McKendrick suggests (as discussed in the previous section). Instead, it means that the homemaker or consumer was exposed to images of artificial interiors and to examples of real individual domestic interiors on a constant and regular basis. Whether consciously or subconsciously, these would have helped to inform their understanding of the home, how it could look and how it could be used. When making decisions for their own home, this would have played a role in influencing the decision making process, and in consumer motivation.

The choice of which goods to purchase cannot be explained solely through emulative practice. McKendrick argues that retailers were able to influence consumers easily into buying certain goods because of a pre-existing desire amongst the middling sorts to emulate the spending patterns of their social superiors. However, consumers were not necessarily ‘spurred on by social emulation and class competition’. This ‘trickle-down’ theory of consumer motivation is contradicted by the facts of ownership, which reveal that urban tradesmen were more frequently the owners of...

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48 It is not the intention to provide a comprehensive overview of retailing here as that is outside of the scope of this thesis. Key developments have been through work carried out by Jon Stobart: Stobart, Jon (1998), ‘Shopping Streets as Social Space: Leisure, Consumerism and Improvement in an Eighteenth Century County Town’, in Urban History, 25/1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.3-21 and more recently, Stobart, Jon, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan (2007), Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680-1830, Routledge, London and New York; Mui, Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui (1989), Shops and Shop Keeping in Eighteenth-Century England, London, Routledge; Cox (2000), The Complete Tradesman, this key work was the first comprehensive study of retailing in the early modern period.


50 Edwards (2005), Turning Houses into Homes, p.39 and p.51. He points out that the furniture trade was incredibly complex with many different arrangements between production and retail, pp.55-63

51 McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), The Birth of a Consumer Society, p.2 and p.10
new and decorative goods rather than their social superiors. Thus Weatherill demonstrates that a hierarchy of the consumption of new and decorative goods did not correspond with the social hierarchy.\(^{52}\) Emulation does not explain consumer motivation because imitation is an act and not a motive, and behaviour could be imitative without necessarily being emulative.\(^{53}\)

Goods could be desired for a variety of reasons; their function, appearance or to fulfil a social or cultural role. As goods carried such a wide range of meanings, then it follows that the desire and purchase of goods was the result of a combination of complex motives. To understand consumer choices and motivation the locus of consumption and the act of shopping are crucial.\(^{54}\) This is difficult to study as the process of shopping was poorly documented, and is further complicated by the nature of the act. Shopping itself is ephemeral act occurring partly in the minds of the shopper and retailer. Even when documented, the thought processes behind purchase are not necessarily revealed, though there are exceptions such as written correspondence between shopper and retailer and from the shopper to others justifying or explaining the decision making process that they went through before purchase. Such written documents are few and far between and to enable this to be studied, it is necessary to widen the social focus out from the middling sorts and to consult letters written by the gentry and aristocracy. The letters that Anne, Countess of Strafford, wrote to her husband, Thomas, when he was away from home and she was attempting to furnish their new household, document some of the motivations behind consumer choices.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{52}\) Weatherill (1988), *Consumer Behaviour*, table 8.2 and p.185 also, pp.194-196


\(^{54}\) Pennell, Sara (1999), ‘Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 42, No. 2, p.552. She doesn’t suggest a solution to this.

Anne’s letters detailed her thoughts regarding the development and decoration of their metropolitan town house. In October 1711 she informed Thomas that she had ‘given the upholsterer some Silk I had with me which will make Chairs for the dining room’. In November she informed him of the progress she had made with the furnishing of a bedroom ‘I am extremely Pleas’d wth the work’d Bed for now tis Clean’d tis as good as new & looks very Genteell I have hung the room with green camlet the same colour of the lace of the bed and made Window Curtains of the same’. Their constant communication charted progress in the decoration and furnishing, and showed her need to communicate these developments to him.

Although he was thus invariably consulted, he was not always fully included in the process of decorating their marital home. It would appear that she retained ultimate power over decorative schemes as in response to many of his suggestions she stated that his ideas were ‘out of fashion’ and offered a more up-to-date alternative. For example, ‘the round Sconces you speak of for Chimneys are quite out of fashion for there is a sort they now make for Chimneys of a particular Pattern wch if you’ll have I can give directions’. She constantly asserted her superior knowledge of fashion and taste, knowledge was essential in order to achieve the ‘correct’ image. Thomas Strafford gave his opinion to his wife, but if Anne deemed it to be ‘incorrect’ or ‘unfashionable’ she told him directly and it would seem that she had the ultimate control in these matters. How far this would have been the case if her husband had been in England at the time of decorating Strafford House has to be questioned, as her authority could have been due to their particular situation. It can be suggested that because she wrote to him about her purchases and informed him of her choice of decorative schemes she felt that it was important that her husband knew these things. It would appear on the surface that through her letters to her husband Anne Strafford was seeking her husband’s approval of her decoration choices, but upon closer examination it emerges that she was merely informing him of her decisions.

Cost and value also influenced Anne Strafford’s decisions. For example, she wrote to her husband informing him that she would like a particular table that could be purchased in Holland for a cheaper price and of a better quality.\textsuperscript{57} Personal taste and cost influenced her decisions of how to decorate her drawing room. Her husband had suggested hanging tapestry upon the walls but this again was a rather outdated and unfashionable wall covering by the early eighteenth century. Instead of directly informing him that his tastes were outdated, Anne recommended a more fashionable wall covering using cost to justify her recommendation. ‘I don’t much admire your fancy in hanging the Drawing Room with Tapestry…you might have plain damask which I believe will cost less than Tapestry’.\textsuperscript{58}

Similarly to Anne Strafford, Mrs Bessy Ramsden a member of the middling sorts, apologised to her cousin for her husband’s poor choice of elaborately patterned silk, stating ‘the plot against your peepers was not of my laying. The Patterns were of my Husband’s chusing, to shew (as he says) his Taste. I tell him he had sufficiently shewn that before in his choice of a – wife.’\textsuperscript{59} Mrs Ramsden clearly thought that, within her marriage, it was her responsibility to acquire knowledge about ‘taste’. Women’s role in creating the domestic interior was not limited to the aristocracy; women of the middling sort shouldered similar responsibilities. Once married, a young wife was responsible for establishing the couple’s position in polite society. The husband provided his wife with the necessary resources to set up a household within which polite company could be received. Because a wife dominated the domestic sphere she was likely to have a significant influence over how their home looked.\textsuperscript{60} Interference from men with regards to taste was not always welcome.

\textsuperscript{60}Berry, Helen (2005) ‘Women, Consumption and Taste’ in Barker, Hannah and Elaine Chalus (eds) (2005), Women’s History: Britain, 1700-1850 An Introduction, Routledge, Oxon, pp.201-202
The type of household discussed thus far has consisted of husband and wife. Undeniably this domestic arrangement was the most common sort of family unit in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it was not the only type. For example, fifteen percent of households in the period were headed by women. The Purefoy family provide an example of a different household composition. Their household consisted of mother and son living together at Shalstone Manor in Buckinghamshire. This unusual situation occurred when Elizabeth was widowed at the age of 32 in 1704 and left with her infant son Henry aged 7, who subsequently never married. The Purefoys were prolific letter writers and 1,260 examples of their letters composed between 1735 and 1753 survive in three letter-books. The composition of their home is not revealed, it is possible that they sub-divided Shalstone manor and each ran their own section as an individual household. The use of plurals by Elizabeth and Henry in their letters, such as ‘our’ to describe features of their house, and the use of ‘we’ when discussing consumption choices, suggests that the household was shared at least in part and not segregated. However, even within this shared household arrangement, they each would have had a small suit of rooms consisting of a bedroom and dressing room and perhaps others which were considered private. Elizabeth Purefoy and her son Henry seem to have shared the role of domestic furnishing and decorating between them.

The Purefoy example provides a different perspective of household decoration and furnishing from that of Anne Strafford because they are from an established household, not from a new marital household in the process of being set up. The letters reveal that in some cases decorative schemes were changed and additions to furniture were made throughout the occupant’s lifetime. The changes that the Purefoys made were not based on following fashionable trends and were not always updates for practical reasons of replacing worn out furniture. Throughout the period ‘taste’ changed and developed and their letters reflect this. They were fussy, finicky and hard to please, and were prepared to go to considerable lengths to ensure that their house was decorated exactly as they wanted it to be, stressing just how important it

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62 Mitchell (ed.) (1973), The Purefoy Letters 1735 – 1753, pp.5-6
63 As well as the letters, Henry Purefoy also kept a diary from 1725 – 1756 (with a nine year gap). Mitchell (ed.) (1973), The Purefoy Letters 1735 – 1753, pp.3-4
was to demonstrate a good sense of their ‘taste’ through interior decoration. The Purefoys knew what they wanted and did not hesitate to complain when they did not get exactly that. 64 Elizabeth and Henry’s letters to tradesmen convey how much time and thought went into decorating the domestic interior, stressing how important home, and the way that it looked and was furnished, was to contemporaries.

There are surviving letters from both mother and son written to tradesmen requesting samples of decorative materials and ordering items of furniture. In 1735 Elizabeth requested patterns for soft furnishings from Anthony Baxter a London tradesman. She requested that he would ‘send mee by Webster the Buckingham carrier…some patterns of Quilting you mention together with the lowest prices of each pattern. I shall want enough to make one of the new-fashioned low-beds without a cornice, if I like the Quilting & the price I will let you know the exact quantity’. 65 Patterns were a standard way of viewing suitable fabrics for domestic furnishings. She clearly expected there to be a variety of fabric types and designs from which to make her selection. Her inclusion of detailing the use for which the fabric was intended suggests that there was a particular type or range of material that was suitable specifically for a ‘low-bed’. A sample allowed the customer to view the fabric within the context of their home, for them to see how it would appear amongst their other furnishings.

Henry Purefoy also concerned himself with decorative furnishings and in 1738 he wrote to Anthony Baxter enquiring about material for window curtains:

‘I cannot but think it must be the best chintz must do for our window
Curtains. You say the pattern is three yards long & our window curtains must be 3 yards & a quarter long & for the vaillings & curtains wee shall want 18 yards of ye best sort if you will send it down with the lowest price. If I like it, will have it or else send it you back & pay ye carriage of it up & down. Wee

shall want such another Quantity for another Room if this is liked any but I suppose that of abt. 5 or or 6s. ye yard will serve for ye other room.66

However, the chintz that Henry had enquired about was not available so he sent a letter requesting that he ‘should rather chuse a white Indian Damask’ another fabric that would make window curtains suitable for the room that he was re-decorating.67 Fortunately for Henry the white damask that Mr Baxter sent was suitable. These letters reveal how time consuming the process of acquiring furnishing could be. His first letter was sent in June, but it was not until August that he received the correct material to make his curtains. In his next letter to Mr Baxter he informed him of the suitability of the material. The letters reveal something of the nature of the process of acquiring goods for interior decoration via distance shopping. Firstly a letter was sent to a tradesman requesting a type of material. Upon the unavailability of that material in the required dimensions a second type of fabric was chosen. From Henry’s letter sent in August it can be gleaned that Mr Baxter had sent a whole roll of white damask from London to Shalstone from which Henry could cut the amount that he needed.

Prudence and economy were viewed as valuable skills of household management, and these were certainly features that influenced the consumption choices of Elizabeth and Henry Purefoy. In his letter to Mr Baxter enquiring about chintz window curtains Henry stated ‘I suppose you will warrant its standing ye colour when it is washed.’68 The durability of furnishings was called into account as part of the process of choosing a suitable fabric. A fabric that faded quickly, or one that could not be easily washed, would have to be replaced on a more frequent basis, therefore costing much more in the long term.

Advice on domestic furnishing choices

Individual choices regarding the decoration of the domestic interior were couched within the context of a cultural framework of design and taste. Personal decisions were influenced by wider themes. By the early nineteenth century management literature recognised and sought to soften anxieties about how to furnish and decorate the home. Published in 1825, the household management book written by Mrs Frances Parkes contained a whole chapter explaining how a home should be furnished. She detailed specific factors that should be taken into account when choosing furnishings and deciding upon the interior decoration of a home. Parkes stipulated that prudence and economy should be embedded in the consumers furnishing choices for the home. She explained that a home ought to be furnished in a comfortable way throughout, and not in a purely showy decorative manner. It was important to demonstrate taste, but a good honest form of taste that would be best represented through simplicity and comfort. She informed the reader that, ‘The taste is not good which neglects to study consistency, whether in regard to furniture or to any other thing…Comfort ought never to be sacrificed to appearance, unsubstantial and fruitless as it is!’ This theme was replicated in an anonymous household management book published in 1829. The advice presented is similar to that provided by Parkes but is not as detailed or as prescriptive. Here it is suggested that the household should be furnished based on the unification of ‘economy with elegance and utility’. Both texts suggest that prudence and economy should provide the basis for consumption choices. Parkes advised the middling sorts against furnishing and decorating the home based solely on fashion, stating that it would be far too difficult for them to maintain these types of furnishings. Instead she suggests that for those of middling status the home should be furnished in a comfortable and simple style as this represented good taste. Both Parkes and the anonymous household management book suggested that the purchase of household furnishings should be influenced by maintenance. Parkes dictated that a bedroom ought to ‘contain everything requisite for the comfortable accommodation of either the family or visitants. It is miserable to

69 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties: Conversation IV, pp.185-214
70 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.185
71 A Lady (1829), The Home Book, p.107
72 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.186
see splendour in the drawing-room and deficiency of comfort in the bed-room.'\textsuperscript{73} She went on to advise that if there was a carpet in the bedroom, it should be a bedside carpet and not a full carpet to facilitate its regular cleaning. Bedroom carpets should not be fixed down; Mrs Parkes recommended that the most appropriate carpet was one that could be moved twice a week in order to clean out dust and insects.\textsuperscript{74} This suggests that when making consumption decisions for the household, the care requirements of furniture and furnishings played an important role. Her advice demonstrates that in prescriptive literature a relationship between the material culture of the household, the use of domestic space and the maintenance of the domestic environment was recognised.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Firstly this chapter has demonstrated that images of the home were widely accessible throughout the period. House visiting allowed access by invitation to the houses owned by family and friends, but during such occasion’s visitors would only have accessed certain carefully selected rooms. Sales allowed people to access the homes of their neighbours and even strangers, whether through reading the catalogue, or by attending the sale itself. It is worth remembering that a catalogue was prepared specifically to sell goods, so the interpretation of domestic space and possessions was a version reflected through the lens of a retailer. Artificial domestic interiors were constructed by retailers to educate and encourage sales. These domestic displays were created in the public sphere in the commercial setting of a shop or warehouse and presented an idealised image of domestic space. The domestic interior appeared in other forms of advertisement, and was explicitly linked to mundane maintenance and management.

Secondly, this chapter has highlighted that there were many ways that the domestic interior could be furnished and a multitude of strategies that influenced and shaped consumption decisions during the period. In addition, it has revealed the time and thought that contemporaries invested in decorating and furnishing their homes which

\textsuperscript{73} Parkes (1825 first edition), \textit{Domestic Duties}, p.204
\textsuperscript{74} Parkes (1825 first edition), \textit{Domestic Duties}, p.203
suggests something of the importance of this activity. It has shown that by the
nineteenth century some of the earlier concepts of taste and appropriateness that were
reflected through the ownership of material culture and the domestic interior were
much more concrete. Advice literature suggests that the appropriate furnishing of the
domestic interior was much more specific than previously. An individual’s
consumption and furnishing choices were made from within the social and cultural
framework that they adhered too. The household was individualistic, but it needed
many shared elements to reflect a shared understanding of the social and cultural
values of the middling group.
Part 2: Household Management and Maintenance

Part 1 of this thesis demonstrated that the ownership of household goods increased from the late seventeenth century onwards and by the eighteenth century houses contained far more furnishings than they had a century earlier. This trend continued throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth. In addition to this, the domestic interior increasingly became furnished in a more comfortable and decorative way. At the same time (and perhaps as a consequence) the household took on a new social role and domestic sociability became increasingly important. The focus now turns to explore how these changes were supported and maintained. These changes to domestic material culture and the use of domestic space all had an impact on household maintenance. The increase in household goods added to the burden of housework; owning more goods meant simply that there were more furnishings to clean. The introduction of new and decorative goods often brought with them new and specialised cleaning requirements. Both of these changes made housework more time consuming and more labour intensive. Domestic sociability meant that the home was often visited by outsiders, usually consisting of friends, family and social peers. This placed increased demands on the household as housework had to be carried out to a high level on a regular basis to ensure that the house was ready to receive visitors. In addition, as the house was also seen as a pleasant place to spend time by its inhabitants it needed to be clean and well maintained for it to remain an attractive space in which to spend time. The aim here is to explore the impact that the physical changes to the domestic interior had on the maintenance and management of the household.

Sarah Richards argues that the domestic sphere is ‘a space that is undervalued at the level of intellectual discourse.’

Although there has been a significant increase in academic work focusing on the household since 1999 when Richards’ work was published, much of this has ignored household management and maintenance. For example, in research centred on the material culture of the household, very few studies incorporate any study of the management or maintenance of that space.

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Weatherill’s 1988 key text is a notable exception as she uses concerns around household management and maintenance to provide a context for the main impetus of her study into the ownership of new consumer goods.\(^2\) However, she does not tie the increase in the ownership of new and decorative goods to household management and maintenance. She does not devote as much research to mundane domestic tasks as she does to the acquisition of new domestic goods, a factor that can perhaps be explained by her adoption of Goffman’s theory of social behaviour. Her Goffman inspired division of the household into distinct ‘front stage’ and ‘backstage’ spaces with associated behaviours suggests that mundane tasks were ‘backstage’ activities that took place in subservient spaces within the household. It could be suggested that Weatherill’s focus on ‘front stage’ spaces led her to interpret mundane tasks to be of secondary importance. That she included mundane tasks in her study does however demonstrate that housework was part of the wider context of the household. Therefore, there must be a link between the introduction of new goods and housework. In contrast, household maintenance is virtually ignored by Shammas, in part because she argues that there was no significant change to the domestic environment and cleanliness within the home until after 1800.\(^3\) In her work on eighteenth century ceramics, Richards herself neglected the impact that the arrival of new ceramic items had upon the maintenance and management of the home.\(^4\) She did however consider the use of these items in cooking through changes that they brought (or assisted with) to preparation and eating. Ceramic containers allowed for the purchase of foodstuffs in larger quantities and enabled their storage within the house undamaged and without threat of infestation. Ceramic plates made taking meals a visually attractive occasion, which contributed to the development of new social routines of dining. However, ceramics required more care to maintain, they were not as durable as pewter and if dropped they usually broke or at the least cracked, spoiling their design and soiling their attractive features. They also required water to keep

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\(^4\) Davidson states that the introduction of ceramics introduced the concept of ‘washing-up’ to the list of household chores. Prior to the widespread use of ceramic goods utensils were not washed with water and detergent to clean them. Davidson, Caroline (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles 1650-1950*, Chatto & Windus, London, p.133
them clean, and if being used regularly this meant that a constant supply of water had to be available.

In Part 2 of this thesis attention moves away from furnishing and use of domestic space and instead turns to focus on how the household was managed and maintained. These are two distinct subjects that do relate to each other but are significantly different, because of this each will be dealt with in a separate chapter. Maintenance was the work that was required to clean, care for and service the household. Management was the organisation of these tasks and the planning that dictated how the household would be run. The subsequent chapters explore the home from this often hidden and neglected perspective. There are many questions regarding domestic management and maintenance that remain to be explored and answered by historians. In part this is because household management and housework took place in the private space of the house. Their hidden nature in history is partly a legacy of the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres and domestic ideology. The work that was needed to maintain the household was meant to be invisible. It is partly due to the success of the housewife that the area is under researched. The role of the housewife remains neglected due to the persistence of the theory that during the eighteenth century women and especially those of middling status, retired from domestic work to enter into a life of leisure. The role that they were left with has been undermined, trivialised and is persistently undervalued. The increase in material culture, the changing appearance and use of domestic space have been severed from the mundane aspects of the household. Yet, Vickery’s study of Elizabeth Shackleton, a gentle woman in Lancashire in the second half of the eighteenth century, revealed that the two aspects were both a part of her household life. Vickery’s study demonstrated that for Shackleton furnishing and maintaining the home were linked. The household was not simply a site of consumption solely concerned with the acquisition of new and decorative goods; it was also reliant on the use of such goods and to this end the

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maintenance and care of these goods was of equal importance to consumption. Once purchased goods needed to be maintained to ensure they could continue to be used.

Firstly, the increase in the ownership of goods and the densely furnished decorative interior had a significant effect on maintenance. Rather simplistically, the ownership of increasing numbers of decorative domestic goods added to the burden of housework. Secondly, the physical properties of many new goods meant that these required special care on a regular basis to maintain them. Thirdly, the changing use of the home placed increased pressure on the maintenance of the domestic interior. Rooms needed to be maintained to a high standard on a regular basis so that they could be used and as a consequence of this use the timescale for cleaning and preparing these rooms was shortened. Finally, these changes had a profound effect on the role of the housewife. As historiography has demonstrated, these fundamentally significant changes to the household remain largely ignored by academic research.

The central focus for Part 2 of this thesis is firstly to establish an understanding of household maintenance and management and secondly to explore the impact that the changing nature of the home had on these mundane processes during the period.

In order to explore these issues Part 2 of this thesis has been divided into two chapters, Chapter 4 ‘Household maintenance and housework’ and Chapter 5 ‘Household management and the role of the housewife’. Both aspects are interrelated, but they are distinct and as such they must be discussed separately. Chapter 4 focuses on the ways in which housework changed as a result of the increase in the ownership of domestic furnishings and the impact of new materials and decorative goods. Chapter 5 focuses on the way that the role of the housewife developed and adapted as a direct response to the changes in the nature of housework and the additional demands created by the social use of the home.
Chapter 4: Household Maintenance and Housework

Chapter 4: Household maintenance and housework

Part 1 of this thesis demonstrated that the household underwent a number of changes to its furnishing, appearance and the way that it was used. The aim here is to investigate household maintenance and housework to gain an understanding of what it was, how it was carried out and how this changed. Through doing so we will begin to gain an understanding of how the changes to the home as outlined in part one affected the way that the household was maintained. This chapter picks up on the changes to the household that were identified in Part 1 and analyses the impact that these had on household maintenance. The increasing use of the home for a range of social activities placed a growing demand on the need to maintain rooms in order for them to fulfil their function. A great deal of work had to be carried out repeatedly to maintain the household and to care for the domestic environment and its furnishings. As such this work dominated domestic life, creating patterns that punctuated the days of the housewife and her domestic workers. The maintenance of the domestic interior has received little attention, and has as a consequence become separated from the study of the material culture of the household. The way that the home changed, in its appearance and in the ways in which it was used, had an affect on how and when it needed to be cared for.

The maintenance of the home has remained under studied for a variety of reasons. It is generally accepted that during industrialisation, the home and workplace became separated with work increasingly taking place outside the household in the form of paid labour. In the pre-industrial household the family worked together to produce goods either to sell or for their own consumption. Housework was unproductive and classed as unpaid and as a consequence of these characteristics it has not been viewed as work in a traditional economic understanding of the term, rendering it an unimportant subject for study. The unpaid status of housework deserves further examination, because whilst the middling household was a site of the unpaid labour of the housewife it was at the same time the paid workplace of servants and domestic

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workers. This paradox of the home as a site of both unpaid and paid employment contributed to tensions within the household and is worthy of examination. Furthermore, contemporary domestic ideology dictated that good household management was characterised by its invisibility, with the result that its importance has often been overlooked.\(^2\) The main focus of this chapter is to investigate what household maintenance and housework consisted of, how these tasks were undertaken and who carried out the work. A further focus will be to understand how these processes changed during the period, as a response to the changes to household furniture and furnishings and the changing use of the home. The increase in domestic goods meant that there was more to organise and care for within the home. Furnished interiors required greater maintenance and many new or decorative goods had specific care requirements.\(^3\) This chapter addresses these issues by providing detailed study of household maintenance. In order to gain an understanding of the changing nature of household maintenance during the period the two tasks of the care of furniture and laundry are studied in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.

**Housework as household maintenance**

The term ‘housework’ is difficult to define because it has various meanings to different groups of people at different times. Housework does not consist of a fixed body of activities instead its meaning ‘varies from one culture and time to another’.\(^4\) Similarly, Susan Strasser comments that housework can only be defined in an individualistic way because each housewife would characterise such work within the context of her own home and the specific needs of her family.\(^5\) As her definition makes clear, housework is categorised as being distinctly feminine, and can be

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\(^4\) Davidson suggests that housework ‘includes every activity required to maintain a home and meet the physical needs of its members (usually a family)’ . Davidson, Caroline (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles 1650-1950*, Chatto & Windus, London, p.1

\(^5\) ‘Just as the individual housewife cannot define her work outside the context of her family’s well-being or categorize her tasks discretely, so the story of American housework cannot be separated from the broader social and economic history of the United States.’ Strasser, Susan (1982), *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, Pantheon Books, New York, p.xiii
described as women’s unpaid work within the home. For these reasons the term ‘housework’ will be used here to describe the physical work that was necessary to maintain the household and to ensure that it functioned as it needed to. There were a number of tasks that were generic to all middling sorts households during the period, these essential tasks included; laundry, provisioning, food preparation and cooking, care of the domestic interior, cleaning, and repair of household and personal linen.

A central task for the middling housewife was the organisation and administration of domestic tasks including ‘housework’. The role of the housewife will be more fully explored in the next chapter, but it was the housewife’s duty to ensure that housework and domestic chores were undertaken and that the household ran smoothly on a daily basis. Women were responsible for running the house and for ensuring that its members were ‘supplied with the necessities of life’. These ‘necessities’ varied from home to home depending on its size and type, as the precise nature of the work necessary for maintenance was specific to the needs of the individual household.

The work required to maintain a household was different in every home as it depended on many variables such as the size of the house, the number of rooms it contained, its furnishings and interior decoration, how it was used by its occupants and the number of servants employed. Rather simplistically a house with more rooms meant more work, or needed a longer period of time to clean and maintain than a smaller house. This has always been the case and remained the case throughout the period. However, the changes to the home that were identified in the first part of this thesis did have a striking impact on the way that the household was cared for and maintained in general. Firstly, the increased ownership of domestic furnishings brought with them an increase in housework as more furnishings meant that there was more to keep clean. The housewife faced a constant perpetual battle with the dust and dirt that covered surfaces, ornaments and furnishings. Secondly, the type of furnishings also increased the burden of housework due to the nature of the care that they demanded. New domestic furnishings, especially those made from new

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7 This does not include household management activities. These are separate from housework.
materials and decorative goods, often required a higher level of maintenance than their older and perhaps plainer counterparts. New items such as upholstered furniture, decorative textiles and wallpaper could easily be discoloured and eventually be damaged through a lack of correct care. To maintain the appearance of the domestic interior, to preserve decorative furnishings and to make it a more comfortable place for its occupants to spend time, dust and dirt had to be removed on a regular basis. The more decorative and comfortable the household became the more complex the necessary cleaning processes were and the longer it took to clean. Many of the new domestic furnishings that were incorporated into the homes of the middling sort throughout the eighteenth century required complicated care processes, which demanded changes were made to the way that household cleaning was carried out. Thirdly, the social use of the home as a site of comfort and relaxation and as a space for entertaining others meant that the household had to be constantly and consistently maintained to a high level, with new domestic routines creating new patterns of service. The greater social use of the home and the increased level of comfort required led to an increase in the number of heated rooms. Fireplaces, and an increase in the number of fires meant that dirty coal had to be brought into a room more frequently and the smoke and ash from fires could discolour and damage upholstered furniture, decorative textiles and wallpaper. The work needed to remain invisible but the home always needed a polished veneer, this lead to the creation of mundane domestic routines to ensure that the necessary work was always undertaken at the right time.

The 1745 probate inventory of Henry Adams provides a good example. The parlour of his Birmingham home contained a substantial amount of furniture, including two tables, a corner cupboard, and four chairs. In addition, his parlour included of a set of china and silver tea paraphernalia. Each of these materials had their own distinct care and cleaning requirements. The inclusion of these items in the parlour suggests that they were used for taking tea as well as being decorative items. Their pattern of use would have dictated their cleaning needs and regular use would have demanded regular cleaning at a time or place that did not interfere with that pattern of use.\textsuperscript{10} China brought with it new cleaning demands. Pewter, the common material for

\textsuperscript{10} The Dictionary Archive, Adams Henry of Birmingham, Brush maker, 1745
domestic vessels in the previous period could be scoured and scrubbed with various materials, usually sand or ash to clean it.\textsuperscript{11} China was more delicate and needed to be washed either in warm water or in water with a soap. ‘Washing up’ crockery in this way only occurred after the introduction of ceramic domestic vessels.\textsuperscript{12} Changes to the domestic environment such as new wall and floor coverings brought their own additional cleaning burden. For example, the increased cleaning required by wooden flooring was enough to convince Elizabeth Shackleton in 1767 to retain a flagstone floor. Wooden floors needed to be swept, washed and polished regularly to preserve them, whereas stone or flagged floors needed to be swept and sprinkled with sand much more infrequently to maintain them.\textsuperscript{13} The furnished decorative domestic interior, with its new patterns of use brought with it new maintenance and cleaning demands that did not previously exist.

**The threat of damage by vermin**

Vermin remained a consistent threat to the cleanliness and condition of the household throughout the period, but new types of domestic furnishings and interior decoration such as upholstered chairs, the increasing use of fabric and paper hangings made the problem worse. These new furnishings provided excellent habitats for a range of destructive insects and animals that frequently found their way inside the home. Manufacturers were quick to understand that their goods, such as paper hangings, made an excellent habitat for insects and rodents. An advertisement by a paper manufacturer placed in the *London Evening Post* in 1737 highlights how widespread this problem was, and demonstrates that manufacturers and retailers responded to it. The reader was informed that the manufacture’s paper hangings had been treated to combat such problems. ‘This Paper is now made into Hangings of all sorts, equal in beauty with any other, and by the Nature of the Preparation Vermin will not harbour in or destroy them.’\textsuperscript{14} The nuisance caused by vermin could be expensive for the homeowner, damaged goods had to be replaced and money had to be spent on treating

\textsuperscript{12} Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, p.133
\textsuperscript{13} Hill (1994, first published 1989), *Women Work and Sexual Politics*, p.107
\textsuperscript{14} *The Dictionary Archive*, LY1737LEP002, London Evening Post, 1737
the problem and eradicating household pests. A paper hanging that was treated against vermin attack and infestation would have been a welcome invention for its potential time saving and cost saving properties, assuming that the claims were effective and safe.

Posing a real threat to cleanliness, order and the general condition of the domestic interior the housewife had to combat insect infestation to prevent serious and long lasting damage to the furnishings within her home. More importantly, bugs disrupted the lives of the inhabitants of houses by biting their skin and causing general irritation. Figure 5 illustrates the problem and one of the solutions for dealing with unwanted insects in the home. An alternative remedy was provided by Hannah Glasse who included a comprehensive guide of ‘How to keep clear from Buggs’ in her recipe book first published in 1747. Her instructions detailed how to treat a room that was subject to an insect infestation. Her solution consisted of sealing the room with cloths over the windows and door and lighting a fire in the middle of the room with charcoal and brimstone, and evacuating the room very quickly and leaving it for at least six hours.  

The instructions did not end there, following the airing of the room, it needed to be swept and washed with ‘boiling lee, or boiling water, with a little unslacked Lime’ in it. The textiles were to be cleaned with a mixture made from ‘a pint of spirits of wine, a pint of spirit of turpentine, and an orange of camphire, shake all well together’. She warned though that if the infestation was severe the process may need to be repeated and the room re-painted. This demonstrates the scale of the problem that could be caused to the domestic interior through infestation of insects. In addition to occasional infestation, insects posed a seasonal problem that the housewife could prepare for and incorporate their removal into an existing household cleaning regime. Glasse informed her reader that if they washed their furniture with her concoction every spring and autumn they would ‘be clear’.  

Susanna Whatman accounted for the seasonal problems caused by summer insects, reminding her housemaid that ‘the floors get sooner dirty in the summer from the insects’.  

Insect infestation was a common problem that disrupted the regular

15 Brimstone is sulphur.
running of the household and threw routine into disarray. The solutions for treating such infestation within the home were often toxic to humans as well as the insects, rendering their removal a dangerous task.

Similarly rats and mice were a constant threat thriving in both urban and rural environments being attracted into the home by poor waste disposal, and the storage of produce. For many eighteenth century households the house cat was the first line of defence against such rodents. Cats feature prominently in many paintings depicting the domestic interior; a working house cat would have been an essential addition to the household in order to reduce the unwelcome residential vermin population. However, cats also harbour insects such as fleas meaning that additional measures were needed to eradicate this further infestation. Many newspapers regularly featured advertisements for rat poisons, most stating that they would kill rats instantly, but would not harm cats. The truth of this claim is doubtful, as many ‘solutions’ to vermin infestation were harmful to humans and not just the insects and rodents that they were intended to destroy. Shropshire’s Salopian Journal regularly contained advertisements for rat powder, starting in 1794 when the first edition was produced. There are two main themes to the advertisement, firstly the powder is strong and therefore fast working, and secondly that it will not harm cats. This suggests that the housewife’s main concern was to destroy rats quickly and effectively without harming her cat, which could perhaps be described as a long-term investment for pest control.

‘JUST IMPORTED,

THE NORWAY RAT AND MICE POWDER,

That destroys those Vermin, let them be ever so numerous, which Preparation the Cats will not meddle with. THIS never-failing Powder is recommended to all who are troubled with those voracious vermin. Farms and houses, which at this particular time of the year, when the Rats and mice leave the fields and get to dove houses, barns, stacks, stables, and houses and committing great havock among the corn, feeds and everything they can get at – It is recommended to captains of ships, on their voyages to take with them This wonderful Preparation will prove to have its great effect in the course of a few
nights, by allowing them to eat of it, and destroy them in the course of an hour."^{18}

Figure 5: ‘Mrs Sperling murdering flies, assisted by her maid who received the dead and wounded.’

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Caring for domestic furniture and furnishings

The changes to the furniture, furnishings and decoration of the domestic interior that were highlighted in Chapter 1 had an impact on how the home was maintained. Similarly, the changes to the use of domestic space and of the home as identified in Chapter 2 also had a significant effect on the maintenance of the house. Attention now turns to investigating what these changes were. The care of furniture and textiles

^{18}Shropshire Archives, The Salopian Journal, 1794
will be investigated in turn to see how the process changed in response to the three themes of an increase in ownership, the introduction of new materials and the demands created by the social uses of the home. Many domestic tasks were repeated in a cyclical way, an infinite number of times in a household’s lifecycle, leaving many housewives sympathetic with Mary Collier when she proclaimed ‘Alas! Our labours never know an end’. For example, personal and household linen needed to be washed on a regular basis so that it could be re-used. It would not have been acceptable for dirty or stained linen to be used or put out on display. The ownership of decorative goods demonstrated an understanding of the polite socio-cultural value of ‘taste’, but in order to express an internalisation of those values the goods had to be cared for in the correct way. Appropriate taste was not only disseminated through the decorative appearance or aspects of the household, but also through the ability to maintain and manage it correctly. It was therefore essential for housework to be undertaken regularly and correctly, to ensure that the domestic interior and its furnishings were kept clean and were well maintained. The focus of this chapter will now turn to examining the way that housework and the maintenance of the domestic interior changed during the period with particular reference to the care and maintenance of furniture and textiles. These types of goods were highlighted in the first part of the thesis as having a big impact on the changing material culture of the household, so it is fitting that the ways in which they needed to be cared for and maintained is the focus here.

**Care of furniture**

The first chapter of this thesis demonstrated that the ownership of household goods increased and the physical attributes of these goods also changed throughout this period with houses become better furnished. Houses contained more furniture than previously and frequently this increase consisted of multiples of the same functional items (such as sets of goods), new decorative pieces, functional items enhanced with decoration and items that were used to perform and enhance certain domestic

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Chapter 4: Household maintenance and housework

routines. Probate inventories are useful for providing a comparative snapshot of the furnishings of the parlour at intervals throughout the period of study. For example, the parlour in Priscilla Pugh’s Shrewsbury home in 1724 contained ‘one looking glass, 12 Chaires, 1 Round table, one Dutch Table 1 Corner Cupboard, two Stands, two tea tables’.\(^{20}\) Returning to Henry Adam’s 1745 Birmingham home, that was briefly mentioned above, his parlour in was significantly better furnished with ‘old Table, Stand Table, Stafford Grate, two Handboards, Corner Cubbert, small Silver Cup Eight small Spoons & a pair of Tea Tongs, a Set of Common China, ffour old Chairs, Two small window Curtains’.\(^{21}\) By the early nineteenth century this enhanced level of furnishing had continued as the inventory of Edward Pearce’s Bridgnorth house in 1810 illustrates. His home had two parlours containing amongst them, ‘six chairs worked seats, small chest of drawers, oak table, four chairs, yew dining table, round table, mahogany round table, china, glass and tin fender’.\(^{22}\) Although these are isolated examples, they are typical of their time and reinforce the equation that more possessions would have taken a longer time to clean and maintain. In addition to this the changing nature of these goods had a further impact on the ways in which this was done. Different types of wood and those that were finished with special surfaces required particular types of care and specific cleaning routines that were often complicated and even more time consuming. For example, mahogany became increasingly popular and it was frequently finished with French polish. Decorative goods such as carved wood required an additional level of attention frequently enlisting the use of specialist cleaning equipment that was not necessary with plain items of furniture.\(^{23}\)

It is necessary to gain an understanding of the processes of cleaning and maintenance to understand fully the impact that an increase in the ownership of furniture, the addition of new types of furniture and decorative pieces had on the time that was needed to look after them. Due to the nature of housework as a mundane domestic task that was valued by its invisibility it is difficult to find any descriptions of how, when and why cleaning was undertaken. It is possible to approach the subject from

\(^{20}\) The Dictionary Project Archive, Pugh Priscilla of Shrewsbury, Salop, upholstery, 1724
\(^{21}\) The Dictionary project Archive, Adams Henry of Birmingham, Staffs, Brush Maker, 1745
\(^{22}\) Shropshire Archives, 6001/4/4645/4647, Pearce, Edward, Bridgnorth, 1810
\(^{23}\) The process of cleaning and caring for new and different types of wooden furniture will be dealt with later in this chapter. See pages 161-166
an alternative perspective and to explore advice and instruction of how housework could be carried out through published household management books. An investigation of the advice offered through this literature will provide an understanding of how the process of caring for furniture was perceived to have changed during the period. Advice and instruction of how to clean domestic space, and specifically furniture are conspicuous in their absence from early household management books. With the exception of laundry recipes and hints, early advice literature did not often stray into the realms of cleaning and maintaining domestic furnishings. This suggests that authors of domestic advice literature at that time did not feel that the housewife needed any particular help or advice in how to care for her household furniture. For example, Hannah Woolley’s advice book published in 1683 did not contain any reference to the care or maintenance of the domestic interior. Her advice was broken down into chapters that focused on ‘the art of preserving’, ‘the physical cabinet’ and ‘the compleat cooks guide’. Woolley’s book contained advice on ‘preserving, physick, beautifying, and cookery’, and even included a section on angling, but did not offer any suggestions of how to clean or maintain furniture.

Advice literature only included assistance or directions for particular household chores that the author felt the reader would require further information about. In the introduction to his advice book published in 1687 John Shirley briefly commented about the care of textile furnishings. He stated that the ‘gentlewoman’ needed to ensure that fabrics ‘be not injured by dampness, dust or Moths, considering, as occasion requires, to air them both by the fire within, and the sun without, and cleanse them from dust by beating.’ This reference to the care of domestic textiles was more of a comment, or a reminder to the reader not to forget to care for her furnishings. In addition Shirley may have chosen to remind his reader rather than instruct her because he assumed that the housewife would already know what needed to be done within her home. These skills would have been taught to a young girl by her mother and she would go on to own similar types of furniture and furnishings.

The ‘Servant Maid’ an advice book published for servants that explained the roles of domestic staff was similar in its treatment of the subject of cleaning and caring for

furniture and furnishings. The sixth edition of the book, published in 1700 informed the reader that the housemaid was expected to care for the domestic interior and its furnishings. The author specified that furniture needed to be kept clean and brushed. However, they did not detail how these tasks were to be undertaken as he or she simply assumed that the reader would have prior knowledge and would understand how to care for all domestic furnishings, or would be correctly instructed by the housewife. The brevity of the reference to the care of furniture (and to a lesser extent textiles) suggests that in the late seventeenth century it was rather easy to care for furniture as it required little more attention than dusting and protection from damp and insects.

Glasse included a similar snippet of advice in her recipe book first published in 1747. The section entitled ‘Directions to the House-maid’ consisted of one sentence offering a hint for household cleaning. ‘Always when you sweep a room, throw a little wet Sand all over it, and that will gather up all the Flew and Dust, prevents it from rising, cleans the Boards, and saves the Bedding, Pictures, and all other Furniture from Dust and Dirt’. These instructions would only have applied to rooms with uncovered floors. Although her book was specifically a recipe book, she clearly felt that a tip for cleaning floors would have been useful to her readers.

By the mid eighteenth century the parlour had taken on a social role, and to carry out this role it needed to be a comfortable space to spend time and to receive guests. To provide warmth the fire would need to be lit each day, this would have caused a much higher level of dust and dirt firstly from transporting coal to the fireplace and secondly from the smoke of the fire. This would have meant that floors would have got dirtier more quickly and in turn would need to be cleaned regularly. During the eighteenth century better glass making technology meant that houses had larger glazed windows which allowed more light in. Glazed windows made houses warmer and much more comfortable, but the light that they let in would have made dirt and dust much more visible. It could be suggested that earlier books did not focus on providing advice on household management and maintenance because these were not

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27 Glasse, Hannah (1747 second edition), The Art of Cookery, p.330
seen to be important aspects of housekeeping that the housewife would have required advice with. The ways in which the household changed during the eighteenth century made housework much more important. The increase in fires made the house and its furniture and furnishings dirtier, glazed windows made dust and dirt more visible, and the social uses of the home imposed higher standards of appearance and cleanliness.

Reflecting the changes to the furnishing of the interior in 1760 Glasse published an advice manual that was specifically concerned with providing household maintenance instruction to servants. Her instructions to the housemaid reveal the nature of some of the problems associated with cleaning a densely furnished domestic interior. Cleaning a well furnished room had to be carried out in an ordered way to prevent dirtying or damaging other furnishings in the process. Carpets needed to be brushed clean and folded back so that the floor underneath could then be swept. Following this, whilst the carpet was folded up, the curtains needed to be shaken or whisked with a particular brush to ensure that they were free from dirt. Subsequently the windows and shutters needed to be swept clean, and the dust blown off pictures, frames, wainscot, china and stucco-work, with a pair of bellows to avoid damage. The room then needed an additional sweep to remove the dislodged dust. The pattern of cleaning needed to be organised to ensure that dust was not transferred to clean furnishings during the cleaning process.

Not all advice literature in the second half of the eighteenth century included directions of how to clean the domestic environment. Recipe and cookery books continued to be popular and occasionally these featured advice relating to other aspects of household maintenance. In a similar way to earlier advice literature, Sarah Phillip’s book entitled ‘The ladies handmaid; or a compleat system of cookery on the principals of elegance and frugality’ published in 1758 included a section of helpful advice for laundry work. She did not include any such advice for the cleaning and care of furniture or other domestic furnishings. Other books with a focus on cookery and recipes, such as Ann Shackleford’s 1767 volume, did not comment on any other

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28 The book was specifically concerned with providing household maintenance instruction to servants, but the text had a secondary role as a companion providing advice to the housewife and this will be investigated in further detail in chapter 5. Glasse, Hannah (1760), *The Servants Directory or Housekeepers Companion*, London.

aspect of household management or housework. Elizabeth Raffald’s ‘The Experienced English Housekeeper’ first published in 1769 focused almost exclusively on cookery, even though its title suggested that it would provide advice on other elements of household management.30

By the late eighteenth century Mrs Whatman felt that advice and instruction of how to clean and care for her household furniture was important enough to warrant inclusion in her personal household management book. In contrast to the majority of earlier published literature she provided detailed and specific cleaning regimes for certain items of her household furniture. Whatman’s personal management book has much in common with Glasse’s published text ‘The Servants Directory…’ Both texts provide detailed instructions of what was required of each servant on a daily basis. They each provide an understanding of the process of cleaning and the nature of maintenance and they hint at the amount of time that was needed to care for furniture. Whatman’s instructions are particularly interesting because they reveal her specific maintenance regimes for her personal household. This is perhaps because she had compiled her notes exclusively for her household and either assumed that her servants would not know how to look after her furniture properly, or she preferred to dictate how her possessions should be kept clean and cared for. To maintain the furniture and furnishings in her household items firstly needed to be protected from sunlight on a daily basis to prevent fading and colour damage and secondly had to be regularly dusted to keep them clean. A key part of the housemaid’s daily duties as she went around the house was to close a room’s shutters or blinds at a stipulated time to prevent the sun from damaging any of the room’s furnishings. Furniture needed to be dusted either daily, or frequently enough to prevent a build up of dust and dirt. In addition some furniture required further treatment to preserve its appearance. Polishing was required less frequently and was not only specific to the type of wood, but also to the individual piece of furniture. For example, her dressing room mahogany cabinet was ‘of very nice workmanship’ that had acquired a polished veneer from previous years of good care. To maintain this it needed only ‘common

dusting’ and occasional ‘rubbing’. The housemaid was reminded ‘Never to use a hard brush to any mahogany carving that has been neglected and the dust suffered to settle in it’ as this would have scratched or damaged the carving spoiling its appearance.  

Whatman’s list of tasks addressed the concerns of each room in turn, as each individual piece of furniture had its own specific needs and routine of care. The room in which furniture was kept was important for its care because the function of a room dictated its pattern of use. The maintenance of her drawing room provides a good example. As was discussed in chapter two, the requirements for the care of the room were related to its function. The furniture and furnishings of the room would have reflected and supported its use as a social space for sitting and relaxing, for taking tea and for entertaining guests. To fulfil these functions the drawing room needed to be kept clean and tidy. Initially the room needed to be protected from sunlight by having the blinds drawn all morning everyday. Sunlight could case fading to patterned textiles which were particularly associated with the drawing room. The furniture needed to be ‘kept dusted, and the chairs and sofas dusted occasionally, and the mahogany rubbed’. Her housemaid needed to use her discretion to decide when to dust, but a build up of layers of dust would not be tolerated by her mistress. The fabric covers needed to be shaken daily to remove dust. The room could have been used by the family on a daily basis hence the need for the regular removal of dust. The fully carpeted floor posed further cleaning problems as it could not be rolled up and removed for cleaning and swept underneath as non-fixed carpets could. The carpet was to be cleaned with tea leaves, and Whatman was careful to stipulate twice that the carpet should be protected from dirt. She stressed that when coal was brought in and when the fireplace was cleaned something should be laid over the carpet to protect it from the coal dust. If such dirt had landed on an unprotected carpet it would have been very difficult to remove and it would have been very obvious to visitors that proper care had not been taken.

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32 For a discussion of the way that rooms were used and their function please see Chapter 2.
Specialised cleaning equipment

The prescribing of cleaning equipment to specific roles can be seen as an aspect of the specialisation of housekeeping. Such prescription can be seen as a way of breaking down ‘housework’ into smaller more manageable tasks with their own specific cleaning paraphernalia. After their categorisation, individual cleaning tasks could be organised into specific routines and the housewife could then dictate who would carry out the work and how it would be undertaken. The separation of cleaning cloths and equipment would enable two or perhaps more tasks to be undertaken simultaneously, where staffing numbers allowed it.

Newspaper advertisements and the probate inventories of retailers reveal that a whole host of specific and specialist domestic cleaning equipment and tools were available for purchase. For example, the Manchester brush maker William Low advertised a large array of specialist brushes for household cleaning in his local newspaper. In his advertisement in the ‘Manchester Mercury’ in 1763, he informed the reader that he sold ‘Carpet Brooms of all Sorts, Bed Brooms, Dust Brushes…Cloaths Brushes of all Sorts’ alongside other brushes for use by workers in specific trades.34 This array of different brushes indicates that specialised equipment was required for specific cleaning tasks, or that he would have liked people to think that these were necessary. It would of course be in the best interests of a retailer to sell numerous products instead of one.35 He distinguished between types of brushes by naming their use or linking them to a specific item of furniture. This informed the reader, who was a potential customer, that to clean a carpet efficiently and without damage a special ‘carpet brush’ was required. The term ‘carpet brush’ suggested that it was the only brush that should be used to clean a carpet. The housewife therefore had a responsibility to ensure that within her house the correct equipment was used for the task that was being undertaken. The appearance of these specific types of brushes implied that cleaning was becoming a considered and even specialised task that required knowledge and a certain degree of skill. In turn specialist equipment also needed to be maintained, creating new elements of housework. As the household became better furnished these items all needed to be kept clean which lead to the

34 The Dictionary Archive, NY1763MNM002, Manchester Mercury, 1763
35 The nature of retail advertisements is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3.
development and production of a variety of specific tools to undertake new jobs or aspects of housework that previously simply did not exist. Taking the example of a ‘carpet broom’, before floor carpets were widely used there would have been no need for it, the creation of specific broom suggests that the material itself was not being maintained well by previous equipment.

Through her household management instructions Mrs Whatman explained to her domestic servants what equipment they needed to use, when it needed to be used and how it should be used. She dictated that specific furnishings needed to be cared for with specific tools that were suitable for the item in question. For example, she provided detailed instructions that her housemaid was to use ‘a painter’s brush to all ledges, window frames and furniture, and then the duster. Never to use a hard brush to any mahogany carving that has been neglected and the dust suffered to settle in it…A steel should be used round the hearth and in all dirty corners.’

Mrs Whatman was not alone in her use of specific tools or equipment to clean and care for specific household furnishings. Elizabeth Shackleton also made reference to specific pieces of cleaning cloth by referring to ‘china cloths’, ‘a cloth to wipe the leads’, ‘knife cloths’ and ‘tin cloths’. The name of these cleaning dusters or rags was determined by how she wanted them to be used. This suggests that she felt the need to distinguish and separate cleaning equipment by its intended use. She made no mention of whether there were any physical or material differences between the rags that would explain why she had designated them to specific cleaning duties. It could be suggested that in the absence of a physical difference between cleaning cloths, their prescribed use was based on her need to distinguish between household chores. Household cleaning equipment was distinguished by its specific intended use and had a designated role, possibly because of the substances used on them, or because each material produced its own type of dirt. The following section goes on to investigate the special care that was required of certain items of furniture, and sheds further light on the need to divide cleaning clothes by task.

Specialised treatment for furniture

Certain items of furniture needed specific cleaning and care routines to maintain their appearance and longevity. By the late eighteenth century probate inventories and sales catalogues reveal that furniture was made from a range of different types of wood including oak, mahogany, walnut, cherry and teak. Each type needed to be cared for in a slightly different way. By the end of the eighteenth century commercial domestic cleaning products were being advertised and retailed to the middling sorts. Some new types of wooden furniture required more than just regular dusting, certain types of treated (or finished) woods needed to be rubbed or waxed and others needed to be polished whereas some needed any combination of these. By the end of the eighteenth century maintenance products began to be marketed with an increased frequency reflecting the new care demands generated by new types of furniture. One such product was Packers Royal Furniture Gloss. The pictorial advertisement for the polish was discussed in chapter three for different reasons (Figure 3). The 1793 advertising bill contained an image depicting two women within a domestic interior that is indicative of a middling sort’s parlour. It contained the furnishings, fixtures and decorative items typical of such a home during the late eighteenth century, with three chairs, a table, a bureau (or writing desk). It was decorated with prints, a decorative fire grate with surround and a looking glass. The women are depicted as seated either side of a table perhaps awaiting the arrival of tea. The figure on the right is portrayed as a visitor because she has her hands inside a muff. She comments on the condition of the domestic interior, especially the furniture, stating ‘Your furniture’s exceeding Nice. Pray Madam tell to me, what makes it so? And what is the price that mine the same may be.’ The reply from the lady to the left, presumably the housewife responded ‘Tis Packer’s Gloss that makes it so. One shilling is the price. Do you buy one the troubles none and yours will be as nice.’ According to the advertisement, highly polished furniture of such commendable quality could easily be achieved by the purchase and use of Packers Gloss. The advertisement suggests to the viewer their household furniture was constantly on display to visitors who would notice its condition and appearance. As a result of this the bill hints that the

38 See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the changing nature of furniture.
39 Figure 3, Detail of a bill advertising Packer’s Royal Furniture Gloss 1973, Snodin, Micheal and John Styles (2001), Design and the Decorative Arts: Britain 1500 –1900, V & A publications, London, p.180, No.43, see Chapter 3 p.126
advertisers had an awareness of the demand for highly polished furniture and used this to relate their product to the housewife.  

Nineteenth century advice literature marked a change in the subject of household advice and in the way in which the advice was presented. It became more common for management books to include advice on cleaning and caring for the domestic interior and its furnishings. For example, in her 1825 volume Mrs Parkes devoted a section of her book to ‘Household concerns’ and within that included a chapter entitled ‘furniture’. Here she gave instruction of how certain types of furniture and furnishings needed to be cleaned and cared for. The reader learnt how to care for rose-wood, japanned furniture, how to polish mahogany and how to care for a whole host of other domestic furnishings. Each type of wood required different treatment and as Parkes pointed out to her reader, simply to use the same method for all types of furniture could in many cases cause damage. For example, furniture made from rose-wood was finished with a varnish and so needed to be rubbed every day with a ‘soft duster, but should not be touched with wax or oil, which would destroy the varnish which the upholsterer has put on’. For polishing furniture made from mahogany, she acknowledged that there were several ‘mixtures prepared’ but that the best varnish was ‘cold-drawn linseed oil’, which she instructed if it was applied correctly over time would form a good varnish providing protection to the furniture. Mrs Parkes directed that Japanned furniture would benefit from treatment using ‘spirit of turpentine’, but as this was impractical on a regular basis due to the smell, the furniture should be kept clean by regular gentle rubbing with a piece of old silk. Although this might mean more work, Parkes insisted that the regularity of rubbing with silk would minimise the need to treat the pieces with turpentine anyway. In this circumstance regularity with the correct equipment was the key to success, which may have taken some time if a household contained many items of japanned furniture.

Parkes did not provide any recipes for cleaning or polishing solutions, but she did

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41 Parkes, Frances (1841 fifth edition), Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Young Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, and the Regulation of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, pp.199-200
stipulate how often maintenance work needed to be carried out and specified the equipment that was needed to clean various different household furnishings.

In a similar way to Parkes, William Kitchiner included matters concerning the cleaning and care of household furnishings in his 1829 text. ‘The Housekeepers Oracle’ was published posthumously in 1829 and was intended to work as a companion to his earlier volume ‘The Cooks Oracle’. His instructions covered the care of a range of goods and solutions for various household problems including, ‘Varnish for Oil Paintings’, ‘Method of cleaning paper-hangings’, ‘To prevent disagreeable smells from sinks &c’ and ‘hints relative to beds and bed-clothes, ‘To make wooden stairs have the appearance of stone’.42

With their inclusion of cleaning and maintaining domestic furnishings amongst their subject matter these texts marked a change from previous household management books. This inclusion suggests that authors felt that their readers would require and value such advice. The demands of cleaning new types of furniture were so significantly different and more complicated that detailed instruction of exactly how to care for these items was essential.

Kitchiner’s appendix contained a selection of instructions for the maintenance of furniture, specifically recipes for ‘French Polish’ and a ‘polish for dining tables’.43 It became increasingly popular to apply a French polish finish to mahogany furniture. His recipe for making French polish was complicated and would have taken much time to manufacture and prepare even before the cleaning process could be carried out. The preparation stage would have taken a few hours of uninterrupted physical work, with at least a further twenty-four hours of waiting before the concoction could be used. The reader was instructed to:

‘Take a quarter of an ounce of Gum Sandaric And a quarter of an ounce of Gum Mastic; Pick the dirt and black lumps out very carefully, and pound them in a Mortar quite fine; Put them into a bottle, and add to them a quartern (old

43 Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, pp.318-327
measure) of strong spirit of wine; Cork it down and put it in a warm place;
Shake it frequently till the Gum is entirely dissolved, which will be in about
twenty-four hours.”

Following its manufacture the French polish then needed to be applied to the furniture
and Kitchiner went on to provide detailed instructions of how this should be done.
The furniture needed to be free from grease, or any polish or wax that may previously
have been applied which in some cases meant that the furniture would need to be
sanded down. The polish could then be applied with a twisted piece of linen cloth to
the furniture in the direction of the grain of the wood. Following this the furniture
needed to be rubbed lightly with a soft fine cloth or ‘what is better, an old silk
handkerchief’, until the furniture had a polished appearance. The time consuming
process would have taken a long time to complete, Kitchiner estimated that the
polishing stage alone would have taken two to three hours. It can be assumed that this
treatment would only be applied to an item of furniture once or twice during the
lifetime of its owner. If the polish were to fade and appear dull Kitchiner informed
his reader that it could be ‘recovered with a little spirit of wine’. The successful
application his French polish relied on the use of the correct equipment and the
adoption of his exact methodology. Kitchiner’s complex instructions for
manufacturing and using French polish assumed that the person carrying out the task
had a certain level of competency and an understanding of furniture.

In addition to his recipe for French polish Kitchiner provided comprehensive advice
for manufacturing and administering polish specifically for a dining table. His
instructions suggest that a dining table needed to be cared for in its own way using a
special formula for its appropriate cleaning. To follow his instructions fully involved
much time consuming labour. For example, the first stage of the process needed to be
repeated every day for several months. Following his timescale this would have been
at least twenty minutes work everyday to polish a single piece of furniture, albeit one
that required a good deal of initial capital investment. The use of the wrong
equipment or cloth could potentially cause more problems meaning that the process
would need to be started from the beginning or even worse causing damage to an

44 Old measure is Kitchiner’s exact wording. Kitchiner (1829), The Housekeeper’s Oracle, p.323
45 Kitchiner (1829), The Housekeeper’s Oracle, pp.323-324
expensive and essential piece of household furniture. Referring back to the section on specialist cleaning equipment, following Kitchiners instructions it becomes obvious as to why Whatman insisted in the allocation of separate cleaning cloths for each specific task. He explained to his reader the equipment that was needed to achieve the best results, how the polish should be applied and how often the cleaning routine needed to be carried out.

‘Polish for Dining Tables, is to rub them with cold-drawn Linseed Oil, Thus:—put a little in the middle of a Table, and then with a piece of Linen (never use woollen) Cloth rub it well all over the Table; Then take another piece of Linen, and rub it for ten minutes, then rub it till quite dry with another Cloth. This must be done ever day for several months, when you will find your mahogany acquire a permanent and beautiful lustre, unattainable by any other means, and equal to the finest French Polish; and if the Table is covered with the Table cloth only, the hottest dishes will make no impression upon it: and when once this polish is produced, it will only require dry rubbing with a linen cloth for about ten minutes twice in a week, to preserve it in the highest perfection; …If the appearance must be more immediately produced, take some FURNITURE PASTE.’

In complete contrast to earlier literature, nineteenth century advice books even strayed into the realm of furnishing the domestic interior. Mrs Parkes included a comprehensive guide in her management book that was first published in 1825. Parkes provided an extremely detailed guide to how the household should be furnished, and argued that the cleaning and maintenance requirements of furniture and furnishings should be considered when deciding which items to purchase. She informed her reader that a simply and tastefully furnished house would be easier to clean suggesting that a clean well maintained house was of greater value than a fashionably furnished interior. Mahogany furniture was favoured by Parkes who praised it for its durability and the ease with which it could be kept clean and well maintained. For example, she informed the reader that mahogany was ‘capable of

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46 Kitchiner (1829), _The Housekeeper’s Oracle_, pp.324-325
47 This chapter Parkes’s book is also discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this thesis.
48 Parkes (1825 first edition), _Domestic Duties_, p.186
It is impossible to tell from advice literature alone whether such instructions were followed and recipes were used. The appearance of such instructions does, however, demonstrate a perception of concern about how to care for the changing domestic interior. The advice that was disseminated through nineteenth century household management books was significantly different to that offered by eighteenth century manuals. Eighteenth century household advice generally consisted of suggestions and helpful tips, hints and recipes selected from various aspects of household management. The advice was presented as a series of useful suggestions that the reader could select from and could decide whether to use or not. By the nineteenth century advice literature was presented in a dramatically different way. It had become prescriptive and consisted of a much more comprehensive list of detailed instructions on how to manage a household. This literature dictated how the household should be managed, rather than offering advice as to how various tasks could be undertaken as earlier advice had done. The advice propagated by later household manuals focused on the management of the household, it was not fragmentary as earlier advice had been, it formed a comprehensive guide as to how the household should be managed, even down to detailing how furniture should be cleaned and maintained.

**Laundering**

As was revealed in Chapter 1 the ownership of textiles increased during the period, with families owning more domestic linen and items of clothing than had previously been the case. The growth in the ownership of textiles was also partly due to their popularity as domestic furnishings that added decoration. Window curtains, floor coverings and carpets and upholstered furniture all contributed to the increasing presence of textiles within the household. These items all needed to be kept clean and free from dust and dirt to maintain their appearance and also to encourage their longevity. Some textile furnishings could not be home laundered due to the delicate nature of certain fabrics, or because they were fixed in place in the interior. These

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49 Parkes (1825 first edition), *Domestic Duties*, p.198
fabrics could not be washed and they needed to be cared for in different ways. Often such textiles were treated similarly to other domestic furnishings, with dust being removed regularly and occasional cleaning using specialist treatment, sometimes employing the use of a professional. The care of these textile items was covered in the section above, and will be returned to later in the chapter, but now the focus will remain on laundry.

Laundry work had always been a time consuming and physically demanding task. This continued throughout the eighteenth century. It was heavy rough work that was a laborious and monotonous household routine that had to be regularly repeated. It has been suggested that washing was traditionally undertaken specifically on a Monday. This perception is reinforced by popular Georgian culture, where rhymes and songs specify Monday as washday in a virtuous and godly household. It is generally accepted that laundering would have taken almost a week to complete from washing through to ironing or pressing. The traditional explanation is that washing had to be started on a Monday or Tuesday at the latest in order for the best clothes to be ready to wear at Church the following Sunday. However, Davidson suggests that a more likely explanation is that market days usually fell on a Thursday and Saturday, so the washing had to be complete by then to enable the housewife to visit the market to purchase household provisions. In addition, the accepted theory of a Monday wash day is generalised and does not allow for any individual differentiation.

The process of laundering changed very little throughout the period even though the ownership of textiles increased considerably, with the addition of many new types and patterns of fabrics emerging. From probate inventories it is clear that these families owned more linen, often having duplicates of basic household linen such as tablecloths and personal linen such as shifts and shirts. There is an argument that the ownership of multiple items reduced the need to wash regularly because a duplicate item could be used to replace a dirty one. And whilst this argument is convincing when applied to the use of textile items, what is overlooked is that these additional items would also have had to have been washed at some point. The result being that a

50 Laundry was one aspect of the process for cleaning and caring for domestic textiles, after they were laundered or washed items needed to be dried, aired and smoothed.
51 Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, p.150
52 Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, p.150
larger load of washing would have to be undertaken at one time, creating a demand for increased labour.

**Sourcing and treating water**

The process of washing was more complicated than simply identifying dirty items and planning when and how it was best to wash them. Like many elements of housework a great deal of preparation was required before the task could be undertaken. The washing of fabric was dependant upon the procuring of water and washing agents. Davidson does not underestimate the labour associated with accessing clean water as she argues that the most important change to household management between 1600 and 1900 was the introduction of piped water to houses.\(^{53}\) If or when water was not available on site it had to be brought to the house making the task of washing more onerous and labour intensive. Carrying water to a house was a laborious time consuming task that needed to be repeated regularly to facilitate washing. Servants were often sent to fetch water, or where that was not possible domestic labourers outside of the household could have provided such a service. An eighteenth century account described Londoners fetching water at four o’clock on Sunday mornings to take ‘the Advantage before other People are up, to fill their Tubs and Pans, with a Sufficiency to serve the ensuing seven days’.\(^{54}\) Often the source of water was a well or a pump some distance from a house meaning that large quantities of water had to be carried some distance. Hill comments that in rural areas water was often collected from a well and after being drawn was carried for more than a quarter of a mile from its source to a house. It has been estimated by Hill that, in the south of England, women usually carried between one and three gallons of water at a time. In urban areas where water pumps were present they too resulted in a journey from the pump to a house, but there was the additional complication of demand often outstripping supply which frequently resulted in long queues or the need to fetch water in the early hours of the morning in an attempt to avoid waiting.\(^{55}\) Water carriers provided the service of delivering and selling fresh river water to households. The Boycott account

\(^{53}\) Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, p.3  
book reveals that Elizabeth Boycott often paid for the delivery of water to her house. Whether she was paying a specialised water carrier or had commissioned a day labourer to undertake the task for her is unclear. A payment for such a service was made on the 24th March 1704 ‘1d fetching water’.  

The quality of water brought additional problems and once water had been acquired and brought to the household it often needed further preparation before it could be used. Phillips in her domestic advice manual published in 1758 informed her reader that the washing water had to be treated before the process could be started: ‘Some people are so inconsiderate as to wash with water when it first comes in, which being always thick, and very often yellow, gives the linnen a muddy cast’. The washing would then be spoilt and the process would have to be repeated thus making more work. She recommended that this could easily be avoided if the housewife saved her washing water so that it ‘may stand and settle 3 or 4 days at least before you use it’, so adding substantial preparation time to household chores before the work of washing could be undertaken.

Some newly built late-eighteenth century houses were designed and developed with the necessity of a supply and access to water in mind. For example, John Pinney a West-India merchant had a house built in Bristol between 1788 and 1791. His house had a sealed tank under the basement that stored collected rainwater to add to the spring water that was already fed to the tank. Such a collection was dependant on rainfall and would have had to be supplemented if rainfall was low. Access to water was essential and something to consider when deciding where to live. Even by the early nineteenth century access to water remained an important enough concern to warrant its inclusion in advice literature. For example, the anonymous author of ‘The Home Book: or Young Housekeeper’s Assistant’ reminded her house-hunting reader to examine if potential dwellings were ‘supplied with a spring of good water’.

56 Shropshire Archives, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudgwick Hall, Household account book, 1704-1798
57 Phillips (1758), The Ladies Handmaid, p.469
58 Pave, Richard, Bristol Museums & Art Gallery (no date), The Georgian House, Bristol City Council
59 A Lady (1829), The Home Book: or Young Housekeeper’s Assistant, Smith, Elder and Co. London, p.106
Soap

The process of washing fabric required the use of detergents, throughout the period of study these could be made at home or purchased from retailers. Some housewives used lye as their cleaning agent, but it was a dangerous mixture made from water boiled with ashes and could cause skin burns and blindness if misused or accidentally spilled, and it took additional time to prepare and administer.\(^6^0\) Soap was affordable to those of middling status and was readily available through provincial retailers. For example, the 1704 probate inventory of Sarah Deykin noted that she has a ‘firkin of the Best Soap’ in stock at her grocery shop in Walsall. Similarly in Shifnal just over ten years later, John Greene had ‘halfe a firkin of soap’ remaining in his grocery shop in 1713.\(^6^1\) At roughly the same time regular payments for soap were recorded in the Boycott account book, these usually coincided with payments made to a ‘washer woman’ and for ‘washing great things’ suggesting that this soap was purchased for the purpose of laundering the household linen.\(^6^2\) It is likely that many housewives used a combination of these detergents to wash their clothes and household fabrics. Davidson comments that some women used soap to wash their favourite clothes and small linens and left everything else for bucking.\(^6^3\) Offering support to her claim Elizabeth Purefoy divided her washing in this way based on which detergent would be used: ‘one day soap and another day ye Buck’.\(^6^4\) Further instructions provided by Phillips assumed that soap would be generally used for washing fabrics. She went on to suggest that to soften the water ashes could be tied up in linen cloth and added to washing water since a smaller quantity of soap would then be required.\(^6^5\)

White items could be made brighter by a process called ‘bluing’, usually using an indigo based dye. Powdered ‘blue’ was available to purchase in shops throughout the eighteenth century. For example, the Boycotts purchased the powder in this form as

\(^6^0\) Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, pp.142-143
\(^6^2\) *Shropshire Archives*, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall, *Household account book, 1704-1798*
\(^6^4\) See footnote 26, Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, p.144
\(^6^5\) Phillips (1758), *The Ladies Handmaid*, p.469
an entry in their account book reveals that payment for ‘1 lb powder blew’ was made in January 1704. In addition, William Cowckley’s probate inventory from 1719 revealed that he had 14lbs of the powder for sale in his Shrewsbury shop. Presumably this was stored in loose powder form and a customer could purchase the amount that they required, then place the quantity that they wished into their own ‘dolly blue bags’ as and when necessary. Additionally, indigo could also be used to the same effect and was often incorporated into the starch. The use of these agents would have taken place after the washing phase otherwise they would have been removed in the rinse.

The process of washing

The process of washing did not change radically during the period. The work was carried out by hand and was both labour intensive and time consuming. Household management books throughout the period suggest many different methodologies for washing and provide comprehensive instructions for washing different garments and fabrics. Many early household management books contained advice in the form of recipes for washing certain fabrics or removing specific stains. For example, in her 1684 book Hannah Woolley included instructions on how to ‘Starch Tiffanys or Lawns’, ‘to get Ink Spots out of Linnen’, ‘To take away the stains of Linnen Cloth, caused by any sort of Fruit’, ‘To wash and starch points’. In like manner Phillips in her advice book published in 1758 included recipes for the removal of stains, such as ‘to take out iron moulds, or stains of claret, ink…out of muslins table linens &c’, ‘how to get the stains of fruit out of linnen’ and ‘Another way to get spots or ink our of linnen’. Alongside these recipes Phillips added additional detailed advice about how the process of washing should be carried out. For example, ‘See that your pot or copper be nicely clean, that it may not soil or grease the water; while it is heating, sort your clothes, laying the small in one heap, and the great in another…When you have done this, rub them all well over with soap, especially those places you find most

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66 Shropshire Archives, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall, Household account book, 1704-1798
67 The Dictionary Project Archive, Cowckley, William 1719
68 Machinery to assist with washing was available and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.
69 Woolley (T.P) (1684), The Accomplish’d Ladys Delight, pp.192-195
dirty’. These detailed instructions suggest that Phillips thought that there was a need for an additional level of advice and instruction required for managing and carrying out laundry. Both Woolley and Phillips provided precise directions of how to wash fabric detailing the amount of soap to be used, ways the fabric needed to be rubbed and number of lathers and rinses that fabric needed to clean it without damage. Many recipes dealt with the care of new types of domestic textiles, which can offer a partial explanation of why such detailed instructions were present in advice literature.

New types of domestic textiles and dyes that were increasingly popular as domestic furnishings often posed problems as some of these needed to be cared for in certain ways to prevent damage. For example, printed fabrics that could be home laundered required special care when washing to ensure that the colours did not run. For this reason Phillips, suggested that her reader should use ‘oldest soap you can, for that which is new made not only spoils the colour of the linnen, but also does not go so far’. Evidently using soap that had aged was a far more prudent decision as it did not damage colour and in addition a smaller quantity could be used in comparison with new soap. New textiles such as printed cotton and chintz brought with them an additional burden that affected the nature of housework. They could not simply be washed with other domestic textiles as the process of washing could damage both these and other textiles washed with them. Reflecting her concerns of how to care for new decorative fabrics, Christiana Awdry recorded a formula for washing chintz and ‘printed linen or checked’ in her household book. The recipe detailed an exhaustive process that extended over three days. In addition it suggested that ‘Chintz and printed linens are rinsed in spring water which the oftener done the whiter they will be. Put them into water starch with a little blue in it. Hang them in the shade to dry.’ The method would have been difficult to achieve in most urban areas where

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70 Phillips (1758), *The Ladies Handmaid*, p.470
71 Phillips (1758), *The Ladies Handmaid*, p.470
72 ‘To a handful of bran a gallon of boiling water poured over it. Strain it off the next day. Wash your linen in it warm. Repeat this if you see it necessary. Chintz and printed linens are rinsed in spring water which the oftener done the whiter they will be. Put them into water starch with a little blue in it. Hang them in the shade to dry.’ Jensen, Margaret (ed.) (1995), *Christina Awdry’s Household Book*, Ex Libris Press, Wiltshire, p.91
spring water would have difficult to acquire. The housewife most likely followed recipes as far as she could and ‘made do’ with replacement ingredients if she could not locate those specified. The ability to home launder certain textile furnishings would have significantly added to the burden of housework.

Professional care for textile furnishings

Since the increased use of textiles and soft furnishings within the home created additional cleaning demands, professionals began to offer specialised cleaning services for domestic textiles that were difficult to clean in situ. They portrayed themselves as skilled specialists who were trained to wash delicate and colourfast articles that could not be cared for adequately by washing at home. In Birmingham Mrs Satterthwaite promoted her professional laundering service by placing an advertisement in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* in 1790. She informed the towns inhabitants that alongside usual laundering she also ‘mangles Bed Furniture and Linens of all Kinds, in the neatest manner.’

Likewise, Cripps and Co. placed a similar advertisement detailing the many fabric cleaning services that they provided:

*Cripps and Co. from London, No 24, Top of Church Street, Birmingham . . . have brought to the highest Perfection the Art of Cleaning the above Articles…wrought Beds, Mohair, Moreen, Harrateen, stuff Camblets, China Hangings and all Kinds of Bed Furniture cleaned and dyed in the neatest Manner; scarlet Cloaks redded; Mittens, Gloves either Silk, Linen or Leather, dyed; Ladies Night Gowns, great Coats, Levets &c glazed in the compleatest Manner, without taking to Pieces,. . . N.B, Country Orders duly attended to.*

In a similar way Mr William Wakeman advertised himself as a ‘silk-dyer and Cloaths-Cleaner (from London)’ in a 1790 edition of the *Leceister Journal.* Alongside the usual services of dying and cleaning clothing and household fabrics he informed the reader that he also ‘cleans, dyes and waters harateen and stuff beds, of

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74 *The Dictionary Archive*, MY1790ABG108, Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 1790
75 *The Dictionary Archive*, MY1790ABG015, Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 1790
all sorts, and dyes them all colours’ and ‘scours blankets, and cleans stair-case and parlour carpeting, without injury to the colours; he cleans cottons, linens, callicoes and chintzes, and calenders them with a machine by means of which gowns are calendered without being taken to pieces’.

**New technology: The washing machine**

From the second half of the eighteenth century, machines to assist with domestic washing were invented and patented in an attempt to make laundry work easier, quicker and less labour intensive. These domestic ‘washing machines’ were marketed and advertised in newspapers as labour saving devices, as these examples demonstrate.

From *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 1790:

‘MACHINES, by virtue of his Majesty’s Patent, for WASHING LINEN are now brought to Perfection, and may be had at Mr Copeland’s, Carpenter and Builder, Oxford-street, Digbeth, or at Mrs Tildesley's, No 89, Dale-End, Birmingham.

The Proprietors have the Satisfaction to inform the Public, from the great Number that have been sold, that the common Objection to Machines of their hurting the Linen, is in this invention, utterly removed; though its Action on the Material far exceeds the Effect of Hands, and renders every Kind of Garment, Shirt, Sheet, Counterpane or other Article, whiter and cleaner than the common mode, yet it is entirely free from Friction, as it works by Pressure only, but in so equal and admirable a Manner, as not to wear the finest Linen, or Muslin, so much as when washed by Hands, and entirely saves the Trouble and Expense of Boiling; giving them a better Colour, being enable to wash with water boiling hot, so that a Boy or Girl, Twelve Years Old, may, in equal space of Time, wash as much Linen as Five or Six of the ablest

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76 *The Dictionary Archive*, MY1790LCJ089, Leicester Journal, 1790
Washerwomen, with one third less of the Fire and Soap. - The Machines are made of different sizes, and should be proportional to the Number in Family, viz. those two Feet and a Half in Length, Value £3 3s will wash eight or nine Shirts, Sheets or other Articles in Proportion, at once; - three Feet Long, £3 13s 6d and three Feet and a Half £4 4s four Feet £4 14s 6d. On Account of the present Demand for them, one Guinea is expected to be paid at the time of giving the Order.\footnote{77}

From the Observer, 1791:

‘PATENT LAUNDRESS, or WASHING MACHINE; Is sold by Mr. KENDALL, the Inventor and Patentee, at No. 7, Charing-Cross, London.

THIS ingenious Invention, made wholly of wood, is highly esteemed by men of science, and persons of every description; and without the parade of enumerating the saving qualities, it possesses them all, in the most eminent degree. The act of Wringing, so destructive to linen, is changed for Pressure, which cannot injure, and is made to fit the Machine or a Rincer, a most valuable appendage, which makes it the most complete Machine now known for the purpose of Washing.

***The Wringer included at the under Prices - Small size, 8 shirts, 3 Guineas and a half; middling ditto, 14 shirts, 4 Guineas and a half; large ditto, 30 shirts, 6 Guineas. - Paid for on delivery.

The Patent Churn in different sizes, as usual.’\footnote{78}

Both advertisements stress the labour and time saving properties of the machines.

They were intended entirely for domestic use with the first advertisement stressing

\footnote{77}{The Dictionary Archive, MY1790ABG113, Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 1790}
\footnote{78}{The Dictionary Project Archive, LY1791OBS002, Observer, 1791}
that they were made in different sizes and should be bought according to ‘Numbers in Family’. They reveal that the act of wringing could damage clothes and suggest that earlier washing machines had damaged the items that they were washing, but these machines did not because they used pressure to wash garments in the same way that washing by hand did. Both advertisements stress the economic benefits of using a machine to wash; apparently both less soap and less labour were needed, reducing household costs, particularly of the washerwoman who would no longer have to visit her employer’s home. Removal of the washerwoman could have been a popular choice, as contemporary culture portrayed her as a gossip who by entering the home would know all the household secrets, and be able to reveal them to others. Whether this was the case or not, she was perceived to be a threat to the family and household. Domestic washing machines would have further ‘de-skilled’ washing. Previously it needed some knowledge, experience and expertise to wash effectively and successfully, as the guides provided in advice literature demonstrate.

The washing machine is portrayed in the advertisements as an exciting and clever device with the first advertisement implying that it was a better method of washing and by describing hand washing as ‘common’ it suggests that the machine was ‘uncommon’ and therefore exceptional in the work that it did. The second informed the reader that the machine ‘is highly esteemed by men of science’, validating the machine by placing it into the world of science, therefore appealing to the eighteenth century interest in the subject. Washing machines were advertised in the provincial press and according to an advertisement in Aris’s Birmingham gazette they could be purchased in Birmingham.

Charles Bruce’s advertisement for a washing machine in his auction implies that the machine was second hand by informing the reader that it was ‘good as new’, suggesting that some people had purchased and used domestic washing machines. In the sample of provincial newspapers a domestic washing machine appears in a sales list just once. Charles Bruce informed the readership of the Leicester Journal in 1790, that he had for sale a ‘a patent washing machine as good as new’ amongst many other household goods at his ‘Repository, White Hart Inn, Coal-hill, Leicester’. 79

79 The Dictionary Project Archive, MY1790LCJ034, Leicester Journal, 1790
Washing machines such as these do not seem to have been popular as there is no evidence of ownership in the probate inventories and sales catalogues consulted for this thesis, though these inventions were a little late for the majority of probate inventories. In addition to this, and perhaps partly providing an explanation for their unpopularity, washing machines were not endorsed by household management books. These advocated traditional methods of hand washing, providing detailed instructions of the best ways that this could be undertaken well into the early nineteenth century. In 1825 Mr Parkes advised directly against the use of a washing machine, she acknowledged that they could initially save labour, but warned that they did not wash as well as the traditional hand washing methods and that they could damage linen resulting in more work in the long term.\(^{80}\) In a similar vein, in her study of household technology, Ruth Schwartz-Cowan concluded that notionally labour saving devices very often did not save labour.\(^{81}\) The creation and development of domestic labour saving devices, such as a domestic washing machine suggests that people wanted domestic tasks alleviated. People wanted to make their household chores easier, less onerous and at the same time more economical. Interestingly, men created and invented the devices, but women administered and carried out housework. It could therefore be suggested that it was in fact men who wanted to reduce the time spent on domestic tasks and had their own agenda for wanting to do so. Wash day was criticised by men as it apparently could throw other household tasks and routines into disarray.\(^{82}\) If the washing took longer than planned meals could easily be served later than usual and housework became visible as it had an affect on the way that the household functioned.

**Conclusion**

The increase in the ownership of goods, the enhanced domestic interior and the changes in how the house was used affected cleaning and maintenance by making the process more time consuming, more complicated and yet at the same time necessary.

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\(^{80}\) A washing machine saves labour, but I believe that the clothes are not so well washed as by the hand; and some imagine that it wears out the linen, and tears it’, Parkes (1825 first edition), *Domestic Duties*, p.149 - 150


\(^{82}\) Davidson (1982), *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, p.151
within a structured timescale. Combined, these elements put pressure on the housewife to ensure that her house was kept clean and maintained to a high standard to enable it to be used by her family and for social activities with friends and social peers. This leads to the theme that will be addressed in the following chapter where the aim is to explore the nature of the role of the housewife and to understand how the role adapted to meet the new demands of housework and household management.
Chapter 5: Household Management and the Role of the Housewife

The term ‘housewife’ itself reveals the gendered nature of household management and organisation. The definition of ‘housewife’ demonstrates women’s distinct relationship to the household. As Oakley states, a housewife is a woman and a housewife does housework.¹ This tie was recognised by contemporaries who identified that women had a special role in maintaining the household.² Until very recently men and women have always under taken different activities within the family, with women usually taking responsibility for children, cooking and other domestic maintenance tasks.³ In pre-industrial society it has been demonstrated that women also played a vital role in household economy, providing labour and thereby contributing to the production of goods for sale or for use within the home.⁴ As a consequence of industrialisation, home and work gradually became separated and, it has been argued, that women’s role in the home became more limited. As paid work moved out women were left with mundane household maintenance tasks that became known as housework.⁵

There is a general perception that as work moved out of the home women were left with less to do because they no longer contributed to the production of goods either for sale or for use within their home. This interpretation assumes that the home remained static and the tasks needed to maintain it remained the same or were reduced. However, Part 1 of this thesis demonstrated that houses changed during the period and domestic space became increasingly better furnished with a growing range of new and decorative goods. Rather than a shrinking of responsibility, more furnishings within the household meant that a wife had more to maintain and

organise. In addition, domestic space was used in different ways and was often the site of social events. This chapter explores what effect these changes had to the role of the woman within the household by exploring the work that she carried out. The theoretical and cultural ideal role of the housewife will be explored through domestic ideology and where possible this will be enhanced by vignettes of personal information revealing how women themselves considered their role within the household. Its central focus is to investigate how the role of the housewife adapted to the changing nature of the home.

The role of the housewife as household manager

The increase in domestic goods meant that there was more to organise and to care for within the home. As was identified in the previous chapter, furnished interiors required far greater maintenance and new types of furniture and decorative goods often had specific care requirements. Participation in polite society brought demands on the wife’s time through the need and desire to participate actively in social activities both within and outside the home. The pull of sociability and the demands of running a household made this dualistic and often contrasting role a delicate balancing act. Housework was often physically demanding and would have taken its toll on appearance. For example, the constant use of hands for rough work would have at the very least made hands rough with inflamed and reddened skin, and over time deformed with calluses and sores. Delicate tea table china and porcelain was intended to show off white smooth hands, not to contrast with the rough reddened hands symptomatic of housework. The dualistic nature of the wife’s role meant that women needed to maintain an ordered and tidy household, but they also needed to maintain their personal physical appearance. These two conflicting pressures lead to a change. As a response to the contrasting demands placed upon the wife her role as ‘housewife’ developed into a managerial and supervisory position.

As the household manager, the housewife’s role was to organise and manage and not to undertake every household maintenance task herself. This resulted in a separation

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of physical labour from organisation and management. The housewife remained ultimately responsible for ‘housework’ and the domestic arena, but delegated the physical work to others, usually servants or paid domestic workers. Overton *et al* comment that the ‘main role of the wife frequently became much more that of supervision with much more of the actual work being done by servant labour.’\(^7\) The value-laden language used to describe the changing nature of women’s unpaid domestic work is revealing. Overton *et al*’s use of the term ‘supervision’ contrasting with ‘actual work’ suggests that women took on an easier role within the household.\(^8\) Alternatively, it can be argued that management brought with it a number of new and different issues, such as managing servant staff, accounting and auditing, organisation, shopping and general provisioning, alongside cooking, cleaning and washing.

The managerial housewife was a paradox within the middling home; the wife was encouraged to stay within the home and not enter paid employment, yet at the same time her role within the household began to utilise the professional and managerial skills of the workplace.\(^9\) In this sense the changing role to manager and supervisor could be considered to reflect the type of role that her husband took on in the public world of work. Domestic life was governed by female control; men knew that for their house to function successfully they were dependant upon the skill of their wife as a household manager. An efficient ‘female superintendent was an indispensable member’ of the household as without her the house would stop functioning correctly, plunging it into disorganisation and disarray making it become the antithesis of a polite home.\(^10\) Husbands became aware of the problems that could arise if their wife was absent from the marital home for a period of time leaving them the task of household management. In the 1750’s when Anne Stanhope was away visiting her sister, her husband informed her that ‘ye house does not look right without you and I am no way qualified for housekeeping.’\(^11\) Stanhope thus acknowledged the skilful nature of his wife’s role. He recognised that successful household management was

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\(^7\) Overton *et al* (2004), *Production and Consumption in English Households*, p.80
\(^8\) Overton *et al* (2004), *Production and Consumption in English Households*, p.80
dependant upon skill and an appropriate domestic education, of a type given only to women.

By the nineteenth century advice literature confirmed that the role of the housewife was that of household manager. William Kitchiner, writing in 1829, suggested that a wife needed to understand the economy of household affairs in order to carry out her role appropriately, to ensure that her family were comfortable and respectable and to augment ‘The Happiness of Home’. 12 In the same year, the anonymous author of ‘The Home Book’ confirmed that management skills were essential for a comfortable household and family. 13

**Household management books**

The changing nature of advice literature during the period reflects the changing nature of the household and the way that it needed to be managed to ensure it could fulfil its functions. When married, the young wife took complete control of her new household, a situation that was a new experience even for a woman who had received exemplary training from her mother in household matters and domestic tasks within her childhood home. Advice texts were prevalent throughout the period, coming from many different authors. The most popular of these volumes ran to numerous editions. For example, Raffald’s, ‘The Experienced English Housekeeper’, was published at least nineteen times between 1769 and 1825. Similarly during the early nineteenth century Mrs Taylor’s advice manual entitled ‘Practical Hints to Young Females on the Duties of a Wife, a Mother and a Mistress of a Family’, ran to approximately a dozen in just eleven years between 1815 and 1826. 14 Household management books provided a data bank of knowledge that would have been particularly useful to the young inexperienced household manager and once owned they could be referred to

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13 A Lady (1829), *The Home Book: or Young Housekeeper’s Assistant*, Smith, Elder and Co. London, p.1
and consulted on numerous occasions. The survival of many copies suggests that these books were widely owned, and the inscription of the owners name inside some books provides further evidence of ownership.\textsuperscript{15} Personalising books in this way is indicative of long-term ownership, suggesting that the books were referred to throughout the owners’ lifetime. Many authors intended their books to be used in this way, informing the reader that the book was a ‘friend’ or companion. For example, Shirley described his text as a ‘Delightful Companion’ in its title.\textsuperscript{16} Domestic advice literature provided the housewife with appropriate advice and as such supported her in her new role as household manager.

Advice literature does not reveal actual practice but it is possible to glean from it information about the changing ideal role of the housewife. Household manuals at the beginning of the eighteenth century were different from those published in the early nineteenth century. The style of management books changed from offering advice and suggestions, to providing rules and directions. For example, in the first edition of her book published in 1747 Glasse informed her reader that the layout of the table was to be at the discretion of the housewife, ‘Nor shall I take it upon me to direct to a Lady how to set out her Table…Nor indeed do I think it would be pretty to see a Lady’s Table set out after the Directions of a Book.’\textsuperscript{17} Glasse expected a housewife to manage her household, but to use her discretion and initiative on how she chose to do so. Plenty of cook books during the eighteenth century provided detailed templates of how a table could be set. William Henderson’s cook book, published in 1790 featured an additional section with copper-plate illustrations of ‘The Best Manner of decorating a Table’.\textsuperscript{18} The guides provided in these recipe books were intended to be a list of suggestions of how the table could be set if the housewife chose to accept the advice. They provided several different variations for the


\textsuperscript{16} Shirley (1687), \textit{The Accomplished Ladies Rich Closet of Rarities}.


\textsuperscript{18} Henderson, William Augustus (1790), \textit{The Housekeepers Instructor; Or, Universal Family Cook}, W and J. Stratford, London.
housewife to select from, allowing the housewife made her own decision of how to set her table.

Thirteen years after the first publication of her cookery book, Glasse published a household advice book entitled ‘The Servants Directory or House-keepers Companion’. This book took on two roles, it acted as an instruction manual for servants, providing detailed descriptions of the activities they should undertake to fulfil their roles correctly, and yet at the same time it provided suggestions and advice for the housewife. The deferential language used by Glasse in the preface to her book is interesting; here she informed the established housewife that she did not intend to teach ‘those whose knowledge is superior to mine’ and she hoped that they would not view her attempt to provide instructions to servants as impertinence. Her text is divided so that instruction regarding maintenance and housework are directed to servant staff. The only section that was explicitly aimed at the young inexperienced housewife related to household account keeping. It was not required, or considered appropriate, to provide instruction to the housewife of how her household should be maintained and managed.

The way that advice literature was presented and written developed during the period. By the early nineteenth century domestic management texts were more authoritarian in style providing a list of directives rather than suggestions of advice. In 1825 Parkes’s advice book marked a significant change in how advice literature was presented. Her title, ‘Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Young Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, and the Regulation of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life’, is suggestive of this change to instruction from advice as previous management literature had been. Parkes provided instruction on almost every aspect of household life, including housework, leisure pursuits and even how to furnish the rooms of the house in an appropriate manner. The style of her book formalised the oral tradition of disseminating housekeeping knowledge by presenting her advice as a conversation between an experienced older housekeeper (Mrs B) and a young recently married woman who had just set up her own household (Mrs L). The authoritative tone of Mrs B was directed at the reader as

20 Introduction to the Young Housekeeper, Part VI, Glasse (1760), *The Servants Directory*, 1-4
much as it was to answering the questions of Mrs L. This instructive approach was very different to previous advice literature where the reader was assumed to have some knowledge of housekeeping, and in some respects to have more knowledge than the author.\textsuperscript{21} Parkes’s management book led the way for the authoritarian books of the second part of the nineteenth century, where it was assumed that the author had far more knowledge than the reader and the purpose was to educate based on an ideal.

**Domestic organisation**

For a house to be managed successfully, for it to be able to function appropriately, it had to be well organised. Housework had to be carried out at appropriate times to enable the home to fulfil its role as a place of comfort for household members and as an arena for polite domestic sociability. Mundane household support services existed to sustain daily household routines and frequent social rituals. An early example illustrating domestic organisation of mundane tasks comes from the Boycott household in Rudge, Shropshire. The Boycott account book from 1704 to 1707 contains a list or rota for cleaning the household linen. The book and list were most likely compiled by Mrs Elizabeth Boycott who died in 1727.\textsuperscript{22} The Boycott family lived at Rudge Hall in Shropshire and were landed gentry.\textsuperscript{23} Mrs Boycott’s list of instructions suggests that in her household at least, housework was organised into various patterns to suit the routine nature of many domestic tasks. It is not clear who the instructions were intended for, they could have been a personal memorandum or for a servant. Her use of the term ‘Your master’ suggests that the instructions were intended for a person of lower status.\textsuperscript{24} The list of instructions forms a household cleaning routine and demonstrates a level of organisation:

\textsuperscript{21} In the preface to her 1760 management book Glasse included the proviso that she did not ‘pretend to teach the old experienced housekeeper, or those whose knowledge is superior to mine’. Glasse (1760), *The Servants Directory*, London, p.A2
\textsuperscript{22} Shropshire Archives, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798: 330/6 and Directions on bed linen, N:D: 330/07
\textsuperscript{23} The survival of such a list providing details of a rota for washing household linen is incredibly rare, and as it relates strongly to the central theme of the chapter it has been included even though the Boycotts were landed gentry and at the upper echelons of the middling sort.
\textsuperscript{24} Shropshire Record Office, 330/6 Paper from the Boycott account book: Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798
‘Shift my bed every week
Nursery bed every fortnight
Childrens Mr Wines george’s and nans bed the
Sunday every month
Long towels 2 every week
Your master and childrens towels 2 each a week
Mr Wine 1 towell a week
Table cloth and side board once a fortnight
Napkins, twice a week.’

There is a sense of order and priority in her list that was written on a single piece of paper folded into four quarters and presumably kept inside the back of her household account book (figure 6). Mrs Boycott obviously felt that cleaning routines were important, as she had written down precisely how she wanted them done, demonstrating how personal household management was and how individualistic household regimes and routines could be. The differentiation of the cleaning routines for certain members of the household suggests that cleaning was dependent upon the person’s status or needs within the household. Mrs Boycott’s bed was to be ‘shifted’ every week, yet other members of the household only had their beds ‘shifted’ once a month. A greater number of towels were washed weekly for the master and for the children than they were for Mr Wine. Mrs Boycott organised routines for washing and cleaning ensured that her household’s needs were met, and that her home was maintained an appropriate level of cleanliness. The cleaning routines might not have been carried out as precisely and rigidly as the instructions dictate, but they demonstrate that Mrs Boycott considered it important to have written set routines to manage the task of housework successfully.

25 It is not clear who the people mentioned in the instructions are, but there are references made to Nancy and George in the memorandum note section of her account book, which suggest that George was Mrs Boycott’s child and Nancy was her cousin. Shropshire Record Office, 330/6 Paper from the Boycott account book: Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798
26 Which would explain its survival, a loose small sheet with a few words on could easily have been lost or destroyed. The piece of paper had been folded up and tucked into the back cover of the account book. It is written in the same handwriting as the account book.
28 The identity of Mr Wine is unknown however the extract suggests that he was not a member of the immediate family. Shropshire Record Office, 330/6 Paper from the Boycott account book: Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798
Servants

As the period progressed the conflicting pressures of an increased workload and the social functions of the home meant that cleaning and maintenance had to be carried out in a restricted timescale. The home needed to be presented to guests as clean and well maintained and to facilitate this housework had to remain invisible. These conflicting demands lead to a reliance on servants to carry out mundane domestic maintenance tasks.29

Due to increasing levels of work and the changing use of the home, servants became more and more essential for the middling household to function successfully. Two key studies of servants during the eighteenth century have focused on the servant experience at this time. Both identify the type of work that servants undertook and investigate what life was like for them, as opposed to exploring the employment of servants from the perspective of the housewife. The work of Hecht focuses predominantly on servants employed by the aristocracy to work in their large residences. By contrast Hill set out to challenge the stereotype perpetuated by Hecht

29 See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of housework and how it developed in response to the changing nature of goods, both in quantity and their physical attributes, and as a consequence of the social uses of the home for the family and for entertaining visitors.
that servants predominantly worked in large houses in rigid hierarchical structures, turning her attention to the experience of servants employed by the families belonging to the middling sort. Hill’s work reveals a difference in the servant experience between those employed by the aristocracy and those employed in smaller houses. She found that the majority of domestic servants worked in London and not in the country houses of the aristocracy, and that the majority of these servants were female, while male servants worked almost exclusively for the aristocracy. The liveried male servant was a symbol of conspicuous consumption and considered a luxurious accessory by contemporaries. The servant tax that was first implemented in 1777 was intended to be a tax on luxury penalising the lavish lifestyles of those who employed male servants, principally the ostentatious wealthy aristocratic elite. When in 1786 the tax was extended to those employing female servants, it became apparent that the middling sort and not just the luxurious rich would be penalised. It was proposed to introduce a sliding scale of assessment. For example, in families with two children of a certain age, one servant would be non-taxable. This legislation recognised the increasing reliance that the middling household had upon servants by legitimising the employment of a servant as a necessity that should not be subject to taxation.

There was an increased demand for domestic labour during the eighteenth century and this was driven by the growth of the middling sorts. Contemporaries estimated that the numbers employed as domestic servants increased during the century, an estimate in 1767 suggested that there were 50,000 domestic servants in London alone and by 1777 this had increased to 80,000. Hill suggests that such an increase is not beyond the realms of possibility as demand for domestic labour from the middling families of London increased at an accelerated speed during the last quarter of the century as their homes became better furnished and required greater maintenance. Outside of London, the rest of the country may not have experienced such radical growth.

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34 Estimate made by Jonas Hanway. He suggested that 1 in 13 of London’s population were servants, providing a figure of 50,000. In 1777 he increased his estimate to 1 in 8, providing a figure of 80,000. Hill, Bridget (1994, first published 1989), *Women Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century England*, UCL Press, London, pp.126-127
Schwartz’s evidence for the rest of the country reveals that there were proportionally more live-in servants ‘during the eighteenth century than subsequently’. He goes on to suggest that this decline in domestic live-in servants could have started during the eighteenth century.\(^{35}\) This trend varied across the country with London experiencing change much later than the rest of the country, perhaps explaining why historians had previously not identified this decrease. Historical study of servants has focused predominantly on the experience of the capital where data was available.\(^{36}\) The issue of the numbers employed as domestic servants is clouded by legality whereby the definition of a servant was given as a domestic worker who resided in the home of his or her employee.\(^{37}\) Using the legal definition, the numbers employed as servants living in the home of their employer may have started to decrease in the second half of the eighteenth century, but the demand for domestic workers continued to increase. In many cases, the increased demand for servant work from the middling sorts was met by domestic day workers living outside the home.

Employing a domestic worker who lived outside the household clearly had benefits. Out-workers were not legally classed as servants so were not taxable.\(^{38}\) In addition they did not require accommodation within their employer’s home and they did not need their employer to provide them with food. To employ live in servants a house needed to be large enough to accommodate such workers and this was not always the case in the homes of middle rank families. The work needed to maintain their homes increased rapidly, but this did not increase in proportion to their ability to accommodate servants. More work demanded more servants, but due to the expanding size of the middling status family with its growing propensity for separate rooms for sleeping, many families simply could not accommodate the required number of domestic live-in staff, or perhaps did not want too.\(^{39}\) Schwarz points out that the demands made by the middling sort to live in clean ordered houses with ‘ever growing numbers of well polished consumer durables’ would have been met by the

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\(^{37}\) The legal definition of a servant was a domestic worker who lived in the household where he/she was employed. Steedman (2004), ‘The Servant’s Labour’, pp.10-13


\(^{39}\) Schwarz highlights that the relationship between domestic architecture and servant accommodation is an issue that has not received any attention. Schwarz (1999) ‘English Servants and their Employers’, p.254
casual employment of the labouring poor, or perhaps by professional cleaning agencies.  

By the late eighteenth century, the household had become heavily dependent on domestic labour and in some ways this gave servants the upper hand. Elizabeth Shackleton’s despair when her servants absconded or left her employment without giving any notice reveals how reliant she was on their work for the successful running of her home. The periods when she was left with a minimal staff, or even without any servants led Shackleton to record her feelings in her diaries. In August 1776 she remarked, ‘No servants all at an end’ and in June 1780 when her remaining female servant went to a wedding leaving her without any servants, her distress caused her to proclaim, ‘God help me what will become of me?’ It is worth noting though, that her despair most likely referred only to a lack of live-in servants. Shackleton had access to and frequently ‘topped-up’ her domestic staff with the employment of local domestic day workers as and when she required their service. The extent of her despair reveals just how important servants and the work that they did were to the household. In a similar way, a decline in the number of her domestic employees in 1810 led Jane Horrocks of Preston to proclaim, ‘The house I am ashamed to say is in a filthy state and likely to remain so till we get a fresh supply of servants.’ Without servants, the middling household was plunged into a state of stagnation and ultimately into disorder leading Vickery to conclude that such households ‘could not function without servants.’ The amount of work would have been far too much for one person, and it would have been impossible to undertake two tasks at once, for example undertaking the washing of household linen on wash day and preparing cooked meals for the family simultaneously. Administrative duties such as account keeping were essential to the efficient running and good management of the middling household, but their time consuming nature would have resulted in the housewife spending more time at her writing desk and less time performing practical domestic tasks. Domestic labourers carried out the physical hard work within the household and without them the work could not have been done.

41 LRO, DDB/81/29 (1776), f.78 and LRO, DDB/81/37 (1780), fos. 116, cited in Vickery (1998), The Gentleman’s Daughter, p.143
43 Vickery (1998), The Gentleman’s Daughter, p.142
Finding servants

Most advice literature stipulated that appointing efficient, diligent and respectful domestic employees was the key to good staff. When she needed to locate a servant suitable to the needs of her household, Shackleton initially drew on her extensive network of female friends to recommend a reputable servant. If they were unable to do so she consulted her regular tradesmen. Vickery states that through their involvement in locating and recommending servants ‘shopkeepers, mantua –makers and milliners are revealed as important intermediaries between two worlds of women.’\(^{44}\) The word of mouth method of acquiring servants was still favoured in the early nineteenth century, when it was recommended as the best method in many advice texts.\(^{45}\)

The development of provincial newspapers from the mid to late eighteenth century provided a new method of locating domestic servants. This type of advertisement appeared frequently in Shropshire’s *Salopian Journal* throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The advertisements provide details of the nature of the work that the servant would be expected to carry out, or was needed in the household. For example, in 1814, the following request appeared:

‘WANTED, a steady person, who understands WASHING and GETTING UP FINE LINEN, can work well at her Needle, and can wait upon a Lady. None need apply who cannot have a character of being capable of the above. – Apply to THE PRINTER.’\(^{46}\)

In the June edition of the paper, another advertisement for a domestic maid of all work ‘to wait upon a Lady, a Person who understands Washing, getting up fine Linen, and can work well at her Needle – Also a good plain COOK, where no kitchen Maid is kept. None need apply whose character will not bear the stricktest Investigation Apply to the PRINTER, if by Letter, Post-paid.’ In 1834, the *Salopian Journal*

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\(^{45}\) Dr Kitchiner explained that the best way to acquire a good servant was by way of a personal recommendation, ideally from a friend, but if that was not possible to turn to local tradesmen and enquire as to whether they knew someone suitable. Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, p.119  
\(^{46}\) *The Salopian Journal*, March 1814
included an advertisement for ‘a Family residing at Oswestry’ an advertisement for ‘a steady middle-aged Woman as COOK and UPPER SERVANT. Apply (if by letter, Postpaid) to Mr. PRICE, Booksellers Oswestry. None need apply without a good Character from their Last Place.’ Advertising in this way was encouraged by advice literature authors. Kitchiner advised housewives that if they could not find a suitable servant via word of mouth the next step was to place an advertisement in a local newspaper. This would enable the housewife to specify the type of servant and mandatory skills required and advertising in this way enabled the housewife to dictate to her potential future staff what she would require of them if they were employed in her household. Kitchiner went on to provide his reader with an example of an ideal advertisement that the housewife could use as a template.

‘WANTED, immediately, a SERVANT of ALL-WORK:  
- so uniting COOK and HOUSEMAID, that the utmost excellence in either capacity would not answer, without corresponding perfection in both;  
accompanied by absolute sobriety and universal honesty. Her age must be from twenty-five to forty. In regard to character, that of her last service, unless it has been a long one, will not be sufficient. The Advertiser, being of opinion that all the malefactions of mankind originate in practical falsehood, gives warning, that the first lie shall be the last. There is no possibility of any perquisite, nor impunity for the slightest fraud or waste; but liberal wages and the kindest treatment may be confidently counted on by a really deserving woman.’

Kitchiner encouraged his reader in their search for servants by informing them that they should not find it too difficult to locate the necessary staff. He pointed out that there was a large body of people seeking domestic employment due to the quantity of advertisements that were placed in newspapers by people seeking positions in households. From the late eighteenth century onwards, Shropshire’s newspaper

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48 He advises that, ‘The shortest way is to advertise yourself, describing what sort of Servant you wish for’, Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, p.119  
49 He claimed that his example of a model advertisement was a legitimate advertisement taken from ‘The Morning Post in October 1819’, and was not specifically created for his book, but one that he felt was exemplary; Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, p.119  
50 Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, pp.118-119
‘The Salopian Journal’, contained many advertisements from those seeking employment in domestic service and from those requesting servants. In June 1814 a female domestic labourer placed an advertisement where she stated her terms of employment and the pre-requisites of what she expected from the post that she was seeking. She informed potential employers that she required a position in a household where there was a kitchen maid, presumably to complete the rough work for her.

‘COOK AND HOUSEKEEPER
WANTS a Situation, where there is a kitchen Maid kept, a Steady Woman, who understands her Business; has no Objection to the Country – Letters Pos[t] Paid, will be immediately attended to. Direct M. R At Mr. GILLING’S, Pride – Hill, Shrewsbury.’

A housewife needed her servants to be malleable, to accept her authority and to carry out the tasks she assigned to them. Servants were not to dictate their workload to their mistress and employing a servant who had made specifications about a post would have given a servant an element of power. The balance of power within the household had to be carefully managed. It was not enough to simply employ good servants, they needed to be well managed, instructed and regularly supervised.

Managing servants

Whether they lived in or outside of the household, domestic labourers had to be well managed by the housewife to ensure that tasks were undertaken and completed to the required standard at the correct time. Servants and the quality of their work were important to the reputation of the housewife. The work that they did demonstrated a wife’s proficiency as a household manager. The middling wife’s reputation was based on her skill and competency as a housewife and as an extension of that, the work that her servants undertook was her responsibility and a reflection of her managerial skills. Proficient domestic labourers were crucial for maintaining the appearance and facilitating good order in the home. Advice literature reminded the

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51 The Salopian Journal, 15th June 1814.
housewife that servants could not be expected to perform their household tasks adequately or anywhere near the high quality that the middling home needed if they were not managed efficiently. The housewife needed regularly to observe the work of her servants, supervising them and demonstrating how to undertake tasks where necessary to ensure a high standard of work was maintained.

The housewife expected her servants to be able to undertake a whole range of tasks within the household. Frequently the middling household employed one or two servants and they were almost exclusively female. In this model servants would have undertaken a much wider range of work than in a household where a larger body of domestic staff were employed. In 1753 Mrs Purefoy wrote personal reminders highlighting what she required from the servants she employed. Her list of tasks for the cook maid encompassed a wider range of tasks than supporting the cook in the preparation and cooking of meals. The cooking tasks that were expected of her only involved simple processes with meat, presumably these were tasks that she would be expected to undertake alone.

‘The Cook Maid
To roast and boil butcher’s meat and all manner of fowls
To clean all the rooms below stairs
To make the servants beds and to clean all the garrets
To clean the great and little stairs
To scour the pewter and brass
To help wash, soap and buck
Or to do anything she is ordered
If she has never had the smallpox to sign a paper to leave the service if she has them’.

Purefoy expected her servants to undertake any work that she required of them, regardless of the title of employment. For servants in middling households this was

common. The servant hierarchy that existed in country houses did not apply to the working life of the majority of servants. In theory servants might have had specific titles, in practice and in a middling household they were expected to be capable of performing a whole variety of tasks. Whatman expected her domestic servants to be capable of performing general work on a regular basis, regardless of their specialist ability. For example in her household she specified that the housemaid should assist the laundry maid with mangling and folding, the dairymaid was to scour saucepans and wash plates and dishes, and the laundry maid was to undertake housework associated with cleaning rooms on a regular basis.\(^{54}\)

By the end of the eighteenth century contemporary consensus held that servants were contracted for time and not to carry out a specific role.\(^{55}\) Not being willing or able to carry out a range of domestic tasks was a sackable offence. Shackleton certainly expected her servants to be able to undertake a wide range of tasks. In 1770 she dismissed a girl employed as an ‘upper servant’ and highlighted her inadequacies, writing ‘She set off from here on Thursday morning September ye 13\(^{th}\) on her feet in a hurry. She co’d neither sew, wash, Iron or get meat’\(^{56}\) Washing, ironing and ‘getting meat’ are not tasks that would traditionally be associated with the role of an upper servant, but if a servant was paid for their time and not for a specific task it would be perfectly acceptable for them to be required to perform a range of domestic duties.

It was the housewife’s responsibility to organise her domestic staff to ensure that all of the work that was needed to maintain her household was carried out efficiently to an appropriate standard to enable her home to function. The organisation of servants work was crucial and they were heavily regulated and controlled by their mistress who set strict routines for carrying out housework. The duties that Whatman set down in her housekeeping book for her servants would have ensured that they were well regulated with precise timetables of work, leaving little time for ‘idleness’. Her instructions to her housemaid illustrate how she attempted to achieve this:


\(^{55}\) ‘whatever the contract, it was for time’. Steedman (2004), ‘The Servant’s Labour’, p.6

\(^{56}\) Vickery (1998), The Gentleman’s Daughter, p.136
Chapter 5: Household Management and the Role of the Housewife.

‘The House Maid [will] whisk all the window curtains every Saturday. Shake mats, carpets, etc. every Saturday…To rise early on Tuesday morning to wash her own things and the dusters, and help wash stockings. To iron her own things of an evening…Housemaid folds with the Laundrymaid every Wednesday…The Garrets should be swept three times a week, Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Tuesday being washing morning, and Wednesday the day for fouling.’

The housemaid’s day would have been very long, often starting before anyone else had woken and working well into the evening. Whatman expected her housemaid to rise early to prepare the household for the family’s daily use. At night she needed to remain awake to heat the family’s beds, although she relieved her housemaid of this duty on a Monday night as ‘she is expected to rise very early the next morning to wash’. Whatman stipulated in great detail the work she expected her servants to do, and for most tasks when she expected them to do it. She even went as far as informing her maids when they would wash and mend their own linen.

The work of the servant supported the needs of her family and prepared the house for their use. The housewife had to ensure that rooms were ready for the family to use without any sign of the work that went into their maintenance. Hester Chapone, a late eighteenth century advice author informed the housewife that a good manager needed to ‘avoid all the parade of bustle’. The success of housework was in part not due to its occurrence or completion, but due to the invisibility of the process itself. Value was placed on the results of housework, therefore it was not significant how a piece of furniture was polished, but it was absolutely essential that the furniture looked shiny and highly polished. For the housewife to be a good manager she needed to hide her

58 She ‘must be an early riser, because the ground floor should be ready against the family come downstairs.’ Hardyment (ed.) (2000), *The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman 1776-1800*, p.38 and p.50
59 ‘To rise early on Tuesday morning to wash her own things and the dusters, and help wash stockings. To iron her own things of an evening. To mend the towels and her Master’s common stockings of an evening.’ Hardyment (ed.) (2000), *The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman 1776-1800*, p.38
work and remain silent because ‘the best sign of a home well governed is that nobody’s attention is called to the little affairs of it’. 61

By the early nineteenth century organisation reached a new level and advice literature suggested formal schedules of the servants’ house work. Kitchiner informed the housewife, ‘Order, is especially important to Comfort in the choosing convenient Days and Hours for cleaning the House; - some good Husbwives act as if they fancied that this cannot be done often enough, and seem to have such amphibious Dispositions, that one would think they chose to be half of their lives in water, there’s such a continued clatter of Pails and Brushes, such Inundations in every room, that a man can hardly find a dry place for the sole of his foot.’ 62 Bad household management alone could cause chaos by turning the home into a disordered space that could not fulfil its functions. A chaotic disorganised home was the antithesis of middling domestic culture. Household members wanted a clean, tidy and functioning household but did not want to experience or see the work that went into maintaining the home. Kitchiner stressed that a good housewife should be able to schedule essential housework around the needs of her home and its individual household members. To ensure comfort housework needed to be invisible and this could only be achieved through sound planning and good organisation. 63 Kitchiner provided an example of how a housemaid’s daily duties could ideally be divided so that work slotted around the family’s use of the house and did not disturb them. His plan ensured that downstairs rooms were cleaned before the family had risen for the day. Whilst the family were using downstairs rooms, their bedrooms were to be tended too:

‘Rise at Six
Open Shutters by a quarter past,
Clean Grates by Seven,
Sweep Rooms by half past,
Dust and have Rooms ready by Eight,
Have your own Breakfast till half past,

62 His comment on housework is unsympathetic to the plight of the housewife and her responsibility to ensure that her home was kept clean (a constant task). Kitchiner (1829), The Housekeeper’s Oracle, p.125
63 Kitchiner (1829), The Housekeeper’s Oracle, p.1-B
Prepare all ready to go up Stairs by Nine,
Turn down Beds and open Windows by half past,
Clear away things, empty slops, and Change water by Ten,
Make beds by Eleven,
Sweep Rooms by Twelve,
Dust and lay all smooth by One,
Clean yourself ready for Needlework, or whatever may be required by half past.  

As the mediators of housework, servants were expected to be hidden within the household and the housewife had to employ a range of management skills to ensure this. Their mundane domestic routines supported the social routines of the household. Servants facilitated the smooth running of domestic sociability from ‘behind the scenes’. Two paintings illustrate this. The first is a strong visual representation of ‘Women at tea’ c.1740 (figure 7). The painting shows three women, in a composition that invokes the style of the conversation piece. The three are positioned around a small tea table, where they are depicted as taking tea with the decorative tea paraphernalia including a ceramic tea service. Probably they were in a parlour which was furnished and decorated accordingly, providing an environment suitable for the dissemination of the domestic sociability that the painting depicts. On the right hand side of the painting there is a door that is slightly ajar through which a young servant girl is pictured peering through.

This theme is repeated in the later painting of ‘A luxurious breakfast in an English home’ by Abraham B. Van Worrell (c.1819) (figure 8). There was not a formal breakfast with specific food types, paraphernalia and associated rituals, until its development in the eighteenth century, when in order to ‘do breakfast properly’ a

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64 Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, p.125
66 See chapter 2 for a discussion about the parlour.
significant amount of money had to be spent to acquire the necessary implements. The painting shows what appears to be a very relaxed domestic scene, in which a group of three people, two women and a man, are seated around the breakfast table. A servant is standing in the doorway, or hallway outside the breakfast room. She is carrying a silver urn, presumably containing hot water for making tea. These depictions of domestic routines illustrate how servants were expected to be hidden within the household but were essential to facilitate domestic rituals. The hidden nature of servants was related to the work that they were undertaking. Servants were hidden whilst they were carrying out housework because the task was meant to remain invisible. However, servants were often present at domestic social routines such as meal times or semi-public entertaining where they were expected to serve food.


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Chapter 5: Household Management and the Role of the Housewife.

Figure 8: ‘A Luxurious Breakfast in an English Home’ c.1819, Abraham B. Van Worrell
Chapter 5: Household Management and the Role of the Housewife.

The servant problem

It was unusual and exceptional, for a servant to remain in the employment of one household for a long period of time during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was not due to disillusioned or disgruntled middling employers dismissing their domestic staff quickly on the grounds that they had failed to achieve the prescribed high standards of work, but instead it was due to the servants themselves leaving their place of work. Often servants would abscond or leave abruptly without giving their employer any period of notice. To illustrate the scale of what became known as the ‘servant problem’ throughout 1772 Shackleton employed fourteen female servants in the capacity of permanent full-time live-in staff. However, ten of them remained in her employment at Alkincoats for less than thirty days and none of the other four women remained there for longer than six months in total. This was not necessarily a reflection of Shackleton’s management skills. Her experience was not exceptional: a rapid turnover of staff became the norm during the eighteenth century. For example, the Purefoys employed at least thirty servants in a period of ten years, and Whatman experienced a similar turnover of female staff. In 1778 she had six maids in her employment, a year later only two of them remained and by 1780 two to four of their successors had also left.69

The expansion of the middling social group and their demand for domestic employees created a climate where servants could pick and choose where they worked. Demand was so high that it was the servants who wielded power in the labour market and not their employers. This increasing demand, coupled with the escalating burden of housework, created unhappy circumstances for the middling housewife seeking to obtain good, industrious, loyal staff. Good servants were at a premium and as a result, the housewife often had no choice but to accept less competent servants, or to ignore bad behaviour from proficient workers. Within the context of the eighteenth century ‘servant problem’ it is hardly surprising that advice literature warned the inexperienced housewife to be cautious and suspicious of her servants. To err on the side of caution regarding the trustworthy nature of a servant’s character was a way of

protecting the household. The relative freedom enjoyed by female domestic servants in the labour market did not translate well to their employment as servants. Here any sense of freedom was severely restricted by the housewife’s implementation of rigid, unforgiving timetables of work that dominated the maid’s day.

A high and rapid turnover of staff increased the housewife’s work load. One of the vital aspects of managing servants was explaining what was expected of them within their employment, teaching them how to perform tasks using a specific method and instructing them to use specialist equipment. The individualistic nature of household management meant that servants were expected to undertake slightly different tasks in each employment. There were numerous ways for domestic tasks to be carried out, and in different households different methods were used. New equipment needed instructions for use and new goods needed specialist care. It was the housewife’s responsibility to disseminate this information to her domestic employees and this task would have been time consuming, especially when it had to be repeated each time a servant left. The high turnover of domestic workers often meant that just as one servant had mastered her specific role in a household and had learnt how things were carried out in that employment, she would leave and the housewife would have to start the training programme all over again with a new servant. As Jane Scrimshire’s consolation to her friend upon the loss of a servant highlights ‘I know what it is to lose one that is used to one’s ways’.  

It took a significant period of time for a servant to work in the way and to the standards that the individual housewife required. In order to cope with the constant loss of staff and the introduction of new domestic employees many housewives wrote detailed accounts of what they expected from specific servants. A set of instructions would help them in their training of a new servant and would assist with a smooth transition from one servant to another.

The relationship between mistress and servant was strained during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth and this can be at least partially explained by two key developments. The first was the growth of the middle class culture of domesticity with the belief that women naturally presided over the home. The second was the changing nature of domestic service from a paternalistic short-term training

relationship to a contract for time, labour and money. These changes led to increased pressure between the housewife and servant.

Some conflict between the housewife and her servants was in part due to the changing nature of domestic service. Women of the middling ranks were trained in domestic matters from an early age, providing them with experience of how tasks were undertaken, and preparing them for their role as housewife once they married. The nature of this training is unclear as to whether middling women were themselves competent in domestic maintenance tasks, or whether their expertise was solely in management and supervision. The housewife expected her domestic employees to have a similar all-encompassing knowledge of essential household tasks and housework that she had, but also to have practical working knowledge of how to carry out this work. This may not have always been the case for their female servants.

Traditionally, prior to the eighteenth century, domestic service was part of the lifecycle of labouring women. Women went into service during adolescence and learnt the skills of housewifery, they then left service to marry and set up their own household utilising the skills that they had learnt. Service was therefore essential for labouring women to learn the skills of housewifery. Young women were traditionally sent to a family for a period of years where they lived as a part of the household. As such, service was a training or educational position that taught them the skills they required to run their own home. During the eighteenth century this began to change with women entering service for different reasons to their predecessors. Entering domestic service was no longer viewed as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Instead service became a wage earning occupation and not a short term training position where housewifery skills were taught. As a result, female servants did not receive the same domestic education that they had previously received. In part this was due to the nature of work that they carried out under their employment in the middling household. Servants carried out the mundane drudgery and routine physical labour of maintenance under the close direction of their mistresses, the household

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71 Barker, Hannah and Elaine Chalus (eds) (2005), *Women’s History: Britain, 1700-1850 An Introduction*, Routledge, Oxon, pp.41-42
manager, whose role became increasingly professionalized. This division of labour within the household enabled the housewife to demonstrate and enhance the social distance between her and her servants.  

The developing middling culture of domesticity played an important part in causing tension between the household manager and her servants. Due to the growing culture of domesticity during the late eighteenth century, the middling housewife believed that women were naturally suited to the domestic sphere. Therefore, domestic service was seen as operating within the framework of the middle class culture of separate spheres. Apparently, female servants had an affinity to domestic work, an opinion that was perpetuated through advice literature where it was simply assumed that servants would carry out the instructions of their mistress if they were correctly managed. The behaviour of many servants during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth is not suggestive of a deferential relationship between mistress and servant. Domestic servants did not share this culture and increasingly saw their work in service simply as employment comparable with their social peers in other sectors of waged labour. Instead servants behaved similarly to wage earners in other employment: they frequently moved position when it suited them, and often for an increase in salary. This clash of cultures heightened tensions between servants and their mistresses.

The housewife could not comprehend the behaviour of her female servants and along with other members of the middling sort became suspicious and even fearful of servants because they no longer conformed to their cultural ideal. The deceitful nature of servants is a theme that runs consistently through advice literature, by which the young inexperienced housewife was constantly warned that her servants were not to be trusted. Whilst giving advice about the most successful methods of managing household servants, Parkes informed her reader ‘There is not perhaps any class of people more fanciful, or inclined to imagine themselves more indisposed than they really are, than the one of which we are speaking [servants]’. This derogatory

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75 Parkes, Frances (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Young Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, and the Regulation of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London, pp.118-119
assessment of domestic servants became characterised as a general disintegration of deference in the servile.\textsuperscript{76} It was the responsibility of the housewife to address this and to ensure that her servants were well managed and behaved in an appropriate manner.

By the early nineteenth century the growing dominance of the middle class culture of domesticity applied even greater pressure through the assumption that women, including female servants, naturally belonged to the home. The housewife was under a great deal of pressure to ensure that her domestic labourers carried out the work that she required. Kitchiner stated that the relationship between master and servant was the ‘natural consequence of Domestication’. He suggests that if a housewife was unable to manage her servants well she was not fulfilling her domestic role.\textsuperscript{77} Most servants identified with other workers and not with middle class domestic ideology.

The home was a site of both paid and unpaid work and this heightened conflict between the housewife and her servant staff. Each approached their work from a different and sometimes contrasting perspective; the unpaid housewife had a responsibility to manage her household correctly, whereas her paid servants worked in her home for a wage. Both middling status women and working women had closer ties to the values of their own social class than to any shared experience defined by their gender.\textsuperscript{78} The household was the meeting point of social groups, but rather than a bonding experience evidence suggests that this was a space where cultural and social differences were exposed and contested. The middle class ideal of a domestic utopia where female servants were deferential to their managerial housewife simply did not exist.

**Household accounts**

During the eighteenth century the role of the housewife became grounded in administration and paperwork and this trend continued to develop throughout the period. Early in the eighteenth century, account keeping became viewed as an

\textsuperscript{76} Vickery (1998), *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p.141
\textsuperscript{77} Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*, p.118
appropriate tool within the household, with its proponents seeking to convince women to learn the skill and apply it to their lives.\textsuperscript{79} In the late seventeenth century, society began to regard numbers and figures as important; a movement that has been described as ‘quantification fever’ by Conner who suggests that by 1700 a fashion emerged to ‘make numbers pre-eminent’.\textsuperscript{80} Book keeping became an essential part of the commercial world and in the early eighteenth century Defoe viewed with contempt tradesmen who prided themselves on keeping their business accounts in their heads. By then such tradesmen were distinctly ‘old fashioned’.\textsuperscript{81} Very little research has focused on account keeping in the home, and even less has looked at its relationship to the housewife.\textsuperscript{82} Throughout the period account keeping was promoted as an appropriate tool for managing the household and monitoring household expenditure. Advice literature stressed the importance of keeping accurate accounts to successful household management. The methods of account keeping that were propagated through advice literature became increasingly complicated and time consuming as the period progressed.\textsuperscript{83}

It is worth noting that the majority of surviving household account books for the period predominantly had a male author. The survival of such household books


\textsuperscript{81} Defoe, D (1727), The Complete English Tradesman in Familiar Letters, Directing him in all the Several Parts and Progressions of Trade, vol.1 Supplement, London, quoted in Lemire (2006), The Business of Everyday Life, p.190


\textsuperscript{83} Vickery (2006), ‘His and Hers’, in Harris and Roper (eds) (2006), The Art of Survival, p.21
reveals something of the gendered nature of account keeping where women’s accounts were largely taken during her working day and as such were a document of use, a tool of household management. These books were carried around during the business of the day and were entered into as and when needed, often in unclean conditions which would have contributed to their loss. Male account books on the other hand were compiled in different conditions away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and were intended to be a formal record of the household’s accounts. In the early eighteenth century Mrs Boycott of Rudge Hall Shropshire, kept a household account book detailing her household expenditure between 1704 and 1707 (Figure 9). The survival of this account book is unusual and it is the only financial document that survives for the Boycotts and Rudge Hall during this period, so it is not possible to say whether the household consistently kept such financial accounts. Boycott listed her household expenditure for domestic provisions and services including payments made for groceries and meat, services such as washing and ironing, the carriage of goods and the purchase of material and shoes. Occasionally she itemised purchases by their individual cost, for example in this entry made on 13th January 1704 for 6s 11d ‘fouls 3s 3d herbs 2d sugar 3s 6d’. At other times she summarised expenditure over a period. For example an entry made on 19th January 1704 for 13s 6d was simply accounted as ‘pd baker woman all due to the 22 and then it begins again’. The account book records frequent payments to named individuals, perhaps domestic servants. On 31st January 1704, she ‘pd Mary 11d’ and this was recorded on the same line as the purchase of ‘sope’ and ‘fish’. Later in February there seems to have been another payment to Mary, ‘pd Marys bill 4s 11d ¼’. Similarly in March 1705 she recorded payment of 3 shillings to Mrs Smith. Later on in August of the same year she made two further payments to Mrs Smith, but this time detailed exactly what payment was for, ‘pd Mrs Smith washing linen 4s’ and ‘pd Mrs Smith Cleaning house 8s’.

Smith could have been an out-servant, possibly a charwoman or a washerwoman.

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84 Shropshire Archives, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall, Household account book, 1704-1798. The account book is referenced as 1704-1798, but the last entry is 1707.
85 First payment dated as 26th February 1704. Second payment March 1704 Shropshire Archives, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall, Household account book, 1704-1798
86 First payment 12th August 1705, second payment dated 27th August 1705. Shropshire Archives, 330/6, Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall, Household account book, 1704-1798
Boycott sometimes wrote entries in short hand suggesting that her household account book was intended for personal use. She also used her account book in part as a personal memorandum, a place to record certain details that she might otherwise have forgotten. After the accounts end (the last entry is from June 10th 1707) there are several blank pages then personal financial reminders or notes ranging from the cost of sending letters, to detailing quantities of money that she had lent to others. For example in October 1705 she recorded lending ‘Alice Dier three pound which she promised to pay the first week in January’. At the bottom of the same page in the account book Boycott made a note of a partial repayment ‘received of Alice Dier one pound ten shillings in part of the three pound I lent her’, indicating that she was only able to repay the amount she owed in instalments. Alice Dier was later paid by
Boycott in November 1706 for ‘washing’, suggesting that she was a domestic labourer. Elizabeth Boycott also lent money to her relatives, again noting these in her account book. For example in April Boycott ‘Lent cosen Abram one pound ten shillings when she was in town to carry her home’ and in July of the same year ‘Lent cosen nancy boycott £6 9s’. When her relatives repaid her she marked the entries as paid and also crossed through them. The way that these entries were written suggests that they were intended to form a personal reminder of events for her use. Record keeping in this way formalised agreements and ensured that expenditure could be monitored and accurately accounted. In practice, account books were frequently used to record additional information in this way. Lemire found that some book keepers were unable to record quantitative information without any narrative commentary. She cites the example of Joshua Wharton, a Bristol merchant, who was on occasion unable to reduce certain account book entries to figures and often accompanied entries with narrative explanations. Expenditure on behalf of his sick daughter was accompanied by a narrative explanation, ‘27 Dec 1735 Saterday my son Stephens sent a man and his horse with a Letter to acquaint me his Wife was very ill and so Desire Dr Hardwick to goe to Cirencester to her’ and ‘sent my Daughter Stephens 2 l, Chocolett’. As these examples suggest, household account keeping in the early part of the period could be quite personal and informal, serving as a casual reminder to the author of when and how certain household expenses were paid. This is a clear contrast to the recommendations for account keeping in the later period, which will be discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

Account keeping allowed the housewife to monitor both the expenditure of her household for personal reasons, and those who supplied and serviced her household. Elizabeth Purefoy must have kept a detailed account of her expenditure to enable her to check discrepancies easily. She was well aware when tradesmen made mistakes such as over charging her, or not recording the receipt of her account payments. She was so confident in the accuracy of her accounts that when a discrepancy occurred, she often wrote to the perpetrator to inform them of their mistake. In 1738 she

87 6th April 1706 and 17th July 1706, Shropshire Archives, 330/6, Boycott account book: Records of the Boycott family of Rudge Hall Household account book, 1704-1798
noticed that Mr Yates of Brackley had sent an incorrect quantity of currants and in so
doing had under charged her for the amount that she had received.

‘you made a mistake in putting up the Currants, there were 6 pounds of them
instead of 4 – and you have charged no more than 4 pounds, which was what I
sent for, but 2 pounds of currants will be no losse to mee, so I have sent you
the money for ‘em. There is also a mistake in the money the boy gave you, for
I gave him but 5 shillings and sixpence and hee brought mee again 2s 10d., so
I have sent you 1s. 9 1/2d. I fear had it been any servant but an ignorant boy
you would have lost the money; you see the account is right and proper
inclosed. Pray send me a rect. in full by the bearer that we have no more
mistakes’.

Purefoy regularly chastised her suppliers when inaccuracies arose, as her letter to Mr
Wilson, a London grocer, from May 1744 reveals:

‘I admire you don’t keep your books more regular, I suppose if I had lost the
receipt and Mr Robotham had chanced to have dyed I must have paid the
money over again – I allways pay you ready money because Mr Cossins told
mee I should be better used for so doing.’

It transpired that her payment of £3.18s had not been entered into the tradesman’s
account book, but that she had a record of the payment being sent, and even perhaps
that it had been received. Elizabeth Purefoy had frequently purchased goods from
Wilson; in a letter of 1747, she claimed to have provided him with her custom for
forty years. Mr Wilson was not the only grocer that received patronage from the
Purefoys and he certainly was not the only tradesman to make mistakes that were
noticed and pointed out by the efficient systems of accounting practised by Purefoy.

Similarly in her personal account book Whatman informed her cook that ‘The meat is
weighed every week when it comes in all together. The separate joints that come in

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90 No. 104 E.P to Mr Wilson May 9th 1744, Eland (ed) (1931), Purefoy Letters 1735-1753, pp.67-68
91 No. 106 E.P to Mr Wilson Ffebry the 6th 1747, Eland (ed) (1931), Purefoy Letters 1735-1753, p.69
singly are only weighed now and then occasionally, just to keep an eye on the regularity of the Butchers.’\textsuperscript{92} Inaccuracy was not to be tolerated. If mistakes crept in and were left unnoticed by the housewife, at the very least, valuable household resources could have been wasted. A perhaps more extreme consequence was that the tradesman could have become aware that his customer did not maintain accurate records, which an unscrupulous retailer could then exploit for his benefit. Fear of exploitation in this way was a prevalent theme amongst contemporaries, with advice literature warning the inexperienced housewife to be aware of such possibilities. The reliance of the household upon retailers for the supply of their essential domestic provisions placed the tradesman in a position of power. Keeping rigorous accounts and informing tradesmen of occasional mistakes allowed the housewife to guard against potential intentional exploitation. It could be suggested that by keeping precise and accurate accounts the housewife was able to display a level of managerial competency. Tradesmen were in the public domain and they supplied the needs of the private sphere of home. In this way the public world came into direct contact with the private. Account keeping was part of the commercial world and by using the same techniques to monitor domestic expenditure women were able to display their skill as a housewife to the outside world.

The housewife’s role became more administrative and grounded in paperwork, so much so that Vickery suggests that the ‘Ladies Memorandum book’ became a symbol of the managerial housekeeper.\textsuperscript{93} As planning and record keeping became a central aspect of her role, a good housewife needed to enhance her numerical skills and master the basic principles of accounting. Economy, prudence and frugality had always been considered essential to successful household management. These were skills that were taught to young girls by their mothers or female relatives. For young women to demonstrate an understanding of domestic economy was a highly prized achievement and often played an important role in marriage proposals.\textsuperscript{94}

What changed during this period was the growing assertion that domestic economy needed to be visually captured and measured in numeric form through household account

\textsuperscript{92} Hardyment (ed.) (2000), \textit{The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman 1776-1800}, p.45  
\textsuperscript{93} Vickery (1998), \textit{The Gentleman’s Daughter}, p133  
books. Lemire comments that ‘housewifely skill was epitomized through the creation of numerate records’.95

Advice literature stressed the importance of paperwork to good household management, emphasising that rigorous planning and record keeping were the key to a successful and happy home.96 The information regarding account keeping in advice literature only describes an ideal and not actual practice. It must be remembered that households were not homogeneous and housewives did not act in identical ways. The individualistic nature of the home ensured that accounts were kept in a variety of different ways. Many women kept some sort of account book but not all women followed the advice or rules set out in prescriptive literature. As Vickery points out there were many methods of accounting employed during the period with some book keepers choosing to record certain types of purchases, or only their outgoings and in some cases account keeping was patchy and inconsistent over a period of time. It must not be forgotten either that successful accounting was reliant on mathematical knowledge and ability.97 Some, but not all, surviving account books suggest that in some households, account book keeping was carried out consistently and maintained to a high standard.98

Early nineteenth century advice literature promoted more formal, complicated and time consuming account keeping strategies. Writing in 1825 Parkes explained to the young newly married wife, that it was her role as housewife to manage the expenditure for the whole household.99 By the end of the eighteenth century household management books frequently devoted a chapter to explaining the importance of account keeping, detailing how it should be carried out and explaining why it was important for successful household management.100 Through her domestic advice book Parkes informed her young inexperienced reader that keeping a

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96 Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*; Parkes (1825 first edition), *Domestic Duties*.
98 For example the surviving Eyton account book, compiled by the housekeeper and obviously for an estate of considerable size. The index page demonstrated that the accounts had been subdivided into Housekeeping account, Household Expenses, Stable account, Servants Wages, Tradesmens Bills, Road account, occasional Expenses, annual Expenses; *Shropshire Archives, 112/9/6, Eyton General Account book*, 1771-1774
99 Parkes (1825 first edition), *Domestic Duties*, pp.2-5
100 Parkes (1825 first edition), *Domestic Duties*; A Lady (1829), *The Home Book*; Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*. 
household book would assist her in the organisation of her household. She went on to provide an example that she considered ‘to be on an excellent plan’. It was recommended that account books were kept to keep a check on household expenditure to ensure that the household remained financially viable. She stressed that accuracy in these recordings was essential for the financial well being of the household. It was a rigorous, repetitive and time consuming process with figures to be entered into one set of books, then cross-tabulated with another before calculating the totals from the various books and adding them to a master book.

‘Each tradesman, such as the butcher, the baker, the green-grocer, the oilman, and the milkman should write down in the book appropriated to him, the quantity of the commodity with its price, which has just been delivered; and his bill, if correct will tally with the contents of this book…The amounts of each of these weekly settlements should, afterwards, be entered in your housekeeping book; and at the end of every month, this housekeeping book should, in its turn, be added up, and the sum total entered into the cash book. Thus your housekeeping book shows you your current expenses for each week; and the cash book the amount of the whole monthly, besides including every other expense that occurs to you. The cash book should be balanced every 3 months; by which you will not fail to discover whether you are keeping within the bounds, or exceeding the income upon which you propose to live.’

A similarly thorough accounting system was proposed by the anonymous author of ‘The Home Book’ who informed the reader, notionally a young housewife, ‘Your next employment will be to arrange a system of accounts… [in a] home account book’. This ‘home account book’ was to be produced by cross-tabulating five separate ledgers, consisting of a kitchen book, a weekly account, cash account, commonplace and annual account books. A template for how such accounts should be compiled was included in an appendix in the advice book. The system of accounting suggested by both Parkes and the author of ‘The Home Book’ would have been highly

101 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, p.225
103 Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, pp.225-226
104 A Lady (1829), The Home Book, p.20
time consuming administrative duties. Firstly, the repetitive protracted nature of this task is evident; multiple sets of figures had to be totalled and checked accurately on a regular basis. The paperwork from this task alone would have been immense as managing books of figures that inter-related to each other demanded a considerable amount of numerical skill. Secondly, each advice text suggests that some of the accounts were to be entered by servants or tradesmen, how this would have been carried out in practice is unclear and the reality of such a system would have lead to further complications through inconsistency. Successful account keeping of this nature was reliant on good organisation and proficiency in account keeping, in order to maintain, use and understand such records. Even the most proficient household account keeper with good numerical dexterity would have been occupied by domestic financial records for a significant period of time on a regular basis. To administer accurately time would have to have been devoted to book keeping on a daily basis, taking the housewife away from other domestic tasks. Lemire suggests that the repetitive nature of account keeping delineated the housewife’s days and its time consuming nature reinforced its significance. Reducing housekeeping to numbers in the way that account keeping did reinforce the notion of control.  

There were additional benefits to be gained from keeping rigorous accounts. Accurate accounts of household expenditure served as a means of surveillance, to record and monitor the honesty, proficiency and competence of servants and tradesmen. Lemire has demonstrated that accounts became viewed by contemporaries as an objective record that expressed truth with an almost unquestioned authority. In this way concise accounts could protect the housewife and ultimately her household. It is perhaps for this reason that account keeping was a prevalent theme throughout household management books, especially those published in the early nineteenth century. The preface of Kitchiner’s posthumously published household management book repeats the theme of the importance of surveillance. He intended his book to prevent unsuspecting, naïve and inexperienced housewives from the ‘impositions – of dishonest servants, or the extortions of – extravagant tradespeople’.

Similarly Parkes provided precise details of exactly how this should

107 Kitchiner (1829), *The Housekeeper’s Oracle*.
be carried out and suggested that accounts were a way to monitor the behaviour of those who supplied and serviced the household: Fastidious accounting served as ‘a check both on trades people and servants’; for that reason books should be ‘kept in the kitchen, in which every article is entered that is brought into the house’.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, the anonymous author of ‘the home book’ suggested that an account should be kept of the prices of all goods as they entered the home, as a way to keep ‘checks for each of your tradesmen, in which they should daily enter whatever articles they deliver to the Cook. I do not recommend this mode with the Chandler and green-grocer, as it is by no means so easy to check them as the other tradesmen: since it not unfrequently happens, that the Green-grocer himself cannot write’.¹⁰⁹

If servants were to be given responsibilities, account keeping enabled the housewife to monitor their behaviour. The anonymous author of ‘The Home Book’ noted that the cook’s record keeping actually served as a check on her honesty and competency. She suggested that the cook’s figures needed to be accurate because the experienced housewife could check her honesty instantly as she was ‘acquainted with what ought to be the consumption at any given time.’¹¹⁰ This advice however, required the housewife to have a level of competency and confidence in her knowledge of her household that the new inexperienced wife might not have developed in the early stages of her marriage. At that time she simply would not have known the consumption patterns of her household since they would not yet have emerged, let alone become established. It would have taken a significant amount of time for a new household to develop patterns of consumption and for even the most astute young housewife to recognise them to the level that was required to identify foul play or simple inaccuracies and incompetence instantly.

Accounting became so ingrained with the practice of housekeeping, and so integral to the role of the housewife that by the early nineteenth century printed diaries often included space for keeping accounts.¹¹¹

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¹⁰⁸ Parkes (1825 first edition), Domestic Duties, pp.225-226
¹⁰⁹ A Lady (1829), The Home Book, p.20
¹¹⁰ A Lady (1829), The Home Book, p.21
What did women feel about their role as housewife?

It is very difficult to find any direct information about how women considered their role as housewife, and their perception of the changing nature of this role during the period. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there is evidence to suggest that women consistently took their role as household manager seriously with many women quietly celebrating their success and criticising the failings of others. For example, Whatman compiled her housekeeping notes in a management book because she felt that her management was so successful that it was the ‘best’ way that Vinters could be managed. She intended that her record of how she managed its domestic needs would become her legacy to its future household managers. Whatman assumed that her notes would provide a guide for future housewives at Vinters, so ensuring that she maintained some sort of control over its organisation long after she left. Similarly at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Mrs Stout handed over her household to her eldest son’s wife, she had assumed that she would be able to influence and control how the household’s new manager would go about her work. She was mistaken as William Stout explained, ‘when the young wife came to housekeeping, my mother thought to have some direction in that, more than the young wife (who had been her father’s housekeeper) would allow’.

Many housewives were proud of their achievements of successful household management and many enjoyed the role. This is made evident by their reluctance to pass on what had been their household to a future housekeeper. Shackleton expressed regret over her loss of control when her married son took over Alkincoats in Lancashire in 1779 which had been her residence for twenty-eight years. She was initially scornful of his wife’s housekeeping ability, writing in May 1779 that Betty Parker’s weak management style had left Alkincoats ‘all in sad confusion’. This was a complete contrast to how she perceived its management and organisation when she was its household manager. Shackleton felt that she had managed Alkincoats in the ideal way, and to her, that was the only way that it should be run. Women wanted to imprint their management style on future custodians of what had been their home. The role of household manager was jealously guarded because it allowed women to project their identity through their domestic competency into the world outside the home.

An understanding of how some women felt about their role as a housewife can be glimpsed through the views of those who were not permitted or able to carry out the role fully. Some women were subject to a controlling husband who severely restricted their ability to manage their household. The anguish that this caused such women provides evidence of how seriously women viewed their role as household manager. The sense of despair and failure at being prevented from carrying out the role is evident in their writing. Vickery notes that Shackleton regularly complained of her husband’s interference in her household management. As a result on one occasion she branded him ‘quite cruel’ in her personal diary. 114 That her husband’s interference in household management led her to describe him in such a way, stresses how importantly women took their role as housewife, and how essential it was to them to be able to practise it correctly and fully. Mr Shackleton’s interference in the affairs of the household, however minor, led Elizabeth to request ‘God Almighty Bless Preserve & be with me.’ 115 A dominating husband would intervene in domestic affairs as a method of undermining his wife in her own household and potentially as a way of subjecting her to a form of mental abuse. Sarah Cowper was subjected to severe restrictions of her role as household manager by the interference of her husband. His intrusion into her duties of household management was massive; he deprived her of the custody of household linen, objected to her tea and coffee account and protected faulty servants. In short, as Vickery states he ‘prevented any administration on her part’, and she proclaimed that he ‘restricts me in all my due privileges’. 116 She was well aware of the social conventions and ideology that dictated a woman was in control of the home, that it was their duty to manage and organise it. Due to the ideology that domestic work should be hidden, women such as Sarah Cowper were severely limited by their role in their response to such restrictions. She knew that other women wielded control over domestic matters, writing that she had heard of:

‘ladies that manage their domestic affairs in such a manner as argues they have much power: then home I come a humble mouse gnawing on the thought

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that in forty years I have not gained the privilege to change a cook maid on any account whatsoever. Who can help being uneasy at these matters?
Though I keep silence my heart doth burn within me.’

Cowper’s behaviour must have been particularly upsetting to his wife because it was not confined to the hidden aspects of household management. In restricting her access to household linen he prevented her from accessing the essential equipment of the tea table, effectively rendering her unable to carry out her role in facilitating domestic sociability. His maliciousness was not kept to the private sphere; he made it public by humiliating her in front of guests, therefore preventing her from taking an active part in polite sociability. Their lives were a deviation from contemporary norms regarding the household and its management, a digression from eighteenth century conventions regarding home. So interwoven was this role with women’s gendered domestic upbringing that they saw the failure to manage their home as a failure to be a women.

**Conclusion**

As a response to the changing nature and use of the home the role of the housewife developed into a supervisory and managerial position. The combined demands of an increasing amount of housework that had to be undertaken regularly and the participation in social routines and entertaining guests lead to a split between the physical work of maintenance and the management of the household. As this occurred the housewife became increasingly dependent on the employment of servants to keep her house clean, tidy and serviced. The household manager needed to organise routines for her servants to ensure that they carried out the maintenance of her household based on its individual needs. The role of the housewife became grounded in administration and paperwork, with a greater emphasis on the importance of household accounts. By the nineteenth century the housewife was expected to maintain sets of complicated accounts so that household expenditure could be closely monitored and her success as a prudent housewife easily measured through her accountancy skills. The role of the housewife as household manager became professionalized as a direct response to the changing nature of the household.
Conclusion

Through this thesis I set out to explore the relationship between the decorative domestic interior and the mundane maintenance and management of the household between 1700 and 1830. The work that is presented in this thesis confirms that the relationship between the material culture of the home and household maintenance and management is both interwoven and complex. As such an understanding of this relationship is crucial to our understanding of the household during the period. Through this thesis I have demonstrated that the changing nature of the home was interwoven with household maintenance and management. The combination of the material culture of the domestic interior and the ways in which it was maintained and managed were both a part of an emerging middle class culture of domesticity. This has led to the conclusion that in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the home during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth it is necessary to study the material culture of the home in conjunction with household management and maintenance. This thesis makes a significant contribution to a holistic understanding of the household by looking at the ownership of goods and the use of domestic space within the context of maintenance and management.

It is already established that the ownership of household goods had increased by the early eighteenth century. Following on from this work, I have demonstrated that the ownership of household goods continued to grow throughout the eighteenth century and furthermore that these developments can be extended into the nineteenth century. The successful expansion of the period of study through the sensitive use of a wider range of sources than probate inventories stresses that there was a level of continuity in the way that the household developed during the long period. A qualitative methodology enabled the use of probate inventories from the eighteenth century to be combined with sales catalogues from the nineteenth. This provides continuous evidence of a similar nature for the ownership of household goods through the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth, and has demonstrated that the ownership of domestic goods continued to increase throughout the period. As the

eighteenth century progressed, people owned more goods of different types including new decorative items. This increase had a direct impact on the time that was needed to clean and maintain the household.

A qualitative and textual reading of inventories and catalogues reveals that, whilst the ownership of goods continued to increase, their changing nature also had a profound effect on the household. Through reading inventories and catalogues, rather than enumerating their contents, it becomes clear that the domestic interior became a more densely furnished and a more decorative space during the period. The physical attributes of goods themselves underwent significant change, with furniture and furnishings available in a range of sizes, shapes, colours, patterns and manufactured from an array of different materials. The home was transformed through the ownership of goods and an increased level of interior decoration and furnishings. Textile furnishings added warmth and comfort but they also contributed to the appearance of a room through the use of pattern and colour. Whilst the home was more attractive and comfortable for its occupants it required a greater level of care to ensure that both the rooms themselves and the furniture in them were maintained to an appropriate level.

At the same time as the domestic interior was enhanced by the ownership of an increasing range of different types of goods and furnishings, the way that the home was used also underwent substantial change. This has already been established for the early eighteenth century through quantitative studies of probate inventories, but there are no equivalent comparable studies for the later part of the period. There are however, qualitative investigations into interior decoration, domestic furnishing and the use of the home. Building on these studies, this thesis demonstrates that the

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changes to the use and division of domestic space continued during the eighteenth century and were further developed in the early nineteenth. Furthermore, our understanding of the use and division of space in the period is enhanced by taking into account household maintenance and management, the inclusion of which provides a comprehensive understanding of how the home was used.

Many rooms became defined by how they were used, taking on specialist roles linked to the activities for which they were used, whereas formerly they had been used for a multitude of activities. The most significant development to the use of domestic space during the eighteenth century was the creation of a social space within the home. The home became a space for relaxation in comfort for the family and an arena for disseminating domestic sociability to guests. The parlour took on these functions; it was a space for private activities involving an individual or the whole family and for semi private activities involving the participation of invited guests.4

The use of the home for social activities involving invited guests has lead to an interpretation where domestic space is considered to have been split between public and private activities. Some rooms took on public roles whereas others became dedicated to private activities. With this in mind, it was assumed that public rooms were well decorated and furnished because they were intended to be seen by outsiders. The goods that they contained were imbued with social and cultural values and their display conveyed this to the viewer. Weatherill uses the concept of ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ rooms, originated by Goffman, to explain the division of domestic space.5 Here front stage rooms were accorded more value and as such were heavily invested in and furnished with decorative and attractive goods. Front stage rooms were seen as representative of how the occupant wanted to present him or herself to the outside world. In contrast back stage rooms were where mundane maintenance activities took place and were less liable to change, were infrequently decorated and were not overtly expressive.

4 The study of the parlour and how the room developed of has been taken to the nineteenth century by Thad Logan in his research into parlour in the Victorian house. Logan, Thad ( 2001, reprinted 2003), The Victorian Parlour, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
5 Weatherill (1988), ConsumerBehaviour; Goffman, Erving (1959), The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Harmondsworth, USA.
This interpretation of the division of domestic space does bring together furnishings and use, and provides a partial explanation for the development of the social space of the parlour. However, through investigating the use of domestic space from the perspective of household maintenance and management the work presented in my thesis reveals a number of flaws with this theory. There is a significant difference between the everyday use of space within the household and the static location of goods. Firstly, decorative goods were not exclusively located in front stage rooms of the house. They were frequently located in backstage rooms that had a primarily private function, such as the bedroom. This suggests that decorative and expressive goods had a role to play in the ordinary private lives of the household. Secondly, the theory suggests that back stage rooms are defined by front stage rooms. Front stage rooms were heavily invested in and backstage rooms were formed by default as they were left and not invested in. This was not the case, as service spaces were significantly invested in with equipment to enable household management to take place and to support the social activities of the household. As the social needs of the house grew so did mundane service space that was required to meet these increasing needs. Back stage rooms were populated by domestic workers and were perhaps visited more regularly than the front stage rooms that were intended for a public audience. Finally, front stage rooms were not used exclusively for entertaining outsiders. These rooms were used by members of the family in private, suggesting that they had meaning and significance without a public audience.

The use of domestic space continued to develop throughout the late eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth. This period saw a continuation of the development of rooms having a specific function. Social space became further fragmented with the separation of sitting and eating into the drawing room and the dining room respectively. The social spaces of the house became gendered in that rooms were both furnished and decorated to fulfil their function, and also as a reflection of the gender of the primary user. Ideology (perpetuated through advice literature) dictated that domestic space needed to be organised so that each room fulfilled a function and was clearly furnished to reflect and assist in its delivery. In reality, it was not always possible for a house to have separate social rooms. This was

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overcome through furnishing the one social room in a way that enabled these routines to be carried out in comfort and style as particular activities required. Providing further evidence for a fluidity of the use of domestic space, an appropriately furnished room could function in a way to support how it was being used for each activity.

At the same time as the development of social rooms, the spaces to maintain and service the household also increased. The activities to maintain the household were hidden and so took place in rooms separate from the social space of the home. Space for household maintenance also experienced greater subdivision than it previously had. New town houses were designed to include rooms such as a scullery for the storage and washing up of kitchen equipment and crockery and a wash room for household laundry. The use of a separate space for these activities was not necessarily a new development as eighteenth century inventories reveal that often the brew house was used in this way. However, the investigation into advertisements of house sales demonstrates that rooms were frequently labelled with a name that represented the specialist activity that they were intended to be used for. This suggests that such specific mundane working rooms were considered as desirable features in a house. Older houses did not always have enough rooms for such specialised use which lead to a doubling up of activities. In these circumstances there was usually one room dedicated to maintenance. This contained the equipment and furniture for the majority of maintenance activities and these items would then be used as and when required. Regardless of the provision of specialised rooms for mundane work, maintenance activities had to take place in the social rooms of the house. The desirability for housework to remain hidden meant that it had to take place when the room was not being used by family or guests. This further indicates the complexity of room use and demonstrates the fluidity of the division between the public and private parts of household space.

It has been asserted that during the late eighteenth century the home became a private refuge from the outside world. Rather than a private haven of tranquillity, the household was a fluid space with multiple divisions of space that was inhabited and accessed by a variety of people on a regular basis. The meaning of domestic space

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depended on the perspective of the individual and how they were using or interacting with it at a particular time. As a consequence of the increase in household furnishings and the greater social use of domestic space, the home became the workplace for a number of people. As such, the home was a shared social space where the middling sorts came into regular contact with their social inferiors. Servants accessed all of the rooms of the house and not just those that were intended for visitors. Domestic day labourers further compromised the private nature of the home as they crossed the boundary between the private home and the outside public world on a daily basis.

This examination of the use of domestic space has led me to propose an alternative explanation. There is a common assertion that the division of space was fixed both physically and ideologically with a preference for a binary division of space polarised around public and private. However, rooms were used for a variety of activities. Furnishings and decoration supported use, but often this was transitional and a room needed to be able to function and operate on many different levels to suit the requirements of its user. Therefore, the meaning of a room was far from fixed and instead was dependent on the context of its use at a given time. The division of space was fluid and dependent on the way that it was being used.

Adding to the debate surrounding the private nature of the home, images of the domestic were present in the public world. Access to the real homes of friends and neighbours was readily available, not just through social visits but also through reading auctioneers catalogues of the sale of household goods and by attending the sale itself. The reality of the interior presented through sales catalogues and at house sales should be questioned. These interiors were prepared by a retailer, and as such, reflect the home through the lens of a tradesman who was trying to sell goods. This accessibility to the homes of others without invitation further questions the private nature of domestic space. The contents of both social rooms and maintenance rooms could be viewed, interpreted and judged by the reader.

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Retailers presented and perpetuated an image of domesticity that evoked an idealisation of the space of home. They used the home as a selling strategy through the creation of artificial interiors in their showrooms and by using elements of the domestic in advertisements. In so doing retailers reflected and also shaped the development of the middling culture of domesticity. They played on the concerns of the consumer who was trying to set up a household by presenting an idealisation of the domestic interior, its contents and decoration. This exposure to the domestic interior both contributed to and reflected a culture of home and this created a framework that influenced consumption choices. The decision making process for consumption took place within this framework; the individual acted within this framework, with it shaping their decisions in some way.

In some advertisements, the image of the home promoted by retailers clearly linked domestic space to its maintenance and management, further reinforcing the relationship between the two. It was not enough to simply own and use the correct goods in an appropriately furnished and decorated domestic space, the maintenance of these goods within the home and the way that the household was managed were just as important. By the nineteenth century some advice literature suggested that the particular cleaning and care regimes for certain types of furniture and furnishings should play an important role in consumption decisions. The purchaser should consider whether the domestic staff that their household employed would be sufficient to meet the needs that certain items demanded.

In contrast to the study of the material culture of the household and the domestic interior, there has been very little written on household maintenance and management. This is in part due to the assumption that as home and work became separated the role of the housewife was restricted with women playing only a limited role in the economy of the family. Housework was unproductive and viewed as unpaid, rendering it an apparently inconsequential subject for study. Coupled with this, successful housework was measured by its invisibility, and as such there are very few surviving sources making it a difficult subject to study. The detailed examination of household maintenance and management presented in this thesis provides new evidence that challenges these statements. Firstly, the use of advice literature spanning the entire period, provides an understanding of the nature of housework,
how this was undertaken and how it changed during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth. Secondly, my thesis shows that the role of women in the household changed during the period, but that this change was far from the restricted limited role that it has previously been assigned. Thirdly, I have contested the assumption that the home was a private space and a site of unpaid work. Whilst it is true that the housewife’s work as manager was unpaid, the work of her servants or domestic day staff was paid. The presence of numerous paid workers in the household compromised the private nature of domestic space and made it a site of contention as a meeting point for social groups and conflicting culture.

The maintenance of the household underwent significant changes during the period, many of these in response to the changing nature of the home. As the home became increasingly embellished with an array of furniture, furnishings and interior decoration there was more to keep clean and care for. It took much longer to clean a densely furnished house and as the ownership of domestic goods increased so too did the time needed to keep all of its contents clean. The changing nature of domestic furniture and furnishings brought with them further demands of time and complexity. Decorative goods, delicate textiles and an array of polished furniture demanded particular patterns of care. These new processes of cleaning were often complicated and required regular repetition and the use of specific equipment. These changes added both time and complexity to the process of housework.

In some cases the changes to the domestic interior perpetuated and perhaps increased existing maintenance problems. For example, the threat of vermin to the household remained constant throughout the period. The furnished interior could have contributed to an increase in infestation by providing suitable habitats for insects and rodents. This is an issue that manufacturers and retailers of decorative furnishings recognised and attempted to combat through developing, or at least advertising that their goods were impervious to such infestation. The extent of the problem is reinforced by the complicated, time consuming and dangerous methods for removing an infestation of vermin.

The social use of the house, through the daily routines of the family in private and the semi-public entertainment of their invited guests put pressure on maintenance and
created additional work. These routines of the home constricted the time that was available to clean and care for goods, whilst simultaneously creating more work through the use of goods and rooms. Furthermore, the expectation that housework should be invisible led to the development of new cyclical maintenance routines to support these new patterns of use. To fulfil its function appropriately a room had to be clean and tidy and ready for use without any evidence of the work that had gone into its maintenance and preparation.

The regular maintenance of the home was essential for it to function correctly. The domestic interior and its furnishings conveyed an understanding of a shared culture, but the successful display and use of these items was reliant on good housework. The ownership of an appropriately decorated and furnished interior was not enough, goods needed to be kept clean and well cared for to convey their cultural message. Maintenance supported the social use of the household by enabling household members to participate in activities such as dining and taking tea, and to provide domestic hospitality for guests and visitors from outside the home. This leads to the conclusion that the maintenance of the household played a role of vital importance in the everyday functioning of the home and as such contributed to its overall success.

Overall, household maintenance became more labour intensive. The increase in goods and the complexity of care treatments meant that housework took longer to carry out. Added to this, was the pressure of regular routine maintenance to support the social use of the household. Due to the demands of these new patterns of use, this often time consuming work had to be carried out frequently and in a short space of time. The social use of the home increased housework and also constricted the time that was available to carry out this work. These contradictory conditions of an increase in work but a limited timeframe to undertake that work, led to a demand for the additional labour of domestic workers. A greater number of employees working concurrently on a range of tasks meant that the increasing work load could be carried out in shorter timescale.

Traditionally, it has been argued that as economically productive work moved out of the home, the role of women became marginalised. Apparently, the role of the housewife was eroded as her husband went out to earn a wage and she remained in the
household, unable to contribute to the economy of the family. In contrast the work presented in this thesis suggests that, as the home changed, women took on the role of household management. Freed from the burden of physical labour, women became increasingly well trained in the professional skills of management that were more commonly associated with the role of their husband in the public world of work. Throughout the period, these skills became more formalized and increasingly professionalized.

Participation in polite society brought demands on the wife’s time through the need and desire to participate actively in social events. Concurrently her house was filled with furniture and furnishings that took time and physical effort to keep clean and in good condition. The conflicting pull of sociability and the demands of running a household caused a split between the physical labour of housework and the management of the home. The role of household manager was a direct response to the changing nature of the home and the increased burden of maintenance. This change is reflected and reinforced through advice literature.

The content and style of advice literature changed dramatically during the period. These popular books reflected and responded to the changing nature of the home and at the same time also helped to shape the role of the housewife. At the beginning of the eighteenth century published advice literature usually contained hints, tips and suggestive advice of how certain domestic tasks could be carried out. In general the advice in these early texts was limited to recipes for food and methods for washing fabric. It was unusual for household management and the care of furniture and the domestic environment to be commented on. This suggests that these authors did not feel that it was appropriate or necessary to suggest to the housewife how her home should be organised and run. The lack of direction for cleaning and maintaining the domestic interior suggests that this was a simple task and one which the housewife understood and was able to direct her servants appropriately. Literature specifically aimed at servants was equally as unspecific regarding the care of furniture, merely informing the reader that this was a duty of the housemaid. Reflecting changes to the furnishing and decoration of the domestic interior, after the mid-eighteenth century, advice literature began to offer increasingly comprehensive content. Details of how to care for the domestic environment and directions of how to clean and care for
furniture and furnishings were prominent features taking up a significant proportion of the books. This advice remained suggestive to the housewife and instructive to servants if they were the intended readership. By the nineteenth century this had changed and advice literature was radically different in style and content. Advice books intended for the housewife took a prescriptive tone and formed a list of instructions of how the household should be managed. Through its approach as purveyor of knowledge and experience this literature perpetuated its authority in matters of household management. Inherent in the text was an understanding of the authority of the author and the naivety or inexperience of the reader. This allowed these texts to provide instructions on every aspect of household management. The content of later advice literature demonstrates how complicated management and maintenance of the household had become. Authors informed their reader that their instructions and directions needed to be followed closely to ensure that the household functioned correctly and successfully. The prescriptive nature of this literature celebrated and confirmed its own success.

The housewife was responsible for the maintenance of her home, its contents and the smooth running of domestic social routines. A large part of her role was spent organising the time of her domestic staff and the pattern of when tasks would be undertaken to support the needs of her household and ensure that her home functioned efficiently. Example timetables for the daily work of staff were available in household management books to assist the housewife, stressing the importance of organisation to successful household management. Whilst advice literature describes ideology and not actuality, surviving personal papers suggest that housewives did attempt to organise the work of their servants.

The management of servants was an area of contention for the housewife throughout the period. This was further complicated by the changing nature of service and the developing middle class culture of domesticity. The home was the paid workplace for a large number of people, predominately female. The middling sort required domestic workers but due to the architecture of their houses, many people could not accommodate live in servants, which led to the employment of domestic day workers. The nature of domestic service underwent significant change as it moved away from a
The Material Culture of the Household: Consumption and Domestic Economy in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

paternalistic bridging occupation that was a part of the lifecycle for labouring women to a wage earning position.

At the same time middling culture propagated the view that women naturally belonged to the domestic sphere. Female servants were seen as naturally being drawn to the domestic in the same way as the middling housewife was, a view that was perpetuated to the household manager through advice literature. Servants did not share this culture and associated more with their fellow labourers, viewing the home of their employer as a workplace similar to any other. The demand for domestic assistance created a climate where servants could pick and choose their employer and leave a position without providing notice. The housewife could not understand the behaviour of her servants. This caused tension in the household where the unpaid work of the household manager met with the paid work of her servants. The home as a workplace was a meeting point of social groups and as such a site of cultural conflict. The household manager was responsible for the management of her household and this clashed with her domestic servants whose work equated to a financial transaction.

The role of the housewife became more grounded in finance through the keeping of household accounts. This skill required a level of mathematical understanding and competency. As the period progressed, greater emphasis was placed on good account keeping and by the nineteenth century the success of a household manager could be measured by her proficient book keeping. Account keeping became more formalised and increasingly complicated. Nineteenth century advice literature dictated how the housewife should undertake a complicated time consuming procedure where by multiple books were kept and cross referenced, totalled and added to other books periodically. Account keeping enabled the housewife to monitor the activities of her servants and her tradesmen. The rise of account keeping can be seen as an attempt to measure the activities of the housewife by reducing her work into a series of financial transactions.

Finally, evidence suggests that women embraced and enjoyed their role as household manager. It gave them a position of power, as they were responsible for the home and the successful running of their household. Women were aware of the importance of
their role to their position in society. Furthermore, the home and its management was an arena of expression for middling status women throughout the period.

In summary the work presented in my thesis demonstrates that as the material culture of the household changed so too did the work of maintaining it. These changes were inter-woven, the maintenance and management of the household played an important role in shaping the home. The combination of the material culture of the domestic interior and the ways in which it was maintained and managed were both a part of an emerging middle class culture of domesticity. The correct maintenance and management of the home was crucial to display a shared understanding of the middle class culture of domesticity and thus to confirm social status (membership of the middle class). The housewife was aware of the importance of her role and the maintenance work that she managed. This work was central to the social status of her household and the happiness of her home.
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