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**Eating Together: Early Modern Gentry
Commensality
in the Northwest of England
c.1530-1670**

A FIELDING

PhD 2023

**Eating Together: Early Modern Gentry
Commensality
in the Northwest of England
c.1530-1670**

Anna Fielding

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements
of Manchester Metropolitan University
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of History, Politics and
Philosophy in collaboration with the National
Trust
2023**

Abstract

Early modern commensality represented an opportunity for early modern gentry communities potentially split along religious lines to come together while simultaneously being occasions for the display of social status, a mechanism for social advancement, and the persuasion of important county figures. This thesis demonstrates that the northwest gentry families of the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons used commensality and hospitality to navigate the religious and social changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Successful commensal occasions required detailed knowledge and implementation of culture, dietetics, information, and accomplished social skills. This was demonstrated through décor, tableware, conversation, entertainments, and food. Careful stage-management of these elements ensured commensal atmospheres that could shape and influence guests.

Immersive food spaces featured aspects of material culture which acted as pillars of support for Catholic hosts, such as the Heskeths and Norrises, when deviating from the prescriptions of their faith in dining with Protestants. These symbols of devotion rooted Catholic hosts in religious piety even as they made concessions over foods served or who they broke bread with. They also represent changing conceptions of the early modern gentry home during the Reformation as food and dining rooms became increasingly sanctified in lieu of ecclesiastical buildings and amid anxieties over mixed-faith commensality.

Gentry commensality was increasingly centred on London in the seventeenth century and this change is reflected in the experiences of the Protestant Moreton family. Changes in hospitality shifted the location of commensality around different food spaces of the gentry house and then beyond the home in line with changing social fashions. Added to the assemblage of gentry commensality came influences from metropolitan, colonial, and diplomatic centres including associated material culture, conversation, and different markers of gentry belonging.

Analysis of how each of the families achieved this at Rufford Old Hall, Speke Hall, and Little Moreton Hall uses affect and assemblage theories. These are combined with early modern understandings of domestic environments based on embodiment, humoral bodies, and the interconnected nature of mind, body, sensation, and soul.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to my supervisor Dr Ros Oates for her continued support throughout this PhD which has been a difficult process for various reasons, not to mention a global pandemic happening in the middle of it. Your patience and understanding have meant a lot to me.

Thanks also to the staff and volunteers at the three National Trust study properties for their enthusiasm every time I have visited and for making my engagement work so enjoyable. Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton are all very dear to my heart.

Thanks to my parents for being there for me in so many ways: childcare, financially, and for me to offload onto. You instilled in me a love of study that I have perhaps taken to the extreme but it has also been an enjoyable experience.

Apologies for my children Henry and Alice for all the times I've not been able to do stuff because I've been busy with early modern dinner parties. Maybe one day you'll read this and understand what it was I was doing all the time when you were growing up.

And lastly, but by no means least, thank you to Paul. I know this has been hard for you and has lasted much longer than it was supposed to. Thanks for being there throughout with a joke, a shoulder to cry onto, to bail me out, and basically for running things for four years. I could not have even attempted a PhD without you.

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Abbreviations and Primary Source Archival Documents:

BL – British Library:

BL Add MS 44026 – Hesketh Illustrated Genealogy

BL Add MS 36924-36927 – Papers of the Family of Norris of Speke

BL Add MS 36913, 36914, 36923 – Aston Papers Relating Chiefly to the Aston and Norris Families

BL Add MS 33935-33942 – Correspondence and Papers of the Moreton Family, plus Notebooks of Philip Moreton

SP – State Papers 12 – Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I, 1558-1603.

CP – The Cecil Papers, Hatfield House – 1598-1600

Lancs Archives – Lancashire Archives, Preston.

WCW/Disputed/C76A – 1620 Inventory relating to Robert Hesketh of Rufford.

P.20 – Copies of Papers of Robert Hesketh 1570-1620.

DDBL Acc 6121 – The Blundell Hodge Podge.

Chethams Library, Manchester –

MUN.A.2.121 – Commonplace Book of Christopher Towneley (1604-1674)

Westminster Diocesan Archives –

'A' Series, VI, ff.429-452 – Information from Priest Thomas Bell to Henry, Earl of Derby c.1589-91.

Derby Collection, Knowsley Hall, Lancashire –

C46.1 Information on Food Gifts Donated for the Coming of James I (1617).

Introduction:

In this thesis I demonstrate that commensality allowed members of the gentry to navigate the Reformation in the northwest of England, and that a study of commensality sheds light on the wider Reformation. I will show how the different forms of commensality used in the northwest during the period were used to maintain and advance social status and were an important part of gentry power in the region and nationally. I demonstrate that the early modern dinner table is a prism through which to better understand the Reformation and the everyday consequences of it at gentry level; to appreciate the ways the gentry adapted to challenges they faced in society, using dining as a tactical strategy with which to position themselves. In this study I use material culture alongside other sources to recreate what was happening around dinner tables in Lancashire and Cheshire and demonstrate the impact this can have on in heritage settings. 'Affect theory' and 'assemblage theory' are used in this thesis to combine material culture alongside other sources to enable a better understanding of the experiences behind commensality. In addition, I demonstrate how I have subsequently used the same theories to convey the complexity of early modern dinner parties to the public. My research shows that each aspect of dining together, whether food, spaces, or material culture, had spiritual, humoral, and physiological implications which acted on diners.

I argue that the early modern dining table was often used in commensal settings as a space to negotiate differences between the gentry and their neighbours. I have explored this 'commensal negotiating table' through an investigation of different elements of dining. Three chapters are case studies based on the experiences of northwest gentry families: the Catholic Heskeths of Rufford, Catholic Norrisses of Speke, and Protestant Moretons of Little Moreton. These families have been chosen for several reasons: all three of the timber-framed houses they lived and entertained in survive in some form; the families provide a range of variables from religious background to geographical locations across the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire; each family also left a good selection of archival records and material culture, and evidence of their influence can be found in wider society at local, national, and international levels. The three properties are all now owned by the National Trust and this thesis is the result of a collaborative doctoral award. Therefore, the research from this PhD has, and

continues to, feed into public-facing interpretation and engagement projects at the three sites. Details of this collaboration work are contained throughout this thesis.



Fig. 1. Rufford Old Hall, Lancashire, home of the Hesketh family. Exterior of the great hall and brick 17th century wing. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.



Fig. 2. Speke Hall, Lancashire, home of the Norris family. Exterior of north range. Image courtesy of Ian Greig.



Fig. 3. Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire, home of the Moreton family. Exterior of south range. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

All three study families dined in religiously mixed company with the Catholic Heskeths and Norrises using commensality to protect their faith. Material culture also allowed them to express their faith despite its prohibition. Through their successful use of commensality we can see how these families' friends and companions were reluctant to prosecute their fellow gentry due to bonds created and reinforced around the dinner table. My work supports that of Alexandra Walsham and William Sheils, who have both argued that friendship and kinship bonds were at odds with religious polemic concerning social contact. Commensality lessened the impact of division and persecution.

Each of the three families used differing forms of hospitality. The Heskeths centred their commensality on the great hall, reflecting a focus on entertainment and ceremonial dining connected to the social circles of the Earls of Derby. The Norris family's commensality was more concentrated in the intimate space of the great parlour when hosting fellow gentry, but they also utilised the great hall when it came to hospitality based around Catholic festivities or rites of passage. The Protestant Moretons shifted the focus of their commensality away from the great hall towards parlours and a long gallery, reflecting changing fashions. They later

incorporated changes in hospitality, drawing on influences coming from urban centres on the continent and London into their style of commensality. As a family of lesser gentry status compared to the Heskeths and Norrises, the Moretons sought to incorporate all the requisite elements of ideal gentry householders within their hospitality.

Historiography:

Catholic and Protestant Interaction

Within early modern historiography there has been a divide along denominational lines when studying communities: studies of Catholics or Protestants in this period disguise the extent to which these groups interacted.¹ John Bossy looked at the Catholic community as a whole and concluded that from the 1570s they withdrew into gentry houses, however reinvigorating this was for English Catholicism.² Yet, when he discussed Lancashire, he pointed out that ‘the Catholics of south-west Lancashire seem by and large to have practised co-existence with their immediate Protestant neighbours.’³ A ‘dumbing down’ of Bossy’s conclusion has perpetuated the argument that Catholics retreated socially from those around them, with the household becoming insular.⁴ However, Bossy had recognised, albeit briefly, that Lancashire’s gentry continued to socialise together. The reference to south-west Lancashire situates this observation in the very area where the Heskeths and Norrises resided and entertained. The argument Bossy made regarding Catholic insularity related to the separation of Catholic worship from that of the Church of England, with the site of worship shifting to the domestic

¹ Bossy, J. *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*. Darton, Longman and Todd (1975); Haigh, C. *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*. Cambridge University Press (1975); Collinson, P. *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*. Oxford University Press (1967); Collinson, P. *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625*. Clarendon Press (1982); Collinson, P. *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*. The Hambledon Press (1983); Collinson, P. *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Macmillan (1988); Collinson, P. *The Reformation: A History*. Random (2003).

² Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 203-292, 277, 282, 394, 397.

³ Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 93-94.

⁴ Questier, M. *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550-1640*. Cambridge University Press, (2006), pp. 293-295.

homes of the gentry.⁵ In this thesis, I develop how this move impacted mixed commensality through the use of food spaces and, in this respect, I counter Bossy's argument that Catholics retreated when it came to personal devotion. The Heskeths and Norrises welcomed Protestants into their home and into rooms filled with Catholicism and evidence of domestic spiritual practice.

Christopher Haigh noted that Lancashire Catholics socialised with Protestants.⁶ Haigh, like Bossy, used a narrative of separation and retreat yet, again, this was separation in terms of worship, not in terms of social contact. Haigh stated that Lancashire recusants 'never became an exclusive and introspective group.'⁷ Both Bossy and Haigh's analysis of Catholicism largely minimised the extent of interaction but neither of them argued that Catholics retreated socially from everyday gentry contact. I look much more closely at the cultural interactions of Catholic families in Lancashire, and how they used commensality to bridge tensions and help facilitate dining with Protestants and the ongoing interconnectedness of Lancashire gentry relationships.

Bossy and Haigh have subsequently been accused by Alexandra Walsham and Alison Shell as guilty of failing to surmount the 'denominational paradigm.'⁸ For Shell, in her work on the literature of early modern Catholics, it is difficult to overcome reductive prejudices surrounding Catholic separation if the study of such communities is narrow in scope and confined to the same sources.⁹ Shell stresses the need to take into account sources covering Catholic cultural contributions or the continued Catholic presence in wider society.¹⁰ Haigh now recognises this, admitting that a wider consideration beyond recusancy rolls and

⁵ Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 250-277, 391-401.

⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, pp. 91, 142, 210-211, 213, 284, 293.

⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, pp. 293.

⁸ Walsham, A. *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. In the Lord's Vineyard. Taylor Francis (2014). pp. 6-10; Shell, A. *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660*. Cambridge University Press (1999). p.5; Walsham, A. (2014). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. In the Lord's Vineyard. Taylor Francis, p.8.

⁹ Shell, A. *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, pp. 14, 16-17, 225-226.

¹⁰ Shell, A. *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, pp. 14, 16-17, 225-226.

published polemic is required to capture societal interaction in everyday life and the importance of lived experience.¹¹

Michael Questier's work on Catholic communities does account for this interaction. Questier argues that studying social interaction between faiths can help us understand more about the nature of English Catholics through how their networks overlapped with Protestant ones and wider society.¹² Questier does this through using the concept of the 'entourage' to examine a family's social network and involvement in and reaction to change during the Reformation.¹³ It is important for him to move away from recusant rolls and state papers.¹⁴ I argue socialising played a large role in community networks and so needed to continue for Catholics beyond their co-religionists whatever the local or national backdrop. Questier's micro-historical approach, looking at the lives of the Browne/Montague family, can shed light on community interactions, friendships, and religious identity on the ground.¹⁵ This is how I have approached the social interaction evidenced around the tables of Lancashire and Cheshire, with their mixtures of nobility, gentry, priests, preachers, performers, physicians, and county administrative figures. Questier's study is a good example of a Catholic network study that does not operate solely in its own social bubble.¹⁶ Maintenance and recovery of status was a huge motivation for Catholic families and this case study shows the importance of relationships, 'patronage nexuses,' and the ability to discuss opinions on pertinent issues of conformity or non-conformity with others.¹⁷ This idea of consultation and discussion is one I have advanced through my consideration of dinner tables as negotiating spaces, a site of discussion on religion, with people of differing religious standpoints present at meals. Running throughout this thesis is the theme of tables as places where decisions on a variety of issues are made as people consider their positions in society.

¹¹ Haigh, C. Catholicism in Early Modern England: Bossy and Beyond. *The Historical Journal*, 45, 2 (2002).pp 481-494; Shell, A. *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, p.225.

¹² Questier, M. *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550-1640*. Cambridge University Press (2006).

¹³ Ibid, pp. 4, 6-7, 63, 179-180, 510.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 17-18, 20, 179-180.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 2-3, 5, 181, 182-183.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 60, 179-180, 181, 183.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 7, 63, 181, 182, 289, 510.

Alec Ryrie's work on Protestant everyday lives has gone some way to addressing the issue of Protestant-Catholic interaction, looking at situations of encounter but still largely deals with Protestants as a closed group. Ryrie considers the nature of Protestant emotion, a new area of research previous lacking from the historiography and important for me in terms of the dynamics of gentry commensality.¹⁸ He considers table talk and gives insight into the difficult tension between gustatory enjoyment and godly living, concluding that religious piety did not negate positive attitudes towards taste. This is particularly useful when he considers taste and sweetness in the Protestant faith.¹⁹ However, Ryrie expresses wariness over 'conceptual bubble wrap' and the different approaches of scholars such as Barbara Rosenwein, who studies the history of emotions.²⁰ Rosenwein's 'emotional communities' is a useful concept I consider that takes into account the emotions and intersectionality of historical groups, how communities overlapped, feelings of communal belonging and heterogeneous change amid and between groups together with an understanding of the necessities of everyday societal contact.²¹

Bill Sheils has demonstrated the existence of mixed communities, challenging idea of religious enclaves.²² His is a look at the practicalities of continuity and change through necessary compromise, including the decisions of Protestants on who to prosecute without upsetting important regional structures.²³ I would argue it is these everyday decisions that have led to the historiographical confusion of whether Catholics were still present or absent in society and the difficulties in neatly pigeonholing individuals and families in the wider community, as I show with the decision of the Norris family to entertain Protestants. Sheils argues many

¹⁸ Ryrie, A. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford University Press (2013).

¹⁹ Ryrie, A. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, pp. 42, 44, 86-87, 89, 90, 348.

²⁰ Ryrie, A. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, p.10; Rosenwein, B. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Cornell University Press (2006); Rosenwein, B. *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700*. Cambridge University Press (2016).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sheils, W. 'Getting On' and 'Getting Along' in Parish and Town: Catholics and their Neighbours in England. In: Kaplan, B. et al (eds.). *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c.1570-1720*. Manchester: Manchester University Press (2009) p.73; Sheils, W. The Catholic Community. In: Doran, S. and Jones, N. *The Elizabethan World*. Routledge (2011), pp. 263, 267.

²³ Sheils, 'Getting On' and 'Getting Along', pp. 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 81; Sheils, The Catholic Community, pp. 260, 262-263, 265, 266, 267.

Catholics chose ‘the neighbourly virtues of civil society’ over retreat and separation.²⁴ As my work demonstrates this compromise and adaptability occurred as much around the table as anywhere else and therefore communal dining can provide an insightful arena from which to view this in action.

Peter Marshall looks at how religious resolve worked in society when community interaction was messy and religion interwoven into the very fabric of life, irrevocably linked to the everyday.²⁵ My work demonstrates how the Reformation was affected by interactions in the complex realm of domestic dinner spaces. Such adaptations would be as likely to be present during formal and informal commensal occasions. The table was as important a site for enacting change as universities, parliaments, or privy chambers.²⁶ Confusion over how to do religion ‘right’ caused a ‘wait and see conformity’ or apathy to develop and may have given individuals more leeway from which to construct their own religious positions in the later 16th and 17th centuries.²⁷ Such revelation led to a conversation not just nationally and in print, but in everyday locales, which, I would argue includes the dinner table.²⁸ Marshall sees the Reformation as causing tensions but also creative responses with neighbours still needing to ‘make do and muddle through’ amid this.²⁹ For Marshall, these calculations on how to behave and the difficult decisions over the tension between national harmony and religious order and local peaceful society shaped the direction of the Reformation as much as any decisions made by national main players.³⁰ Michael Questier also concludes that any historical study of the Reformation should acknowledge the importance not just of the ‘vertical structures of authority’ but also on the ‘horizontal bonds of community’ involving ‘complex and sophisticated adaptations of conscience to conditions.’³¹ It is for this reason that a study of commensality which considers the myriad forces affecting these negotiations is needed.

²⁴ Sheils, ‘Getting On’ and ‘Getting Along’, p.81.

²⁵ Marshall, P. (2016). *Heretics and Believers: A History of The English Reformation*. London: Yale University Press, pp.xii, xvi.

²⁶ Ibid, p.xviii.

²⁷ Ibid, pp.xiii, 578 regarding people’s ‘choice and change.’

²⁸ Ibid, pp.xiv, 578.

²⁹ Ibid, p.xvi.

³⁰ Ibid, pp.575, 578-579.

³¹ Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, p.xix; Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, p.4, referring to ‘top down, bottom up, outwards as well as inwards.’

Community life continued and, despite the differences in devotional, ritual, and festive life for Protestants and Catholics, communities still came together regularly throughout the year. Ronald Hutton's *Stations of the Sun* takes us through the festive year and plots changes to this throughout the Reformation.³² He shows that, decisions around individual participation depended as much on friendship and community cohesion as it did on appropriateness or placing oneself in confessional jeopardy. This is an important aspect in Lancashire where community celebrations often encompassed open house hospitality offered to all comers and tensions between Sunday church services and Catholic celebrations as evidenced in various reports to the Privy Council and those of priest turned informer Thomas Bell. This type of local community hospitality also involved the co-opting of such celebrations for the chance to convert people or provide access to a priest, as seen with the Norrises (chapter 2).

David Cressy argues that celebrations and rites were an opportunity for people to come together to celebrate despite religious differences and separatist polemic. The Catholic Norris family demonstrate how weddings were often simultaneous occasions for the receiving of sacraments from priests, Catholic community festivities, and to bring together mixtures of Catholic and Protestant revellers (see chapter 2). Occasions such as births, marriages, and deaths were also times where the Norris family's wider kin, from across the religious spectrum due to intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants, came together. Alexandra Walsham has mentioned how people used occasions such as baptism and burial to negotiate local relationships and remain integrated in local society.³³

Walsham and Lisa McClain have written about the reconceptualization of domestic spaces as holy sites, with Walsham arguing that priests, massing stuff, and guides to domestic spiritual devotions acted as a 'compass' and 'anchor' which facilitated interconfessional navigation.³⁴

³² Hutton, R. (1996). *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³³ Walsham, A. *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700*. Manchester University Press (2006), pp.208-209.

³⁴ Walsham, A. *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, & Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Oxford University Press (2011), p.567; Walsham, A. *Beads, Books, and Bare Ruined Choirs: Transmutations of Catholic Ritual Life in Protestant England*. In. Kaplan, Moore, Van Nierop, and Pollmann.

The idea of a compass and anchor which allowed the gentry to negotiate commensality is one I will return to throughout this thesis. The Norrises' home of Speke included priest holes and decorative schemes which were spiritually intense points within dining rooms that moored Catholics in their faith as they ate.³⁵ Catholic spiritual practices were also incorporated into the domestic routines of the gentry household as they moved through their home during the day, including when they sat together at mealtimes.³⁶ These aspects allowed sufficient slack with which to acquiesce and downplay religious identity in certain commensal situations. These aspects gave Catholics spiritual reassurance while promoting a sense of their belonging to long-established gentry social networks and a shared gentry identity regardless of conflicting confessional backgrounds.³⁷

Neither Reformation houses nor communities were hermetically sealed. I develop the work of Alexandra Walsham, Francis Dolan, and Lisa McClain through an analysis of dining in food spaces which utilised this merging of indoor and outdoor realms to conflate Catholic conceptions of English Catholic longevity.³⁸ Walsham argues there was a link between celebrations, the early modern home, and the wider landscape by arguing for the porosity of gentry households, drawing on Frances Dolan's 'geography of the sacred.'³⁹ Early modern houses were conceived, in a similar way to early modern bodies, as being permeable and so

Catholic Communities in Protestant States (2009), p.117; McClain, L. 'Without Church, Cathedral or Shrine: The Search for Religious Space Among Catholics in England, 1559-1625. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002), pp.381-399; McClain, L. *Lest We Be Damned: Practical Innovation & Lived Experience Among Catholics in Protestant England, 1559-1642*. Routledge (2004), chapter 2.

³⁵ Walsham, A. Holy Families: The Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Revisited. In. Doran, J, Methuen, C and Walsham, A. *Religion and the Household. Studies in Church History. Ecclesiastical Society*. Boydell & Brewer (2014), pp.152, 153, 154; Cogan, S. Building the Badge of God: Architectural Representations of Persecution and Coexistence in Post-Reformation England. *Archive for Reformation History*, 107:1 (2016); Cogan, S. *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England: Kinship, Gender, and Co-existence*. Amsterdam University Press (2021), pp.129-156.

³⁶ Walsham, Holy Families: The Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household, pp.152-153.

³⁷ Cogan, S. Building the Badge of God; Cogan, S. *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England: Kinship, Gender, and Co-existence*. Amsterdam University Press (2021), pp.129-156.

³⁸ Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.10, 14, 153-232, 182-183.

³⁹ Walsham, A. (2006). *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.5, 9, 166; Walsham, A. Holy Families: The Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Revisited, p.124; Walsham, Beads, Books, and Bare Ruined Choirs, pp.113, 117 citing Dolan, F. E. Gender and the 'Lost' Spaces of Catholicism. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32 (2002). See also McClain, L. 'Without Church, Cathedral or Shrine' pp.381-399 and McClain, L. *Lest We Be Damned*, chapter 2.

the boundary between inside and outside was 'hazy.'⁴⁰ Questier and Walsham have documented how both festivals and administration of the sacraments involved the community coming into the Catholic household and the household spreading out into the community.⁴¹ Catholics did mix, they did not retreat wholesale from a locality and landscape that they saw as theirs, and it was imperative that they stayed visible and relevant.⁴² The reconceptualization of domestic space as sacred allowed and enabled Catholics to mix and still play a role in society.⁴³

Walsham's *Charitable Hatred* highlights the tensions and danger involved in social interaction with those seen as being 'other' but also the need to embark on these interactions.⁴⁴ As well as the edicts that sanctioned mixing with the 'other' on social occasions for the greater good of Catholicism, there was similar advice concerning the creation of opportunities to persuade and convert.⁴⁵ Both the Hesketh and the Norrises families took advantage of opportunities created during the offers of hospitality to convert or reconvert people to the Catholic faith as they balanced a need to mix socially with Protestants with their commitment to the longevity of Catholicism in Lancashire. Protestants and Catholics both felt an Augustinian obligation to coerce the other into joining them, to go out and 'compel them to come in, that my house may be filled' (Luke 14:23).⁴⁶ This carried the dual responsibilities of educating the other and of taking care of their spiritual salvation.⁴⁷ I demonstrate the existence of a concern for spiritual education and the spiritual wellbeing of dinner guests through the commensal environment created at Little Moreton. This was achieved through religious décor in food spaces as well as the inclusion of sermons during commensal occasions in the mixed religious company of the Earls of Derby and the gentry they classed as their friends. Walsham highlights

⁴⁰ Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p.5.

⁴¹ Questier, M. *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*, pp.214-215; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.176-180, 187, 201.

⁴² Sheils, *The Catholic Community*, pp.113-114; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, chapter 3; Walsham, A. *Supping with Satan's Disciples: Spiritual Secular Sociability in Post-Reformation England*. In: Morton, A. and Lewycky, N. *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England. Essays in Honour of Professor W.J. Sheils*. Routledge (2016), pp.50-51.

⁴³ The term 'migration of the holy' is taken from Bossy, J. *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*. Oxford University Press (1985), p.153.

⁴⁴ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp.273-280, 300-303, 306, 322.

⁴⁵ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp.41, 237, 248, 250.

⁴⁶ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p.2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

how such seemingly tolerant behaviour was often begrudging if it came because of concessions granted or a drive to unify the whole of local, or indeed national, society.⁴⁸ Walsham's exploration of much intolerable toleration transferred easily to the microcosm of the table arena. Any motivations to eat together could very well be because of an ulterior motive of coercion and conversion and Walsham's consideration of these motives are supported by the activities of my three study families, Catholic and Protestant, who took advantage of dinner gatherings to shape and affect religious conviction and devotion.

The practical tolerance Walsham writes about stresses 'equilibrium over enmity' and a reluctance to override social bonds forged at the table to turn non-believers or heretics over to the authorities.⁴⁹ This reluctance is evidenced repeatedly in this thesis amongst the social networks of the Heskeths and Norrises. Walsham cites Gregory Hanlon's work in France and his idea of sociability forming a 'cocoon' in which to protect 'others' that society says one should expose.⁵⁰ Dutch examples show a similar phenomenon where 'ecumenism and interconfessional conviviality' overrode the drive to exclude.⁵¹

A by-product of viewing Protestant and Catholic communities separately is that it leads to the assumption that individuals would always move straight to prosecution. Looking at communities together, through the prism of commensality undermines this as part of complex societal networks. This all supports Walsham's argument of community being a 'highly variegated social and intellectual landscape' which is interconnected and reactive to local and personal situations, not always diametrically opposed.⁵² This tolerant intolerance (or intolerant tolerance) acted as a check on the latent explosiveness in mixed confessional

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p.11; Sheils, *Getting on and Getting Along*, pp.69-70. This is what Walsham refers to as 'convivencia', *Supping with Satan's Disciples*, p.42 and *Charitable Hatred*, p.9 citing Grell, O. and Scribner, B. *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (1996).

⁵⁰ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*

⁵¹ Walsham, *Charitable* pp.12, 277, 304-5; Pollman, J. *The Bond of Christian Piety: The Individual Practice of Tolerance and Intolerance in the Dutch Republic*. In: Hsia, R. and van Nierop, H. *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*. Cambridge University Press (2009), pp.58, 71.

⁵² Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*.

communities, dampening it down if not quite making it wholly pleasant.⁵³ Walsham surmises that early modern communities were ‘neither harmonious, conflictive, consensual or repressive’ but instead responsive to an ‘everchanging political, ecclesiastical and ideological atmosphere.’⁵⁴ I argue Lancashire and Cheshire commensality was a similar mix of comfort, discomfort, control, acquiescence, moderation, difference, and commonality. All facets of it were a necessary part of northwest society, allowing a coping mechanism for the gentry through which to continue their elevated and respected social positions. In this they put the realities of regional society on a level with national politics and religious edicts. I demonstrate throughout my work how dining occasions were an arena where evaluation and responsiveness took place, with each person negotiating sociability as well as the wider Reformation and its fallout through measured and pre-meditated behaviour in commensal contexts.

Food, Dining, and Bodies:

Food history has moved on from being simply concerned with food stuffs and recipes, as seen in the work of Peter Brears or traditional National Trust publications, useful though these are.⁵⁵ In its ability to uncover more about people’s lives, it is emerging as a historical methodology in its own right.⁵⁶ Therefore, this study is at once a study of northwest gentry and sociability and also addresses some of the larger issues and themes of the early modern period. Through an investigation of the ways in which food was much more than simply sustenance for our families, I stress how we can better understand early modern understandings of the world around them: social, political, religious, environmental, physiological, and cultural.

⁵³ Sheils, *Getting On and Getting Along*, p.81.

⁵⁴ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p.13.

⁵⁵ Brears, P. *Cooking and Dining in Tudor and Early Stuart England*. Prospect Books (2015); Paston-Williams, Sara. *The Art of Dining: The History of Cooking and Eating*. National Trust Books (2012).

⁵⁶ Thirsk, J. *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760*. Hambledon Continuum (2006); Kissane, C. *Food, Religion and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. Bloomsbury (2018).

Diane Purkiss argues for the importance of recipe books and approaches to food in the civil war era.⁵⁷ I subscribe to her view that it is beneficial to perceive historical periods through the lens of food and how viewing historical eating as an everyday activity can help us get closer to personal and collective experiences and adaptations. Purkiss puts food on the same footing as other areas of 17th century study.⁵⁸ I develop this use of food to analyse historical interactions and experiences of the Reformation by combining close exploration of the meanings of certain foods with other sources such as religious publications, the political machinations of state papers, decorative schemes, and social interactions recorded in letters or diaries. Similarly, Sara Pennell and Michelle DiMeo argue that recipe collections were at once a means of communication between men and women, a memorial of family members, and had 'religious, emotional, and regional connotations.'⁵⁹ Recipes captured political, colonial, aesthetic, geographic, social and intellectual engagement and were 'choreographies of connection.'⁶⁰ I further this application of food history by demonstrating how each study family used food as a way to facilitate and control social interaction. Such meaningful actions are important for my study as I want to incorporate considerations of affective practice in how my families may have used foods in creative and meaningful ways.

Felicity Heal has shown how the ideal of the hospitable host was a key indicator of gentry status, intertwined with concepts of friendship and a functioning society.⁶¹ Hospitality included one's ability to fulfil Christian, social, and reciprocal obligations to friends, neighbours, the needy and even strangers.⁶² Such obligations became more complex with the Reformation, though Heal demonstrates how Catholic and Protestants still felt obliged, through subtly different Biblical precepts, to keep themselves willing to receive guests and play the perfect host.⁶³ Any neglect of such duty could severely affect reputations and even a

⁵⁷ Purkiss, D. *The English Civil War: A People's History*. Harper Perennial (2006), pp. xxiii, 340-356.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Pennell, S. and DiMeo, M. *Reading and Writing Recipe Books: 1550-1800*. Manchester University Press (2013), pp.12, 13.

⁶⁰ Pennell and DiMeo, *Reading and Writing Recipe Books*, pp.13, 16; see also Wall, W. *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen*. University of Pennsylvania Press (2016).

⁶¹ Heal, F. *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, Oxford University Press (1990), pp.1-7, 23.

⁶² Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.12, 20-21.

⁶³ Ibid, pp.17-19, 93.

place in local gentry society with a risk of being overlooked thereafter.⁶⁴ As my work shows, regardless of religious conviction, Protestant and Catholics in the northwest needed to remain hospitable and sit down to eat together. It was not possible to eschew this for risk of social ostracization or spiritual consequences. These rules may have been particularly strong for the three study families. Classical modes of generosity and liberality were important in the image of the country host.⁶⁵ Classical ideals helped to manage unease at entertaining those of other religious identities and I demonstrate how the three study families were influenced by this ancient model through certain styles of décor, tableware, and table talk. The consequences of not entertaining those of different religious conviction is demonstrated in Heal's use of Sir Thomas Posthumous and Lady Margaret Hoby's miscalculations when reluctantly entertaining their Catholic Eure neighbours.⁶⁶

Heal plots the decline of this traditional model in favour of smaller, more intimate gatherings which is seen in the Moreton family's adoption of metropolitan styles of dining (chapter 3).⁶⁷ Different modes of expression and entertaining, under the influence of Italian conduct writers, shifted the focus of entertainment to the urban centres and away from the countryside.⁶⁸ These were all elements present at the Moretons' table. Heal suggests a link between Catholic households' continued desire to provide more open house hospitality centred around traditional festive celebrations and the retention of a great hall as the focus for dining.⁶⁹ My work shows how the Catholic Hesketh family centred their hospitality in their great hall and the Catholic Norrises used theirs for community celebrations. In contrast, the godly may have seen any hospitable and charitable obligations as extending to a smaller circle of friends and kin, those of the same faith and only as far as their means would allow. The Moretons kept their great hall but most entertaining was done in their two parlours and long gallery. Heal warns this does not mean some Protestants did not also continue a tradition of open hospitality and this is supported by the Moreton family's accounts which show preparations for community events such as harvest home. These tendencies and trends are explored in my

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.13-14, 21-22.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.25, 105.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp.13-14, 21-22.

⁶⁷ Heal, *Hospitality*, chapters 2-4, pp.23-191.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.169-178

work but with evidence of the activities of the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons problematising these general distinctions based along religious lines or decisions based on fashionable hospitality trends alone.

Taste as a sense and eating as a bodily function were caught up with ideas of baseness, delight in earthly pleasures, and shame. Victoria von Hoffmann, Elizabeth Swann, and Gail Kern Paster stress how this had great importance in an age where civility, manners, and displays of piety were crucial to the social and hospitable performances of gentry families.⁷⁰ In this thesis I look at the overlapping areas of taste, manners, senses, and the body in commensal contexts. Food and taste were seen as potentially problematic in northwest contexts, as reflected in the way decorative space or domestic spiritual advice was used to moderate the enjoyment of earthly pleasures at Little Moreton and Speke. Norbert Elias's *The Civilising Process* documented the increasing pressure on diners to restrict and control themselves at dinner and how the state intervened around the table.⁷¹ My work on gentry commensality complicates this through looking at how ideas on civility intersected with conceptions of bodies, humours, debate, and mixed religious dining – the latter two points being largely ignored by Elias.

Paster considers Norbert Elias's work on shame and civility and how, for Elias, civil bodies were increasingly re-conceived as bounded entities which did not leak or excrete.⁷² Jennifer Richards also considers Elias's argument about the restrictive nature of conduct books and how a closer reading reveals their use in discussing humoral bodies and food in detailed ways around the table.⁷³ Rather than civility being increasingly restrictive, it could actually do the opposite and facilitate discussion over taste, food, and bodies. Evidence for the northwest gentry reveals a desire to cater for humoral bodies during meals, to work out amongst

⁷⁰ von Hoffman, V. *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe*. University of Illinois Press (2016); Pastor, G.K *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Cornell University Press (1993). Swann, E. *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press (2020).

⁷¹ Elias, N. *The Civilising Process: The History of Manners*. Urizen Books (1978).

⁷² Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, pp.1-22, 23-63; Elias, *The Civilising Process*.

⁷³ Richards, J. Health, Intoxication, and Civil Conversation in Renaissance England. *Past and Present*, Supplement 9 (2014), pp.171-172, 180, 181-185.

themselves what was best for their diets, and to make notes on dietetics and physiology in ways that show no embarrassment over food consumption and associated discourse.

Keith Thomas has argued that civility could also be one way of justifying your socialising with people of different faiths as, despite their ungodliness, they and you would still both abide by rules of civility. Divines of both faiths who would rather people did not continue to mix socially and commensally had to concede that such separation would go against 'rules of neighbourhood and civility'.⁷⁴ This has had implications for my work as I have used civility in northwest commensality to explain how and why, alongside social ties, gentry of mixed faiths continued to dine together. The Hesketh and Norris families used expressions of civility in their commensality to protect their status and faith in the region and the commensal atmospheres of all three families created a setting for discussion, reflection, and the reinforcing of common bonds which drew on models taken from antiquity and civil behaviours linked to gentry identity.

I demonstrate how all three study families thought about bodies, minds, surroundings, and food in terms of humoral embodiment. Commensal environments and dining together were believed to have the potential to affect diners in adverse ways. This makes it much easier to understand the uneasy relationship people had with taste and their fears around sensory seduction. Paster stresses the material nature of the humours, spirits, and passions and makes it clear how these affected the body in ways that were difficult for the diner to control.⁷⁵ However, Michael Schoenfeldt and David Gentilcore have stressed how this could be managed through dietetic control and adaption.⁷⁶ Work by Paul Lloyd and Ken Albala is also useful in this area for understanding the complexities of dietary advice and the culinary treatments of food. Whereas Albala focusses on the content of dietetic advice and how this changed over time, Lloyd highlights how this was used in practical terms by various gentry

⁷⁴ Robert Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln cited in Thomas, K. *In Pursuit of Civility*. Yale University Press (2018), p. 135.

⁷⁵ Paster, G.K. *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*. The University of Chicago Press (2004), pp. 25-134.

⁷⁶ Schoenfeldt, M. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press (1999); Gentilcore, D. *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine and Society, 1450-1800*. Bloomsbury (2016).

families.⁷⁷ Each study family shows their continued understanding of bodies and environments in Galenic terms throughout the 17th century with adaption based on personal, regional, and gentry contexts running throughout the early modern period.

I combine all these insights to highlight the importance of the health regime as a means of controlling perceived 'dangerous' forces around the table which had the ability to cause involuntary changes in temperament and behaviour. The people studied in this thesis viewed commensality as a vulnerable arena, in which they might lose their reason, and at the same time an opportunity to control bodies, minds and souls through what they served. Various elements of commensal gatherings including sanctified tableware, calming décor, and the use of religious sermons, show the vulnerability felt around northwest tables when dining and beliefs about how bodies and minds were open to influence around dinner tables. They read, discussed, and implemented dietetic advice. Evidence of the use of food and adaptations made to humoral dietetic advice is seen in the foods produced, bought, and consumed by each family in this thesis and wider northwest society.

I argue for the intersectionality of dietetic advice with religious understandings of bodies, minds, and souls in commensal contexts, inspired by work from Matthew Milner, Chris Woolgar, and Eleanor Barnett. All argue that lived religion was conflated with understandings of physiology and sensory immersion in domestic environments and that faith could not be removed from these contexts.⁷⁸ Dietary and medical texts featured theories concerning the body which echoed religious writings regarding the management of the Christian mind and soul. Christians needed to guard against physical and mental corruption and any susceptibility to evil influence when mixing with others. Northwest food practices demonstrate how humoral understandings ran through many aspects of commensality, whether food, faith,

⁷⁷ Lloyd, P. Dietary Advice and Fruit-Eating in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 67:4 (2012); Lloyd, P. Making Waterfowl Safe to Eat: Medical Opinion, Cookbooks and Food Purchases in Early Seventeenth-century England. *Food & History*, 11:1 (2013); Albala, K. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. University of California Press (2002).

⁷⁸ Milner, M. *The Senses and the English Reformation*. Routledge (2011); Woolgar, C.M. *The Senses in Late Medieval England*. Yale University Press (2006); Barnett, E. Reforming Food and Eating in Protestant England, c.1560-1640. *The Historical Journal*, 63:3 (2020); Richards, J. Useful Books: Reading Vernacular Regimens in Sixteenth Century England. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73:2 (2012).

décor, conversation, or social interaction. I show how food was manipulated by the three study families when it came to the management of humoral bodies and minds and how this influenced guests around the dinner table. However, this was not as malevolent as published texts suggest.

Fears over food consumption and environments had to be balanced by the ability to have a good time, albeit in the correct fashion.⁷⁹ Elizabeth Swann, in her work on taste, argues that despite fears aroused through sensory experience, the senses also informed and allowed people to experience a closeness to God. In this, the senses were not always perceived as dangerous but also caught up in religious adherence and behaviour. This is apparent in the ways the three study families used commensal spaces in religious ways that reassured guests of spiritual protection and sanctity, through colours, texts, apotropaic marks, or the very fabric of material culture.

Material Culture:

Marc Girouard perceived the country house as filled with fixed meanings based on a cosmological template and conceptual framework.⁸⁰ He aimed to 'understand the architecture' and recognise how it was designed to 'fit a particular way of life.'⁸¹ Girouard argued that the house was conceived as a microcosm of the early modern universe and showed how bricks and mortar were employed to express this belief, as with his example of Sir Thomas Tresham's triangular banqueting house at Rushton, Northamptonshire.⁸² The way Girouard moved around the space of the English country house, walking around the physical space and the material culture and décor it contained, has been a starting point for me in my consideration of how dining at the three study properties felt for guests. However, the 'text-book' gentry home is problematic, since my three study families' homes show how each was

⁷⁹ Thomasik, T. and Vitullo, J. M. (eds.) *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Brepols Publishers (2007).

⁸⁰ Girouard, M. *Life in the English Country House*. Yale University Press (1978).

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.94.

⁸² *Ibid*, p.108.

used in ways that fit the individual families and their beliefs and requirements about commensality. Each family approached the use of their homes in different ways that were not uniform or clearly defined. Throughout the thesis, I address the dualistic meanings and the simultaneous functions of domestic spaces and material culture.

Tara Hamling, in *Decorating the Godly Household*, demonstrates how domestic decorative features were used to influence, control or prompt family members, servants and guests as they moved around its various rooms including food spaces.⁸³ Hamling looks at artistic renderings of the senses or Biblical scenes *in situ* and at the uses of family domestic spaces, showing the house as being an important site for religious education, moderation, daily performances of piety and religious observance, and a manifestation of literal and metaphysical spiritual space. This physical manipulation of both family and guests as they view decorative elements highlights just how influential the domestic environment could be, particularly when contemplating the decisions householders made in the commissioning of such work.⁸⁴ This is important when considering the decorative schemes in commensal spaces at Speke and Little Moreton, in particular plasterwork ceilings and brightly coloured wall paintings which I interpret as both Catholic and Protestant mnemonic prompts and which also were designed to temper behaviour.⁸⁵ Such decorative schemes played an active role in the control of bodies and minds in domestic spaces infused with religiosity. *Decorating the Godly Household* views decor as a way of understanding how the early modern household was conceived by its inhabitants and guests as an important space for religious practice alongside everyday domestic life, Hamling arguing decorative schemes surveyed and regulated as well as acted to sanctify domestic spaces.⁸⁶ I argue the Speke and Little Moreton schemes were also used to render food spaces spiritually safe for Catholic and Protestant diners alike. Through understanding this we can learn more about contemporary thinking around space, performance, and piety in the context of dining.

⁸³ Hamling, T. *Decorating the Godly Household*. Yale University Press (2010), pp.22-23, 93-98, 103-120.

⁸⁴ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, chapter 4, pp.121-198.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp.134-137 on the wall painting of Suzanna and the Elders at Little Moreton Hall.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.269-272.

Sara Pennell also builds on the work of Girouard, but employs a more holistic approach to domestic space which has informed my consideration of the complexities of domestic food spaces. Pennell offers a greater understanding of how the kitchen was known to contemporary dwellers, physically and psychologically. This includes considerations of practice and performance, embodiment, psycho-geographies, power-geometries, food 'axes' and, though not explicitly expressed, I believe, affect theory and assemblage theory.⁸⁷ Pennell believes that rather than a space unworthy of study, the kitchen is actually 'a space good to think with'.⁸⁸ I have taken Pennell's approach to the complicating of domestic food spaces and 'axes' and applied it to the food consumption spaces of the three study properties, asking how these complex understandings connected to food preparation spaces, passages, attitudes to food, and ingredients in early modern minds. For Pennell, the kitchen was fluid not static, and she dismisses the binaries in previous considerations of the domestic, which set the kitchen against the polite realms of the house.⁸⁹ Inspired by the work of Daniel Jütte and Otto Brunner on the home as an organism, constantly in a state of flux, she argues convincingly that any boundaries in existence were more liminal ones which were crossed and blurred regularly.⁹⁰ People, things, ideas, practices, and spiritual adherence crossed over it.⁹¹

I have drawn on this idea of porous boundaries in food spaces and combined it with the work of Alexandra Walsham and Tara Hamling on porous early modern buildings and sanctified domestic space.⁹² In addition, I have used the work of Paster, Gentilcore, and Schoenfeldt on the porosity of early modern bodies open to influence through their surroundings to show how commensality held affective power through its relationship to internal bodies and minds, dining rooms, and the surrounding landscape.

⁸⁷ Pennell, S. *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1600-1850*. Bloomsbury (2016), pp.11, 39, 94 (concerning flows in and out of the kitchen), 113, 136-139, 143.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp.1, 15, 171.

⁸⁹ Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, pp.38, 56, 57.

⁹⁰ Jütte, D. Living Stones: The House as Actor in Early Modern Europe. *Journal of Urban History* 42:4 (2016), pp.677, 678. For the blurring of inside/outside and boundaries see also Cohen E.S. and Cohen, T.V. Open and Shut: The Social Meanings of the Cinquecento Roman House. *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 9:1 (2001), p.61.

⁹¹ Jütte, D. Living Stones, p.678.

⁹² See also Brundin, A. Howard, D. and Leven, M. *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy*. Oxford University Press (2018), p.81.

I demonstrate how the interwoven nature of people, rooms, experiences, faith, and permeable boundaries meant all food spaces, both those for preparation and consumption, required sanctification. Pennell argues that: ‘the early modern household was woven into a landscape wherein faith was embodied and enacted’.⁹³ She turns here to early modern ‘belief-scapes’ and the ideas of psycho-geography showing that the kitchen was, in the mind of household members, a ‘liminal’ space full of weak spots: windows, doors, hearths, continual comings and goings.⁹⁴ This porous space invited in evil spirits which therefore required the physical structure of the property to be shored up with protective or apotropaic markings at significant entry points and on kitchen equipment and vessels.⁹⁵ It was especially important that this space was secure, safe, and spiritually sound because the consequences of food leaving this space that was not safe could result in moral and spiritual disorder.⁹⁶ My work shows that these associations extended to those spaces where the food that emanated from the kitchen was ultimately consumed. Each study property in this thesis used elements of religious décor or apotropaic marks in food spaces which indicates the families’ belief in vulnerable buildings and bodies when consuming food. Pennell’s approach, as with Hamling’s, focuses on mainly Protestant experiences of kitchens and food spaces. I build on this and extend these ideas to Catholic homes, showing that Catholics and Protestants had similar approaches to food spaces and their decoration.

Micro-historical case studies highlight the manipulative and affective power of objects. Some material culture was designed in bring about harmonious and collective performances around the table. Banqueting trenchers, examined by Victoria Yeoman, also featured poems, songs, or parts from a play for diners to recite in turn as part of a collective round-the-table performance.⁹⁷ Consisting of beech or sycamore thin roundels with paper decoration and text pasted to them, they could be bought and remain as intended or customised and adapted as

⁹³ Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, p.137.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.143, echoing Walsham in *The Reformation of the Landscape* where she writes of the ‘nexus between the material and spiritual realms and the redefinition of how the sacred was present in the world’, p.9.

⁹⁵ Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, pp.7, 142-145.

⁹⁶ Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, pp.135-143.

⁹⁷ Yeoman, V. Speaking Plates: Text, Performance, and Banqueting Trenchers in Early Modern Europe. *Renaissance Studies*, 31:5 (2017), pp.763, 764, 765, 772, 757, 773-778.

desired.⁹⁸ Seemingly conducive to a harmonious after dinner banquet course, diners consumed the sweetmeats of the banquet from the plain wooden side and then flipped the trencher over to reveal a written part in the play or a poet to recite.⁹⁹ However, they were also designed to embarrass any participant who was not adept enough in their handling, performance, or recital.¹⁰⁰ Victoria Yeoman has highlighted the prescriptive ways of handling the trenchers, under the watchful eyes of other guests.¹⁰¹ In this, tableware could be included on a particular table to 'booby trap' or set a fellow diner up for a fall.¹⁰² In the context of the dinner spaces studied in this thesis, several elements were included in the families' commensal gatherings which required such wit and flexibility, from the interpretation of decorative schemes on walls, trenchers, and painted ceramics, to the use of jokes and poems in curated dinner conversation. This divisive element detected in material culture and commensal atmospheres goes against the assumption that commensality only fostered feelings of togetherness. I have taken this onboard to consider in more depth how material culture could divide as much as unite. Here I have incorporated similar work by Alexandra Walsham writing on Protestant ceramics featuring anti-Catholic imagery. I argue that for mixed faith dinners to happen, divisive elements that provoke discomfort in some diners were necessary for hosts for them to remain rooted in their religious conviction as they mixed with people across the religious spectrum.

Similarly manipulative were the carving knives with musical notation studied by Flora Dennis.¹⁰³ These knives did more than carving: they brought the assembled group of diners together, heightening their commensality, through their inscriptions of musical notation and individual parts as part of a shared musical performance.¹⁰⁴ One side featured a pre-dinner benediction, the other an after-dinner grace.¹⁰⁵ Designed therefore to be sung, the musical

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp.757, 766-767.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp.757, 759, 760.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp.756, 770, 757, 764, 765.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.770, 756, 765, 769.

¹⁰³ Dennis, F. *Scattered Knives and Dismembered Song: Cutlery, Music and the Rituals of Dining*. In: Motture, P. and O'Malley, M. *Re-thinking Renaissance Objects: Design, Function and Meaning*. Wiley-Blackwell (2011).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.171.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.156.

inscriptions were multi-part pieces.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of the extent of the musical performance , the significance of these knives was that they asked individual dinner guests to partake in a performance together as one. This I have considered in the context of various drinking vessels and other decorated tableware at the three properties.¹⁰⁷ When considering material culture, I also consider utterances around the table, musical accompaniment, performance, interludes and the religious effect of benediction and grace on all the other elements of the dining scene to show how synesthetic experiences were replete with meaning and affective resonance.

The power of material culture was not just visual or material. It did not revolve solely on what was engraved or printed on it or on what its form encouraged to user to do physically. There were also intangible associations, with material culture acting as a prompt to thought as well as action. Mental spaces conjured in dinner spaces are considered in the Speke ceiling or in how the Norrises moved through their home in ways described in Catholic domestic spiritual guides which were cerebral processes not knowable to other diners. Affective commensality relied as much on these processes as it did on combinations of tangible food and tableware. For Katherine Murphy, Chardin's rendering of pots and bowls prompts the pot's user to ponder the shape, colour, and vacuum of empty vessels.¹⁰⁸ This led people's thoughts beyond the immediate bodily action of using a bowl, reminding the user of what lied beyond the realm of the material and earthly sensations. There are echoes here of Psalm 68:13:

Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a
dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.

Other early modern paintings of kitchen scenes similarly feature the religious as a backdrop to mundane actions regarding food production, illustrating the cognitive connection between food and faith in people's minds and the presence of God and other biblical characters amongst the pots and pans.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Murphy, K. Pots, Pans and Pondering in Chardin's Domestic Scenes. *Apollo*, November (2018).

¹⁰⁹ Murphy, K. Pots, Pans and Pondering in Chardin's Domestic Scenes. *Apollo*, November (2018); Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, p.20.



Fig. 4. Diego Velazquez, *Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus*, c.1618. The National Gallery, no: NG1375. Image courtesy of The National Gallery.

My work is original in that it combines different elements to show how commensality functioned. In all the perspectives on food, dining, and material culture detailed above there is a disconnect. Work on early modern senses does not connect sensory information with the movement of humours, blood, and internal physiology prompted by eating. Likewise, work on food and how this affected the body internally does not connect with sensory perception and the operation of animal spirits with the natural and vital spirits involved with internal organs, digestion, breathing, and the mind. I have taken works by Albala, Gentilcore, Paster, Milner, and Woolgar and combined their insights into physical and mental embodiment to understand sensory and gustatory commensal experience in a holistic way. This holistic combination of early modern understandings of people and commensality includes their religious connotations and the impacts these had on how easily diners met to eat together.

Sources:

I have used published sources including medical texts, dietary manuals, healthcare regimes, recipe books, domestic religious guidance, conduct books, and guides to commensal conversation and entertainments. These document what diners thought, or were expected to think, about food and health when they ate, bodily processes, connections to cognition and sensory understandings, how to act around the table, how to get the best from commensal occasions and what to be wary of. Guides on conversation or how to entertain guests allowed one to exert influence around the table. During this thesis, I explore how much the families of

the northwest used these published sources and how such diverse sources of guidance informed understandings of what happened when one ate in company.

Family papers are housed at the British Library, University of Liverpool Special Collections, and Lancashire and Cheshire Archives. These include correspondence, commonplace books, notebooks, deeds, accounts, wills, and inventories. There are detailed probate inventories for all three families across the period together with extant material culture in the form of interior décor, furniture, tableware, and the dining spaces themselves. I acknowledge that inventories can mislead through how they were compiled, for what reason, and in what they included and excluded.¹¹⁰ However, interpreted with care, the range of inventories detail a wealth of tableware and decorative furnishings which I can place in food spaces across the three properties, often with the good degree of detail on things such as styles and colours, how they would be used, or what food they would facilitate on the families' tables. Although representing a snapshot in time, all these inventories demonstrate the importance of commensality for the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons through the range of material culture listed. They can also help with the reconstruction of foods served and the important role female members of each family played in the provision of successful hospitality via sweet foods, embroidered soft furnishings, and a desire to ensure dinner guests' humoral and spiritual comfort through a range of culinary and medical equipment.

For Lancashire, there are several important primary records of dining in the northwest for this period. These offer insight into wider dining between the gentry and nobility in the county. In 1617 James I dined at Hoghton Tower in Lancashire during his progress down to London after his return to Edinburgh.¹¹¹ Entertained by Sir Richard Hoghton, the proceedings were recorded in the journal of Nicholas Assheton with the dishes served described in the records

¹¹⁰ Richardson, C. *Written Texts and the Performance of Materiality*. In: Gerritsen, A. and Riello, G. *Writing Material Culture History*. Bloomsbury (2015); Orlin, L. C. *Fictions of the Early Modern English Probate Inventory*. In: Turner, H. (ed.). *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*. Taylor Francis (2002).

¹¹¹Nichols, J. *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*. Vol 3. AMS Press (1828/1968). (1868).

of James's 1617 progress.¹¹² Since local gentry were invited to this gathering it is likely that the Heskeths and Norrises were amongst the party. The next stop on James I's procession was at Lathom with the Earl of Derby.¹¹³ Gentry families from around the region sent food gifts to the Earl with which to feed the king and his entourage, and the recordings include waterfowl, fruits, and venison gifted by the Heskeths and Norrises and with younger members of the families in attendance.¹¹⁴ In both these cases of dining with the king, the records also show the ceremony associated with these occasions and the organisation involved in putting on these commensal set-pieces. Sources such as these illustrate the need for our gentry families to be able to perform at this level of dining with distinction.

The Derby Household Book (published by the Chetham Society in 1853) is another invaluable source where we can see the sorts of foods, entertainments and company Lancashire gentry enjoyed when dining with their equals and the Earls of Derby themselves: Edward, Henry, and Ferdinando. It also includes other families the Norrises and Heskeths dined with at the Earls' homes. The accounts start with Edward Stanley, third Earl of Derby from 1521-1572, with accounts for 1561 and his household regulations for 1568. The second set of accounts are for Henry Stanley, fourth Earl of Derby from 1572-1593, with accounts from 1587 together with his slightly different regulations. Henry was careful to add amongst his directions for dining that 'a care to be had that the best sorte be placed together and accordinglie served.' The comings and goings documented in the accounts are of importance to this study by showing how regularly the Heskeths and Norrises, as well as Lancashire's gentry on the whole, attended on the Earls of Derby. These records also demonstrate the mixed religious make-up of the guests, with Protestants and Catholics dining together albeit with the added tension of preachers giving regular sermons to the guests. The food spaces of the Earls of Derby were 'perfect eating palace[s].'¹¹⁵ They will be referred to throughout the thesis in how the commensal practices of the Earls of Derby had a direct effect on how the Heskeths and Norrises went about their use of hospitality. Lancashire gentleman William Farrington (1537-

¹¹² Raines, F. R. (ed.). The Journal of Nicholas Assheton of Downham, *Chetham Society*, Vol. 54

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Derby Collection, Knowsley Hall, C46.1.

¹¹⁵ Raines, F.R. (ed.). The Stanley Papers. Part II. The Household Regulations and Expenses of Edward and Henry, Third and Fourth Earls of Derby Together With A Diary Containing the Names of the Guests Who Visited the Lattter Earl at his Houses in Lancashire. *Chetham Society* (1853).

1610) recorded the comings and goings at the homes of the Earls of Derby in his role as comptroller.¹¹⁶ His grandson William Farrington (c.1585-1657) also left records of dinner arrangements made in connection with his role as Sheriff of Lancashire which give useful information on how members of the Hesketh family may have entertained in their time as county sheriff.¹¹⁷

In Cheshire the situation was different for the Protestant Moreton family, of a lesser status than the Heskeths and Norrises and outside the orbit around the Earls of Derby. The Moretons left a wealth of family papers including correspondence, accounts, and notebooks that detail what they ate, and how they studied commensality, using it to try and improve their social position. In the 17th century the Moretons also provide a contrast to the practices of the Heskeths and Norrises. As well as hosting dinner parties at their house in the northwest, they used commensality away from the home, centred instead on the legal environs of London and the diplomatic circles of Italy. Closer to home, the Congleton town accounts provide details of how the Moretons used commensal meetings in the local town community, socialising with other gentry in the context of dinners, cockfights, and bear-baiting celebrations, and being feasted at the expense of the town.¹¹⁸

Material sources include the properties themselves and their surviving decorative schemes, layouts, and evidence of how each properties' food-axis has changed over the course of two centuries. The three properties feature wood carvings, plasterwork, wall paintings, and inscriptions. Speke and Little Moreton also feature a large number of apotropaic burn and scratch marks in their various food spaces. Archaeological remains of slipware drinking vessels were found on site at Little Moreton and a wooden wassail bowl survives at Speke. Furniture including tables, forms, and cupboards also remain in situ at all three properties, as well as the ornate passage screen at Rufford. I have also looked at collections at local and national

¹¹⁶ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*, p.iii.

¹¹⁷ Farrington, S.M. (ed). *The Farrington Papers, The Shrievalty of William Farrington esq. A.D. 1636. Chetham Society*, vol. 39 (1856)

¹¹⁸ Congleton Town Accounts 1584-1637, Congleton Museum.

museums and galleries, informed by archival information on the material culture of the three families.

Methodology - Balancing the Sources and Commensal Interaction:

A methodology based on 'assemblage theory' and 'affect theory' has allowed me to combine all the above primary sources and consider how each had a bearing on commensal gatherings. These theories have also guided me in considering the relationships between different elements of commensality present at the study families' tables. In both the range and interpretation of sources and in the structure of the thesis, I have continually borne the tenets of the two theories in mind.

Based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, assemblage theory involves thinking about the social world holistically; not as people, objects, and spaces in a vacuum but as related elements which all interact with each other.¹¹⁹ My understanding of assemblage theory is taken from several writers: Manuel DeLanda, Ben Jervis, and Oliver Harris but principally Yannis Hamilakis.¹²⁰ The theory involves working at different scales: so micro-historical approaches are combined with wider investigations of religious, political, and social contexts taken from primary and secondary textual sources and material culture.¹²¹ Closely related to assemblage is affect theory and here several theorists have shaped my view of its utility as a

¹¹⁹ Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Bloomsbury/University of Minnesota (2013/1987).

¹²⁰ DeLanda, M. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh University Press (2016); Jervis, B. *Assemblage Thought and Archaeology*. Routledge (2019); Harris, O. (Re)assembling Communities. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 21:1 (2014); Harris, O. More Than Representation: Multiscalar Assemblages and the Deleuzian Challenge to Archaeology. *History of the Human Sciences*, 31:3 (2018); Hamilakis, Y. Sensorial Assemblages: Affect, Memory and Temporality in Assemblage Thinking. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 27:1 (2017); Hamilakis, Y. *Archaeology and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect*. Cambridge University Press (2013).

¹²¹ Harris, More Than Representation; DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, pp.14-21; Hamilakis, Sensorial Assemblages.

methodology.¹²² However, two writers in particular have shaped my use of assemblage and affect through their use of it in relation to food and dining: Hamilakis and Jane Bennett.¹²³

Hamilakis uses food and commensality to explain assemblage theory through a case study of sugar in the work of artist Kara Walker and in Bronze Age Cretan feasting. In Walker's *A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* the artist combined imagery relating to historical sugar sculptures with racial stereotypes and slavery.¹²⁴ The installation, in a disused sugar refinery, featured figures composed of white refined sugar and black molasses which smelled sickly sweet and slowly melted through a combination of their location on the waterfront in Brooklyn and the hands of visitors invited to touch them.¹²⁵ As a sensory assemblage the work featured materiality, scent, vision, touch, movement, the sugar refinery, food, sweetness, large and small sculptures, memory, the artist, the visitors, history, slavery, and Euro-centrism: an affective assemblage of the material and immaterial connected to sugar.¹²⁶ Hamilakis's study of Bronze Age Cretan feasting includes an assemblage of cups, pots, bones, incense burners, shells, feasting practices, food, memories and associations, communities, alliances, performances, politics, landscape, and the remains of palatial complexes.¹²⁷ Elements of an assemblage include the tangible but also intangible such as sensations, utterances, and emotions.¹²⁸ It also takes into account time and memory: the recalling of memories and associations during an assemblage of dining elements, and the creation of new memories which are then put to use in the future.¹²⁹ Hamilakis concludes that affective assemblages are an ideal methodological fit when studying people eating together, with 'the sensorial assemblages of communal consumption...some of the most affectively intense and efficacious.'¹³⁰ I have applied this thinking to my work, considering the multiple

¹²² Blackman, L. *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*. Sage (2012); Wetherell, M. *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*. Sage (2012); Massumi, B. *Politics of Affect*. Polity (2015).

¹²³ Hamilakis, Y. *Archaeology and the Senses*, pp.91-92,166-190; Hamilakis, Y. *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.177-180; Bennett, J. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press (2010), pp.39-51.

¹²⁴ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.169-171.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, p.170.

¹²⁷ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.177-180. Further detail of the Bronze Age Cretan feasting assemblage is given in Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*

¹²⁸ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.173, 177, 178,

¹²⁹ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.174, 179-180; Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses* on 'forward remembering' p.84.

¹³⁰ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, p.180.

interconnected aspects of commensality in an early modern context that also included conceptions of porous bodies, buildings, embodied sensory experiences and faith.

Thinking about how various elements interacted in the assemblage of gentry commensality involves also using affect theory. Hamilakis believes affect is essential for assemblage thinking as it focuses on the relationships between aspects, what he calls the 'in-betweenness.'¹³¹ In the case of commensality, Hamilakis lists these aspects as including the food and ingredients, feasting sites, memories, material culture, sensory experience, relationships, embodied understandings, the blurring of boundaries between inside/outside as food was ingested, and the onward trajectories of these different elements as the assemblage broke up and re-merged as part of other future groupings.¹³² In my work, therefore, is the study of forces at work amongst and between different components of a dinner party: incorporating great halls, parlours, material culture, hosts, guests, religious and cultural contexts, food and ingredients, physiology, embodiment, and sensory experience. Another way of looking at this assemblage model for dinner parties is as these interconnections and forces as 'webs' or 'meshes' that create powerful intersections of the different elements of a commensal meal as the connections intersect.¹³³ By way of example, I am concerned in this thesis with the powerful links between food advice, faith, table ceramics and landscape; another powerful intersection is politics, faith, entertainments, and food space décor (see fig. 5).

¹³¹ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.169, 171-173, 176,

¹³² Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.177-180.

¹³³ Ingold, T. *Lines: A Brief History*. Routledge (2007).

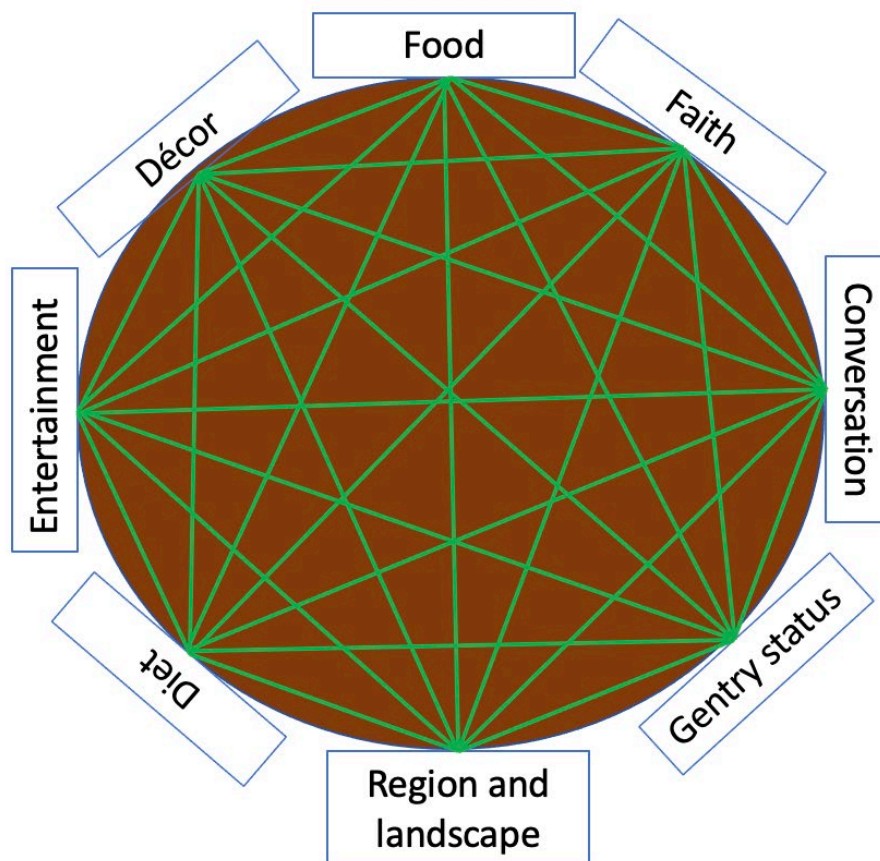


Fig. 5. Intensities around and across the table. A visual representation of assemblage, affect, and 'in-betweenness.' This echoes Pennell's use of 'power geometries.'

In my work, affect theory is way of considering the experiences of encountering things, space, information, and others, at moments of interaction.¹³⁴ It is concerned with the intensities created when elements of an assemblage combine and the effect of that resonance on other aspects of a scene.¹³⁵ Affect theory is a means of asking why encounters and experiences move people.¹³⁶ Jane Bennett's perception of the interactions in affect theory are that there are no Cartesian binaries or boundaries as she argues for the breakdown of the subject/object divide.¹³⁷ I use this when considering connections around the table, as at play amongst this

¹³⁴ Fielding, A. Going Deeper than 'Emotional Impact': Heritage, Academic Collaboration and Affective Engagements. *History Journal*, 107:375 (2022) p.1.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ New materialism is similarly concerned with the breaking down of unhelpful dualisms such as inside/outside, human/nature, or mind/body which were not present around the early modern commensal table.

were also complications of landscape, regional social relations, and spiritualised domestic space.

Bennett thinks of matter or aspects in an assemblage as vibrant, possessing ‘thing power’, highlighting the charge between elements of assemblages as they interact.¹³⁸ Qualifying agency between subject and object as seen in Alfred Gell’s work, Bennett describes agency as being distributed throughout an assemblage of component parts.¹³⁹ Agency is useful when considering the effect of tableware or decorative schemes but I, like Barrett, widen this out to incorporate more aspects of commensal assemblages.¹⁴⁰ Barrett sees ‘atomistic agency’ as too concerned with the separation of human and object interactions in isolation whereas affect and assemblage view the interactions between all aspects of a grouping.¹⁴¹

Of relevance to my work is Gell’s exploration of distributed personhood; the materiality of Lucretius and porous boundaries; his thoughts on the changeable and contextual ‘fleeting’ interactions between people and material culture; and the dualistic meanings and personal interpretations things and people exchange.¹⁴² Incorporating Gell’s work into my use of assemblage and affect involves thinking in terms of embodied experiences with agency being distributed throughout the elements of a dinner assemblage, working together in a composition.⁴⁸ For Hamilakis, Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* has also inspired assemblage and affect approaches through an avoidance of thinking only in ‘doubles (subject-object, mind-body, inside-outside, object-image).¹⁴³ In eating, Hamilakis sees ‘the division between...subject and object dissolve.’¹⁴⁴ Both the blurring of boundaries and the interaction of different elements of assemblages mirror early modern thinking on porous

¹³⁸ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp.4-17.

¹³⁹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp.21.

¹⁴⁰ Gell, A. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford University Press (1998).

¹⁴¹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp.20-24; Harris, *More Than Representation*. Gell did consider ideas of networks and temporality, see Gell, *Art and Agency*, pp.221-258 and Watts, C. and Knappett, C. *Ancient Art Revisited: Global Perspectives from Archaeology and Art History*. Taylor and Francis (2022), chapter 1.

¹⁴² Gell, *Art and Agency*, pp.22-23, 96-154, 104-105, 222-223.

¹⁴³ Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*, p.66; Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge (1962).

¹⁴⁴ Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*, p.83.

bodies, environmental embodiment, and the interconnectivity between commensality, religious and political backdrops, sensory immersion, and the tangible elements of tableware, furniture, and surviving food spaces.

In a chapter devoted to eating, Barrett highlights how food is never *just* food because of the way it relates to all other elements of an assemblage which changes its intensity, its meaning, and its power: 'food...is one of the many agencies operative in the moods, cognitive dispositions, and moral sensibilities that we bring to bear as we engage the questions of what to eat, how to get it, and where to stop.'¹⁴⁵ The various aspects of life connected to early modern food had to be considered by the study families when they planned what to eat, how to serve it, where to serve it, and what they accompanied it with. Barrett gives the example of Bismark's Germany and the powerful intensities created between food, beer drinking, newspaper politics, and the music of Wagner.¹⁴⁶ An example of this in my work is the serving of waterfowl in the context of dietetics, the corruption of humoral bodies, estate management, wealth, spices, the wetland Lancashire landscape, and gentry status.¹⁴⁷ Affect and assemblage, combined with agency, has motivated me to not consider food in isolation as a 'powerful agent' but as something which 'affects and is affected by' numerous other things present in Reformation lives in the northwest.¹⁴⁸

I have used affect and assemblage together as an overarching methodology with which to consider the overlapping nature of forces, influences, flows, and agencies around the dinner table and how this can bring us closer to understanding the factors at play as diners negotiated 16th- and 17^t- century commensality. This methodology has guided my considerations of how early modern gentry in the northwest ate together and has allowed me to approach a wide

¹⁴⁵ Barrett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp.44, 45, 47, 49.

¹⁴⁶ Barrett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp.44-5.

¹⁴⁷ Barrett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. 49, 94.

¹⁴⁸ Barrett, *Vibrant Matter*, p.21; Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*, p.30; Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, p.173, all citing Spinoza, B. *Ethics* (1677) and Deleuze, G. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. City Lights Books (1983).

variety of sources in an interconnected way, whether written, material, religious, decorative, medical, culinary, or social in nature.

Chapter 1 looks at the Catholic Heskeths of Rufford in northwest Lancashire. Built in the early 1530s, Rufford was built by Sir Robert Hesketh (d.1541), inspired by his time at the court of Henry VIII. This provided a backdrop for the later socialising of son Sir Thomas Hesketh (1526-88), and grandson Robert Hesketh (1560-1620). Sir Thomas focused on entertainments, particularly music and performance. This kept him close to key regional figures such as the Earls of Derby, from whom he gained protection. Such displays of hospitality also allowed Sir Thomas to project an image of a commensurate gentry host, creating a commensal atmosphere of culture and intelligence. Such uses of commensality and maintenance of traditional bonds with other gentry and the Earls of Derby allowed Sir Thomas to continue to support Catholic worship and priests behind the scenes. In contrast, Sir Thomas's son Robert was a church papist, projecting an image of Protestant conformity while still heading a Catholic household. This allowed him to gain access to prestigious positions such as Sheriff of Lancashire, with all the attendant dinner occasions that came with the role. He was well versed in the requirements of elite dining, enough to be able to host Ferdinando, Lord Strange, and his wife at Rufford Old Hall. His was an image of dependability, supported by a close relationship with those with power fostered through dining, which allowed his secret support of Catholicism in the longer term to go unnoticed or to be at least tolerated.

Chapter 2 examines the Catholic Norrises of Speke in southwest Lancashire. Commensality here allowed for the entertainment of Protestant figures and family members in food spaces where Catholic imagery and priests remained in close proximity. This was either through ambiguous decorative schemes or the presence of harboured priests who were sat at tables, waiting on them, or hiding above food spaces in priest holes. Degrees of flexibility when it came to dining with Protestants allowed the Norrises to acquiesce on certain points when they ate and conversed with others, such as the sharing of food, the eating of prohibited food on fast days, or the hearing of Protestant graces. The Norrises understood the importance of commensality in maintaining their elite social position in Lancashire as well as the benefits of

entertaining those who could protect them, turn a blind eye to their Catholicism, or support them while in positions of office in the county.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Moretons of Little Moreton Hall in Cheshire. As Protestants in a largely Protestant area, the Moretons still dined with Catholics, either in social community settings, or at home. Commensality at Little Moreton Hall centred on spaces away from the great hall, with food spaces replete with Protestant imagery. This was combined with a tactic of control around the commensal table, using information, news, learned attributes, and skilful conversation to punctuate and moderate how commensal dinners unfolded. This allowed William Moreton (c.1510-63) to combine an image of the ideal gentry host with fashionable metropolitan and continental styles of hospitality through the travels of his various sons nationally and internationally. The chapter also explores the disruptions to the Moretons' commensal tactics for social advancement caused by the Civil War and the permanent changes to hospitality in the later 17th century.

Having demonstrated how each family used combinations of entertainment, décor, and conversation in the commensality they offered, Chapter 4 will move on to consider understandings of bodies, minds, and physiology in food spaces and how these affected diners. This considers how dietetics and bodily health merged with religious guidance and anxieties around vulnerable bodies in commensal situations. I argue that each of the study families understood the world around them in embodied ways that combined religious, humoral, and social contexts. I demonstrate that the families utilised dietetic knowledge to ensure guests' comfort and health while also displaying examples of gentry status and wealth through the manipulation of food. The chapter concludes by examining how the three study families employed humoral understandings to exert influence on their guests through food but in combination with other elements of the commensal sensorium.

Chapter 5 explores the sensory environment of commensality beyond the consumption of food and how bodies and minds were believed to be shaped through sensory information.

Early modern writing on the senses stressed the vulnerability of bodies laid open through orifices and permeable skin which could have implications on perception, decision-making, and religious adherence. Through a consideration of the sensory environments of Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton and attitudes in the northwest regarding sensory and humoral manipulation I conclude that each study family aimed to shape important local figures through commensal sensory experiences but that this was not done in the malicious ways published medical and religious texts suspected.

Chapter 6 focuses on material culture, including tableware, decorative schemes, and the fabric of each of the families' homes. This chapter explores the understandings the families had concerning commensal objects and surroundings and how these were used to create convivial atmospheres which helped to manage dining in mixed company. The chapter also considers the affective power of different combinations in food spaces and how these worked to infuse such spaces with faith which shaped guests' and hosts' behaviours. I argue that, overall, the three study families' commensality worked to assuage difference, finding common ground whether through the need to feel spiritually protected when eating or through bonds forged over shared gentry identity. However, some points of difference remained when it came to religious décor in food spaces that allowed the Catholic Hesketh and Norris families to navigate the hospitality they had to provide in order to retain their status and remain relevant.

Interspersed through the thesis are sections detailing my heritage work at the three National Trust properties. This has been informed by my research and the methodology of affect and assemblage. Previous work in this area, detailed in *History* journal in 2022, is extended here by detailing how the complexities of commensality can be conveyed in affective and multilayered ways using a range of approaches.¹⁴⁹ This includes creative responses to my research with groups such as National Trust volunteers. With this, I demonstrate how my in-depth consideration of gentry dining in the northwest can be used to help various groups

¹⁴⁹ Fielding, A. Going Deeper than 'Emotional Impact': Heritage, Academic Collaboration and Affective Engagements. *History Journal*, 107:375 (2022).

understand more about how each family used Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton and the contexts in which dining took place.

The three properties have varying degrees of experience when it comes to academic collaboration on projects and the dissemination of academic research through heritage interpretation. This has meant each property has required different approaches. Some of the outputs from my PhD research have yet to reach fruition and are due to be put into place over the course of 2023/4, some were affected by Covid-19 closures, and other aspects have been ongoing during the doctorate. The collaborative work includes an exhibition, installation, volunteer remaking projects, videos, reciprocal site visits between the properties, and talks.

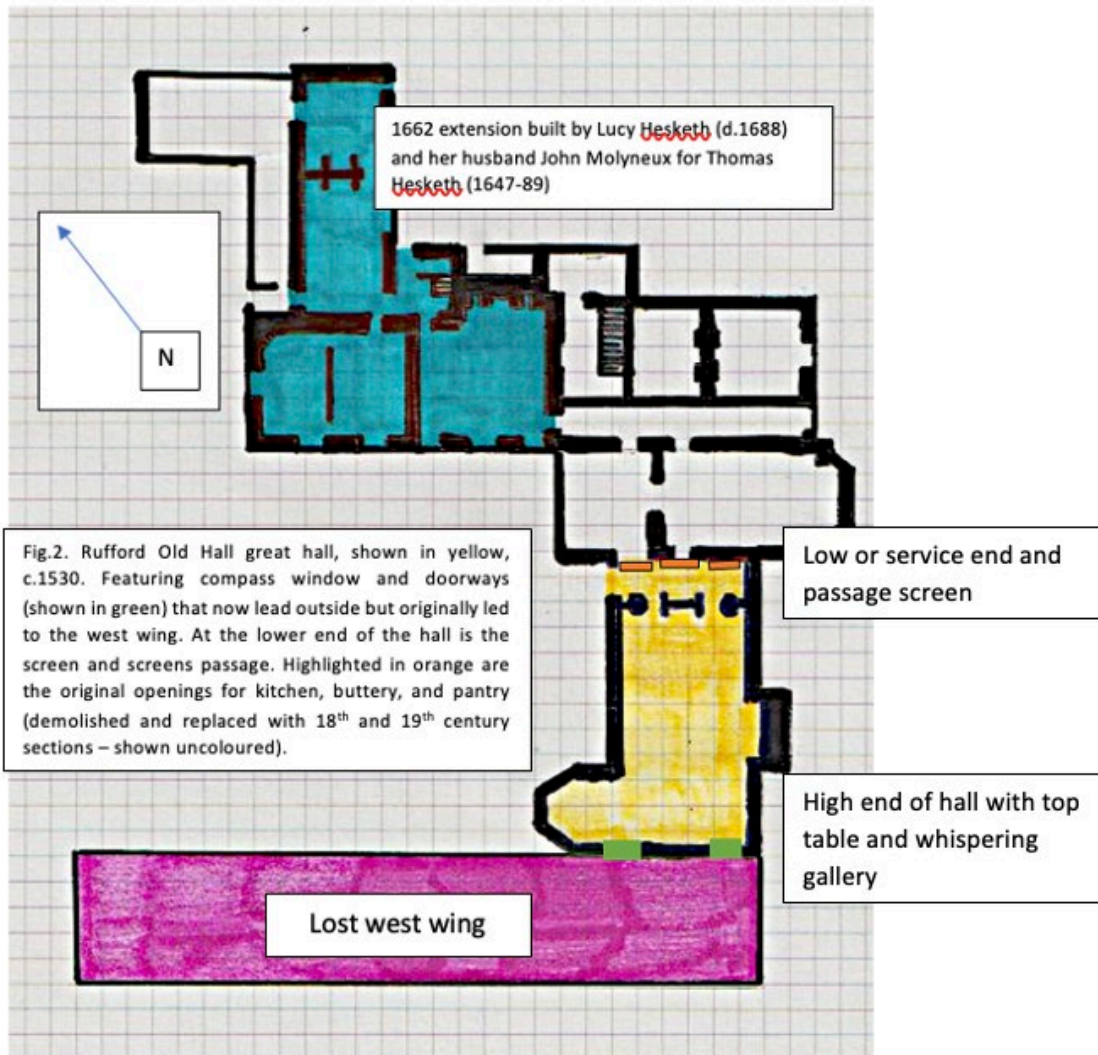
Chapter 1

'A Notable Good Housekeeper': The Heskeths of Rufford Old Hall



Fig. 1. Rufford exterior with timber-framed hall and brick extension. Photo author's own.

Three generations of the Catholic Hesketh family used entertainments and dining centred on the great hall at Rufford Old Hall to protect their position in society. The decisions they made about their style of commensality were based on their need for legitimacy. They hosted dinners associated with county roles such as Sheriff of Lancashire and mimicked the ceremonial dining enjoyed by the Earls of Derby, including putting on entertainments. This use of the great hall was at the expense of smaller withdrawing spaces such as parlours. This challenges the idea of commensal fashions being adopted wholesale by the gentry and demonstrates how decisions over the site of dining within the gentry home were based on other factors besides following dining trends. The decision to retain the emphasis on the central traditional space of the great hall, I argue, did not reflect a disregard for fashionable modes of hospitality, but rather a desire to use Rufford Old Hall as a base from which to engage in the sorts of hospitality the Heskeths experienced elsewhere and wanted to replicate in their own way at home.



The social network that the Heskeths were part of consisted of the Earls of Derby and gentry families from across Lancashire, with a mixture of Catholics and Protestants regularly dining together. This demonstrates how Catholics and Protestants ate together, whether recusant, church papist, pursuivant, or sympathiser. It counters the idea that Catholic networks remained as enclaves with little or no integration or contribution to local society. However, the commensal network circling the Earls of Derby, of which the Heskeths were part, operated on two levels. Mixed faith gatherings reinforced social bonds based on gentry identity and an enjoyment of cultural performances. Yet intersecting it was a Catholic gentry network which shared massing stuff, domestic devotional practices, and priests; one that worked to reinforce Catholic county-wide longevity, often at the same time and during the same commensal events.

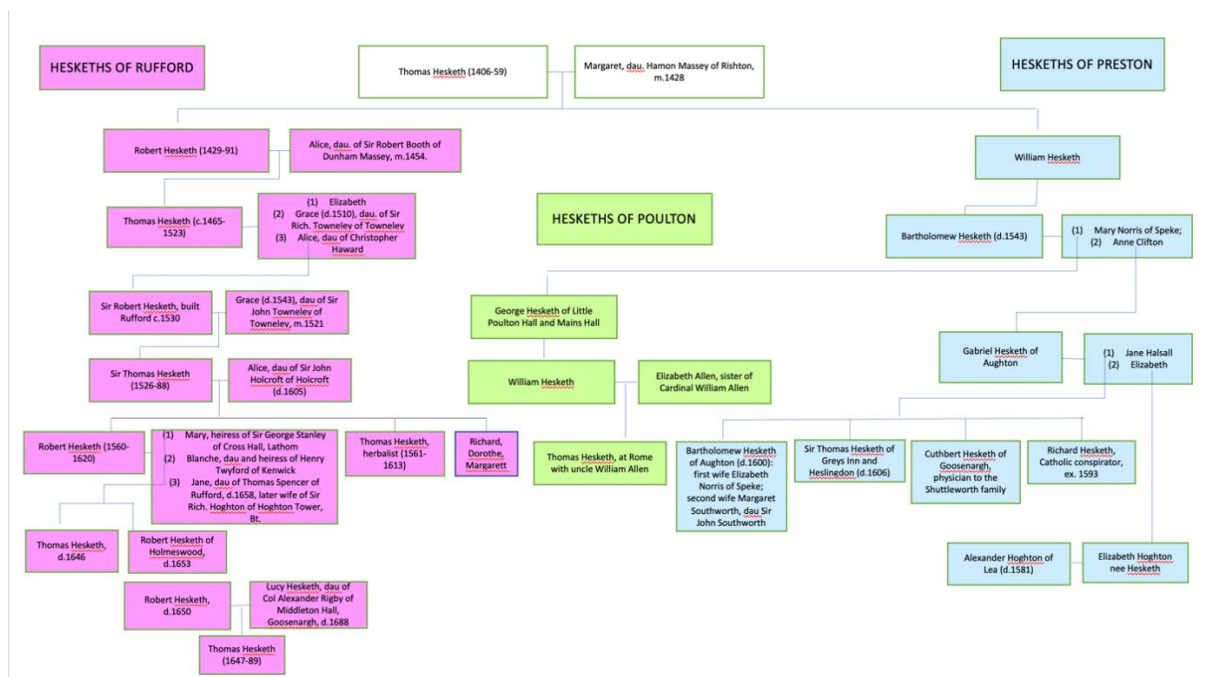


Fig.3. Hesketh family tree showing the Rufford branch in pink.

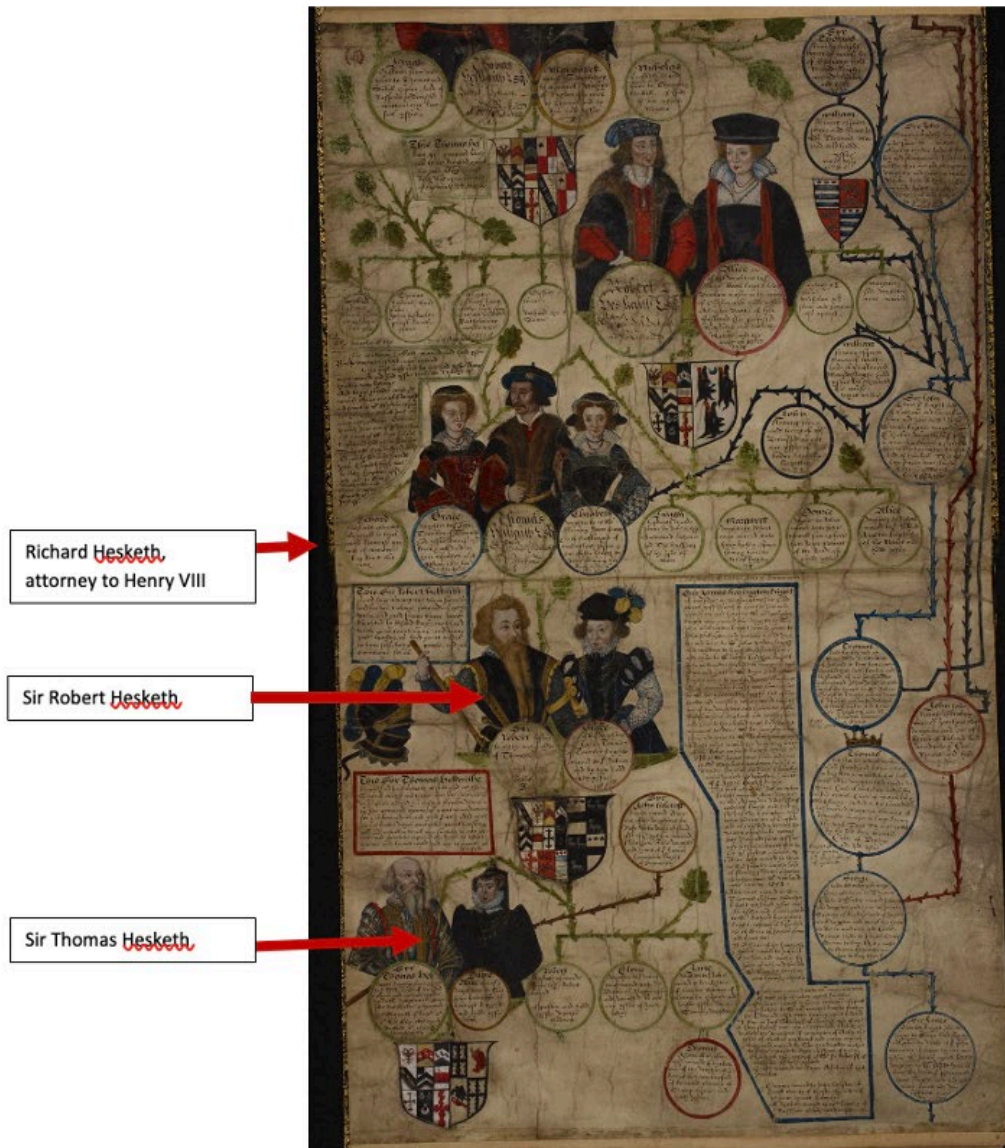


Fig. 4. Sir Robert with his wife Grace Towneley; his uncle Richard Hesketh, attorney to Henry VIII; and his son Sir Thomas Hesketh and his wife Alice Holcroft – from the Hesketh illustrated genealogy – British Library Add MS 44026.

Sir Robert Hesketh (c.1490-1541) and Rufford's Great Hall: An Impressive and Quasi-Ecclesiastical Dining Space:

In the 1530s Sir Robert Hesketh (c.1490-1541) began constructing Rufford Old Hall following a legal battle over his right to inherit the Hesketh estates. Sir Robert was an illegitimate son of Thomas Hesketh (1465-1523) but named in his father's will as heir.¹⁵⁰ He had to fight the heirs-in-law, his aunts, for the rights to Rufford. His father Thomas had been part of the retinue of the Earl of Derby as accountant and his uncle Richard was attorney general to Henry VIII.¹⁵¹ After fighting in France at the Battle of the Spurs in 1513, Robert was knighted personally by Henry VIII 'for his valoure, forwardness, actyvytie and good service theare.'¹⁵²

Sir Robert created Rufford Old Hall as a canvas on which to state his legitimacy following his inheritance. He did this through various decorative features including a hammerbeam ceiling and ornate passage screen. On these he displayed the heraldry of prominent families in the region in carved woodwork: the Earls of Derby, Fittons, and Bannesters, all of whom were included on the Hesketh genealogy as important patrons and ancestors.¹⁵³ The carved wooden angels which still adorn the hammerbeam ceiling were inspired by ecclesiastical and monastical furnishings and were complemented by intricate gothic carvings on the wooden passage screen at the low end of the great hall, which shielded the three entrances to the kitchen, pantry, and buttery. High up in the corner of the beams at the high end of the great hall was a carving of the Five Wounds of Christ, which faced the top dining table.¹⁵⁴ The woodwork carvings had the effect of imbuing this space with an aura of the quasi-ecclesiastical and gave the impression of age and long establishment despite their being newly

¹⁵⁰ Procter, W.G. The Manor of Rufford and the Ancient Family of the Heskeths. *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. 59 (1907) p.103; Farrer, W. and Brownbill, J. (eds.). *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 6*, (1911), pp. 119-128. citing Add. MS. 32104, no. 1393 and Duchy of Lanc. Dep. Hen. VIII, xv, K 2. Despite the claim Robert was ruled to be heir to the estates of his father due to the will of 2 July 1522.

¹⁵¹ Evidence of Robert's father being accountant for the Earl of Derby is given in his will – BL Add MS 32104; Hesketh Genealogy BL Add MS 44026 states: 'Richard Hesketh attorney Generall to that most famous prince of memorye & king Hen.8'; Farrer and Brownbill, *A History of the County of Lancaster*, pp. 119-128.

¹⁵² Procter, W.G. The Manor of Rufford and the Ancient Family of the Heskeths, pp.102-103. Hesketh Genealogy BL Add MS 44026.

¹⁵³ Farrer and Brownbill, *A History of the County of Lancaster*, pp.119-128.

¹⁵⁴ Tables listed in 1620 inventory Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/ C76A.

commissioned by Sir Robert.¹⁵⁵ They supported the idea of legitimacy, lineage, and the longevity of the Hesketh family to which it was decreed he was the rightful heir.

It has been suggested that the angels at Rufford may have come from Burscough Priory or Whalley Abbey but there is no evidence for this.¹⁵⁶ The idea of reusing furnishings from religious buildings after the dissolution of the monasteries was something people disagreed on.¹⁵⁷ Edward Earl of Derby wanted the fittings of Burscough Priory to remain as his ancestors were buried there and thus required the continued protection and intercession such ecclesiastical spaces and furnishings provided.¹⁵⁸ Others saw nothing wrong with re-using the architectural fabric of ecclesiastical spaces in their homes such as Thomas Holcroft, of Vale Royal in Cheshire, who demolished the abbey church there and constructed his house on the foundations, with portions of the abbey building visible in the new home.¹⁵⁹ Dismantling and reusing once sacred building fabric and disturbing the souls of the dead could even bring bad luck, risking 'much secret revenge from God.'¹⁶⁰ Unease about the reuse of ecclesiastical furnishings did not extend to replicating the look and feel of such spaces in domestic contexts. Instead of reusing ecclesiastical furnishings, Robert commissioned his own.

Through the great hall décor, Sir Robert combined a religious aura in his principal dining space with fashionable interior décor influences coming from the continent. The use of the grotesque or all'antica carvings, seen especially on the wooden Rufford passage screen, was adopted in churches as well as in dining spaces used at court from c.1510-40, coinciding with the date for the building of the hall by Sir Robert in the early 1530s.¹⁶¹ Thus Sir Robert's

¹⁵⁵ The space is markedly similar to both Adlington Hall in Cheshire and Ordsall Hall in Salford, Lancashire, two more great halls of imposing stature.

¹⁵⁶ Orlin, L.C. *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*. Oxford University Press (2007), p.71.

¹⁵⁷ Guinn-Chipman, S. *Religious Space in Reformation England: Contesting the Past*. Routledge (2013), p.36.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp.15-16, 37.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp.28-29. Holcroft used the building materials from the abbey building in a series of new buildings at Vale Royal

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.36 citing BL Harley 2194, f.21v.

¹⁶¹ Semler, L.E. *The Early Modern Grotesque: English Sources and Documents 1500-1700*. Routledge (2020), pp.12-13; Riall, N. All'antica Carving of the Early Tudor Renaissance at St Mary's Church, Old Basing, Hampshire. *Proc. Hampshire Field Club Archaeological Society*, 64, (2009), pp.147-171. All'antica, antique work, grotesque work or Renaissance gothic are all terms to describe this fashion which came from the continent, Semler pp.12-14.

ecclesiastical angels were complemented by other decorative devices with a religious precedent. Evidence of the grotesque style appearing in ecclesiastical décor comes particularly from Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester (c.1448-1528), and stonemason Thomas Bertie (c.1485-1555).¹⁶² The style was also increasingly used on the funerary tombs of the elite.¹⁶³ The use of all’antica decoration also became popular at the court of Henry VIII and there was a clear crossover between the use of this grotesque style between religious buildings, court décor, and works associated with the nobility and gentry.¹⁶⁴



Fig.5. The Great Hall at Rufford Old Hall. The Five Wounds of Christ above the top dining table, the angels watching above, and the al’antica passage screen, all commissioned by Robert Hesketh (c.1490-1541) as an expression of status and legitimacy. Photos author’s own.

¹⁶² Semler, L.E. *The Early Modern Grotesque*, pp.13, 15, 16-17.; Riall, N. All’antica Carving of the Early Tudor Renaissance, pp. 147-171; Riall, N. The Early Tudor Renaissance in Hampshire: Anthony Blunt and ‘L’influence Francaise sur L’architecture et la Sculpture Decorative en Angleterre Pendant la Premiere Moitie du XVIeme Siecle’ Revisited. *Renaissance Studies* 21: 2 (2007), pp.218-253.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Semler, L.E. *The Early Modern Grotesque*, p.16; Riall, N. All’antica Carving of the Early Tudor Renaissance, pp. 147-171; Riall, N. The Early Tudor Renaissance in Hampshire, pp.218-253.



Sir Robert further marked his legitimacy with his use of the all'antica style taken from the fashionable court of Henry VIII. Evidence that Robert took inspiration from his time at the royal court comes from similar examples of these all'antica features at Westminster Hall, Hampton Court, and Nonsuch.¹⁶⁵ All the carvings, alongside paintings and tapestries, were derived from a mixture of different European styles of antique or grotesque work, with Italian, French, and Flemish influences created by workers from the continent.¹⁶⁶ By 1529, however, the style was also being created by English craftsmen and increasingly used in both ecclesiastical and domestic spaces.¹⁶⁷ It is unknown whether continental or local craftsmen created the work of the great hall, but the Renaissance influence is clear. Early examples of all'antica style were a combination of different influences in this early period including influences from the east.¹⁶⁸ The Rufford screen shows Manueline aspects, inspired by the grotesque decorative and architectural output of Portuguese artisans, who in turn had been inspired by Islamic architecture and Portuguese travel to Asia, particularly India.¹⁶⁹ This very nature of the screen is typical of this early period of Renaissance inspired interiors, where different elements were incorporated into schemes as a marker of fashion and awareness of new trends but without the overall understanding of the aesthetic which came in the second half of the 16th century.¹⁷⁰ Thus, while the top of the Rufford screen appears incongruous

¹⁶⁵ Semler, *The Early Modern Grotesque*, pp.12-18.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp.12-15, 17.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.17.

¹⁶⁸ Semler, *The Early Modern Grotesque*, pp.12, 17; Anderson, C. *Renaissance Architecture*. Oxford University Press (2013), p.4.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, C. *Renaissance Architecture*. Oxford University Press (2013), pp.136-137; Dias, P. *The Manueline: Portuguese Art During the Great Discoveries*. Museum with No Frontiers. (2002), pp.28-34.

¹⁷⁰ Semler, *The Early Modern Grotesque*, p.12.

with the rest of the space it is in fact an example of a fashionable decorative style incorporated into the strong decorative display of status Sir Robert sought to convey.



Fig. 6. Angels in the hammerbeam ceiling of Westminster Hall. Image courtesy of Jon Worth.



Fig. 7. All'antica hammerbeam ceiling at Hampton Court. Image courtesy of J. Rennocks [CC-BY 4.0]

The décor of the great hall appears to have been designed to impress guests with Sir Robert's appreciation of recent fashion and the financial ability to procure this for his dining space.¹⁷¹ As Nicholas Cooper states, from the 1520s onwards the uptake of this antique/grotesque decoration featured on domestic interiors, goods, and heraldry and was a means of linking an individual with this unique decorative aesthetic: 'its expense and its association with alien products and craftsmen linked it clearly with wealth, with comfort and hence with elite

¹⁷¹ Semler, *The Early Modern Grotesque*, pp.17-18.

status.’¹⁷² Robert’s decorative scheme of the screen, the angels above, the hammerbeam roof, and extensive displays of heraldry combined culture, faith, and status with which to influence and impress guests. During commensal gatherings Sir Robert used this space to legitimise and cement his social status, at risk due to his illegitimacy and the family court case, and to highlight his royal court connections and devout Christianity.

The décor that Sir Robert commissioned demonstrated his knowledge of commensal ceremony he witnessed at the Tudor court with its ornate passage screen, dais, and whispering gallery. It also reflected the dining spaces of Westminster Hall and Hampton Court that he was familiar with, either through his knighthood or via his uncle, Henry VIII’s attorney general. These elements were combined in a main commensal space at Rufford which was then used continually by his son and grandson (see below). The archetypal great hall, designed as a central focus for hospitality and which replicated the lavish dining experienced at court, was the central focus for Hesketh hospitality for the next century.

The service end of the hall features three doorways for the kitchen, buttery, and pantry, features which were re-assuring symbols of a family’s hospitality.¹⁷³ In the later 16th century Sir Thomas Hesketh (1526-88) added a fireplace.¹⁷⁴ However, unlike many contemporaries, such as the Moretons of Little Moreton Hall (chapter 3), he did not insert an extra floor across the span of the great hall. W.G. Hoskins wrote in 1953 about the ‘Great Rebuilding’ between 1570 and 1640 when great halls were sub-divided to provide two stories and hall previously open to the rafters were reduced in size.¹⁷⁵ This was made possible due to advances in brick chimneys and fireplaces negating the need for central hearths. Alongside this was a withdrawal to smaller parlours when hosting company, a greater desire for privacy, and the increased specialisation of rooms.¹⁷⁶ The Heskeths continued to use this space for commensality at the expense of smaller withdrawing parlours - despite changing fashions

¹⁷² Cooper, N. Rank, Manners and Display: The Gentlemanly House, 1500-1700. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002), p.294, cited in Semler, *The Early Modern Grotesque*, pp.17-18.

¹⁷³ Orlin, L.C. *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*. Oxford University Press (2007), p.89.

¹⁷⁴ Procter, *The Manor of Rufford*, p.101; Orlin, L.C. *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*, pp.82-83.

¹⁷⁵ Hoskins, W.G. *The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640*. *Past and Present*, vol 4 (1953), pp.44-59.

¹⁷⁶ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, pp.67-70, 97-105.

after Robert first built it. At the high-status end of the hall, at either side of a whispering gallery, were two doors which would have led to the lost west wing and two parlours. These could have been used as more intimate dining spaces, yet the inventory of 1620 shows the parlours situated there as either containing beds or used as storage rooms, not fitted out to receive guests.¹⁷⁷ If Rufford followed the expected 'text-book' layout of the 16th-century gentry house, then one would expect these rooms to be withdrawing rooms like those at Speke and particularly Little Moreton. However, while the lost west wing contained bed chambers and a gallery, the latter was also used to house equipment and resources, not to cater for the entertainment of guests, as the gallery at Little Moreton was (again, see chapter 3). This room use has implications for what commensality at Rufford was like. It suggests that it was centred on the great hall throughout the 16th and into the 17th century.

Lena Cowen Orlin argues that Hoskins' perceived wholesale move or 'progression' did not take into account personal choice and preference when it came to building layouts, changes, and styles of hospitality.¹⁷⁸ She refers to Rufford as one example of a house built with a central hall as a focal point which then retained this as the epicentre of hospitality.¹⁷⁹ I argue the Heskeths made an informed choice not to reduce the size of their great hall and to retain its central function of hospitality for all occasions. This was because of the Lancashire gentry social circles they mixed in which gravitated to the Earls of Derby and their use of hospitality and ceremony, as shown in the Derby Household Book.¹⁸⁰ The Rufford great hall also lent itself to large shows of commensality associated with positions of office as well as to the entertainments of Sir Thomas Hesketh (see below).

¹⁷⁷ 1620 inventory Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/C76A; Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p.82

¹⁷⁸ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, pp.67-70.

¹⁷⁹ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, pp.82-83.

¹⁸⁰ Raines, F.R. (ed.). *The Stanley Papers. Part II. The Household Regulations and Expenses of Edward and Henry, Third and Fourth Earls of Derby Together With A Diary Containing the Names of the Guests Who Visited the Lattter Earl at his Houses in Lancashire. Chetham Society* (1853).

Sir Thomas Hesketh (1526-88) - Commensal Entertainments, Performers and Priests:

Sir Thomas was knighted at the coronation of Mary I, when he travelled to London as part of the Earl of Derby's entourage and he gained further favour fighting at the Siege of Leith in 1557.¹⁸¹ Sir Thomas did not suffer any loss of favour amongst the regional authorities following the accession of Elizabeth I: he was made Sheriff of Lancashire in 1563, and became a JP and Mayor of Lancashire in 1577.¹⁸² However, as pressures on Catholics in Lancashire intensified following the capture of Edmund Campion in 1581, Sir Thomas was arrested for not reforming his household in religion. After this, he could no longer secure such positions as the shrievalty or mayoralty, becoming only a JP in 1583.¹⁸³ The fall in status this lowlier position represented appears to have prompted Sir Thomas to find an alternative way of consolidating his image of authority and gentry calibre through the provision of entertainments for his guests through his use of players. The Heskeths continued in the orbit of Earls of Derby who took a keen interest in drama and performance. Sir Thomas was a keen supporter of players, and may have used performances at Rufford to remain close to his family's historic patrons.¹⁸⁴ By maintaining his own artistic troupe, Sir Thomas also ensured that his players were seen at the Derby households.¹⁸⁵

Sir Thomas Hesketh is described in the illustrated family tree produced c.1594 (fig. 6) 'in his latter days [was] a notable good house-keeper...'¹⁸⁶ That commensal networks in Lancashire involved non-gustatory elements such as theatre and music is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the Derby Household Book during the time of Earl Henry's earldom from 1572 to 1593.¹⁸⁷ Groups of players were recorded as visiting the Derby households of Knowsley, Lathom, and New Park. These included the Earl of Leicester's Players, the Earl of

¹⁸¹ Procter, *The Manor of Rufford*, p.103; Bagley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby, 1485-1985*. Sedgewick & Jackson (1985), p.54; Coward, B. *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and the Earls of Derby, 1385-1672*. Chetham Society (1983), p.92; Hesketh Genealogy, BL Add MS 44026.

¹⁸² Procter, *The Manor of Rufford*, p.103; REED Records of Early English Drama, <https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/otra/reed/node/315855> [Last Accessed 19 December 2022].

¹⁸³ REED Records of Early English Drama, <https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/otra/reed/node/315855> [Last Accessed 19 December 2022].

¹⁸⁴ Manley, L. and MacLean, S. *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*, Yale University Press (2014), pp.18-36.

¹⁸⁵ Raines, *The Stanley Papers. Part II. Derby Household Book*; George, D. (ed.) *Records of Early English Drama (REED): Lancashire*, University of Toronto Press (1991), p.160.

¹⁸⁶ Hesketh Genealogy BL Add MS 44026

¹⁸⁷ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*.

Essex's, and the Queen's Men.¹⁸⁸ The circulation of players around the gentry households of the northwest is also seen in the accounts of the Shuttleworth, Walmesley, Shireburne, and the Legh families.¹⁸⁹ The Shuttleworth household accounts feature numerous troupes of players including 'my lorde morlesse pleyeres' in 1586, the 'plaerers of Sur peter lyghe knyghte' in 1588, and 'the Lorde of darbies plaiers' in 1609.¹⁹⁰ Sir Thomas Hesketh had his own troupe of players and there are two recorded instances of them circulating around the homes of the Lancashire gentry and Earls of Derby. The accounts of nearby gentry family the Nowells of Read for July/August 1569 record 'Sir Thomas Hesketh's minstrel', indicating a single musical performer rather than a troupe of players.¹⁹¹ However, William Farrington, at Christmas 1587 recorded in the Derby Household Book that 'Sir Thomas Hesketh plaiers went away' apparently leaving after festivities during the twelve days of celebration.¹⁹² It seems that his players may have helped with performances at other venues, as Richard Dutton believes they did for a Christmas performance for the Earl of Derby.¹⁹³

As shown through this circulation of players, dramatic plays in this period were not restricted to the stage but were performed at private houses.¹⁹⁴ Most of these performers and players were in troupes owned by people such as the Earl of Derby, Lord Strange, and the Earl of Leicester.¹⁹⁵ Sir Thomas was not the only member of the gentry in the northwest to have his own players but the patronage of one's own touring company of actors was unusual for a

¹⁸⁸ Raines, The Stanley Papers; Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune': Household Entertainments, in. Dutton, R. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*. Oxford University Press (2009), p.269; George, REED: Lancashire, pp.179-184.

¹⁸⁹ George, REED: Lancashire pp.xxxix-xliii.

¹⁹⁰ George, REED: Lancashire, pp.166-179

¹⁹¹ George, REED: Lancashire p.160 (Nowell of Read); Dutton, Findlay, and Wilson, *Region, Religion and Patronage* p.192; MacLean, S. Touring Performers in Medieval and Renaissance Lancashire, p.332.

¹⁹² Derby Household Book; Dutton; Keen, A. 'In the Quick Forge and Working-house of Thought...' Lancashire and Shropshire and the Young Shakespeare. *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 33:2 (1951), pp.263-4; Dutton, R. Findlay, A, and Wilson, R. *Region, Religion and Patronage: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, Manchester University Press (2003), p.2; George, REED: Lancashire p.xl; The issue of whether these were Sir Thomas Hesketh's players sometimes stems from what William Farrington, Derby's steward, was actually recording, with arguments centring on whether there is a comma or apostrophe, see George, REED: Lancashire p.xl, Honigman, E.A.J. Shakespeare: The Lost Years. Manchester University Press (1985), p.4 and Manley, L. and MacLean, S. *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*, p.33.

¹⁹³ Dutton, R. *Shakespeare's Theatre, A History*. Wiley-Blackwell (2018), pp.50-59.

¹⁹⁴ Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune': Household Entertainments. In. Dutton, R. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*. Oxford University Press (2009), pp.263-279.

¹⁹⁵ Manley, L. and MacLean, S. *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*. Yale University Press (2014), p.34.

member of the gentry and more associated with noble patronage.¹⁹⁶ Sponsoring theatrical performances had the ability to raise a person's standing amongst gentry society as well as heighten their influence.¹⁹⁷ Performances held in the household could be a form of 'propaganda' through displays of largesse, education, and a way to control events politically as well as aesthetically in domestic spheres.¹⁹⁸ For Suzanne Westfall, performances in domestic spaces, whether that of actors or minstrels, allowed social and political benefits.¹⁹⁹ The more layered and diverse the nature of performances put on for guests, the greater the expression of wealth, education, culture, and intelligence.²⁰⁰ Lavish entertainments were a 'splendidly wasteful display.'²⁰¹ This ultimately meant more power.

Household performances in a domestic setting were different to those performed in theatres.²⁰² The space of the Rufford great hall, with its screen, service doors, and doors either side of the dais lent itself to performances.²⁰³ I argue these entertainments are one reason why the emphasis remained on the great hall at Rufford in comparison to a shift away from it at Speke and Little Moreton (see chapters 2 and 3). At Speke and Little Moreton minstrels' galleries were featured in their great halls whereas at Rufford there is no evidence of one.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁶ Manley, L. and MacLean, S. *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*, p.34. Manley and MacLean are sceptical over whether 'Sir Thomas Hesketh plaiers' were actors and posit the idea that they were instead family players of the Earl of Derby. Sir Richard Shireburn (c.1591-1667) patronised players who appeared at Dunkenhalgh at Christmas 1628/9, see George, REED: Lancashire p.xxxv. Sir Peter Legh did the same, performing at Smithills, home of the Shuttleworths, in 1588, see George, REED: Lancashire p.xl.

¹⁹⁷ Manley, L. and MacLean, S. *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*, pp.13, 26; Dutton, Findlay, and Wilson, *Region, Religion, and Patronage*, p.4; Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune': Household Entertainments. In. Dutton, R. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*. Oxford University Press (2009), pp.263-279; Greenblatt, S. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. Random House (2014), p.105.

¹⁹⁸ Westfall, S. 'The Useless Dearness of the Diamond': Theories of Patronage Theatre. In. White, P. and Westfall, S. (eds.). *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England*, Cambridge University Press (2002), p.45.

¹⁹⁹ Westfall, S. *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels*, Oxford University Press (1990), p.107; Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune', pp.263-279.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune', p.278.

²⁰² Dutton, Findlay, and Wilson, *Region, Religion, and Patronage*, p.4; Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune', pp.263-279.

²⁰³ Westfall, S. 'He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune', pp.263-279; Findlay and Dutton, *Region, Religion and Patronage*, p.5; Dutton, *Shakespeare's Theatre: A History*, pp.55-58.

²⁰⁴ Dutton, *Shakespeare's Theatre: A History*, p.57. Speke's minstrels' gallery has a section of panelling which opens onto the great hall, allowing it to be covered when not in use; Little Moreton's minstrels' gallery was subsequently covered by wattle and daub panels and became a landing from which to access the inserted first floor across the great hall when it was sub-divided.

Thus musical performances occurred within the same floor space as other performances, food, and guests indicating a more immersive sensory experience. Suzanne Westfall describes early modern performances occurring during breaks in dining, allowing commensal proceedings to be punctuated by interludes and stage-managed as much as the entertainment itself.²⁰⁵ In this, Sir Thomas was able to control commensal proceedings and exert influence over his guests through impressive displays and engaging entertainments.

More evidence indicates that Sir Thomas was known to be appreciative of commensal entertainments in the form of performances: the will of his friend Sir Alexander Houghton dated 1581 bequeathed instruments and play clothes to Thomas:

yt ys my mynde & wyll that Sir Thomas Heskethe knyghte shall have the same instruments & playe clothes. And I most hertelye requyre the said Sir Thomas to be ffrendlye unto Ffoke Gyllome and William Shakeshafte nowe dwellynge with me & ether take theym unto his service or, els to helpe theym to some good master as my tryste he wyll...²⁰⁶

Sir Thomas was deemed a suitable person to inherit musical instruments and ‘play clothes.’ The instruments bequeathed by Alexander Houghton appear in the probate inventory of his son, Robert, in 1620 indicating that musical performance continued to be part of Hesketh hospitality at Rufford well into the 17th century. The full list of instruments still at Rufford in 1620 were: ‘Viola and vyoles with chest for them, pare of virginals, a chest of wynd instruments, sagbutts powbones clarinets, more vyoles violen citherne flute in velvet capp tabor pipes, a chest with musique books, one cloath and all furniture thereto belonging.’²⁰⁷ The effect of music and performance at Rufford on guests will be explored in chapter 5 as part of my consideration of sensory embodied experience in commensal contexts.

²⁰⁵ Westfall, S. ‘He Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune’, pp.276, 277.

²⁰⁶ Will of Alexander Hoghton of Lea, 1581. LRO WCW 1581; Dutton, R. Findlay, A, and Wilson, R. *Region, Religion and Patronage: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, Manchester University Press (2003), p.1.

²⁰⁷ 1620 inventory. Lancs Archives WCW/Disputed/ C76A.

The network of gentry commensality and performance to which Sir Thomas belonged gravitated towards the Earls of Derby and was a mixture of Catholics and Protestants. Religion appeared no barrier to important figures socialising together and sharing the projected traits of gentry identity through the enjoyment and appreciation of creative performances.²⁰⁸ Henry, the fourth Earl of Derby (1531-1593), had a keen interest in drama and performance and so it was wise for Sir Thomas to use this as a means to maintain social and commensal bonds with him.²⁰⁹ The Earl was a regular host of the Lancashire gentry, Catholic and Protestant, as the Derby Household Books attest.²¹⁰ William Camden wrote of Henry that at his death 'the glory of hospitality hath in a manner fallen asleep.'²¹¹ The benefits of a close relationship with the Earl were well known, with his Catholic house steward Sir Richard Shireburne benefitting from the earl's protection as well as the protection of the third earl, Edward.²¹² Henry's son Ferdinando complained to Bishop Chadderton, regarding his father's attitude towards his Catholic gentry friends, that while constancy was a virtue when it came to friendship, it was not a virtue where the prosecution of recusancy was concerned.²¹³ In this Ferdinando suggests that his father often put his friends before his duty. That Henry, Earl of Derby, was biddable is confirmed by ambassador to Paris Sir Edward Stafford in a letter to Francis Walsingham in 1585: 'for though he is so good a natured man that he will be ruled, he is too good a natured man; for...every one of his men can over-rule that which anybody hath done with him.'²¹⁴ A courtier of Elizabeth I's remarked 'all the keys of Lancashire do hang at the Earl of Derby's old girdle.'²¹⁵ He was reluctant to prosecute his Catholic gentry friends who regularly paid homage to him.²¹⁶ As such, it was wise for Sir Thomas Hesketh to remain not only within the orbit of the earl but maintain the degree of closeness that his father Robert

²⁰⁸ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*.

²⁰⁹ Baggley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*; Shannon, W.D. "The number of gentlemen inhabiting within everie Towne and of what worthe": Performing Aristocracy in the 4th Earl of Derby's 'Northern Court.' *Shakespeare Bulletin* 38:3 (2020), pp.405-425; Manley, L. and MacLean, S. *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*. Yale University Press (2014), pp.12-36.

²¹⁰ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*.

²¹¹ Baggley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*, p.50.

²¹² Coward, B. *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and the Earls of Derby, 1385-1672*. *Chetham Society* (1983), pp.86-92, 111-122.

²¹³ Peck, F. (ed.). *Desiderata Curiosa, or A Collection of Divers Scarce and Curious Pieces*, (1779), p.147.

²¹⁴ Graham, E. *The Earls of Derby and the Early Modern Performance Culture of North-West England*. *Shakespeare Bulletin* 38:3 (2021), p.321 citing Flynn, D. *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility*. Indiana University Press (1995), p.160.

²¹⁵ Baggley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*, p.56.

²¹⁶ Baggley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*, p.59.

had enjoyed. Performance, entertainments, and adeptness at commensality and hospitality allowed Sir Thomas to do that.

It has often been written that Henry, Earl of Derby, was ineffectual when it came to the prosecution of religious non-conformity and Catholics in Lancashire.²¹⁷ Edward Fleetwood, pastor of Wigan, wrote to Lord Burghley in 1587 that this may have been because of the sorts of friends the Earl surrounded himself, who Fleetwood believed nourished 'that humour of carelesse securitie in tolleratinge and no way sounndly reforming the notoriows backwardnesse of his whole company in religion, and chefely of the chefest abowte him.'²¹⁸ Fleetwood saw how Catholics in the Earl's company could manipulate him in order to remain safe. The earl's son Ferdinando, Lord Strange, wrote on several occasions to William Chadderton, Bishop of Chester, that he was frustrated with his father's inability to reform Lancashire: 'such is his backwardness in the matter, as I find him rather an enemye...then anie frende...'²¹⁹

Sir Thomas's support for performances and the use of players on commensal occasions allowed him to strengthen bonds with Henry, Earl of Derby, and mimic the style of commensality evidenced at Lathom, Knowsley and other Lancashire homes back at Rufford. These performances, particularly where his players performed for the Earl of Derby, were designed to ingratiate Sir Thomas with the earl, which in turn provided protection against the worse of Catholic prosecution, as will be seen below.

²¹⁷ Haigh, C. *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.284, 288, on the actions of Earl Henry after Thomas Bell's evidence see p.289; Baggeley, *The Earls of Derby*, p.59; Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and the Earls of Derby, 1385-1672*, Manchester University Press (1983), p.90.

²¹⁸ BL Cotton Titus B.ii, ff.239-40, cited in George, REED: Lancashire, p.223 – Letter from Edward Fleetwood to Lord Burghley 7 September 1587.

²¹⁹ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, p.147.

The Heskeths as Catholics Entertaining Priests:

In 1581 Sir Thomas was imprisoned, accused of being the head of a Catholic household. A letter from Burghley, Leicester, and Walsingham was sent to the Bishop of Chester in October 1580 asking for a thorough report on all recusants in Lancashire.²²⁰ Following his capture in 1581 Edmund Campion gave up several names in the northwest including Sir Thomas's cousin, Bartholomew Hesketh.²²¹ The Privy Council wrote to the Earl of Derby, Sir Edmund Trafford, and Sir John Biron requesting all suspicious Catholics be questioned:

...whether the said Campion hathe ben there or no, whether he said anie Masse there, together with such other particularities as they shall thinke meete to be enquired of; and further, to cause the said houses to be searched for books and other superstious stuffe....²²²

As part of this attempted purge of Lancashire Catholic gentry Sir Thomas Hesketh was fined and imprisoned, accused of not reforming his household in religion.²²³ He was informed upon by another cousin, Thomas Hesketh of Grays Inn, from the Preston Heskeths (see family tree).²²⁴ Thomas seems to have been treated more leniently due to his connections with the Earl of Derby. Most prisoners were kept at Chester Castle and then the Fleet Prison in Manchester.²²⁵ However, records of the prisoners there do not list Sir Thomas among them, leaving only one other location these prisoners were accommodated: the tower at Liverpool, owned by the Earl of Derby.²²⁶ It seems that Sir Thomas's close personal relationship

²²⁰ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa* p.98. Letter from Burghley, Leicester, Walsingham, and others.

²²¹ *Acts of the Privy Council of England Volume 13, 1581-1582*. ed. John Roche Dascent (London, 1896, pp.176-200. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol13/pp176-200> [accessed 17 January 2020].

²²² *Acts of the Privy Council of England Volume 13, 1581-1582*, ed. John Roche Dascent (London, 1896), pp.126-150. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol13/pp126-150> [accessed 5 April 2020].

²²³ Abraham, *A History of Lancashire*, pp.165-167; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth 1581-90* 175.92. Cited in Honigmann, E.A.J. (1985). *Shakespeare: The 'Lost Years'*, p.35; Baines, E. *History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster, Vol. 1*. Fisher, Son & Co. (1836), pp.535-540.

²²⁴ Dutton, Findlay, and Wilson, *Region, Religion, and Patronage*, p.6; Honigman, *Shakespeare's Lost Years* p.35 citing *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* 175.92.

²²⁵ Wark, K.R. *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, Manchester University Press (1971), p.21; Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa* Book 1, p.110.

²²⁶ Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, p.21; Baggeley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*, p.60; Lannon, D. *Manchester's New Fleet Prison or House of Correction and Other Gaols for Obsinate Recusants*. *British Catholic History*, 29:4 (2009), pp.474-481; for details of prisoners in Chester Castle see McCann, T.J. *Recusants in the*

cushioned him from the treatment others in the gentry circle received in this period. Incarceration at the Earl of Derby's property in Liverpool was seen as the more comfortable option.²²⁷ This imprisonment occurred around the same period Sir Thomas was patronising minstrels and players, demonstrating how his hospitality may have afforded him the benefits of the earl's protection. Although, this allowed him to strengthen bonds with important county figures, it did not protect him completely. Sir Edmund Trafford, who took Sir Thomas into custody, was also part of the gentry commensal network which enjoyed dramatic and musical performances. Trafford visited the Earls of Derby regularly, including when plays were staged, and he is referred to in plays known to have been performed by Lord Strange's Men.²²⁸

Sir Thomas Hesketh petitioned the Earl of Leicester in 1584, pledging to reform his Catholic household.²²⁹ The petition stated that he was:

Innocent in the most material matters of the said complaint, and onely hath offended (as he thinketh) in that he hath bene over negligent to see the reformat[i]on of some in his famylie, for which he is right hartilie sorie.²³⁰

It appears Sir Thomas had faced serious accusations regarding Edmund Campion, through his connection to his Hesketh cousins of Preston (see family tree). He protested:

Protesteth both before god and yo[u]r honor to reforme the same offence in such sort that those wh[i]ch are und[er] his governm[en]t and will not from henceforth use them selves dutyfully & obediently unto her maj[es]tie and her most godly lawes in every respect shall neither abyde in his house nor have any favor at his handes but all extremytie.²³¹

Exchequer Pipe Rolls 1581-1592. *Catholic Record Society*, Vol 71 (1986); Baines, E. *History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster*, Vol. 1. Fisher, Son & Co. (1836), pp.535-540.

²²⁷ Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, p.21; Baggle, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*, p.60.

²²⁸ Manley and MacLean, *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*, pp.105-106, 275.

²²⁹ SP 12/175 f.159.

²³⁰ SP 12/175 f.159.

²³¹ SP 12/175 f.159.

Leicester advised the Bishop of Chester, William Chadderton, to write to Francis Walsingham regarding Sir Thomas:

Your lordship shall do well to wryte to Mr. Secretarie, howe Sir Thomas Heskeith did use himself, & what order was taken, & how submissive [he] afterwards was [when you] shouyd hime the favour.²³²

The mention of Sir Thomas receiving a 'favour' may refer simply to the fact he was to be released but in the same letter to Bishop Chadderton Leicester also mentioned he was due to see his cousin the Earl of Derby shortly.²³³ Though there is no other evidence in this instance that Henry, Earl of Derby, interceded on Sir Thomas's behalf, Sir Thomas's offence was serious enough to merit him being reminded of the aims of Catholics such as Edmund Campion, through reference to Campion's 'brag.'²³⁴

Your lordship shall do well also, to let him know the braggs of the papists; & by what means [they think] to obteyne friendship at L[ondon, at] the courte. I pray you do yt effectually, for I must tell it.²³⁵

Though not definite, the further protection of the Earl of Derby through a 'favour' may have mitigated Sir Thomas's treatment.

The Earl of Leicester believed that even though Sir Thomas had conformed, the rest of his household might continue to support Catholics. He wrote to William Chadderton, Bishop of Chester, regarding the release of Sir Thomas and the drafting of Sir Thomas's bond for conforming in a letter dated 5 June 1584:

²³² Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, Book IV, p.150.

²³³ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, Book IV, p.150.

²³⁴ Campion's 'brag' preceded his time in Lancashire where he was housed by, among other Lancashire Catholics, Sir Thomas's cousin Bartholomew Hesketh. Campion continued to write during his time hiding in the houses of the Lancashire gentry. *Acts of the Privy Council of England Volume 13, 1581-1582*. ed. John Roche Dascent (London, 1896, pp.176-200. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol13/pp176-200> [accessed 17 January 2020]; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.281; Lake, P. and Questier, M. Puritans, Papists and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context. *Journal of Modern History*, 72:3 (2000), pp.601-623.

²³⁵ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, Book IV, p.150.

I have read this recognizance, which I like well of...Towchinge his servants I doe not thinke yt nedefull to put any of them in, unlesse such as bee & dwell in house with Sir Thomas Hesketh.²³⁶

It appears that as well as offering entertainment, Sir Thomas Hesketh's players were go-betweens between Catholic households. The fact that a William Shakeshafte was mentioned in Alexander Houghton's will has meant that historians and literature scholars have closely examined this troupe of players, asking if Shakeshafte could have been William Shakespeare, with no clear answer. Richard Dutton has explored the ambiguity concerning the nature of the performers Sir Thomas employed as the term 'players' could denote musicians or actors and it is unclear which Sir Thomas's were.²³⁷ Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean reject the idea that Sir Thomas could have supported his own acting troupe, especially one of the same calibre as those of noble patronage.²³⁸ Dutton, however, posits Sir Thomas's players may have been both actors and musicians, able to play music and perform plays when needed and could also have been servants able to turn their hand to music and acting when the need arose at certain times of the year.²³⁹ The ambiguous nature of performers, musicians, and servants is something which was noted by various officials when it came to Catholic gentry networks. Sir John Southworth's servants were revealed to be priests in 1592 and Edward Norris's servants were also reported as being disguised priests waiting at table in 1599 (see chapter 2).²⁴⁰ Musicians also came under suspicion. Evidence given by Thomas Bell in 1589 to 1591 indicates the spread of the network of gentry Catholics as well as how priests disguised as music teachers were shared amongst them.²⁴¹ He reported that:

Mrs Houghton of Lea hathe kepte sithence the deathe of her husbände one Richarde Blundell brother to Williem Blundell of Crosbie...who is

²³⁶ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, Book IV, p.150.

²³⁷ Dutton, *Shakespeare's Theatre, A History*, pp.50-59.

²³⁸ Dutton, *Shakespeare's Theatre, A History*, pp.50-59; George, REED: Lancashire p.350; Manley and MacLean, *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays*, pp.33-34.

²³⁹ Dutton, *Shakespeare's Theatre, A History*, pp.50-59.

²⁴⁰ 'Cecil Papers: January 1599, 1-15', in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 9, 1599*, ed. R A Roberts (London, 1902), pp.3-29. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol9/pp3-29> [accessed 17 January 2020]; Petti, A. (ed.). *Recusant Documents from the Ellesmere Manuscripts. Catholic Record Society*, vol. 60 (1968), pp.37-41.

²⁴¹ Westminster Diocesan Archives. Information given to Henry Earle of Darbie about the years 1589.1590.1591 by one Bell a fallen seminarie priest living then in Lancashire. 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452.

an obstinate papiste well acquainted w[i]th a number of seminaries
and he teacheth her children to singe and plaie upon the virginals.²⁴²

Mrs Hoghton was the widow of Sir Alexander Hoghton who had bequeathed the play clothes and instruments to Sir Thomas Hesketh in 1581. She was also Sir Thomas Hesketh's cousin. At the same time as the bequest Sir Alexander had asked Sir Thomas to take care of two servants. Emilie Murphy has demonstrated how the use of music and song in northwest Catholic networks and the creation and continuance of a distinct Lancashire Catholic community which shared a sense of belonging through the spread of works created by William Blundell of Crosby (married to Emilia Norris of Speke, see chapter 2).²⁴³

Suzanne Westfall, in her work on household performances, notes that circulating troupes of players could be 'mouthpieces and spies.'²⁴⁴ In this vein, Phebe Jensen has drawn attention to the Simpsons, a troupe of players who played in gentry houses in Yorkshire, with their plays having Catholic parts which could be removed if Protestants were in the audience.²⁴⁵ In Durham and Northumberland a similar conflating of performance and Catholicism occurred in the activities of dancing master Robert Hindmers and his wife Anne.²⁴⁶ The couple, supported financially by the northeast Catholic gentry, were 'popish seducers' who 'by his daunceing crept into manie houses...[and] have done much harme.'²⁴⁷ The couple used their travelling and presence in gentry houses to both prepare the ground for converts through conversation and acted as messengers, transporting Catholic books, and accompanying priests shared amongst Catholic gentry networks.²⁴⁸

²⁴² SP 12/243 f.158..

²⁴³ Murphy, E. Music and Catholic Culture in Post-Reformation Lancashire: Piety, Protest, and Conversion. *British Catholic History*, Vol. 32(4) (2015). pp.492-525.

²⁴⁴ Westfall, S. Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels, p.151.

²⁴⁵ Jensen, P. Recusancy, Festivity and Community: The Simpsons at Gowlthwaite Hall. In. Dutton, R. Findlay, A. and Wilson, R. *Region, Religion and Patronage: Lancastrian Shakespeare*. Manchester University Press. pp.78, 102, 103, 107, 109, 110-111 citing Star Chamber case PRO STAC 8/19/10:19; PRO STAC 8/19/11. The Simpsons also went by the name Sir Richard Cholmeley's Players; Fox, A. Religious Satire in English Towns, 1570-1640, in Collinson, P. and Craig, J. *The Reformation in English Towns 1500-1640*. Macmillan (1998), p.230.

²⁴⁶ Jakovac, G. A Dancer Made a Recusant: Dance and Evangelisation in the Jacobean North East of England. *British Catholic History*. 34 (2), pp.273-303.

²⁴⁷ Jakovac, A Dancer Made a Recusant, pp.278-279.

²⁴⁸ Jakovac, A Dancer Made a Recusant, pp.282-283.

Sally-Beth MacLean notes there were a variety of travelling performers moving around Lancashire but that the performers linked to the houses of the gentry in Lancashire came from the Ribble Valley.²⁴⁹ Along the valley lived the Heskeths at Rufford, the Shireburnes, the Shuttleworths, and the Walmsleys, all of whom hosted and supported players and performances at their homes.²⁵⁰ These players, of a lesser calibre than those of the Earl of Derby's, were 'a haphazard mix of amateur and professional music and drama' performers.²⁵¹ MacLean finds a correlation between the Ribble Valley and travelling performers, the households they frequented, and the Catholic gentry of Lancashire.²⁵² The fact that this Ribble Valley network also included the Protestant Shuttleworths points to how the social circle who enjoyed these entertainments intersected with the network of Catholic Lancashire and the sharing of Catholic priests, massing stuff, books, or information amid this cultural and social exchange. The Catholic network described by Thomas Bell extended across Lancashire and featured many of the same families who received artistic performers, musicians, servants, and priests. Sir Thomas's patronage of his own artistic troupe allowed him to assist the Earl of Derby with extra players, gain cultural esteem through his own use of performers at home and elsewhere, and facilitate the circulations of Catholic people around Lancashire.

Alice Hesketh (d.1605) - Hospitality, Priests, and Feasts:

Sir Thomas's wife Alice Hesketh (d.1605) was an important link in a chain of Catholic activities spread across Lancashire. Following Sir Thomas's death in 1588, she continued her priest harbouring at another Hesketh property, Martholme, where she resided as dowager. In 1591 she harboured priest Thomas Barcroft.²⁵³ His brother John Barcroft, on interrogation by Sir Robert Cecil, gave details of a network of harbourers Thomas Barcroft used to move about Lancashire and further afield:

[Thomas] then went into Lancashire, where he abode untill after Easter...some thinke at my Lady Heskettes called Marthhome, at Mr. Yates,

²⁴⁹ MacLean, S. 'A Road Less Travelled? Touring Performers in Medieval and Renaissance Lancashire', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. (2001), p.321.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp.328-329.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.332.

²⁵² *Ibid*, pp.334-335.

²⁵³ SP 12/240 f.172.

schollmaster of blackburne, at Robert Lawes neere Whalley, at Henry Hindleys in Pendle who childe he baptised...in all which houses there are recusanttes.²⁵⁴

Martholme was also the property where Alice was reported, alongside her son Thomas, in 1591 as welcoming and giving 'countenance to Worthington, the seminary priest.'²⁵⁵ Worthington was named repeatedly in the evidence Thomas Bell gave to Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby, and was mentioned in connection with several properties across Lancashire including Little Crosby, home to the Blundell family and Emilia Norris of Speke.²⁵⁶

Entertaining at Martholme appeared more relaxed than at Rufford, given the evidence of material culture and kitchen equipment there in the 1620 inventory. It was however, like Rufford, a place that combined the entertainment of priests with the entertainment of the Lancashire gentry.²⁵⁷ The Barons of Walton, the Langton family, mixed in the same commensal circles as the Heskeths, often entertained at the homes of the Earls of Derby at the same time as Sir Thomas, Alice, or their son Thomas.²⁵⁸ The Baron of Walton, Thomas Langton (c.1561-1605), had conformed but his wife was allegedly re-converted to Catholicism by Alice Hesketh at Martholme and subsequently refused to go to church: '[she] was corrupted in that house...who before her comynge thither was very well disposed in religion.'²⁵⁹ The Baron himself was also subsequently re-converted by a priest named Grisly.²⁶⁰ Alice merged gentry hospitality in Lancashire with the conversion of guests to Catholicism and further combined this with open hospitality around major Catholic festival days. As well as the contributions Alice made to Rufford in her role as Lady Hesketh, in her widowhood she continued her use of commensality in the service of the Catholic faith.²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ SP 12/240 f.172.

²⁵⁵ SP 12/240 f.224.

²⁵⁶ Westminster Diocesan Archives. Information given to Henry Earle of Darbie about the years 1589.1590.1591 by one Bell a fallen seminary priest living then in Lancashire. 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452.

²⁵⁷ Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/ C76A.

²⁵⁸ Raines, The Stanley Papers.

²⁵⁹ Westminster Diocesan Archives. Information given to Henry Earle of Darbie about the years 1589.1590.1591 by one Bell a fallen seminary priest living then in Lancashire. 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452; SP12/240 f.225.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ For more on the role of widows within Catholic networks, see Binczewski, J. Power in Vulnerability: Widows and Priest Holes in the Early Modern English Catholic Community. *British Catholic History*, 35:1 (2020).

Alice's grandson George Hesketh of Howick (d.1649) became a priest and left for the English College in Rome in 1619.²⁶² George was converted to Catholicism by Jesuit Richard Cowling, who worked predominantly in the north of England.²⁶³ Cowling had existing links to the Hesketh family, describing being sheltered in 1596 at 'the house of the widow of one of the principal gentry', namely Martholme, home Alice Hesketh:

As for me, at the earnest request of good priests, I went to live in the house of the widow of one of the principal gentry [in Lancashire]. So many Catholics flocked to see me, bringing their schismatic and even heretic friends for advice, that it was quite impossible to accommodate them in the room that I used as a chapel, spacious though it was.'²⁶⁴

Cowling described regular gatherings at Martholme for Catholic gentry to receive the sacrament, showing Alice's use of hospitality as a means of harbouring priests and converting guests, as with the case of priests Barcroft, Worthington, Cowling, and the family of the Baron of Walton:

'Indeed it often happened that as many as two hundred, mostly of the gentry, would come for a sermon, while on Sundays and ordinary feast-days (not to mention the greater feasts) as many as thirty of forty would receive the sacraments from me, and I never sent them away without nourishing them also with the word of God.'

The combination of hospitality, food, and faith is emphasised in Cowling's descriptions of his contact with the Catholic community at Martholme through the language of nourishment and spiritual sustenance. This is fused with Alice Hesketh's provision of hospitality to the wider faithful. The sacraments he provided to the faithful are merged with the food eaten on feast days and Catholic communal celebrations:

²⁶² Hodgetts, M. Elizabethan Priestholes V: The North. *British Catholic History* 13:4 (1976), pp.273-274; The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome, Part 1. *Catholic Records Society*, 54, (1962), pp.324-326

²⁶³ Hodgetts, M. Elizabethan Priestholes V: The North, pp.273-274; Kenny, A. (ed.). The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome, Part 1, pp.324-326; Caraman, P. (ed.). *The Other Face: Catholic Life under Elizabeth I*. Longmans (1960), p.313.

²⁶⁴ Caraman, P. *The Other Face*, p.121; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.291.

On the greater feasts we had to keep the doors shut and admit only a selection. Otherwise we would easily have numbered more than a thousand, and that might have got noised abroad. So I had to go round after these feasts and satisfy all in turn.²⁶⁵

Alice, her son Thomas, and her grandson George were all involved not just in the housing of priest Richard Cowling, but the celebration of Catholic feast days, of providing a venue for the Catholic community to observe the Mass, and a site for the conversion of other 'schismatics' and 'heretics.' Just as Sir Thomas used Rufford to entertain mixed company, reenforce status and important gentry-nobility connections, and simultaneously harbour and circulate priests, so Martholme was an important gentry home focused on Catholic domestic faith, the movement of priests, community feasts, and persuasive hospitality aimed at the furtherance of the Catholic faith.²⁶⁶ Both Sir Thomas and Alice demonstrate how commensality for the Heskeths combined faith with the sharing of gentry bonds, affective atmospheres, and the continuation of Catholic worship.

Robert Hesketh (1560-1620) – Positions of Office, Shrieval Dining, and Church Papism:

Sir Thomas and Alice's son, Robert Hesketh, inherited Rufford in 1588 and projected an image of conformity through a combination of church papism, positions of county authority, and dining. He was made a knight of the shire in 1597, Sherriff of Lancashire in 1599-1600 and 1607-08, and a JP in 1600²⁶⁷ He took his role as Sheriff of Lancashire seriously given the notes he wrote in his commonplace book. This book contained everything he needed on assuming his various roles as JP and Sherriff of Lancashire, including the oath he was required to take as JP, notes on the county assizes, details of an order regarding bridge repairs, and various bonds and indentures he copied down for reference.²⁶⁸ Robert's commonplace book reads as a repository for elements he thinks important for his role as a respectable member of the gentry, able to converse of a range of subjects in commensal company, and to support his

²⁶⁵ Caraman, *The Other Face*, p.121.

²⁶⁶ Binczewski, J. Power in Vulnerability, pp.1-24.

²⁶⁷ Farrer, W. and Brownbill, J. (eds.). *A History of the County of Lancaster*, p.123; History of Parliament: <http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1558-1603/member/hesketh-robert-1560-1620>

²⁶⁸ Lancs Archives, P.20, Copies of Papers of Robert Hesketh 1570-1620.

position as JP and Sheriff of Lancashire. His notes also include extracts from the will of Henry VIII, details of members of the court of Elizabeth and James I, historical and genealogical notes, a list of the crown jewels with detailed descriptions, and notes on the death of friend Ferdinando Stanley, fifth Earl of Derby.²⁶⁹

Through his role as Sheriff Robert appears in the Cecil papers as a reliable figure of note in the region, conforming to the Protestant faith and pursuing Catholics alongside his cousin Sir Thomas Hesketh of Grays Inn (see Hesketh family tree). Richard Vaughan, Bishop of Chester, wrote to Sir Robert Cecil to relay the case of a priest sprung from the hands of Robert Hesketh in his role as Sherriff of Lancashire in May 1600:

I have thought it my part to intimate the loyal and Christian endeavours of the Sherriff, by so much the more to be esteemed because few of place and authority in these parts do so sincerely affect the present proceedings, or so zealously bend themselves against those popish pioneers which, with their faculties from Rome, labour so mainly to undermine the state both of policy and religion.²⁷⁰

On the 7th October 1600 the bishop again professed to Robert Cecil that Robert Hesketh was one of the best people for the job of suppressing Catholicism in the region:

The High Sherriff of Lancashire in this year of his office, and Sir Richard Houghton, both heretofore and now of late, have done great service in apprehending of sundry priests, pestilent persuaders to rebellion, and are the ablest and fittest persons, in regard of their state and their near dwelling to the most corrupt places of Lancashire.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Lancs Archives, P.20, Copies of Papers of Robert Hesketh 1570-1620.ff. 9, 64v, 67v, 68r, 71-72, 134r, 143v, 145r.

²⁷⁰ Cecil Papers: May 1600, 16-31 in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 10, 1600*, ed. R A Roberts (London, 1904). Pp.148-169. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol10/pp148-169> [accessed 5 April 2020].

²⁷¹ Cecil Papers: October 1600, 1-15 in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 10, 1600*, ed. R A Roberts (London, 1904), pp.335-353. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol10/pp335-353> [accessed 5 April 2020].

As Sheriff of Lancashire Robert had to finance and host big dinners .²⁷² A sense of the scale and expense of these, and also how they were a collaborative affair between members of the gentry, is provided by the record of William Farrington's arrangements for the same in 1636.²⁷³ Farrington's account details the food served, tableware provided by various gentlemen, who served at table, and what Farrington had to provide and fund. Robert's time as Sheriff meant he too was expected to host such occasions at Rufford as well as attend similar events at county assizes. These commensal gatherings were another opportunity to reinforce social ties, bonding over exclusive food consumption, receiving displays of deference from others, and sharing gentry administrative commonalities.²⁷⁴

The collaborative commensal endeavour of Lancashire shrieval dinners reveals the various connections and overlaps involved in early modern commensal dining. This and the intertwining of different county figures from different religious backgrounds with various foods donated, combinations of tableware, varying roles and responsibilities, and important commensal markers of gentry status are an example of gentry commensality assemblages on the whole. Several county gentry figures donated tableware to Farrington for the table at the Lancaster assizes in 1636 to facilitate the shrieval dinner, bringing plates, platters, bowls, and salts from collections in their own homes to create a new temporary dinnerware assemblage at Lancaster. Farrington himself provided guilt salts, silver spoons, a silver sugar box, and various other 'bowles, boats, and tunnes.'²⁷⁵ From John Fleetwood, married to Anne Farrington, came more silverware together with wine bowls, a flat strawberry bowl, apostle spoons from the Preston family of Preston, and 'Mr Asteleye his great bowle.'²⁷⁶ This tableware featured items on which to serve the sugary sweetmeats associated with gentry banqueting and religious imagery in the form of the apostle spoons featuring the heads of the

²⁷² George, REED: Lancashire p.xvii; Lancashire Archives DDF 971-984, 2437 containing the orders of 1578 concerning the Sheriff's assize table from the Earl of Derby, Lord Monteagle, and the Sheriff and Justices of the Peace, reproduced in Farrington, S. *The Farrington Papers: The Shrievalty of William Farrington, esq. in 1636. Chetham Society, Vol 39 (1856), pp.4-5.*

²⁷³ Farrington, S. *The Farrington Papers: The Shrievalty of William Farrington, esq. in 1636. Chetham Society, Vol 39 (1856), pp.12-22.* Robert and William Farrington knew each other and the latter wrote to Robert to arrange a meeting to assuage differences 'styrred uppe betwixt hus by your brother Richarde.' Lancashire Archive DDHe/55-56.

²⁷⁴ Lloyd, P. *Food and Identity in England* pp.30-31.

²⁷⁵ Farrington, *The Farrington Papers*, p.19.

²⁷⁶ Farrington, *The Farrington Papers*, p.20.

twelve apostles These items were assembled at a gathering which in theory was made up of the responsible and trustworthy sheriff and like-minded JPs. However, the Farrington and Fleetwood families had both come under suspicion for their Catholicism at various points. William Farrington's family were named in the evidence given by Thomas Bell as being Catholic in the 1590s and part of the countywide Catholic network and John Fleetwood's brother Edward had been converted to Catholicism by the Norris family of Speke around the same time as the shrieval dinner (see chapter 2).²⁷⁷ The tableware these families brought for the occasion joined that of Lancaster castle where the dinner was held.²⁷⁸ This included linen tablecloths, two dozen banqueting trenchers, two dozen of 'banqueting dishes', Venice glasses, voiders, a cupboard of plate, a carpet cloth for the table, and twenty cushions.²⁷⁹

All of the elements which formed this shrieval assemblage conveyed a gentry identity of wealth, status, and comfort through the materials they were made from, bright designs, origins, or delicacy (see chapter 5). The food served for the meals that ran during assize week are also listed in the Farrington papers and similarly presented an edible assemblage of foods linked to wealth and prestige including large quantities of duck, beef, veal, mutton, lamb, goat, pork, turkey, capons, chickens, geese, rabbits, pigeons, salmon, ling, sturgeon, waterfowl, partridges, and venison.²⁸⁰ Sweetmeats and other foods for the sweet banquet course included 'banquetting stuff' bought in readymade totalling £3 and other sweet items 'made at home', sugar, ginger, cloves, mace, cinnamon, nutmeg, prunes, raisons, 'tarte stuff', biscuits, sugar-coated caraway seeds, almonds, cheeses, pears and apples.²⁸¹

The matters discussed around shrieval tables were the various points of business connected with the assizes and county administration, as detailed in the orders of 1578.²⁸² Thus, the

²⁷⁷ Westminster Diocesan Archives. Information given to Henry Earle of Darbie about the years 1589.1590.1591 by one Bell a fallen seminarie priest living then in Lancashire. 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452.

²⁷⁸ Farrington, *The Farrington Papers*, pp.12-16.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Farrington, *The Farrington Papers*, pp.14-15.

²⁸¹ Farrington, *The Farrington Papers* p.15.

²⁸² Lancashire Archives DDF 971-984, 2437 containing the orders of 1578 concerning the Sheriff's assize table from the Earl of Derby, Lord Monteagle, and the Sheriff and Justices of the Peace, reproduced in Farrington, *The Farrington Papers*, pp.4-5; Quintrell, B.W. (ed.). *Proceedings of the Lancashire Justices of the Peace at the Sheriff's Table During Assize Week, 1578-1694. Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 121. (1981).

sheriff's table for assize week was a mixture of authority, wealth, status, faith, sensory experiences, material culture and conversation. Seated at it were gentry guests from various families who were supposed to be of a similar religious background: conforming and dedicated Protestants charged with the responsible office of JP, involved in the suppression of Catholicism in the region. Robert Hesketh's commonplace book shows his dedication to the role in the notes he made in preparation. His two periods as sheriff show how he was able to accomplish this level of dining and ceremony, demonstrating his popularity amongst the gentry of Lancashire, and how he considered the role such a beneficial position that he performed it twice.

His ability to create a dining assemblage of the quality seen in 1636 at Lancaster is seen in the extensive variety of tableware and napery Robert owned at Rufford. Items connected with Hesketh commensality were listed in the 1620 Hesketh inventory, taken on Robert's death and included 'basins and ewers of silver', 'double salts', 'Venice glasses', 'whyte bowls' and 'guilt spoons'. To this can be added the fine tableware and decorative elements he inherited from his father, the 'good housekeeper' Sir Thomas. These include '...two silver cans, his best silver basin and ewer, the newest hangings, the cup and cover whereon was engraved the Spread Eagle [the Hesketh crest], carpets and cushions whereupon his arms or crest were either carved or wrought with needle, and all armour, munitions and weapons wherewith to serve her Majesty.'²⁸³ The 1620 inventory highlights how all of these elements were situated in the great hall at Rufford rather than in more intimate withdrawing parlours. The various aspects of commensal dining Robert combined at his home and elsewhere together with his adeptness at hosting and partaking of gentry commensality meant he was able to dine with nobility at the homes of the Earls of Derby as detailed in the Derby Household Book.²⁸⁴ Robert dined at Knowsley on 20 January 1588 with his father Sir Thomas, again on 2 November with his mother Lady (Alice) Hesketh.²⁸⁵ On 4 January 1588/9 he dined at Lathom amongst other gentlemen of various religious convictions, and the same year, 14 June 1589, he dined at Lathom and stayed overnight.²⁸⁶ At the end of January 1589/90 he was at New Park with many

²⁸³ BL Add MS 32104 and also amongst the Towneley papers, Chethams Library, 'BB'.

²⁸⁴ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

other gentlemen and again a month later on 28 February.²⁸⁷ That same week the Derby Household Books records that Ferdinando Lord Strange and Lady Strange dined at Rufford.²⁸⁸ Robert was back at New Park around the 14 March and at the end of March Lord and Lady Strange returned from dining at Sir Richard Molyneux's house with Robert alongside them.²⁸⁹ Robert was not only able to dine amongst noble company and be invited to dine with prominent figures in Lancashire society, he was also able to host noble guests at Rufford. He and Sir Richard Molyneux were the only gentry figures recorded as entertaining Lord and Lady Strange in the Derby records.

Further evidence of Robert's position in society and of the quality of communal dinners he attended is seen in the account of James I's visit to the Hesketh family's friend Sir Richard Houghton at Hoghton Tower in 1617, towards the end of Robert's life.²⁹⁰ Given Robert's status in the county it was likely that Robert was amongst the '100 other gentlemen' Nicholas Assheton describes as being present at the ceremonial dinner alongside named individuals.²⁹¹ As James I continued his progress through Lancashire and Cheshire on his way back from Scotland, he also dined with the Earl of Derby at Lathom.²⁹² Lists of the gifts provided for the party include venison provided by Robert and document the presence of his sons at this later dinner waiting on attendees, indicating his earlier attendance at Hoghton Tower when the King dined there.²⁹³

However, as well as Robert's place within this gentry authoritative and social community, he was also someone with Catholic sympathies and connections hiding in plain sight, as Thomas Bell revealed:

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Nichols, J. *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*. Vol 3. AMS Press (1828/1968), pp.401-403 taken from MS in the possession of Sir Henry Philip Hoghton, Royal Diet at Hoghton Tower 1617.

²⁹¹ Raines, F. R. (ed.). *The Journal of Nicholas Assheton of Downham, Chetham Society*, Vol. 54 (1868), pp.39-46.

²⁹² Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, pp.403-405; Raines, *The Journal of Nicholas Assheton of Downham*, p.46.

²⁹³ Derby Collection, Knowsley Hall, C46.1. For more information on the food provided as gifts see chapter 4.

Mr Robt Hesketh of Rufforth in Crowston & his wife were sometimes great Recusants & his wife in her late sicknesse was reconciled as I heare, her husband knowing & permitting the same.²⁹⁴

Robert's first wife was Mary Stanley, daughter of Sir George Stanley of Cross Hall, Lathom, George Hesketh, Robert and Mary's son (mentioned above in the context of Alice Hesketh and Martholme), stated that his Lancashire gentry family were all Catholics except his father who was 'unfortunately schismatic', evidence which supported that put forward by Thomas Bell:

...his wife [Blanche] that now is was well acquainted wth Worthington & my selfe at Bispham in tyme of her former husband, And the said Robt Hesketh (as a priest tould mee) kepte his father's tenants soe in awe in his father's tyme that none of them durst once whisper against a seminarie priest.²⁹⁵

Robert's second wife, Blanche Twyford, was referred to in the context of the priest Worthington, a fellow priest alongside Bell, and also reportedly harboured by Alice Hesketh at Martholme (see above). Bell reveals that not only did Robert ensure that priests at Rufford were not disclosed to the authorities while Sir Thomas Hesketh was still alive, but that he knowingly allowed priests to be present at Rufford while at the same time assuming the tactic of schismatic or church papist.²⁹⁶ Thomas Bell's evidence shows the strands of the Catholic gentry network that harboured and conveyed priests connecting with Rufford and Martholme, the hospitality and commensality of Sir Thomas and Alice Hesketh, their children, and grandchildren, and the outwardly conformist sheriff and justice Robert. Faith around the dinner table was not always what it seemed. Priests harboured at Rufford and Martholme by Alice Hesketh, such as William Worthington, are later reported as being entertained by the next generation. Worthington was mentioned several times in Thomas Bell's evidence in relation to different Catholic families as he moved around Lancashire. Richard Cowling, also residing with Alice later converted her grandson George. Priests Thomas Barcroft and James Harrison were at Rufford during Sir Thomas's lifetime and his son Robert ensured that Hesketh

²⁹⁴ Westminster Diocesan Archives. Information given to Henry Earle of Darbie about the years 1589.1590.1591 by one Bell a fallen seminarie priest living then in Lancashire. 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452.

²⁹⁵ Hodgetts, M. *Elizabethan Priestholes V: The North*, pp.273-274; Kenny, *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome, Part 1*, pp.324-326, in Latin 'pater pro dolor scismaticus.'

²⁹⁶ Walsham, A. *Church Papists*. Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England. Boydell & Brewer (1993); Overell, A.M. *Nicodemites: Faith and Concealment between Italy and Tudor England*. Brill (2019).

tenants kept quiet about the presence of priests on Hesketh land. Baron Walton's family were converted at Martholme and Alice opened her doors to the community to receive access to priests, using her dower house as cover. And all the while the Heskeths entertained, hosted commensal dinners, put on performances, dined with nobility, and engaged in shrieval dinners that came with county office.

Although outed by Thomas Bell to Henry, Earl of Derby, Robert continued throughout the 1590s to the 1610s in positions of authority, hosting dinners and entertaining in the great hall at Rufford, and assuming a profile of trustworthiness and reliability. This was bolstered through his tactic of church papism and his adeptness at commensality, dining at county assizes, and entertaining the Earl of Derby's heir Ferdinando, Lord Strange, and Lady Strange at Rufford.

Conclusion:

This chapter has shown how three generations of the Hesketh family centred their commensality around the great hall at Rufford. It has also detailed what this commensality consisted of, foreshadowing the analysis of affective commensal assemblages in chapters 4, 5, and 6. The potential of commensality to influence important county figures has been highlighted through the recognised impressionable nature of Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby.

Commensal elements used to impress and shape guests included the décor of the hall commissioned by Sir Robert (d.1541) which conveyed an impression of longevity, status, culture and birth right; the entertainments of Sir Thomas (1526-88), which combined a display of wealth with dramatic sensory experiences and dualistic Catholic resistance to reformation; and the civic and regional duties of Robert (1560-1620) which merged collaborative commensal dinners with the tableware and furnishings of Rufford, clandestine Catholic practice, and gatherings of Lancashire gentry of diverse and variable religious convictions. The decision by successive Hesketh householders to retain an emphasis on the great hall rather than withdraw to more fashionable parlours or galleries was a result of the family's need to

stay close to the influential and protective Earls of Derby and other county figures of authority. The great hall facilitated the ceremonious dining enjoyed by the earls and the gentry they dined amongst when in Lancashire. It also acted as a stage on which to host players who performed plays or music, providing entertainment for guests and creating an impressive commensal atmosphere designed to stay in the memory. Dining in the great hall also kept the focus on the Hesketh family's ability to hold positions of responsibility, drawing on traditional concepts of authority, largess, patronage, and hospitality.

Heritage Interlude:

Interpretation at Rufford:

There have been no previous academic collaborations at Rufford and the interpretation has been a combination of formal tours, questions addressed to volunteers, and the National Trust guidebook. In the past there has been a lack of confidence at the property over how they tell their story and engage audiences with the history of the hall and family. There has been a feeling amongst staff that Rufford and the Heskeths were a 'poor relation' to the Fermor-Hesketh family and the stately home of Easton Neston. Detailed yet accessible knowledge based on my research has restored confidence that the team at Rufford can engage with their early modern past. My doctoral collaboration has been an opportunity to bring the Heskeths of Lancashire and the early modern areas of Rufford Old Hall back to the fore with the Heskeths' 16th and 17th century story ready to be told in new ways.

Rufford Old Hall has changed a lot since the 16th century with the following centuries seeing the construction of the 1665 brick east wing, the destruction of the old timber-framed west wing, and the rebuilding of the rest of the property in the 18th and 19th century. The only parts of the property extant from the early modern period are the great hall and the 1665 brick wing and this has compounded the problems the interpretative team have encountered in sharing the early modern history of Rufford. The Heskeths' use of the great hall as their principal dining and entertainment space in the 16th and 17th centuries means that this room, previously seen as an anomaly compared to the rest of the building, can be re-centred as the focus for Rufford and a nexus through which to engage visitors. Commensality can be used as a starting point to explore the family and their wider Reformation context.

Such context allows the dis-connect between the inside and outside of Rufford to be bridged. During 2023 I will create a map of the hall, surrounding estate, and the landscape it sits within as a resource for staff and volunteers. This map will have a central focus of food sources, domestic spaces, and communities. Using the holistic approach of affect and assemblage theories, I will build information and context around this map, consolidating and

disseminating my research. This will encourage the use of affect and assemblage in interpretation at the hall by emphasising the interrelationship between different elements of commensality. The map will also demonstrate connections between sensory experiences, humoral and environmental embodiment, and how this influenced people inside and outside the Heskeths' family home. Because Rufford Old Hall have not experienced academic collaborative projects before, the map resource is designed to inform the interpretative team there and allow them to make future decisions and apply for greater resources. The team at Rufford are currently planning a new internally funded interpretive project to put to the National Trust. Contextual information for the map to assist with this will include:

- indoor and outdoor manifestations of faith, meditation, and the senses;
- the connections between the land, the botanical knowledge of Thomas Hesketh (1561-1613) and his friendship with John Gerard, author of *The Herball, or, Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597);
- the Heskeths and priests at Rufford and Martholme (chapter 1 of this thesis);
- the positions of various family members regarding their conformity or recusancy;
- the sensorium of the great hall through foods served, entertainments, furnishings, and the woodwork carvings (again, as explored in chapter 1 and chapters 4, 5, and 6);
- and fresh analysis of the passage screen with its grotesque/all'antica details in the context of Sir Robert Hesketh (c.1490-1541) and the building of Rufford.



Fig. 2. Passage screen in the great hall at Rufford. Image author's own.

Linked to this map and the use of affect and assemblage will be a series of volunteer workshops. I have started this process through a talk and early modern food tasting workshop I gave at Rufford in November 2022. From this starting point I have set up a volunteer food remaking group and a volunteer project creating a Rufford/Hesketh 'menu' for the great hall. This will include looking at the 1620 inventory and estate details from old maps and deeds to explore the Heskeths' food sources. This will complement my research on the foods of the Heskeths and the dining habits of others in their social circle. The food remaking group will also begin to look at primary sources for recipes and begin to 'translate' these for modern audiences.

Chapter Two

'Of Evil Affection': The Norrises of Speke Hall



Fig. 1. The north wing at Speke showing the gateway through to the enclosed courtyard, from which guests would enter the Great Hall. To the left of the photograph is some of the service wing to the east housing the kitchens, dairy, the remains of the old chapel (hinted at by the arched window) and the various outbuildings of Speke's service courtyard. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

The Catholic Norris family of Speke appreciated the need to offer hospitality to 'all comers'.²⁹⁷ In the context of the Reformation this meant through commensality they could entertain useful Protestants, persuade fellow Catholics towards recusancy, and host the Catholic gentry and local community. Rather than being an insular gentry Catholic family, the Norrises' sociability protected them from the worst of prosecution and raids. It also helped prolong Catholic adherence and resistance in Lancashire. The Norris tableware and décor shows how the family appreciated the importance of commensality for tending existing social bonds and forging new ones. In the food spaces of Speke the Norrises emphasised their gentry credentials through dining and banqueting and, often simultaneously, infused the same spaces with Catholicism. This chapter will highlight Catholic elements in the great parlour at

²⁹⁷ Heal, F. *Hospitality*, pp.179, 190.

Speke which, alongside the fabric of the building and the landscape beyond it, acted as a ‘compass’ and ‘anchor’ to ground the Norrises in their faith. This focussed the family on their faith as they entertained Protestants, compromising and acquiescing over various points as they ate, conversed, and socialised for the greater good of Catholicism in the region.

The Norrises had allies among the local gentry in positions of authority who looked out for them, which meant that they got early warnings of raids from those inside ecclesiastical commissions or acting as justices of the peace. Commensal dining across the county between gentry families meant that JPs and commissioners who were charged with pursuing Catholics were wary of reporting on their friends. There is no evidence of any raids at Speke during the reigns of Elizabeth or James I though the Norrises were known to support Catholic activities and harbour priests. They suffered fines and, like Sir Thomas Hesketh, loss of regional standing through fewer positions of office but they remained relatively safe ‘through fear of [their] greatness’ over several generations.²⁹⁸

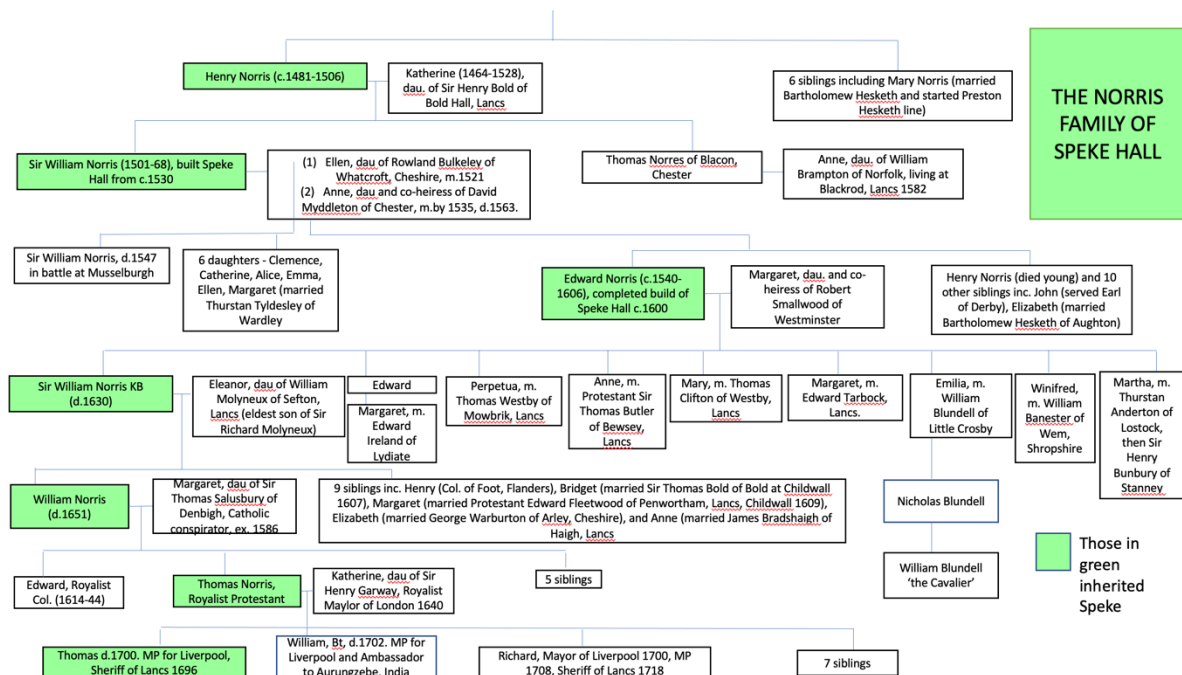


Fig. 2. The Norris family tree.

²⁹⁸ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

Sir William Norris (1501-68): Speke and The Spread of Lancashire Recusancy:

Both Sir William Norris (1501-1568) and his son Edward (c.1540-1606) were close to the Earls of Derby and mixed in the same social circle as the Heskeths, dining regularly with the Earls, and involved in their privy councils and administrative entourage.²⁹⁹ Like Sir Thomas Hesketh (Chapter 1), Sir William Norris had proved his worth on the battlefield, receiving a knighthood after fighting in Scotland during the siege of Edinburgh of 1544.³⁰⁰ He had also enjoyed other local positions of authority prior to the accession of Elizabeth I: Sheriff of Lancashire in 1544-5, JP in 1547, and MP for Liverpool in 1554-5.³⁰¹ William had been present at the examination of Protestant martyr George Marsh in the dining chamber at Lathom House as part of the Earl of Derby's privy council.³⁰² That examination led to the execution of Marsh. He took advantage of the connections these positions brought, including the associated commensal dining that came with the roles of Sherriff of Lancashire; as an MP for Liverpool; and as mayor.³⁰³ However, by the 1560s Sir William began to feel the effects of the new religious policy. Increasingly officials were sought who were felt to be sound in religion. It was hard for Sir William to continue in his regional offices once those known to be steadfastly Catholic were passed over. Maintaining social bonds, which included keeping their doors open to all, became vital if Sir William and his family were to adhere to the Catholic church, avoid heavy prosecution, and maintain social status.

²⁹⁹ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*, pp.v and vi of the Derby Household Book state the responsibilities of the Earl's Privy Council – 'statutes enforced and laws carried into effect, regulations and ordinances of stringent or arbitrary enacted...comptroller, steward of the household, grooms of the bedchamber, clerks of the kitchen,...and eldest sons waited at table...chamberlain/marshall of the hall, master of the horse, falconer, yeomen of the stable, herald/officer at arms, clerk of works, auditor, private secretary, Earl Edward had company of minstrels.

³⁰⁰ Bindoff, S.T. (ed.). *Sir William (1501-68) of Speke, Lancs. The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558* (1982), via historyofparliament.org. [Last Accessed 18 September 2022].

³⁰¹ Ibid

³⁰² Ormerod, G. *A Memoir on the Lancashire House of Le Noreis or Norres, and its Speke Branch in Particular*, Liverpool: T. Brakell (1850), p.36. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor* p.183; Sir William Norris, *History of Parliament Online* [NORRIS, Sir William \(1501-68\), of Speke, Lancs. | History of Parliament Online](https://www.historyofparliament.org/people/norris-william-1501-68) [Last Accessed 2 January 2023].

³⁰³ Quintrell, B.W. (ed.). *Proceedings of the Lancashire Justices of the Peace at the Sheriff's Table During Assizes Week, 1578-1694. Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol 121 (1981), p.65; Lancs Archives, DDF 2437, Orders Respecting the Lancaster Assizes 1578.



Fig. 3. The oak overmantel in the great parlour at Speke Hall depicting three generations of the Norris family Commissioned c.1580-1600. In the centre panel is Sir William Norris [1501-1568] with his first and second wives, Ellen and Anne, holding rosaries and a prayer book respectively. To the right are his son Edward [c.1540-1606] and his wife Margaret Norris, to the left are Sir William's parents, Henry [c.1481-1524] and Clemence, daughter of Sir James Harrington of Wolfage, Northamptonshire. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.



Fig. 4. Sir William Norris [1501-68] seated at the table with his first and second wives with their books and rosary clearly shown. Underneath are their children with the traditional positioning of boys on the left and girls on the right. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

In 1566 Laurence Vaux observed the worrying conformity of the Catholic gentry in his home county of Lancashire and took steps to rectify this.³⁰⁴ He wrote to Sir Richard Molyneux and Sir William Norris, identifying them as key players who could convince other local gentry to stop their attendance at parish churches and worship amongst the ‘heretical’ Protestant congregations.³⁰⁵ This was not simply an attempt to get friends and relations to avoid church, in itself a big step, but also to sign an Oath of Loyalty to the Pope as head of the Church.³⁰⁶ It was the start of serious recusancy in Lancashire. Laurence Vaux was a friend of the Norrises: the Vaux family lived at Blackrod where the Norrises owned another property.³⁰⁷ Vaux’s letter shows the standing of the Norris family in the gentry in the northwest.³⁰⁸ As Christopher Haigh states, the fact that the subsequent crack down on some of those involved in the encouragement of recusancy did not affect William Norris marks him out as one of the ‘big fish’ of the area, alongside Sir Richard Molineux and the Blundell family, who the authorities were mindful of persecuting too forcefully for fear of reprisals.³⁰⁹ This was an oft-repeated tactic for the Norrises and one that needed continual reinforcement through Speke hospitality and commensal networks.

The Oath encouraged the Catholic gentry to abstain from the Protestant church service. As this chapter demonstrates, commensal networks helped fuel the spread of recusancy. The Privy Council were fearful of ‘seditious persons under the colour of religion’ who drew ‘sundry gentlemen...from their duty of allegiance and all good conformitie.’³¹⁰ Dining together as a regular form of social contact aided this process. I argue it was through commensal persuasions that ‘a great number of subjects now good, through their own simplicity and the craftiness of the perverse instruments might be seduced into errors and unloyalty.’³¹¹ The use

³⁰⁴ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.249

³⁰⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.249; Leatherbarrow, J.S. *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants. Chethams Society*, Vol.110. 1947

³⁰⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.250; SP 12/48 f.71.

³⁰⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.203; Graves Law, T. (ed.). *A Catechisme or Christian Doctrine by Laurence Vaux B.D. Chetham Society*, Vol 4 ns (1885), pp. xxxii-xxxix who reprints a copy of a letter to Lancashire Catholic gentry referring to Sir William Norris as a friend, taken from State Papers Domestic Vol xli, no. 1. The letter is also referred to in State Papers Domestic Elizabeth 12 48 34 f.71 in connection with Sir Richard Molyneux and Sir William Norris.

³⁰⁸ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.250

³⁰⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.251.

³¹⁰ SP 12/46 f.43.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

of 'perverse instruments' could include the use of hospitality and commensality to entice and win over those who may have been uncertain or ripe for conversion, subscription to the Oath, and the wider cause. As will be seen throughout the thesis, opportunities to persuade and convert where religion was concerned were factored into commensal meetings.

The Privy Council wrote to the Earl of Derby, Bishop of Chester, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1568 concerned that the people being brought forward for prosecution were not of a high enough status.³¹² They warned that 'the more value the person is accompted of being evill disposed, the meeter he is to be corrected' because such important figures held greater sway.³¹³ These concerns reflected the extent to which prominent figures were avoiding prosecution because of their social standing and connections. They used hospitality to keep those gentlemen charged with the prosecution of Catholics from turning on their friends and recruit others to their cause. Sir William himself was referred by the Privy Council as amongst those 'who have sturred dyvs gent to their faccion...not to come to church...nor to receive the comynon...but to maynteyne the mass and papistyre.'³¹⁴ Keen pursuivant Sir Edmund Trafford, who imprisoned Sir Thomas Hesketh in 1581, was reported by the Privy Council as saying that 'from Warrington all along the saye [sea] coste Lancashyer...begyone [begun] with Mr Ireland, then Sr Willm Norres, and so forwards, other gent here being of the facion, and withdraws theym from religion.'³¹⁵ Christopher Haigh lists the families who were the 'backbone of local recusancy', who he argues were in 1571, the 'Middleton of Leighton, Houghton of the Park, Ireland of Lydiate, Norris of Speke, Clifton of Westby and Rigmaiden of Weddicar.'³¹⁶

The fact that Sir William had been a member of Edward Earl of Derby's Ecclesiastical Council in 1555, during the examination of Protestant martyr George Marsh in the dining room at Lathom House, may have meant reluctance from the Earl to prosecute Sir William in the late

³¹² SP 12/46 f.43; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.251 referring to Sir William Norris and the Blundells as 'bigger fish' who remained untouched.

³¹³ SP 12/46 f.43.

³¹⁴ SP 12/48 f.73.

³¹⁵ SP 12/48 f.73.

³¹⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.258.

1560s for William's Catholicism.³¹⁷ Sir William's role as part of the privy council of Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby, kept Sir William safe from repercussions.³¹⁸ As mentioned in chapter 1, the example of Sir Richard Shireburne shows Edward Earl of Derby's protection of those gentlemen who worked for him.³¹⁹

The Queen's Privy Council thought the attempts of Edward, Earl of Derby, and William Downham, Bishop of Chester, were ineffectual in suppressing Catholicism due to their unwillingness to prosecute their gentry friends in Lancashire.³²⁰ In the case of Bishop Downham the task was made difficult for two reasons: his friendship with Lancashire's Catholic gentry, and the fact that travel to inspect the huge diocese of Chester involved the hospitality of a predominantly Catholic Lancashire gentry.³²¹ James Pilkington, writing to Matthew Parker in 1561, reported that with Downham there was 'never a word spoken of any visitation or reformation; and that he says, he does of friendship because he will not trouble the country, nor put them to charge in calling them together.'³²² As Christopher Haigh surmised, Downham was 'reluctant to offend the conservative gentry among whom he made his friends.'³²³ Downham used the Catholic gentry's hospitality during county visitations to cover the vast diocese which incorporated Lancashire and Cheshire, and in 1568 he described his reliance on such hospitality when moving around:

...he had found the people very tractable...he had the most gentle entertainment of the worshipful to his great comfort.³²⁴

³¹⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p.251.

³¹⁸ The Derby Household Book gives some accounts for the household of Earl Edward as well as the rules concerning dining at the Derby properties, which Sir William would be a part of in his position as a member of the Earl's privy council, see Raines, *The Stanley Papers*, pp.1-12

³¹⁹ Coward, B. *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and the Earls of Derby, 1385-1672. Chetham Society* (1983), pp.86-92, 111-122.

³²⁰ Leatherbarrow, J.S. *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants. Chethams Society, Vol.110.* (1947), p.37, and Gibson, T.E. *Lydiat Hall and its Associations.* Ballantyne, Hanson & Co. (1876), p.184.

³²¹ William Downham, ODNB; Cox, P. *Reformation Responses in Tudor Cheshire c.1500-1577*, University of Warwick, Unpublished PhD Thesis (2013), pp.302-304, 320, 368;

³²² Cox, *Reformation Responses*, p.300 citing Bruce and Perowne (eds.). *Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, p.222.

³²³ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p.210.

³²⁴ SP 12/48 f.75.

Downham believed in the power of persuasion and preferred to coerce rather than force people to conform.³²⁵ He was described as ‘a mild, courteous and loving man, wishing well to all.’³²⁶ Whether he was simply kind-hearted or weak depended on who was appraising his character.³²⁷ Thus hospitality for the Norrises was a tactic they employed to strengthen bonds with important county figures responsible for curbing Catholic Lancashire. It was also an opportunity to convert others or persuade them to turn their backs on religious conformity.

Edward (c.1540-1606) and Margaret Norris: An Open Catholic Home and Priests at the Table

Edward inherited his father Sir William’s estate in 1568. Edward’s elder brother, William, had died fighting in Scotland alongside his father in 1547.³²⁸ William’s death is commemorated through a fallen soldier in the oak overmantel Edward commissioned for the great parlour (see below for a more detailed analysis of this room and its decor). In 1578 Edward signed the ‘Lancashire oath’, a declaration of loyalty to Elizabeth I, but the Norrises continued their domestic Catholicism.³²⁹

³²⁵ Cox, *Reformation Responses*, pp.310, 311, 320, 322, 368.

³²⁶ Cox, *Reformation Responses*, citing BL Harley 1948 f.87.

³²⁷ Cox, *Reformation Responses*, p.302.

³²⁸ Sir William Norris, History of Parliament online <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/norris-sir-william-1501-68> [Last Accessed 2 February 2023]; Ormerod, G. *A Memoir on the Lancashire House of Le Noreis or Norres, and its Speke Branch in Particular*, Liverpool: T. Brakell (1850), p.35.

³²⁹ Later legislation stated that the signing of such a declaration did not absolve Catholics from prosecution: ‘This Act rendered certain assurances made by recusants void against ye Queen.’ Leatherbarrow, J.S. *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*. *Chethams Society*, Vol.110. 194; Gibson, *Lydiat Hall and its Associations*, pp.35, 241.



Fig. 5. Close up of Edward Norris's brother William who died in battle in 1547. Shown beside a skull and bone. Photo author's own.

Edward made changes to Speke, which ensured it fulfilled its role as a site for pious Catholicism in line with John Bossy's 'migration of the holy.'³³⁰ When he built a new north wing in 1598, he added several priest holes to the new building in addition to the existing space above the table in the great hall in the whispering gallery canopy.³³¹ Unlike his father, Edward attended services of the Church of England sporadically while his wife, Margaret, incurred recusancy fines, and kept Speke a Catholic home of domestic devotion, masses, and family priests. In November 1584 a list was drawn up by an unnamed official of the 'names of recusants within the county of Lancaster, and of such as go to church, but have mass at home for their wives; and the names of such as are suspected.'³³² Edward appeared under the subheading as one of those 'as goe to church and keep masse at home for their wives.'³³³

³³⁰ Bossy, J. *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*. Oxford University Press, pp.153-171; Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe. *Past and Present*, 47 (1970), pp.68; Walsham, A. *Holy Families: Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Revisited*, pp.146-160.

³³¹ VCH British History Online 'Townships: Speke', in *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 3*, ed. William Farrer and J Brownbill (London, 1907), pp. 131-140. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol3/pp131-140> [accessed 2 February 2023]; Hodgetts, *Elizabethan Priest Holes: V The North*, pp.275-277.

³³² SP 12/175 f.32.

³³³ SP 12/175 f.32. In 1598 the Bishop of Chester, along with Robert Hesketh, recorded that Edward Norris had been charged £15 for Margaret's recusancy, see SP 12/266 f.107.

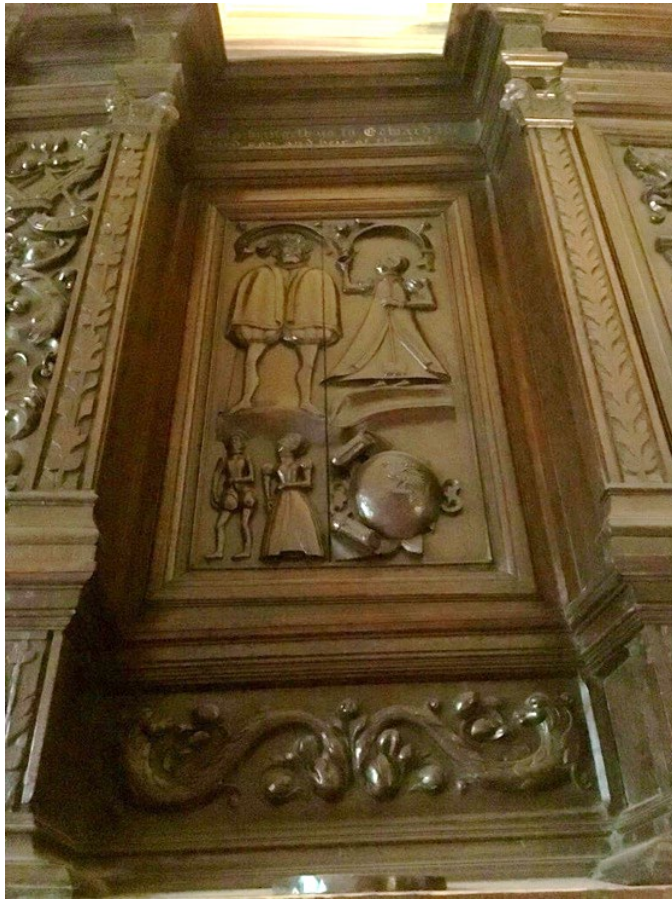


Fig. 6. Edward and Margaret depicted with their first two children. Photo author's own.

Edward's network of close friends were also listed as recusants: Mr Ireland of Lydiate, Mr Blundell of Crosby, Mr Ireland of the Hutt, and Mr Tarbock of Tarbock.³³⁴ There were numerous reports of priests residing with the Norrises and moving around Lancashire as part of a Catholic corridor of harbourers in the region. In 1586 the vicar of Kirkham reported that priest Richard Brittain had arrived at Speke:

Richard Brittain, a priest [was] receipted in the house of Wm Bennet of Westby about the beginning of June last, from whence young Mr Norrice of Speke conveyed the said Brittain to the Speke as the said Bennet hath reported. The said Brittain remayneth now at the house of Mr Norrice of

³³⁴ SP 12/175 f.32.

the Speke, as appeareth by the deposition of John Osbadilston (by common report).³³⁵

Speke was described as a base for priests and recusancy, as well as a site for Catholic worship. However, the various reports detailing suspected activities at Speke never resulted in any raids. I argue this was due to the efforts of the Norrises in their offer of hospitality to useful people in positions of authority, just as Sir William (1501-1568) had employed the same tactic to aid the spread of recusancy in Lancashire in the late 1560s.

The importance Edward placed on commensality is evidenced through his concern regarding the food served to guests. In 1599 Edward let a house on his land to Roger Burye on condition that Burye serve him as a cook during his and Margaret's life 'in the best diligent maner that he can.'³³⁶ Such diligence may have referred to the food served but equally to the spiritual sanctification of food (see chapter 5) or diligence over his role within the Catholic household with its priests, masses, and devotional practices.

The 1590 Privy Council document entitled 'Vewe of ye State of ye Countie Palatine of Lancashire both for Religion and Civil Government' reported on various JPs, knights, and esquires and their religious affections within the West Derby hundred.³³⁷ Family friends the Molyneux were a concern as although Sir Richard Molyneux 'maketh shew of good comformitie,' his family and friends were 'in evell note.'³³⁸ Regarding Edward and his friends Lawrence Ireland of Lydiate, Richard Blundell of Crosby, and Edward Tarbock of Tarbock, all were noted as 'in some degree of comformitie, yet in general note of evil affection in religion,

³³⁵ Gibson, *Lydiate Hall and its Associations*, p.239; Harland, J. (ed.). *The Lancashire Lieutenancy under the Tudors and Stuarts. Part II. Chetham Society*, vol 50 (1859), pp.186-190

³³⁶ University of Liverpool Special Collections, SPEC MS NORRIS 234

³³⁷ SP 12/235 f.4.

³³⁸ SP 12/235 f.4.

non-communicants, and ye wives of ye most of them recusants.'³³⁹ Margaret Norris was described again as a recusant and '*therefore indicted*.'³⁴⁰

In 1591 it was reported to the privy council that there was no divide between Catholics and Protestants charged with their prosecution when it came to shared commensality and festivities.³⁴¹ This provides an indication of how the Norrises avoided heavy prosecution for their activities:

Although their Lordships have often written to the justices for redress, small or no reformation has followed, and cockfights and other unlawful games are tolerated on Sundays and holidays, during divine service, at which justices of the peace and some Ecclesiastical Commissioners are often present.³⁴²

Not only were those charged with the prosecution of recusants present during commensal occasions and celebrations but they also acted as informers for Catholics as a result of Catholic hospitality:

The recusants have spyes aboute the Com[m]issioners, to give them intelligence when anything is entended against them, and some of the Baylifs attending upon the same commissioners entretynid [entertained] for that p[ur]pose (as app[er]eth by a l[ett]re latlie deliv[er]ed to yo[u]r L[ord]s[hip]) to the end that the same recusants may shifte oute of the way for thavoydinge of their app[re]henc[i]on beinge entended, of which Baylifs some examples wold be made to the terro[r] of others.'³⁴³

It was stated in another anonymous document entitled 'The defectes in Lancashire and Devonshire' in 1591 that fourteen JPs, some of whom were also Ecclesiastical Commissioners,

³³⁹ SP 12/235 f.4.

³⁴⁰ SP 12/235 f.4.

³⁴¹ SP 12/240 f.222

³⁴² SP 12/240 f.222

³⁴³ SP 12/240 f.222

were also suspected Catholics living in parishes 'dangerous infested.'³⁴⁴ These suspects included Sir Richard Shireburne and Richard Molyneux.³⁴⁵ In October 1595 suspicions over the trustworthiness of some members of the Ecclesiastical Commission and parish churchwardens was expressed in an unsigned draft letter within the papers of the clerk of the peace.³⁴⁶ It advised that if a strict course of action were followed for two years it would reveal the number of 'obstinate and masking subjects, and also take away all colourable and cunninge dealinge from the churchwardens, which, for the most part, are infected with papistre, or placed by papistes, or their favorites of the baddest sorte.'³⁴⁷ The writer had concerns over those who showed sympathy and turned a blind eye to their friends: for the ecclesiastical commissioners, any that followed 'affection or zeale more than sounde judgement or reason, Mr Anderton wyll moderate their hote humors.'³⁴⁸ The letter ended with a warning to take care which commissioners information was given to regarding arrests of messengers carrying letters between recusants or the 'taking of preestes and seminaries.'³⁴⁹

Edward Norris carried on the family tradition of remaining close to the Earls of Derby, carrying the principal banner at Edward, Earl of Derby's funeral in 1574.³⁵⁰ He was also recorded as dining at the homes of Henry, Earl of Derby, on numerous occasions from the 1570-90s amongst mixed religious company and alongside Protestant preachers.³⁵¹ Whether the largescale dining events used by the Earls of Derby to maintain the working order of the county, or smaller gatherings of Lancashire gentry, Lancashire commensality included ecclesiastical figures. Bishop Chadderton, Downham's successor was also accused of socialising with the Lancashire Catholic gentry: '[he] enterteyneth greatlie many of those gentlemen whose houses are vehemently infected with popery, and he likewise very much resorteth unto those gentlemans houses & pretendeth that he doth for their reformacon, but

³⁴⁴ SP 12/240 f.224.

³⁴⁵ SP 12/240 f.224.

³⁴⁶ Lancs Archives, DDKE/Box 122/1/f.23.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Gibson, *Lydiat Hall and its Associations*, p.154 Ormerod, G. *A Memoir on the Lancashire House of Le Noreis or Norres, and its Speke Branch in Particular*, Liverpool: T. Brakell (1850), p.38.

³⁵¹ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*.

yet never reformed any.³⁵² Alongside dining with the Earls of Derby and various Protestant, Catholic, and ecclesiastical figures at Knowsley, Lathom, and New Park, commensality also took place in the homes of Bishops and the Catholic gentry. The social and commensal community of the gentry, nobility, authorities, and ecclesiastical figures were a melting pot of different religious convictions and political stand points which met regularly and continued to dine together despite their separate positions regarding the Reformation in Lancashire. Commensal occasions were also recognised as opportunities to sway or ‘reform’ others as Bishop Chadderton claimed when justifying dining with Lancashire’s Catholic gentry.



Fig. 7. Lord Burghley’s map of Lancashire 1590 showing the properties of the Norrises and Heskeths, all marked with a cross indicating recusancy or Catholic adherence. BL Royal MS 18.D.III

Lord Burghley was concerned about the Lancashire network of Catholic houses, as illustrated by the map he commissioned in 1590.³⁵³ The map illustrates the spread of Catholic homes across Lancashire through which priests and Catholic materials were conveyed. A report from

³⁵² Cox, *Reformation Responses*, p.300; National Archives SP 15/27/2 f.170v; Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy*, p.50; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.269-70.

³⁵³ BL Royal MS 18.D.III

government spy John Bird to Sir Robert Cecil in January 1598/9 voiced his concerns about this network:

How dangerous it is for such priests to range about the countries on the maritime coast of Ireland, I leave to your consideration.³⁵⁴

Bird's comments show his unease at the recusant activities and harbouring of priests at Speke:

...at a place called the Speake, dwells one Edward Norris, an esquire of £500 livelihood, a known recusant, but who, through fear of his greatness, has never been presented. By report he harbours two priests, one called little Sir Richard, or Sir Richard Norris, the other Sir Peter, for the most part lodged in a chamber over the parlour.³⁵⁵

Bird specifically mentions the presence of priests at the Norris table, either hiding above it, or sitting at it. Bird could be the same 'Byrd' who spied on John Gerard and described Gerard's apparel to Cecil while in the company of his harbourers.³⁵⁶ Gerard stated he found it easier to dress as a visiting gentleman as it aroused less suspicion, and meant that he could draw wavering Protestants into theological conversation unwittingly when sat at the table.³⁵⁷ There were two main ways priests could move around a gentry home whilst guests were present, either as a gentleman friend of the householder or as a servant waiting at table. At Speke, Bird reports that Sir Richard Norris 'waits at table in a livery coat and cognisance.'³⁵⁸ The presence of a priest at the table had galvanising qualities for the Norrises when entertaining Protestants, as well as imbuing the dinner with Catholicism. A priest waiting at the table could overhear conversations, useful if table talk did turn to religion. It would be a useful way of detecting any crisis of conscience in a visiting dinner guest's faith.

The Norrises ensured that local people could visit a priest, and their hospitality included access to the Eucharist and other sacraments. Bird's report about Speke also noted that 'at

³⁵⁴ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

³⁵⁵ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

³⁵⁶ Gerard, J. *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest*, p.22.

³⁵⁷ Gerard, J. *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest*, p.22.

³⁵⁸ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

night strangers visit the house', potentially to see a priest.³⁵⁹ It was important that the family, and wider community, could access a priest to administer rites of passage and sacraments and Bird notes: 'His [Edward's] children (especially one daughter married to Mr Edward Mollineux, a gentleman of fair living) are said to be christened, married, and buried with masses and Romish ceremonies.'³⁶⁰ A report to the Privy Council dated 1591 recorded the use of family celebrations, stating 'marriages and christenings are celebrated by seminary and other priests in corners.'³⁶¹ Baptisms carried out in parish churches were repeated afterwards by Catholic priests.³⁶²

Norris Family Relations:

The various networks that the Norrises intersected through relations and kin meant that separating families into religious enclaves or viewing early modern dining in Lancashire as only ever exclusively Catholic or Protestant is erroneous. Family relations were messy. The placement of daughters in Protestant families through marriage meant that the Norrises straddled the religious divide with families linked through commensality at Speke, whether the Catholic marriage of Emilia and William Blundell at Speke described by Thomas Bell or other rites of passage marked by the different branches of the family and their offspring.

The marriage of Emilia Norris to William Blundell linked the two prominent Catholic families in the region. Several of Emilia's sisters also married into prominent Catholic families in Lancashire, many of whom appeared in the evidence Thomas Bell provided on Catholic networks. However, Emilia's sister Anne married into the Protestant Butler family of Bewsey, near Warrington, her brother William (discussed below) married the granddaughter of Sir Richard Molyneux, and William's daughter Margaret married into the Protestant Fleetwood family of Penwortham (see fig.3). Martha Norris married the brother of Catholic James Anderton. Martha's second marriage, however, was to the Protestant Sir Henry Bunbury, Martha becoming Lady Bunbury. Bunbury's uncle was Sir William Stanley, a notorious

³⁵⁹ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

³⁶⁰ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

³⁶¹ SP 12/240 f.222.

³⁶² Ibid.

Catholic, and another of his uncles was Protestant Sir Thomas Aston. Aston was close to the Norrises and other Catholic Lancashire families despite his faith.³⁶³

Intermarriage with Protestants kept the Norrises safe through kin allegiance but relations with local Protestants were not always smooth, despite the efforts of the Norrises to entertain and forge kinship links. This was particularly the case with the Fleetwoods, Moores, and Bretterghs.³⁶⁴ The marriage of Margaret Norris, Emilia's niece, to Protestant Edward Fleetwood resulted in conflict.³⁶⁵ The will of her father-in-law Richard Fleetwood in 1626 stated that the children of Edward and Margaret Fleetwood should be protected from their Catholic grandparents and 'that by no meanes or waies the said wardshipp shall happen to come into the handes of Sir William Norreis, Knight, or any others who is not conformable to the lawes ecclesiasticall now established.'³⁶⁶ These instructions reveal the anxieties some felt about contact with Catholics.

Familial links to Protestant families was a tactic for the Norries in another way: it allowed the Norrises to bring people over to their faith. The Fleetwood will indicates that Edward Fleetwood had converted to Catholicism and there was a risk of his offspring also being Catholic. John Fleming married Sir William's (d. 1630) daughter Bridget who converted him to Catholicism.³⁶⁷ He subsequently helped his father-in-law with his financial problems alongside his other friends the Molyneux family.³⁶⁸ Fears about contact with Catholics around the table could be justified where it concerned the possibility of conversion attempts.

³⁶³ BL Add MS 36913; MS 36914; 36923; University of Liverpool Special Collections GB 141 AD.

³⁶⁴ The Bretterghs were a godly family linked to the Bruens of Stapleford by marriage. Katherine Brettergh and John Bruen were siblings: see Harrison, W. *The Christian Life and Death of Mistris Katherin Brettergh late wife of Master William Brettergh, of Bretterghoult in the County of Lancashire Gentleman* (1634); Hinde, W. *The Very Singular Life of John Bruen, Esquire, of Bruen Stapleford, Cheshire* (1641).

³⁶⁵ Letters from Fleetwood and start of conflict is Add MS 36927.

³⁶⁶ Earwaker, J.P. *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills and Inventories 1572-1696 Now Preserved at Chester with Appendix. Chetham Society*, Vol 28, ns. (1893), p.194, Will of Richard Fleetwood, the Elder, of Penwortham, Co. Lancs, Esquire, 1626.

³⁶⁷ Collingwood, Paper Calendar of the Norris Papers, Special Collections, University of Liverpool.

³⁶⁸ University of Liverpool Special Collections, SPEC NORRIS 274, 278, 285, 286, 293.

Sir William Norris (d.1630):

Sir William Norris inherited Speke on the death of his father Edward in 1606. He was listed as a recusant in 1626 in the House of Commons.³⁶⁹ The strength of his Catholicism is illustrated through his pilgrimage to St Winifred's Well in North Wales in 1629 amongst numerous priests and fellow Catholics from Lancashire and beyond. Due to financial problems, an inventory was drawn up in 1624 which lists a large quantity of dinnerware indicating the importance Sir William put on commensality. He also made changes to the great parlour where he entertained dinner guests. It was through the various elements of the great parlour that Sir William created a commensal setting which allowed him to both eat with Protestants and create a space which was infused with Catholicism and connected to Catholic Lancashire beyond its walls. Like his predecessors, Sir William was a committed Catholic who used commensality to tend social bonds.

Sir William's use of commensality in the parlour contained the requisite elements for impressive gentry dining but was also infused with Catholicism through the décor of his father and mother Edward and Margaret and through the additions he made to the space. The tableware listed in the 1624 Speke inventory included pewter salad dishes, little saucers, a jelly basin, pasty and pie plates, painted ceramics including two ewers and basins and pewter fingerbowls, and over forty Venice glasses.³⁷⁰ A new porch entrance was added to the great parlour allowing easy access to the gardens following an intimate dinner or banquet course, and a new plaster ceiling full of hanging grape vines, pomegranates, columbines, and roses gave the space a fashionable overhaul. Despite Sir William's money problems, he knew the importance of being able to impress with hospitality and how to use commensal spaces to the best effect.

³⁶⁹Rushworth, J. Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, Vol 1 1618-1629. D.Browne (1721), pp.374-422.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

Catholic Conceptions of Space:

I argue the commensal space of the Speke great parlour worked to reassure Catholics and ground them in their faith as they ate with others. This was done through the positioning of the room itself, next to a priest hole, through the decorative plasterwork ceiling full of Catholic imagery hidden in plain sight, through the oak overmantel featuring generations of the Norris family, and links to nature which connected the act of banqueting to a Catholic landscape.

As mentioned above, one of the main priest holes at Speke was above the table in the great hall and was also adjacent to the great parlour next door. Alexandra Walsham refers to the places where priests or massing stuff had been in a domestic property as a spiritual hotspot, a place that retained its sacred power even after the priest and/or massing stuff had been removed.³⁷¹ These sites acted as a domestic ‘compass’ and ‘anchor’ for the Catholics.³⁷² These ‘compasses’ and ‘anchors’ helped the Norrises make concessions to their Catholic observance if they needed to acquiesce when eating flesh with Protestant guests on fast days or saying a Protestant grace.³⁷³ I extend this idea of the ‘compass’ and ‘anchor’ to decorative features and the act of banqueting amid a Catholic conception of indoor and outdoor space.

Inside Speke’s dining rooms Catholicism was ever-present. The fact priests were situated above the table, as reported by spy John Bird, also feeds into the observation and eavesdropping elements of Speke.³⁷⁴ It has been proven that people seated under the whispering gallery can be heard by people inside the canopy quite clearly during recording at the property.³⁷⁵ An ‘eavesdrop’ hole situated above the main door to the hall allowed people to hear the conversations of people coming up to the main door of the hall in advance of their

³⁷¹ Walsham, A. Walsham, *Holy Families: Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Revisited*, pp.153-154.

³⁷² Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.5, 567.

³⁷³ A guide to how to maintain your faith whilst dining with those of the Protestant faith was drawn up for priests at Douai and Rheims seminaries. This was added to by William Allen and Robert Persons. See Holmes. P.J. *Elizabethan Casuistry*. *Catholic Record Society*, 1981.

³⁷⁴ CP 58/103, Cecil Papers vol 58. 1598/9 Jan.11.

³⁷⁵ Drs Rachel Wiley and Emilie Murphy’s Soundscapes of the Early Modern World project, AHRC funded, AH/S004831/1. [GtR \(ukri.org\)](http://GtR.ukri.org) [Last Accessed 3 February 2023].

knocking. Anyone dining in the great hall or parlours of Speke would know a pursuivant was approaching before they heard the knock. The presence of priests in close proximity to the family when eating in company would imbue the food spaces of Speke with Catholicism.

This omnipresence of priests and domestic Catholicism could be felt through the re-conception of domestic space as Catholic. Instructions on how to lead a Catholic life in the absence of church attendance were regularly published including Robert Southwell's *A Rule of Good Life* (1596-7).³⁷⁶ These instructions allowed Catholic families to remain faithful and lead a Catholic life as best they could in the circumstances of the English Reformation, allowing for the re-imagining of the home as a new spiritual realm in lieu of the church.

One of the instructions of Southwell, in how to think about God and one's faith as one moved around the home, was to dedicate each room to a particular saint. As a person entered the room they could meditate on that saint's life.³⁷⁷ This had implications for a lay Catholic's use of food spaces:

the consideration of the Saintes presence, will be a continuall bridle to restraine me from irreverent demeanor, unfitted for such a behoulder as there I have placed, to be a witness and aider of mind actions...I must place such Saintes in the roome as are fittest to be patterns & examples unto me in that action, for which that roome principally serveth. As in the dining chamber or parlour, Saintes of spare and regular diet, of sober and virtuous conversation.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Robert Southwell, *A Short Rule of Good Life to Direct the Devout Christian in a Regular and Orderly Course* (1596-7).

³⁷⁷ Robert Southwell, *A Short Rule of Good Life*. Within Speke is the curiously named 'St Raymond's Room.' This may be an old echo of such a room naming scheme. Southwell instructed Catholics to think of saints whose lives would be best suited to the use of each room. St Raymond is the saint of childbirth and so this room, on the first floor, could well have been a room for the confinement and lying in of expectant and new mothers.

³⁷⁸ Robert Southwell, *A Short Rule of Good Life*.

Evidence of this reflective way of living and moving around the Catholic house during the day being taken up by the Norrises is the inscription in the great hall, on the panelling of the whispering gallery:

Sleepe not till ye hathe consederd how thow hast spent yr day past. If
thow hae well don thank god if other ways repent ye.

This inscription echoes the instructions of Southwell:

Towards the howre of going to bed, I must examine my self, first whether my promises, or appointments concerning extraordinary things and business, be performed: if I have forgotten any necessary thing I must take order to remember it, that I forget it not a second time. This done I must examine my conscience, touching the thoughts, words and deeds of that day, and especially concerning the purposes that I have made in the morning and how I have observed these rules, and what faultes I have committed of any moment.³⁷⁹

A further inscription, over the door of the great parlour reads:

The streghtest way to heaven is God to love and serve above all things.

These doorway inscriptions fit a Catholic conception of domestic time and space like Southwell's, serving as warnings during meals or on leaving the room to reflect on behaviour and religious devotion. Other rules of Southwell's set out the precepts of what one should do before and after eating:

I must learne my little children (if I have any) to say some short grace, or at the least, I must say grace to my selfe: and when I am set, before I lay hande to my trencher, I may pause a while, and in my mind desire God to give me temperance, and mindfulness of his presence...After dinner I must thank God for his gifts, remembering that he hath fed me for this end, that I

³⁷⁹ Robert Southwell, *A Short Rule of Good Life*.

should be more able to serve him...After dinner I must call to mind, whether I have any promise to performe, or any other business to do that is not ordinary: that I neither forget the thing, nor time appointed for it.

The door inscriptions worked to inform the behaviour of diners within the food spaces of the great hall and parlour. The Norrises were not alone in this need to shape their own religious behaviour and that of others' throughout the home. Mrs Dorothy Lawson of Newcastle also structured her day and used her household in order to meditate and structure her thoughts.³⁸⁰ At home she 'was exceedingly taken with mental prayer, and was wont to compare it to the star that conducted the sages to the crib of Christ..that it serv'd her for a guide in every day's journey, and that the regulating, or well ordering of her actions, depended much of the success thereof.'³⁸¹ The analogy of the star is echoed in Walsham's concept of spaces acting as 'compasses' and 'anchors' to provide a sense of guidance and navigation.

Speke's Great Parlour:

Several decorative elements combine in the parlour at Speke to create an intimate but richly meaningful space for commensality. The plasterwork ceiling was commissioned by Sir William Norris in 1612, adding to the oak overmantel his father commissioned in the 1580 or 90s.³⁸² The meaning of both these decorative elements would vary depending on religious conviction. The plasterwork ceiling, compass window, and carved wooden overmantel all worked to build up affective layers of décor which could comfort, be used as prompts for conversation, be commemorative, or link this food space to the wider natural environment beyond it.

³⁸⁰ Palmes, W. *The Life of Mrs Dorothy Lawson of St Anthony's near Newcastle-on-Tyne*. London (1855), pp.38-40.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.38.

³⁸² Traditionally the overmantel has been dated by the National Trust as being created in c.1567, the year before William Norris's [1501-68] death. Hamling, however, argues that this was commissioned by Edward Norris after his father had died. This is due to his need to establish himself as rightful heir to Speke, despite him not being the first-born son. This is supported by the depiction of Margaret as devout Catholic wife and matriarch. Hamling, T. 'An Arelome To This Hous For Ever': Monumental Fixtures and Furnishings in the English Domestic Interior, c.1560-c.1660. in: Gorden, A. and Rist, T. *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*. Routledge (2013), pp.59-74.

Oak Overmantel: Faith, Remembrance, and Dining

For Tara Hamling, the funerary monuments of the early modern period met with domestic fixtures and fittings in gentry homes.³⁸³ She includes the overmantel at Speke as an example of the fusing of the domestic with the ecclesiastical and memorial in domestic decorative schemes, especially in reception rooms.³⁸⁴ At Speke this created the perfect opportunity to display the Norris family's gentry status, religious conviction, and the commemoration of their predecessors.³⁸⁵

Hamling argues that the overmantel was a piece with affective agency. She has written about the significance of decorative overmantels as a focal point for the room whilst dining or conversing, particularly where there is a religious aspect.³⁸⁶ For her, the arrangement of the Speke overmantel as a triptych references dynastic portraiture, whilst the arrangement of the various spouses and children echoes funerary monuments.³⁸⁷ These aspects together with the rosaries, prayer books and images of grandparents taken from brasses in the nearby Childwall parish church, reflects a Catholic past and Catholic family tradition with relatives looking down (and watching) the later generations, looking for their Catholic obedience.³⁸⁸ The presence of the relatives worked to ensure 'the continued social presence of deceased ancestors within the very spaces they once occupied...which must have bolstered ancient habits of thought...'³⁸⁹ The oak overmantel, therefore, had the power to influence people as they ate.

One way in which it could do this was through the incorporation of imagery linked to commemoration, family, and death. Several elements highlight the similarity between

³⁸³ Hamling, 'An Arelome To This Hous For Ever', pp.59-60.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, pp.61, 71-74.

³⁸⁶ Hamling, T. *Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain*. London: Yale University Press. (2010).

³⁸⁷ Hamling, T. 'An Arelome to this House For Ever', pp.72, 74.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p.74.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

funerary monuments and the Speke overmantel. Several generations of Norris children were placed in a similar fashion to the line-up of children in monuments found in churches from throughout the 16th and 17th century: found in praying poses and with male and female children separated and ranked in age order.³⁹⁰ There is also the *momento mori* image of William Norris's (1501-68) son and heir William (Edward's older brother) who was killed at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547. He is shown lying prostrate amongst a skull and bone, having fallen during the fighting. Tara Hamling and Alexandra Walsham have both highlighted the incorporation of *momento mori* imagery into early modern dining spaces which emphasised the fragility of life.³⁹¹

The overmantel acted as a prompt to remembrance of the Norris family ancestors. It echoed a dynastic triptych such as the state portrait of Henry VIII and family (c.1545).³⁹² Through these various features the overmantel had the potential to exert control over behaviour and thought in this room.³⁹³ The figures of Norris family, past and present, gave ancestors a 'social presence' in this communal space.³⁹⁴ They watched over the happenings and actions of current family descendants, reinforcing the need for displays of gentry status and devout Catholicism in a continuance of Norris family behaviour.³⁹⁵ Hamling, drawing on Alfred Gell's idea of 'distributed personhood', states that material elements such as the Speke overmantel are evidence of the motivations of early modern inhabitants: an embodiment of their 'ideas, priorities, and concerns.'³⁹⁶ In Edward Norris's [1540-1606] commissioning of the overmantel, I argue, he sought to shape the actions of those who ate in company beneath it through remembrance and deference.

³⁹⁰ Hamling, 'An Arelome To This Hous For Ever', p.74.

³⁹¹ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.275-284; Walsham, A. *Domesticating the Reformation. Renaissance Quarterly*, 69:2 (2016), p.579.

³⁹² Hamling, 'An Arelome To This Hous For Ever', p.72.

³⁹³ *Ibid*, p.74.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁹⁶ Hamling, 'An Arelome To This Hous For Ever', p.62; Gell, *Art and Agency*, pp.96-154, 221-223.

Catholic Shared Drinking: The Cup of Suffering

I argue that as well as the overmantel exerting influence through commemorative imagery linked to Norris ancestry, it also worked through family imagery that emphasised the family's Catholic faith. This reminded Catholic diners of the need to be mindful of their conduct and piety when dining in mixed company or of their suffering when they ate with fellow Catholics. Central to this was the image of Margaret Norris drinking from a chalice handed to her by an angel.

Various communal drinking vessels were recorded at Speke in the inventory of 1624 and are discussed further in the context of Angela McShane's work on drinking in chapter 6. The parlour décor featured references to chalices and imbibing within a decorative scheme full of Catholic imagery.³⁹⁷ The sharing of drinks in the parlour was a meaningful act replete with associations of the mass and eucharist, shared Catholic identity, spiritual performance, and the suffering of Catholic persecution. Tara Hamling identified the image of Margaret Norris (1540-1610) in the Speke overmantel as one where she receives the cup of grace from Jesus, in reference to Christ's agony in the garden.³⁹⁸ In this she mimics Christ's acceptance of suffering through his acceptance of the chalice in Luke 22:42: 'Father, if thou wilt, take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.' This is a distinct reference, Hamling argues, to Margaret's belief and perseverance in her Catholic faith despite persecution.³⁹⁹ The overmantel intimates that Margaret has achieved grace through her steadfastness in the face of persecution and her ability to withstand suffering. This act of drinking is reinforced by the presence of another chalice on the overmantel in the bottom right corner. Lisa McClain argues that communal drinking, alongside the rosary, was an alternative Catholics sought in lieu of the eucharist and mass.⁴⁰⁰ While this was unlikely to be an issue for the Norrises as they had access to priests and provided such access to others.

³⁹⁷ Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*, pp.179-181 refers to chalices in the décor of Sir Thomas Tresham's warrener's lodge, another food space, and makes the same connection with Jesus's sacrifice and Catholic suffering and loss of the Eucharist.

³⁹⁸ Hamling, 'An Arelome To This Hous For Ever', p.74.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned* - the rosary Chapter 3; drinking pp.257-8.

However, communal drinking still held significance for the family as it allowed a coming together around shared identities, the expression of these identities, and spiritual connection through physical commensal and convivial acts. The décor of the parlour provided spiritual comfort to diners, expressing shared identity in the face of persecution and continued adherence to the Catholic faith.



Fig. 8. Margaret Norris, accepting a chalice from God, in acceptance of suffering. Image courtesy of Roy Whitelock-Wainwright



Fig. 9. Chalice or standing cup image carved into the oak overmantel at Speke. Image courtesy of Roy Whitelock-Wainwright

Margaret drinking from this chalice, in sympathy with Jesus in the garden, mirrored the imbibing of Catholic dinner guests in the great parlour: partakers shared in the communal drink, echoing the Eucharist and the Last Supper, imitating Christ's suffering through such an action. Lisa McClain details the case of women in Winchester who asked to 'drink all of the same cup' i.e. suffer the same treatment as their Catholic menfolk facing execution.⁴⁰¹ Just as Christ accepted the cup from God in acknowledgment that he must give himself in sacrifice, English Catholics identified with this act as a reflection of their suffering and acceptance.⁴⁰² If the cup could not pass from Christ's lips, it could not pass from theirs – they had to partake of the drink.⁴⁰³ Through sharing the drink, they shared the suffering.⁴⁰⁴ The sharing of a drink in the parlour at Speke during a banquet course with the Norris family was a significant and meaningful act.

Parlour, Banquets, and Landscape:

Sharing food and drink in this space was accompanied by various layers of meaning built up in the décor of the room: the memory of ancestors and the shared suffering of the Catholic community. Dining also recalled Catholic historical connections to landscape features and the legends of early Christian martyrs and English and Welsh Christianity.⁴⁰⁵ Alexandra

⁴⁰¹ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p.257.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Walsham argues that the Catholic sense of dislocation in losing their parish churches resulted in closer relationship to the landscape around them.⁴⁰⁶ She cites Frances Dolan's argument that such 'unchurching' pushed Catholics 'into a more tactical and fluid relation to space', and adds that this occurred as much in relation to the outdoor spaces of the countryside as it did to indoor domestic spaces.⁴⁰⁷ The plasterwork ceiling in Speke's parlour combined gardens and nature with banqueting and shows the sweet course, set in the parlour, was clearly linked to the outdoors in the Norris family's minds. Although parlours could be the site for more intimate dinners, away from the large open space of the great hall, they were also a setting for the sweet banquet course where select guests withdrew to this more private space.

Several historians have written about the strong and widely held connection between banquets and nature.⁴⁰⁸ Anne C. Wilson sees sweet banqueting stuff such as syllabubs as a definite link between food and nature which coalesced around the banquet table.⁴⁰⁹ This link blurred the boundary between eating inside and the landscape beyond where many of the sweet and creamy banquet ingredients were sourced. A pastoral setting and outdoor connections are evoked in this Michael Drayton poem, echoing similar connections made in the songs of William Blundell below:

New whig with water from the clearest stream,
Green plums and wildings, cherries, chief of feast,
Fresh cheese and dowsets, curds and clowted cream,
Spiced syllabubs and cider of the best.⁴¹⁰

The sweet foods that the Norrises served as part of the banquet course in their parlour had inherent outdoor connections which merged associations of rural bounty and community festive celebrations.

⁴⁰⁶ Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p.166.

⁴⁰⁷ Dolan, F. Gender and the Lost Spaces of Catholicism. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32 (2002), cited in Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p.166.

⁴⁰⁸ Stead, J. 'Bowers of Bliss': The Banquet Setting. In Wilson, A.C. *"Banqueting Stuffe": Papers from the First Leeds Symposium on Food History and Tradition*. Edinburgh University Press (1991), pp.115-157. Also Henderson, P. *The Tudor House and Garden: Architecture and Landscape in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century*. Yale University Press (2005), pp.165,157, 243, 219, 220.

⁴⁰⁹ Wilson, A.C. *"Banqueting Stuffe"* p.18.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

That a gentry house such as Speke could be thought of as porous and permeable is accepted by Sara Pennell, Tara Hamling, and Alexandra Walsham. I argue early modern houses were permeable in many senses: they allowed evil to come in (see chapter 5 on apotropaic marks and food); they admitted 'all comers' to eat through community hospitality and celebrations could spill out from them; and the boundary between domestic food spaces and the landscape beyond them was a liminal one⁴¹¹ For Walsham, this porosity links the inside of the house with the landscape around it.⁴¹²

Local community celebrations, like those of Emilia Norris and William Blundell's described by Thomas Bell, help dispel the idea that Catholic gentry homes were hermetically sealed. They also further highlight the connection between food, place, landscape, and faith. A Lancashire church rectors report of 1590 told how 'daily Masses are celebrated, marriages take place in private houses without knowledge of the parish minister and persons have been re-baptised. Popish fasts and festivals are celebrated to the detriment of observance of the Sabbath which again is fast becoming the occasion for fairs, markets, rush-bearings, gaming, piping, dancing and such-like deplorable pastimes.'⁴¹³ The local gentry, including the Norrises and Blundells, partook of such celebrations and facilitated them. Emilia's grandson, William Blundell the 'Cavalier,' reminisced over past local festivities in 1641 with a song:

Then cakes and prunes stude
Weare greedily chude
Of ale that was good
They poured down a flood
And being gott giddy
Then stepped forth Neddy
And swore by his taking
That he would go daunce again
I by the making...
All sport was forsaken
To see loose legs shaked
The maydes buttocks quaked

⁴¹¹ Pennell, S. *Birth of the English Kitchen*, Bloomsbury (2016), pp.7, 142-145; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.271; Walsham, A. *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p.5.

⁴¹² Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.10, 14, 153-232, 182-183.

⁴¹³ Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*, p.120, citing Chetham Miscellany V, *Chethams Society* Old Series No 96.

Lyke custards new baked.⁴¹⁴

William Blundell's use of song, explored by Emilie Murphy, features other examples where faith is closely entwined with the Catholic community and local places.⁴¹⁵ There was no distancing of gentry families in this area from the local Catholic community at times of feasts and festivities. Further evidence of communal festive celebrations come in the form of two wassail bowls in the Speke inventory of 1624.⁴¹⁶ Ronald Hutton has written on the form Christmas and New Year celebrations took when the wassail bowl came out.⁴¹⁷ As well as its involvement in the ritual protection of apple trees in the New Year to ensure a good autumn fruit harvest, at Christmas the bowl facilitated an exchange of drink and hospitality throughout a local community. Such exchange was dependent on the idea of the festive 'open house' which allowed local celebrants to cross the boundary with the wassail bowl and join the party inside. This account of wassailing from Henry Machyn on Twelfth Night 1555 paints a picture of the hospitable nature of wassailing:

Twelve wessells with maidens singing [entered the room], with their wessells; and after came the chief wives singing with their wessells; and the gentlewomen had ordained a great table of banquet, desserts of spices and fruit, as marmalade, gingerbread, jelly, comfit, sugar plate and divers others.⁴¹⁸

The large and small wassail bowls owned by the Norris family indicate a similar exchange, especially given the range of banqueting wares and the equipment to make such sweetmeats also listed in the 1624 inventory. The blurred boundaries of the gentry house through Catholic celebrations and an open house model of feasts and rites of passage brought the outside in and vice versa. For Alexandra Walsham, such a porous gentry house connects with Catholic

⁴¹⁴ The Blundell family miscellany – *The Great Hodge Podge* – held at Lancashire Archives ref DDBI. Extract from van Vuuren, J. *The Manuscript Culture of an English Recusant Catholic Community in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Study of The Great Hodge Podge and the Blundell Family of Little Crosby, Lancashire*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Reading. (2011).

⁴¹⁵ Murphy, E. Making Memories in Post-Reformation English Catholic Miscellanies. In. Walsham, A. Wallace, B, Law, C. and Cummings, B. (eds.). *Memory and the English Reformation*. Cambridge University Press (2020), pp.408-410.

⁴¹⁶ Saxton, E.B. A Speke Inventory of 1624, *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* XCVII (1945).

⁴¹⁷ Hutton, R. *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (1996).

⁴¹⁸ Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, p.13 citing Nichols, J. (ed). *The Diary of Henry Machyn*. Camden Society, 1848) p.99.

ideas of the English landscape and a person's place in it, with the house as porous as the bodies within it.⁴¹⁹

The Parlour Ceiling: Nature, Banquets, and The Song of Songs



Fig. 10. The plasterwork ceiling in the oak parlour at Speke. Flora and fruits featured on the ceiling are as follows: roses, lilies, irises, columbine, nuts, pomegranates, grapes, and honeysuckle. Photos author's own.

Natural floral imagery is featured in the great parlour ceiling, a popular choice for banqueting spaces amongst Catholics and Protestants. The ceiling is a moulded plasterwork scheme consisting of various flowers, fruits, and nuts, as well as a bird and snake (hinting at an Eden reference lurking amongst the garden imagery). A similar ceiling with plasterwork flora and fauna survives at Chastleton House in Oxfordshire, with intertwining vines and flowers, mimicking the experience of walking under a garden arbour or bower.⁴²⁰ This was replicated

⁴¹⁹ Walsham, A. *Reformation of the Landscape*, p.5; Walsham, *Holy Families: The Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Revisited*, p.124.

⁴²⁰ Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden*, p.219.

in banqueting trenchers, delftware plates, as well as in the soft furnishings, and echoed the floral ingredients of the sweet treats at the table including rose water, violets, and other candied petals.⁴²¹ Wherever there was garden imagery in early modern schemes, thoughts would turn to Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the garden scene with Jesus and Mary Magdalene outside the sepulchre. However, the specific images in the ceiling at Speke convey more than these pleasant garden associations. The imagery was specifically chosen to evoke the Biblical Song of Songs (Song of Solomon 1-8). The flowers featured are roses, lilies, and columbine. The fruits of the garden are pomegranates and hazelnuts. Each of these made up the *hortus conclusus* of the Virgin Mary.⁴²² At Speke the parlour ceiling combined nature, dining, landscape, and faith in affective and influential ways. This décor could be read in different ways by different diners.

The *hortus conclusus* was the Virgin's metaphorical enclosed garden which represented her purity and fecundity as well as simultaneously referencing her son Jesus's death on the cross.⁴²³ The root of this *hortus conclusus* came from The Song of Songs and the enclosed garden of the two lovers at the heart of the poem.⁴²⁴ Medieval interpretations of the Song of Songs saw the garden in the poem as being a paradise from which Christ grew, allowing Mary to become the garden, and the poem to become about the incarnation of Christ.⁴²⁵ This interpretation grew alongside the development of medieval gardens, actual devotional gardens planted in monasteries and pleasure gardens developed by wealthier home

⁴²¹ Wilson, "Banqueting Stuffs"; Brears, P. *Food and Dining in Tudor and Early Stuart England*. Prospect Books (2015).

⁴²² Davidson, P. Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England. in, Corthell, R. Dolan, F.E. Highley, C and Marotti, A.F. *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*. University of Notre Dame Press (2007), pp. 27-29; Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden*, pp.73-74; Daley, B.E. The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4:12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary. In. MacDougall, E. (ed.). *Medieval Gardens*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Harvard University (1986); Jennings, A. *Medieval Gardens*, English Heritage and the Museum of Garden History (2004), p.50; Harvey, J. *Medieval Gardens*, B.T. Batsford Ltd: London (1981) figs 41, pp.66-73; Strong, R. *The Renaissance Garden in England*. Thames and Hudson (1979), pp.49, 206-211, 219; McLean, T. *Medieval English Gardens*, Collins: London (1981), pp.129-131, 143, 162-164, 170.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Impelluso, L. (trans. Sartarelli, S). *Nature and Its Symbols: A Guide to Imagery*. Los Angeles (2004), pp.12-15; Larson, V. A Rose Blooms in Winter: The Tradition of the Hortus Conclusus and its Significance as a Devotional Emblem. *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology*. 52:4 (2013), pp.303-306; Daley, B.E. The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain"; McLean, T. *Medieval English Gardens*, Collins (1981), p.170.

⁴²⁵ Larson, A Rose Blooms in Winter, pp.305-6.

owners.⁴²⁶ Taking each image in turn shows how Catholics in this space would think on what they saw, as they retained a moving and transformative connection to the floral motifs of a Marian garden. Dining occurred in spaces that were conceived of as spiritual. The garden imagery associated with the Song of Songs and the *hortus conclusus* was something that Protestants would understand, taking from it a feeling of religiosity and spirituality though this affective interaction would be separated from the very specific and deeply meditative symbolism Catholics associated with it.⁴²⁷

I argue Sir William Norris commissioned the ceiling as a Catholic decorative element that connected the parlour to his faith, family, and Catholic Lancashire. Taking each flower or fruit in turn demonstrates the association of this imagery with Catholic spiritual meditation.

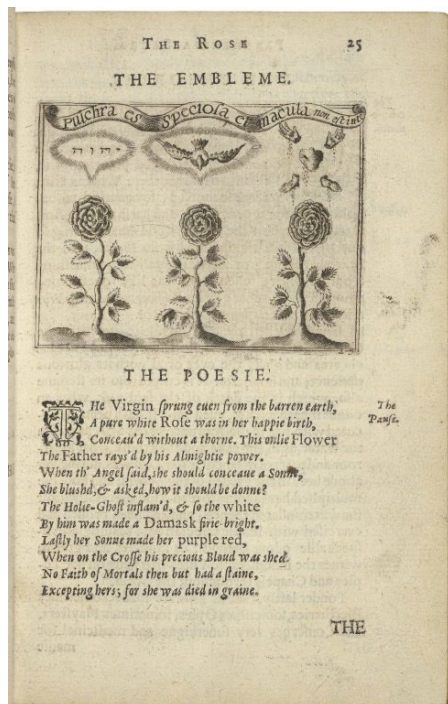


Fig. 11. The Rose, Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633. STC 12958. Image courtesy of The Folger Library.

The rose became synonymous with Mary in the 4th and 5th centuries.⁴²⁸ The red rose was stained with the blood of Jesus, the thorns were those of his crown.⁴²⁹ The five petals of the rose were the five wounds of Christ, dripping with blood.⁴³⁰ This rose symbolism developed

⁴²⁶ Larson, A Rose Blooms in Winter, p.305.

⁴²⁷ Morrall, A. and Watt, M. *“Betwixt Art and Nature”*: English Embroidery from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1580-1700. Yale University Press (2008), p.80.

⁴²⁸ McLean, *Medieval English Gardens*, p.129.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

in the medieval period through the interpretation of the sealed garden in The Song of Songs as Mary's womb and representative of the Virgin Birth.⁴³¹ The rose also became associated with Mary's love and loss, as felt over Jesus, and therefore with death, but also heaven as a garden of paradise.⁴³²

The lily featured in The Song of Songs in combination with the red rose, in part because of its whiteness and purity.⁴³³ The lily was the ideal flower for representation, therefore, of the Annunciation.⁴³⁴ Its whiteness was compared to a holy light.⁴³⁵ It was believed roses and lilies sprang up at Mary's tomb and painted depictions of Mary often featured roses and lilies together, as did medieval garden planting.⁴³⁶

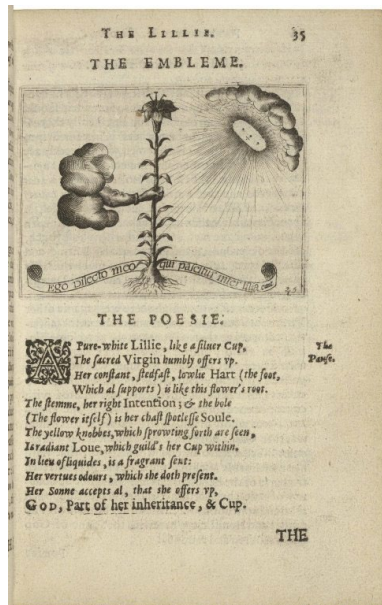


Fig. 12. The Lillie, Henry Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, 1633. STC 12958. Image courtesy of The Folger Library. The text under the emblem shows the lily as a 'silver Cup, The sacred Virgin humbly offers up.'

The shape of the columbine flower was equally meaningful as it was seen as reminiscent of a dove and therefore the Holy Ghost (*columba* is dove in Latin).⁴³⁷ A dove carried an olive branch to Noah and they are mentioned several times in The Song of Songs: 'your eyes are like doves' (Song 4); 'my dove, my flawless one (Song 5).⁴³⁸ The dove was pure, white, meek, and endured

⁴³¹ Ibid, pp.130, 131.

⁴³² McLean, *Medieval English Gardens* p.131.

⁴³³ Ibid, pp.130, 162.

⁴³⁴ Ibid, p.162.

⁴³⁵ Ibid, p.163.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, pp.163-4.

⁴³⁷ Impelluso, L. (trans. Sartarelli, S). *Nature and Its Symbols: A Guide to Imagery*. Los Angeles (2004), p.109.

⁴³⁸ The Song of Songs. Via Biblehub [Accessed 19 January 2022].

suffering.⁴³⁹ It nestled in the wounds of Christ as it did in the holes between rocks (or the holes of a dovecote), and it was chaste and heavenly.⁴⁴⁰

Pomegranates which feature in the roof also feature throughout The Song of Songs, both in the garden where the bride and groom of the song consort but also in the descriptions of their bodies and pleasures: ‘...You are a garden locked up, a spring enclosed, a fountain sealed/ Your branches are an orchard of pomegranates with the choicest of fruits, with henna and nard’ (Song 4:12-13); ‘Your brow behind your veil is like a slice of pomegranate’ (Song 6:7); ‘If the pomegranates are in bloom – there I will give you my love’ (Song 7:7); ‘I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates’ (Song 8:2). Pomegranate were symbolic of Mary’s fertility due to the abundance of seeds and the seeds themselves were likened to rosary beads.⁴⁴¹ Their juice was equated to the blood of Christ and representative of the Passion.⁴⁴²

Also featured in the Speke plaster ceiling are hazelnuts and these too were used to think on Mary, Christian legend telling of her being threatened by a snake and taking shelter in a hazelnut bush.⁴⁴³ Following her encounter she declared that the hazelnut bush would protect against snakes.⁴⁴⁴ Pomegranates were also said to protect against snake bites by Pliny, adding another layer of meaning to the ceiling in the context of its possible protective qualities and the menacing presence of the snake amongst the fruits and flowers.⁴⁴⁵ The three parts of a nut (the sheath, shell, and kernel) also represented Christ’s flesh, the cross, and divinity respectively, as well as the Holy Trinity.⁴⁴⁶ In yet another layer of meaning, hazelnuts were

⁴³⁹ Hawkins, H. *Partheneia Sacra* (1633), pp.201-2.

⁴⁴⁰ Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, p.207.

⁴⁴¹ [Workshop of Sandro Botticelli | The Virgin and Child with a Pomegranate | NG2906 | National Gallery, London](#) [Accessed 19 January 2022]; Unicorn Tapestries pp.131, 143.

⁴⁴² [Workshop of Sandro Botticelli | The Virgin and Child with a Pomegranate | NG2906 | National Gallery, London](#) [Accessed 19 January 2022]; Unicorn Tapestries p.143.

⁴⁴³ Impelluso, L. (trans. Sartarelli, S). *Nature and Its Symbols: A Guide to Imagery*. Los Angeles (2004), p.188.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Pliny cited in Freeman, M.B. *The Unicorn Tapestries*. Metropolitan Museum of Art (1976), p.131.

⁴⁴⁶ Freeman, M.B. *The Unicorn Tapestries*. Metropolitan Museum of Art (1976), p.115; [Cobill Nuts, Christmastide, and The Cloisters | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](#) [Accessed 19 January 2022]; Impelluso explains that the meaning of walnuts and hazelnuts often overlapped: Impelluso, L. (trans. Sartarelli, S). *Nature and Its Symbols: A Guide to Imagery*. Los Angeles (2004), pp.172, 188.

believed to be an aphrodisiac, giving a sensual and pleasurable aspect to the Marian garden, alongside its being another sign of fertility.⁴⁴⁷ Nuts also appear in the Song of Songs (Songs 6:11): 'I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley' reminding us that much of this imagery originated in the garden the lovers of the poem meet in and the sensual pleasures they enjoyed there.⁴⁴⁸

The Speke plaster ceiling connected with the temporal and mnemonic functions of the overmantel with faithful family members of the past and the wider historic and ancient Catholic land outside. Garden meditations prompted by décor such as the Speke ceiling created a mental space to think on one's faith, the Virgin Mary, Jesus, God, and one's position amid the changes of the Reformation.⁴⁴⁹ The creation of such a mental space followed the advice of Robert Southwell and Ignatius Loyola to use one's home as a contemplative space to foster a structured routine of devotion as one moved around the house throughout the day, as detailed above.⁴⁵⁰ Henry Hawkins created, in the *Partheneia Sacra* (1633) and his vision of the *hortus conclusus*, a Catholic mental space that the imagery of the garden promoted and allowed access to.⁴⁵¹ Southwell specifically mentioned gardens as being a useful site for this spiritual thought process and mental space of meditation whilst walking amongst the plants.⁴⁵² Alexandra Walsham also highlights the fact that Southwell's advice was not limited to interior spaces but permeated outside the domestic building too.⁴⁵³ Outdoor locales such as gardens, agricultural land, orchards, and woodland could be sanctified and made Catholic spaces to pray and/or meditate in.⁴⁵⁴ Loyola, Luis de Granada, Edmund Campion and Robert

⁴⁴⁷ Freeman, M.B. *The Unicorn Tapestries*. Metropolitan Museum of Art (1976), p.131; [Cobill Nuts, Christmastide, and The Cloisters | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](#) [Accessed 19 January 2022]

⁴⁴⁸ Freeman, M.B. *The Unicorn Tapestries*. Metropolitan Museum of Art (1976), p.115.

⁴⁴⁹ Davidson, P. Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England. In: Corthell, R. Dolan, F. E, Highley, C. and Marotti, A.F. *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, p.27.

⁴⁵⁰ Larson, A Rose Blooms in Winter, p.308.

⁴⁵¹ Hawkins, H. *Partheneia Sacra* (1633).

⁴⁵² Guinn-Chipman, Religious Space in Reformation England, pp.86-87.

⁴⁵³ Walsham, A. Holywell: Contesting Sacred Space in Post-Reformation Wales. In. *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge University Press (2005), p. 221; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.182-183.

⁴⁵⁴ Walsham, Holywell: Contesting Sacred Space, p. 221. Susan Guinn-Chipman compares this pensive perambulation to the thoughts of Bourdieu, Pierre Nora, and Christopher Tilley on space, movement, actions, memory and understanding, Guinn-Chipman, *Religious Space in Reformation England*, pp.5-7; McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p.199.

Persons also highlighted the garden as a place for reflection.⁴⁵⁵ Hawkin's *Partheneia Sacra* makes clear the links between senses, experience, and mental space in Catholic devotional domestic practice.⁴⁵⁶ He set down in print what had been circulating for centuries in Biblical imagery, art, poetry, and religious interpretations stretching deep into the medieval period.⁴⁵⁷ Hawkins created such a vivid mental image of the Virgin's enclosed garden that the reader feels they can walk around it and fill their senses with the sights, scents, and sounds of roses, irises, lilies, violets, bees, doves, olive trees, and nightingales.⁴⁵⁸

Catholic Landscapes, Banquets, and Memory Arts:

The parlour ceiling may have acted as a mnemonic to remind Norris family of the Virgin Mary, the Passion of Christ, and the Song of Songs as they ate. It had the potential to aid spiritual meditation and prompt reflection. Frances Yates explored early modern memory arts and the idea of a memory palace including the use of actual, corporeal buildings as much as imaginary ones.⁴⁵⁹ She highlighted how some memory devices centred on images and obscure mental space which was seen by some Protestant minds as 'popish' and 'superstitious'.⁴⁶⁰ That is not to say that Protestants were not interested in memory arts. Hugh Platt used the techniques to remember jokes for dinner parties by mental reference to different parts of his own house and advised the reader to do the same using theirs.⁴⁶¹ However, Susan Guinn-Chipman describes the Catholic use of such memory devices to create aids to meditation and contemplation as 'a nexus of individual, micro-level spatial identities' which 'built upon an understanding of broader regional and national topographies' and 'shaped how they thought

⁴⁵⁵ Walsham, A. *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p.182.

⁴⁵⁶ Hawkins, H. *Partheneia Sacra* (1633); Davidson, P. *Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England*, pp.27-29; Larson, A *Rose Blooms in the Winter*, pp.307-309. Though later than the Speke's ceiling commissioned in 1612, Hawkins encapsulated what the imagery was associated with and the meditative uses it had for Catholics.

⁴⁵⁷ Daley, *The Closed Garden*, pp.255-6.

⁴⁵⁸ Larson, A *Rose Blooms in Winter*, p.308; Davidson, *Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England*, pp.27-29.

⁴⁵⁹ Yates, F. *The Art of Memory*. Routledge (1966), pp.22, 33,37, 38-39 ('places real or imaginary', Quintillian's *Instituto Oratoria* XI, ii, 17-22), 75, 85, 115-116, 129, 242, 246,252-259, 267, 269, 271, 274, 288, 290, 297.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ Platt, H. *The Jewel House of Art and Nature* (1594) in Engel, W.E, Loughnane, R. and Williams, G. *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology*. Cambridge University Press (2016), pp.65-69; Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp.276-277.

about histories of place and space.⁴⁶² The ‘Catholic’ memory techniques of Giordano Bruno and Alexander Dicson, disliked by Protestants such as William Perkins, were infused with connections to ruined medieval religious buildings across the landscape.⁴⁶³ Perkins conflated memory arts with idolatry.⁴⁶⁴

William Norris’s plasterwork ceiling and porch door to the parlour at Speke reflect his affinity to the surrounding outdoor spaces and landscape. In 1629 Sir William made a pilgrimage to St Winefride’s Well on the Feast of St Winefride at Holywell alongside priests, other prominent northwest Catholics, and those from further afield.⁴⁶⁵ The list of those present included the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord William Howard, Sir Thomas Gerard, Sir Cuthbert Clifton, Mr Anderton of Clayton, Mr Gerard of Ince, Mr Scarisbricke of Scarisbricke, and Mr Blundell of Crosby – Sir William’s brother-in-law.⁴⁶⁶ The report, thought to be from a spy, lists priests in the company of Sir William Norris and the scale of the gathering:

At Sir William Norris’s House [Speke Hall] two, namely Richardson (Robert) and Holland...with divers other knights, ladies, gentlemen and gentlewomen of divers countries to ye number of fourteen or fifteen hundredth; and the general estimation about a hundred and fifty more priests, the most of them well known what they were.⁴⁶⁷

The presence of people such as the writer and converted Catholic, Elizabeth Cary, indicates this gathering of prominent Catholics from across the country, of which Sir William was a part, was wide-ranging and diverse, stretching well beyond Lancashire.⁴⁶⁸ Catholics found a shared plight with the Christian martyrs and post-Roman British Catholics whose history they saw

⁴⁶² Guinn-Chipman, *Religious Space in Reformation England*, p.134.

⁴⁶³ Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p. 271.

⁴⁶⁴ Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p. 271; Perkins, *A Warning Against the Idolatrie of the Last Times* (1601).

⁴⁶⁵ Gillow, J. (ed.). Registers of Holywell. *Catholic Records Society*, Vol 3 (1906), p.108.

⁴⁶⁶ Catholic Records Society, Vol 3 p.108. Registers of Holywell.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Wolfe, H. (ed). *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680*. Palgrave Macmillan (2006), p.150.

etched on the landscape.⁴⁶⁹ North west Catholics made regional pilgrimages to Fernyhalgh near Preston, to other sites across Lancashire, as well as to St Winifred's Well.⁴⁷⁰ Alexandra Walsham describes the attachment Catholics felt to spiritual sites such as Holywell, connecting them with a Catholic landscape, unchanged over time, with the list of miraculous cures performed at St Winefride's Well evidence of Catholicism 'to be the sole possessor of Christian truth.'⁴⁷¹ That Sir William felt it important to go on pilgrimage to St Winefride's Well in Holywell suggests that he conceived of a Catholic landscape in this way. His pilgrimage is evidence of this connection to the English and Welsh landscape and supports the idea that Catholic devotional spaces extended beyond the boundaries of the home.⁴⁷² Catholic conceptions of interior and exterior spaces show how early modern thought about homes and their situation in the landscape existed with porous boundaries and how the parlour at Speke would be conceived of as intimately linked with a Lancashire countryside viewed as inherently Catholic.

The meaningful decorative schemes of Protestant food spaces detailed by Tara Hamling were not unique to that religious group.⁴⁷³ Catholic schemes can be similarly analysed and in this there is little difference between how the Catholic Norrises and Protestant Moretons used interior decoration in food spaces (see chapter 5). Catholic decoration that used religious imagery mirrored Protestant décor closely. Like Protestant schemes, the Speke ceiling does not feature figurative depictions of Jesus and concentrates on Biblical elements from the Old Testament.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁹ McCain, L. *Lest We Be Damned*, pp.199, 253-260, 291-293; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp.153-232.

⁴⁷⁰ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p.199; Walsham, *Beads, Books and Bare Ruined Choirs*, p.392; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 171,190, 196, 197, 201, 211; Hilton, J.A. (ed.). *The Ancient Crosses and Holy Wells of Lancashire: A Condensed Version*. *North West Catholic History Society* (1993).

⁴⁷¹ Walsham, A. *The Reformation of the Landscape*.

⁴⁷² The Norrises had various Welsh social connections over the years, including the marriage of Sir William's son William to Margaret Salusbury, daughter of Sir Thomas Salusbury who was executed for his part in the Babington Plot in 1586. The family had also held a lease of lands at the old Valle Crucis monastery in North Wales in the 1550s.

⁴⁷³ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*.

⁴⁷⁴ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.219-253.

However, Catholic décor which seemed to share an appearance with Protestant schemes held additional resonance for Catholics based on ideas of persecution, domestic faith, history, and the natural landscape, as the Speke ceiling demonstrates. In The Song of Songs, in Solomon 2:15 there is reference to foxes that attack the vineyard: 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.'⁴⁷⁵ Susan Cogan has equated the foxes in the garden to Protestant threats against the Catholic faith and the persecution of Catholics.⁴⁷⁶ The Norrises were not the only family to use the Song of Solomon to decorate their home. At Harvington Hall, Worcestershire, a series of rooms featured foliate decoration with incorporated lilies and pomegranates Peter Davidson describes as 'quietly eucharistic, quietly Marian.'⁴⁷⁷ Sir Humphrey Stafford decorated his porch, connecting inside and out, using engravings which featured symbolism from the Song of Songs.⁴⁷⁸ Choosing this theme created a triple layer of meaning. Cogan identifies Sir Humphrey Stafford's scheme as a safe one: it utilised Old Testament imagery which was deemed acceptable to Protestants; it used the Song of Songs with its links to hospitality, food, and fruits; and it could make a comment on Catholic persecution.⁴⁷⁹

As well as a spiritual mnemonic, the Speke ceiling could act as a prompt to conversation with its associations between food, bodily health, and links to herbals, dietetics, banqueting, and poetry. Erasmus regularly included gardens, dietary advice, poetry, and displays of learned knowledge in his colloquies based around the dinner table.⁴⁸⁰ It was a prompt for discussion which could help 'season' the food, just as Erasmus does in his *Fabulous Feast*:

That man's a fool whose garden blooms with countless delights when his
mind is uncultivated by learning and virtue.⁴⁸¹

There are various interpretations and connections one could draw from this garden rendered in plasterwork. The ceiling plasterwork was not simply a pleasing aesthetic backdrop for the

⁴⁷⁵ Cogan, Building the Badge of God, pp.185-6.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Davidson, P. Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England, pp.34-35.

⁴⁷⁸ Cogan, Building the Badge of God, p.175.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, pp.175, 185-6.

⁴⁸⁰ Thompson, C.R. (ed.). *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies Vol. 39 and 40*. University of Toronto Press (1997).

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, p.404.

banquet but acted to ensure that the sweet treats served there were accompanied by poetry, wit, and educated conversation. In this, the Norrises' ceiling could pass in plain sight as a decorative scheme fitting for the banqueting space, designed to complement fine dining in learned gentry company and not immediately discernible to Protestant company.

Conclusion: Co-existence:

Commensal practices and spaces at Speke were shaped by a mixture of faith, ambiguity, survival, gentry identity, and were also a site for the maintenance of complicated social bonds. The parlour at Speke represents the negotiations the family made regarding entertaining fellow Catholics and necessary Protestants in their home. Theirs was a home which they adapted and reconceived as a Catholic sacred space from which to go about their continued Catholic practice. It housed priests and was also the site for the implementation of new ideas that emerged from the loss of parish church worship and the replacement with private homes as places of faithful actions. Edward and Margaret accepted as necessary the entertainment of important figures and could acquiesce on several points regarding their continued Catholicism as they ate with others as sanctioned by casuistry advice. At the same time their home, décor, and priest holes reassured them and were a sign to God of their continuing faith.

Religious expression and resistance could be expressed simultaneously.⁴⁸² Susan Cogan has highlighted how early modern people used domestic space to remain connected to local gentry networks through shared interests whilst combining this with decorative manifestations of faith.⁴⁸³ She argued that building and decorative projects were chosen as 'attempt(s) to coexist.'⁴⁸⁴ They allowed bonding with Protestants, for example through a shared interest in architecture and gardens, and set to one side religious difference.⁴⁸⁵ I argue this was a means to allow bonding and dining with other groups, the Norrises using their home to negotiate the new social, religious, and political landscape. For Cogan, this was an explicit

⁴⁸² Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*, pp.173, 175, 183, 189.

⁴⁸³ Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*; Cogan, S. *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England: Kinship, Gender, and Co-existence*. Amsterdam University Press (2021), pp.129-156.

⁴⁸⁴ Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*, p.165.

⁴⁸⁵ Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*, pp.166, 167, 178; Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks*, pp.129-156.

statement of protest against prosecution which could be read by all who experienced Catholics' decorative and architectural schemes.⁴⁸⁶ It was a subtle use of domestic dining spaces with ambiguity built in.

Speke was a site for entertaining useful Protestant figures in regional society. It was important for the Norrises to work at the bonds created and reinstated through the sharing of food in domestic gentry spaces. Social bonds could take priority over obligations to pursue Catholics who avoided church services and the priests they harboured. As Christopher Haigh wrote, 'when royal policy came into conflict with the habits and social relationships of the county it was the latter that prevailed.'⁴⁸⁷ Sir Richard Shireburne's comment in 1592 that he was reluctant to inform on his friends may go some way to explaining how Speke remained a Catholic stronghold for so long: 'if he were so disposed he could easily apprehend massing priests at this neighbours' houses, but he would ransack no man for his conscience.'⁴⁸⁸

The Norrises also used dining to convert others, either from Protestantism to Catholicism in the case of gentry who married into the family, or to persuade their fellow gentry to remove themselves from public Protestant worship in church. Their home was a place in which to continue their Catholicism and strengthen connections to landscape, the Catholic community, and family memory but it was never a hermetically sealed Catholic enclave. It was open and permeable to the natural and social world around it. This has been seen through my exploration of dining in Speke's food spaces and how the Norrises used hospitality.

⁴⁸⁶ Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*, pp.167-169, 187-189

⁴⁸⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p.142.

⁴⁸⁸ SP 12/240 f.226.

Heritage Interlude:

Interpretation at Speke:

Work with the Speke team from 2019-2022 is detailed in my journal article. Speke have worked with other academics including Dr Rachel Willey (LJMU) and Dr Emilie Murphy (University of York) on early modern soundscapes.⁴⁸⁹ The team at Speke have benefited from previous National Trust investment in audio-visual equipment that has enabled interpretation including a great parlour sound installation and projections.⁴⁹⁰ This combined my research on commensality and the anxieties possible during mixed-faith dining with work by Willey and Murphy on sound and listening devices at Speke Hall.

The kitchen at Speke Hall is presented as a Victorian one, based on the story of Speke's 19th century era. Beneath this is the early modern incarnation of the kitchen which often is lost. My work, meant to run from 2020 but due to the pandemic open to visitors throughout 2022, sought to reveal this earlier incarnation and its use in providing food for the Norrises' early modern commensality. This linked to two smaller interventions in the great parlour and great hall that used replica ceramics, syllabub glasses, and the Norris wooden wassail bowl to explore the 1624 Speke inventory and links to Catholic community life outside the hall. Contextual information was given on syllabub as a 16th and 17th century banquet dish; the connections between festive food in the local area and faith through the songs of William Blundell of Little Crosby; and how food and material culture related to the interior decoration of Speke's food spaces and the Catholicism of the Norrises (chapter 2).

The kitchen content consisted of tablecloths on various different work surfaces which focused on a different food known to have been eaten and served by the Norrises. These cloths encouraged visitors to circulate around the kitchen space and encounter the kitchen in a

⁴⁸⁹ Dr Rachel Willie and Dr Emilie Murphy's AHRC-funded project Soundscapes in the Early Modern World – AHRC Code AH/S004831/1.

⁴⁹⁰Fielding, A. Going Deeper than 'Emotional Impact': Heritage, Academic Collaboration, and Affective Engagements. *History*, 107:375 (2022), pp.408-435.

different way, drawing attention to areas not usually the focus of visitors' attention and requiring more circulation around the space. Areas focussed on humoral ingredients and adaptation, the use of food as status symbols, the Norris estate and wider Lancashire landscape where food was sourced, and how food involved reciprocal gifts and the maintenance of social relationships. Six key foods helped visitors explore these themes: venison, wassail, cheese, wheat, salad, and syllabub. Through this exhibition and interventions I was able to use the layout of Speke to explore early modern food through the approach of affect and assemblage.

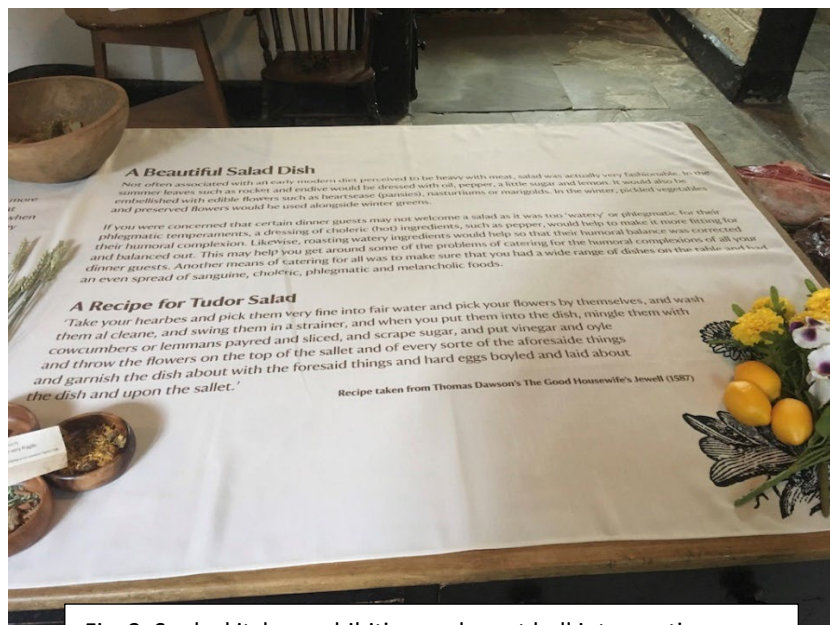
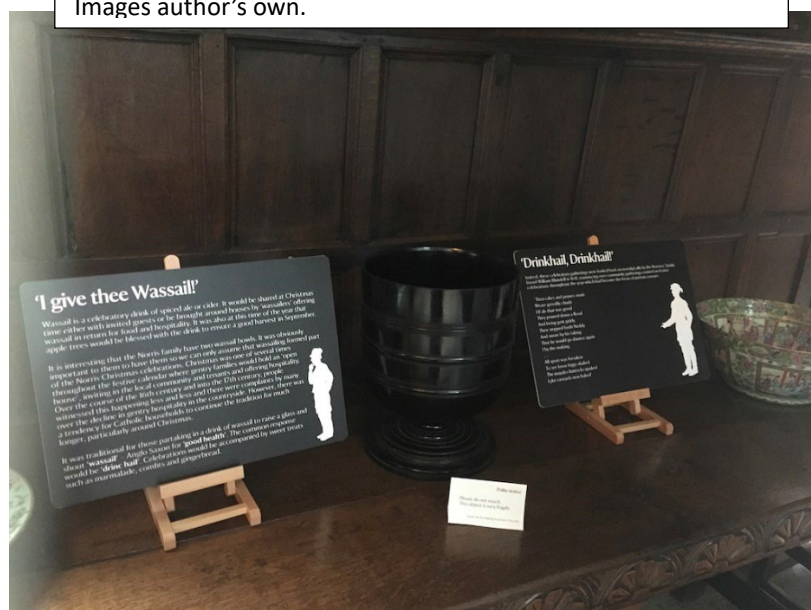


Fig. 3. Speke kitchen exhibition and great hall intervention. Images author's own.



Since my article was written towards the end of the Covid pandemic, work by myself behind the scenes at Speke has sought to deepen the experience and knowledge of volunteers who act as room guides at the property. This has included:

- video content I created to give contextual information to volunteers and an overview of my work in relation to the food spaces of Speke;
- tasting sessions I ran where volunteers could try the foods featured in the kitchen exhibition and a smaller invention in the great parlour;
- a filmed talk I gave to for staff and volunteers, together with a Q&A session, subsequently sent out to the large volunteer cohort;
- related content I wrote for the long-established Speke volunteer newsletter and blog post published online for the Walker Art Gallery.⁴⁹¹

This work has prompted creative responses from volunteers in the form of replica banqueting trenchers, displayed in the great parlour, and crewelwork cushions for the various compass windows of the parlour and great hall.



Fig. 4. Painted banqueting trenchers created by Speke volunteer Heather Day in collaboration with myself. Photo courtesy of Heather Day.

⁴⁹¹ [Tudor Dinner Parties and Political Friendships | National Museums Liverpool \(liverpoolmuseums.org.uk\)](https://liverpoolmuseums.org.uk) [Last Accessed 22 February 2023].



Fig. 5. Crewel work cushions by Speke volunteers, in collaboration with myself and the Women's Institute. Designs are based on early modern designs and feature floral imagery associated with the Virgin Mary, Passion of Christ, and the *hortus conclusus*. These will be available for visitors to interact with and will aid interpretation of the food spaces of Speke and the use of religious décor in commensality. Photo author's own.



Both of these responses have demonstrated the usefulness of academic collaboration in keeping the experiences of heritage volunteers fresh and engaging as well as creating interpretive content for dining spaces. This has strengthened the effectiveness of using volunteers to disseminate academic research at heritage sites. It is also an approach I am keen to replicate elsewhere, as with the example of Rufford above, as a means of solving problems over heritage interpretation which lacks depth or fails to address the complexity of everyday early modern lives and domestic spaces. It is also an area I want to do further work on as a potential solution to the problems of funding affective interpretation, where expensive multi-

media installations are not possible or sustainable. Another potential line of future research on the intersections between academic history and heritage is the ways such affective engagement approaches are evaluated, using creative work produced as one technique that captures the different ways audiences respond to more in-depth and complex interpretation.

Chapter Three

Mirth with Modesty: Hospitality, Conversation, and New Horizons at Little Moreton Hall



Fig. 1. Little Moreton Hall south range and entrance through to the courtyard. Image author's own.

This chapter shows how the Moreton family's style of commensality varied over the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, with their hospitality moving away from the great hall towards parlours and their long gallery in line with changing commensal fashions.⁴⁹² It will also explore shifts in hospitality beyond the gentry home and the impact this had on gentry commensality, the family attempting to counter the drift towards metropolitan styles of socialising and away from the country gentry house. Each Moreton generation used the hall and commensality differently, conveying different messages and creating different atmospheres in the process. William Moreton II (c.1510-63) and John Moreton (c.1541-98) used their home to impress

⁴⁹² Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.40-44.

guests through their ability to host important local figures and their friends, using the latest trends in hospitality, increasingly focused on intimate and exclusive spaces where fashionable bay windows, expensive glazing, or wall paintings could be displayed. In contrast William Moreton III (1574-1654) focused less on the material decor of Little Moreton and more on the nature and quality of conversation he offered to his guests which emphasised his gentry status and important connections beyond Cheshire. He incorporated newer aspects of table talk and commodities coming from London, the continent, and colonial expansion, replicating as much as he could the commensal environments and stimulations found in metropolitan centres. He did this with varying degrees of success before the tactic was curtailed by financial problems and the intervention of the Civil War.

Unlike the Heskeths and Norrises, whose commensality was aimed to maintaining their social position, the Moretons were social climbers who employed hospitality as a means of improving their social rank. William Moreton III invested a lot of money in his children (and his cousin Matthew), financing colonial travels, paying for his children's education, and funding their lifestyles in other countries whilst they sought prestigious positions.⁴⁹³ William's approach to maintaining or increasing social status revolved more around what he could offer as an entertaining host and how he structured commensal occasions than on the architectural and decorative spaces in which he did this. He sought to secure lucrative and respectable positions outside Cheshire for his sons, with the prestige and status that came with these roles flowing back to Little Moreton and infusing commensality. Through the various but intersecting gentry spheres in which his family moved, William Moreton was able to adapt to changing ideas of civility and hospitality which increasingly revolved around colonial intent, cultivation, urban sociability, and the transmission and use of information. He attempted to avoid the increasing association of country hospitality with retreat, escape, or simplicity.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ Evidenced in the various letters where each son and Matthew either ask for money or thank him for money –BL Add MS 33935 ff.23, 40, 54, 73, 74, 78, 81, 83, 85, 103, 112, 124, 138, 145, 149, 150, 157, 169, 232, 261, 291.

⁴⁹⁴ Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.91-122.

Ultimately, I argue William’s tactic was a precarious one which proved unsuccessful. The insecurity of their position was highlighted by the Civil War, and the family largely retreated back to Cheshire. After this rupture the Moretons never recovered their social position and Little Moreton was no longer the focus for Moreton entertaining geared towards social advancement. Through the experience of the Moretons it is possible to trace the changes in hospitality and dining over the two centuries demonstrated by Felicity Heal.⁴⁹⁵ Commensality shifted away from the gentry home towards metropolitan bases with gentry identity expressed increasingly through conversation, wit, and effortless social performances rather than county homes.

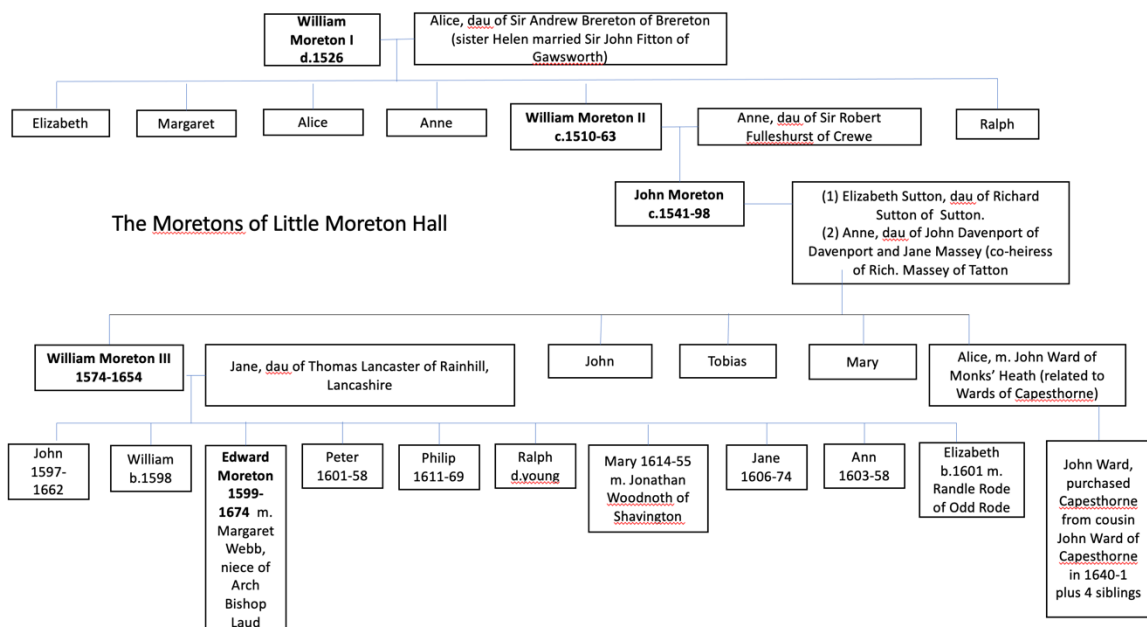


Fig. 2. The Moreton family tree

⁴⁹⁵ Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.103-114.



Fig. 3. Little Moreton courtyard where south, east, and north range meet. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

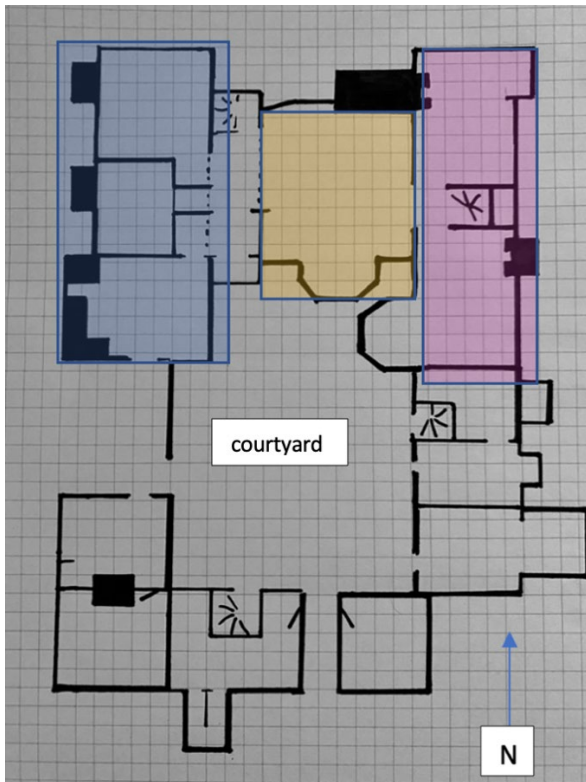


Fig. 4. Ground Floor:
 Blue: service rooms off the screen's passage – buttery, pantry, and kitchen.
 Yellow: across the screen's passage is the central great hall. The bay or compass windows for the great hall and great parlour can be seen projecting out into the courtyard.
 Pink: to the east, the little parlour (top) and great parlour (below) with stairs to the first-floor bedrooms above.

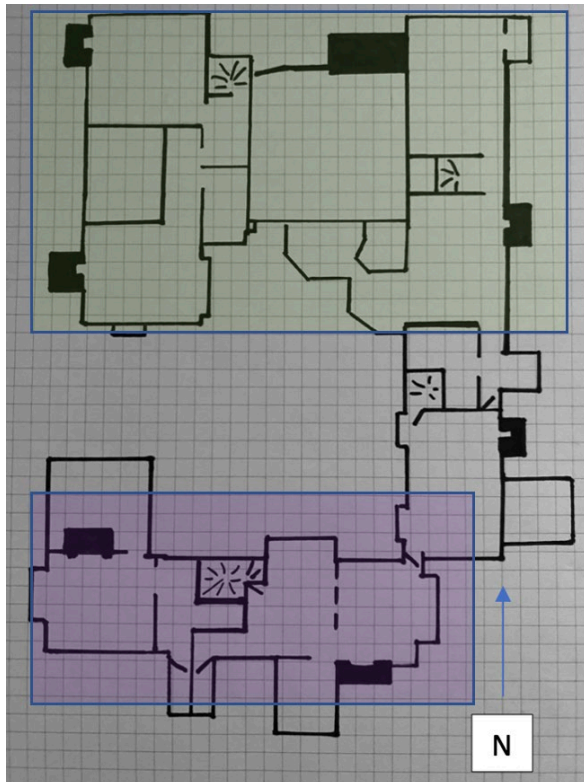


Fig. 5. First Floor

Green: To the north were the main bedrooms for the family and guests. The central space, now the top of the great hall extending to the ceiling beams, was for a period in the 16th century more bedrooms. These were connected to the chambers on the east and west ends of the hall via doorways which can still be seen in the walls of the great hall at first floor level.

Purple: The stairs shown in the south range lead to the first-floor chambers and garderobes and then up to the long gallery above (see fig. 5). Guests going to the long gallery needed to cross the courtyard to access the long dark staircase.

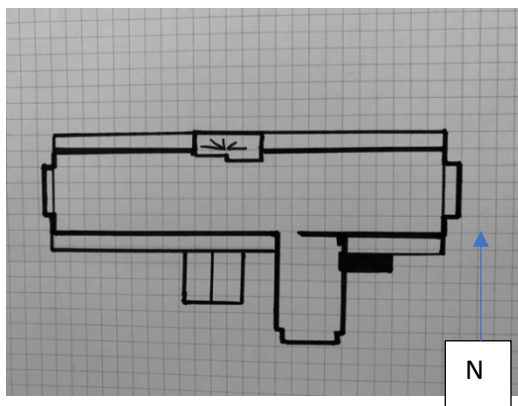


Fig. 6. Second Floor

The long gallery with withdrawing space off it. The impressive space was designed to be narrow to create the illusion of greater length. The gallery therefore rests on the ceiling of the floor below (fig. 4) rather than the weight being taken by the walls of the lower floors. Both sides of the gallery are glazed all the way along allowing light to flood in, affording views of the garden as guests relaxed and walked after dinner.

Little Moreton Hall as a Base for Moreton Commensality:

Little Moreton began as a ‘text-book’ example of a great hall with withdrawing parlours at the high end to the east and service wing off the screens passage to the west built c.1504-8 (see fig.4).⁴⁹⁶ Extensions were added in the 1550s to create the east range (pink) and in the 1560-

⁴⁹⁶ Rothwell J et al. *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*. Architectural Report. Architectural History Practice, London (2012), pp.5, 20

80s to create the south range.⁴⁹⁷ Elements of the building such as garderobe towers, extensive long gallery glazing, a formal courtyard, and bay windows that project into this central space, were all symbols of wealth and status.⁴⁹⁸ Brick fireplaces, added in the 16th century, were markers of status and one in the great hall allowed the introduction of a first floor to span the room, as there was no longer a need for a central hearth with louvres in the roof to allow smoke to escape.⁴⁹⁹ This upper floor may have been added to make the hall a more comfortable and intimate space.⁵⁰⁰ When this floor was constructed and later removed is unknown but I argue its inclusion reflected shifts in the focus of entertaining from central halls to more intimate spaces with which to host guests in the later 16th century and 17th century.⁵⁰¹ In the 1580s the long gallery was built on top of the south range providing an additional entertainment space as well as the great hall, great parlour, and little parlour (see figs 4 and 6).⁵⁰² This altered the entertainment 'axis' at Little Moreton, the focus shifting across the courtyard from the older great hall (pictured fig. 7 and 8) towards the new south range with its fashionable gallery (fig.9), used in conjunction with the existing great and little parlours.⁵⁰³ As a result this the hall became 'symbolic' rather than 'functional.'⁵⁰⁴ A remaining function it possibly served was to host farm workers who may have eaten here to celebrate 'harvest home', with purchases recorded in the Moretons' 1621 accounts showing preparations for a communal meal at this time of year.⁵⁰⁵ That the two parlours were still used for entertaining can be seen from the changes in décor, with the religious painting scheme of Susannah and the Elders added in the 1580s (see chapter 5).⁵⁰⁶

⁴⁹⁷ *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*, p.16.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.6.

⁴⁹⁹ *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*, pp.26, 48; Hamling, T. and Richardson, C. *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life*. Yale University Press (2017), pp.108-9.

⁵⁰⁰ *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*, p.26.

⁵⁰¹ *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*, pp.26, 53, 54; Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.101, 103, 106, 108-9.

⁵⁰² *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*, pp.30-31.

⁵⁰³ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.111-120.

⁵⁰⁴ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, p.120.

⁵⁰⁵ BL Add MS 33941, ff.1-6.

⁵⁰⁶ *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*. p.63.



Fig. 7. Great hall showing the cut off joists for the inserted first floor and the entry to the parlours. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.



Fig. 8. Great hall with filled in doorway linking the bedchambers at the east end of the hall to those on at the west end, which were accessed via another door still visible today. Image courtesy of National Trust Images



Fig. 9. Long gallery at the top of the south range. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

William Moreton II (c.1510-63):

William Moreton II (c.1510-63) inherited Little Moreton on the death of William Moreton I in 1526. The changes made to Little Moreton began when William achieved the position of commissioner in the Royal Visitation Commission in 1559.⁵⁰⁷ The Moretons did not have as much social influence as the Heskeths or Norrises in neighbouring Lancashire, and were considerably less wealthy.⁵⁰⁸ The family often benefitted from local friendships with the Breretons of Brereton or the Fittons of Gawsorth, their social superiors when it came to gentry status and positions of office. William was a surrogate in the Royal Visitation Commission when the main commissioners could not attend.⁵⁰⁹ He took on this role alongside

⁵⁰⁷ Wark, K. R. Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire. *Chethams Society Vol XIX. Third Series* (1971); Thornton, T. *Cheshire and the Tudor State*. The Royal Historical Society Studies in History. Suffolk: The Boydell Press (2000). Kitching, C.J. *The Royal Visitation 1559: Act Book for the Northern Province*. Publications of the Surtees Society. Vol CLXXXVII (1975). For the status of the Moretons amongst the gentry of Cheshire see Cust, R. & Lake, P. *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion: Cheshire on the Eve of Civil War*. Manchester University Press (2020), pp.74, 125; Rothwell J et al. *Little Moreton Hall: History and Development of the Building*, p.6.

⁵⁰⁸ Richard Cust and Peter Lake note that according to the gentry ranking system displayed in the great hall at Adlington Hall in Cheshire, the Moretons were ranked 58 out of 186 Cheshire families. Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.124-125.

⁵⁰⁹ Kitching, *The Royal Visitation 1559: Act Book for the Northern Province*, pp.xix-xxx.

friend Sir Edward Fitton.⁵¹⁰ At Tarvin in Cheshire he was charged with overseeing the parish and clergymen's loyalty to the Act of Royal Supremacy and Prayer Book, receiving presentments of the churchwardens in this regard, inspecting church fabric, and hearing cases of immorality amongst the laity of the parish.⁵¹¹ As a member of the commission he was a representative of the State and presented as a trusted Protestant.⁵¹² The visitation process was slow, involving several days' stay while responses from clergy and follow up investigations were concluded.⁵¹³ This meant an itinerary which included accommodation and meals.⁵¹⁴ William Moreton adapted his home to foreground his Protestantism which underpinned his rise in local government. He displayed an image of someone ready to take on additional administrative responsibility, demonstrating in the main areas of commensality his ability to cater for important guests and the expected socialising that came with office.⁵¹⁵

John Moreton (c.1541-98):

William's son John, who inherited Little Moreton Hall in 1563, does not appear to have held county positions but he was involved in his local parish of Astbury as provost for St Mary's Church, taking decisions alongside other gentry landowners on the appointment of Protestant ministers.⁵¹⁶ John had an authoritative role at town level in Congleton, acting as a juror for the shrieval tourn in 1559, 1572, 1575, and 1581.⁵¹⁷ Whether John sought positions of authority outside of his local parish and town is unknown but the changes he made to Little Moreton indicate a desire to use his home as a centre for hospitality and socialising. He is not mentioned in any of the records of social occasions taking place in the town, unlike his son William (detailed below). John's changes built on the adaptations his father had made in 1559, to which John added a south range, shown at the bottom of fig. 4, together with a long gallery

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid. The visit started with a reading of the Commission, The Thirty-Nine Articles, and Royal Injunctions plus a sermon preached as part of the visitation.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, p.xviii.

⁵¹⁵ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.197-201.

⁵¹⁶ Gordon-Cartlidge, J.E. *Newbold Astbury and Its History*. Old Vicarage Publications (1915), pp.16, 33.

⁵¹⁷ Congleton Museum, Congleton Order Book, pp.28, 34, 35.

which rested on top of it, shown in fig.5. For the additional entertainment space of the gallery, he commissioned painted plasterwork together with religious wall paintings in the older little parlour.⁵¹⁸ These emphasised John's position as a Protestant patriarch and provided a suitable setting for gentry commensality (see chapter 5).⁵¹⁹ The affective nature of the painted schemes John added to Little Moreton (fig.10) will be analysed in chapter 6.



Fig.10. The little parlour with yellow painted panelling and frieze depicting the Apocryphal story of Susannah and the Elders. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

William Moreton III (1574-1654):

⁵¹⁸ Tobit Curteis Associates. Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire: Condition Survey, Analysis and Proposals for the Conversation of the Wall Paintings and Polychromy (2008), pp.3-4

⁵¹⁹ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.197-212; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.134-137.

John's son William made no physical changes to Little Moreton, either in terms of structure or decorative commissions, yet his drive to increase the Moreton family's status manifested itself in other ways. He regularly socialised in and around Congleton with prominent Protestant gentry families including the Davenports, Oldfields, Rodes, and Breretons, at events such as the Great Bear Bait, the Great Cock Fight and at town wakes in the 1610s as evidenced in the town accounts.⁵²⁰ Town celebrations included the visits of groups of players such as the Earl of Derby's, Lord Monteagle's, and the Queen's Players.⁵²¹ Socialising in Congleton, with wine, sweetmeats, fruits, and nuts all supplied by the town authorities, was an opportunity to eat, drink, and converse with influential figures such as Sir John Savage, Sir Urian Legh, and Sir William Brereton.⁵²² Like his grandfather and father, William took seriously the role of gentry commensality and conviviality in honing his social profile. The Moreton correspondence details numerous occasions where figures including Lord and Lady Brereton of Brereton, Ralph Assheton of Middleton in Lancashire, the Welds of nearby Eaton, and several other gentry friends and acquaintances were invited to Little Moreton, with these offers of hospitality also being reciprocated.⁵²³ However, whereas earlier Moreton patriarchs used the fabric their home to support gentry hospitality, William focused on more intangible elements of commensality centring on conversation.

William was able to infuse his dinner parties with his knowledge, culture, wit, and news gleaned from his travelling sons, combining it with other ways of enlivening dinner through studying conversational guides. A diverse approach to commensality and the stimulations a host could offer allowed William to create an atmosphere full of interest with which to impress guests. It could also challenge a growing assumption that country hospitality could not match the excitement and conversational quality of London (see below). The expression of social status through conversation was not something that was spontaneous and inherent: it required research. Lancashire gentlemen William Blundell and Christopher Townley also

⁵²⁰ Congleton Museum, Congleton Account Books, pp.50, 55, 59, 63, 70, 74, 98.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ BL Add MS 33935 ff.187, 191, 249, 259, 314, 354; Add MS 33937 f.1,

noted down in their commonplace books swathes of information which they could use to hone their dinner conversation, be it on poetry, religion, or dietetics.⁵²⁴ The art of conversation was essential in managing and disseminating perfectly timed demonstrations of education and wit. Studious preparation meant one could exert control over other diners and the nature and rhythm of the gathering itself. William Moreton did this through timely combinations of mirth, information, and demonstrations of his gentry cultural education.

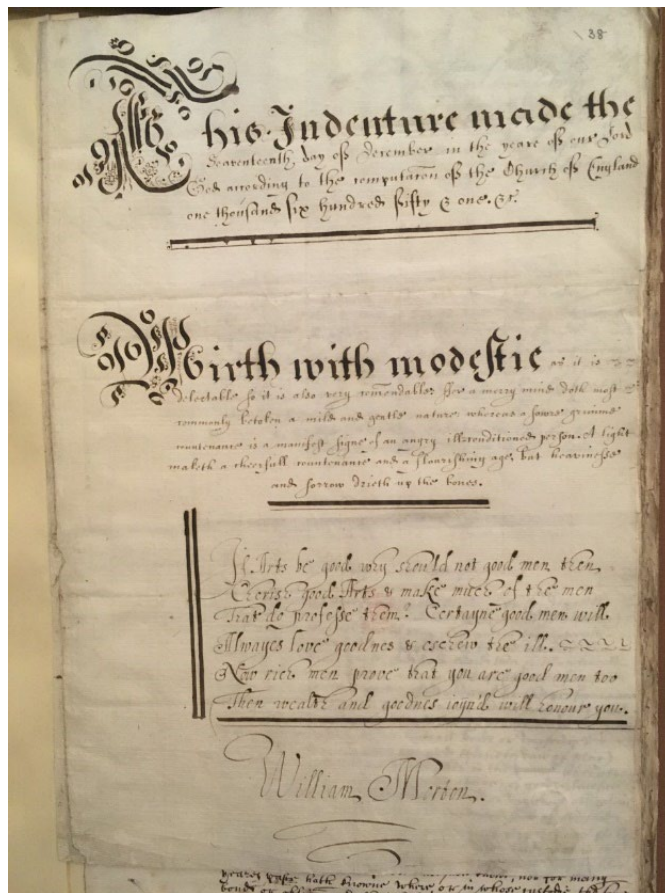


Fig. 11. Mirth with modestie. Extracts from *A Display of Dutie Dect with Sage Sayings...copied out by William Moreton in 1651* BL Add MS 33939, f.38.

In 1651 William extracted phrases from Leonard Wright’s *A Display of Dutie* (1589).⁵²⁵ Wright’s work included sayings, stories, jokes, and advice on how a gentleman should behave in company. Jokes and jests were often mixed up with pithy sayings or nuggets of wisdom one

⁵²⁴ Lancs Archives, the Blundell Hodge Podge, DDBL Acc 6121 Box 4; Commonplace Book of Sir Christopher Towneley, Chethams Library MUN.A.2.121.

⁵²⁵ Wright, L. *A Display of Dutie Dect Dect with Sage Sayings, Pythie Sentences, and Proper Similies: Pleasant to Read, Delightful to Heare, and Profitable to Practise* (1589)

could recall if conversation stalled or flowed to a certain topic. Only one page of William's commonplace book survives in the Moreton papers but his son Philip (1611-69) refers in his notebook to other commonplace books his father owned.⁵²⁶ The only page that survives, however, is the one that contained passages showing the need for mirth when in commensal company. William's mirth and modesty quote comes from Wright's book.⁵²⁷

'The rules of civill government, requireth a man to frame his manners apt and meete for all honest company and society of men...Sobriety without sullomnesse is commendable: and mirth with modesty a virtue delectable. A merry mind doth commonly shewe a gentle nature: where a sower countenance, is a manifest signe of a curious teastie [testy] churle, and disdainfull hypocrite.'⁵²⁸

The text below this in William's book is also taken from the pages of Wright's conversation and conduct guide. Both Wright, and in copying it, William Moreton, combine Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22 to create one phrase. This indicates how the passage resonated with William:

'A light heart (sayeth the wiseman) maketh a chearfull countenance, and a flourishing age: but sorrow and heavinesse dryeth up the bones and shortneth the daies.'⁵²⁹

William copies the passage almost word for word, but it seems to be a combination of other phrases from *A Display of Dutie* he was also drawn to, conflating 'mirth with modesty' with 'a light heart' and 'sorrow and heaviness dryeth up the bones.' The passage has hints of humoral theory and dietetics which reveal a connection with several jest books of the period that

⁵²⁶ BL Add MS 33941.

⁵²⁷ BL Add MS 33939, f.38.

⁵²⁸ Wright, L. *A Display of Dutie*(1589), p.14.

⁵²⁹ Wright, L. *A Display of Dutie* (1589), p.29.

espouse the medical benefits of mirth.⁵³⁰ For Leonard Wright laughter was a purgative medicine:

And as those evil humors which surfet the body, are expelled by medicine: so are such heavy pensive dumps as infect the braine, avoided by mirth and merry company....These will purge the patient from coller, melancholicke, and all grievous paines of the stomacke: make him feede heartely, sleepe soundly, and walke chearefully. To a merry heart (sayth Jesus Syrach) every thing hath a pleasant taste.⁵³¹

Providing mirth at the table was viewed as a constituent part of being the consummate dinner host, as detailed by Della Casa: ‘and because jestes do geve us some sport, and make us merry, and so consequently refreash our spirits: we love them that be pleasaunt, merry conceited, and full of solace.’⁵³² Mirth could facilitate pleasant conversation and benign relationships around the table.⁵³³ It was also a key aspect of moderation – in its other meaning denoting control – around the table.⁵³⁴ Jestng during commensal meals shows the complexity of the early modern notion of moderation⁵³⁵

I argue William employed mirth and other aspects of conversation, pre-Civil War, to add an interesting appeal to his commensality, strengthen convivial bonds, and influence guests while simultaneously moderating or controlling proceedings. Mirth and modesty capture the need for careful balance between fun and moderation. For Ethan Shagan, moderation was not just achieving a golden mean but moderating the behaviour of others and this understanding of the term is useful when considering attempts to exert control over others using commensal

⁵³⁰ Hadfield, A. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, c.1500-1640*. Oxford University Press (2013), p.346.

⁵³¹ Wright, *A Display of Dutie Dect*, p.29.

⁵³² Holcombe, *Mirth Making: The Rhetorical Discourse on Jestng in Early Modern England*. University of South Carolina Press (2001), p.155.

⁵³³ Holcombe, *Mirth Making*, pp.157-158 citing Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter* (1579).

⁵³⁴ Shagan, E. *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press (2011), pp. 23-27.

⁵³⁵ Shagan, E. *The Rule of Moderation*, pp.4, 8, 9,10,18,19, 20, 23-27.

conversation. Despite all the attempts to moderate behaviour in dining spaces through décor, material culture, conversation, manners, or food, the influencing of others involved mirth as much as the curtailing of explicit pleasure. The creation of an enjoyable commensal environment helped moderate guests as much as trying to limit their consumption or shape their opinions. This idea runs through Erasmus's feast colloquies: a good host should show and encourage moderation in food and drink consumption, but also be able to manage the dinner table and moderate the behaviour of others.⁵³⁶

Jests could be useful, as noted by Cicero in affecting guests, senators, and judges.⁵³⁷ Chris Holcombe argues that jokes and jests were a means to exert control in early modern social settings and, if managed properly, allowed one to achieve their 'persuasive aims.'⁵³⁸ Jests commonly featured in conduct manuals.⁵³⁹ Here jests were not just a way of learning to make commensal conversation more pleasurable but could also be used to instruct in morals and teach proper decorum that did not stray too far from acceptable behaviour.⁵⁴⁰ The right combination of jests with appropriate civility was the difference between mirth and buffoonery.⁵⁴¹ Because of this need to tread carefully one had to practice, particularly as the risk of failure could be acute if one was not protected by a lofty enough status.⁵⁴² Hosts and guests would want their witty quips and comments to seem spontaneous or effortless: 'sprezzatura'.⁵⁴³ Used correctly, a person could control conversations more easily and use jests to their advantage.⁵⁴⁴

I argue the use of Leonard Wright's *A Display of Dutie* shows just one way William sought to entertain and influence guests. Wordplay and verbal dexterity was another. Evidence that the

⁵³⁶ Thompson, C.R. (ed.). *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies Vol. 39 and 40*. University of Toronto Press (1997).

⁵³⁷ Munro, A. and Lake Prescott, A. Jest Books. In: Hadfield, A. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, c.1500-1640*, p.345.

⁵³⁸ Holcombe, C. *Mirth Making*, p.2.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid*, p.2-3.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.137, 139.

⁵⁴² *Ibid*, p.24, p.172

⁵⁴³ Holcombe, *Mirth Making*, pp. 67, 69, 71, 127; Heal, *Hospitality*, p.103.

⁵⁴⁴ Holcombe, *Mirth Making*, p.6.

Moretons enjoyed wordplay is seen in the stained-glass rebus in the great parlour. The image of a wolf's maw and a barrel or tun combined to give 'maw-tun' or Moreton. This joke or puzzle, situated opposite the parlour dinner table in full view of the guests, is given extra significance as it incorporates the wolf's head, the Moreton family emblem which is repeated throughout the hall's décor and exterior wood carvings.



Fig. 12. The Rebus in the great parlour at Little Moreton Hall. Image courtesy of Alan Ingram.

This enjoyment of wordplay is continued in William Moreton's commonplace book in the form of what appears to be a self-penned poem, written underneath his extracted quote about mirth (fig.11):

If Arts be good why should not good men then
Cherish good Arts & make much of the men
That do profess them? Certayne good men will
Always love goodness & eschew the ill.
Now rich men prove that you are good men too

Then wealthe and goodness joyn'd will honour you.⁵⁴⁵

Early modern wit required awareness, knowledge, and use of literary and poetic skill. William Blundell of Little Crosby put preparatory time into his performance of his role as commensurate gentry host. In his commonplace book he made notes from Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesie* in order to discuss its merits with friends and show off his skill in talking and composition.⁵⁴⁶ Catholics and Protestants prepared for commensal conversation and entertainment in the same studious ways using the same types of preparatory material.

William Moreton's verse suggests his thoughts about life and art in the 1650s, following the Civil War and during the Protectorate. It may look back, therefore, to a time when William employed all the aspects of commensal conversation the commonplace book page captures, before the family's decline, financial problems, and curtailing of their ambitions. This verse echoes some of the arguments put forward by Leonard Wright, in his *Display of Dutie*, about beauty and artistic appreciation in the form of 'daintie meats', 'beautifull colours pleasant to the eyes,' 'sweet perfumes delightful to the nose' and 'the harmonial consent of music, most precious to the eares.'⁵⁴⁷ He emphasises how 'to the cleane all things are cleane' and how the refreshment these things offer during company can make one a better and more attentive Christian.⁵⁴⁸

Many conduct guides on what constituted the ideal gentry host included poetry as an important interest that one had to display an ability and understanding of. Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593) was devoted to the skills involved in reading and writing poetry, while his *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) had a whole chapter on the uses of poetry. Poetry was not just a means to demonstrate learning and civility, it was also a way to persuade and influence, as made clear by Peacham:

⁵⁴⁵ BL Add MS 33939, f.38.

⁵⁴⁶ Lancs Archives, Blundell Hodge Podge, DDBL 6121, Box 4.

⁵⁴⁷ Wright, *A Display of Dutie Dect*, pp.29-31.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

And if mechanicall arts hold their estimation by their effects in base subjects, how much more deserveth this to be esteemed [poetry], that holdeth so sovereign a power over the minde, can turn brutishnesse into civilitie, make the lewd honest...and in breife, like a queene command over all affections?⁵⁴⁹

Bringing Metropolitan Commensality to Cheshire

This use of commensal conversation to influence and impress was continued by William Moreton III through the addition of news and information which was fed back to him from his sons and relations situated in London and abroad. William's attention to mirth, wit, news, and information meant Moreton commensality could echo that experienced in London and continue the relevance and dynamism of country house hospitality. Each son (and William's cousin Matthew Moreton) demonstrates the changing landscape of gentry hospitality and how William negotiated these changes around the table at Little Moreton.

A large volume of letters and exchanges from beyond Cheshire armed William with a range of interesting and fashionable discussion points. His son Edward (1599-1674) recognised he and his brothers were expected to be 'able to furnish you with domesticke and foreign newes.'⁵⁵⁰ Peter Moreton's (1601-58) correspondence also shows William's eagerness for news. In 1622 he wrote from Westminster about his visit home to Cheshire and his expecting to be 'questioned' by his father for news.⁵⁵¹ Peter notes that the news he could furnish his father with was of a better quality than that which could be gleaned from news circulating in London: 'heere [news] is but little & lesse good than I can acquaint my selfe with.'⁵⁵² Richard Cust and Peter Lake have described William Moreton as a 'connoisseur of news', a reputation he used as a form of 'cultural credit.'⁵⁵³ The level of information William had at his disposal matched

⁵⁴⁹ Peacham, H. *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622), p.80.

⁵⁵⁰ BL Add MS 33935 f.218.

⁵⁵¹ BL Add MS 33935 f.165.

⁵⁵² BL Add MS 33935 f.165.

⁵⁵³ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, p.107.

the calibre of that at court, seen as an accomplished gentry attribute, with news used as a source for polite conversation with which to raise his social status.⁵⁵⁴

Most of the letters William received from his sons and his cousin Matthew included news content in the body of the letter, indicating onward verbal recounting while the letter was filed away with William's papers. On the occasions when there was information of a delicate nature within the letter itself, for example concerning financial problems, news was attached separately so that sensitive information was kept private from the political, colonial, or diplomatic information divulged at the table.⁵⁵⁵ Peter Moreton wrote from Turin in 1629 stating he had written 'this apart, because peradventure you will judge it fitter to bee kept to your selfe, then the other papers.'⁵⁵⁶ The letter concerned Peter's lack of funds and his inability to dress suitably for dinner with Sir Issac Wake and other important people.⁵⁵⁷

Philip Moreton (1611-69) pursued a legal career at the Inns of Chancery, probably Cliffords Inn on Fleet Street. His notebooks and the family correspondence detail the development of his legal career from the 1630s through to the 1660s, including his securing a place in chambers and working as a clerk for Robert Henley of the Kings Bench.⁵⁵⁸ They also demonstrate his frequent visits to taverns, tobacco shops, book sellers, and playhouses in and around the area of St Dunstons where Cliffords Inn was situated. These evidence the attractions and variety of social life in the capital compared to traditional country house commensality.⁵⁵⁹ His notebook recorded visits to friends located in the Inner Temple Inn of Court, with which Clifford's Inn was affiliated, or refers to happenings in Cliffords Inn directly.⁵⁶⁰ Education at Cliffords Inn

⁵⁵⁴ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.107-108.

⁵⁵⁵ BL Add MS 33935, ff.169, 267.

⁵⁵⁶ BL Add MS 33935 f.267.

⁵⁵⁷ BL Add MS 33935 f.267.

⁵⁵⁸ BL Add MS 33936 ff.220, 222, 237; Add MS 33938 ff.239-295 warrants to appear as attorney in Court of King's Bench 1639-43.

⁵⁵⁹ BL Add MS 33937 f.67; Add MS 33941 ff.32-38, 52, 122-124; Add MS 33942 ff.1-9. There is no note of Philip in any of the admissions lists for the four Inns of Court for the period in question, while the admissions for three of the four Inns of Chancery are unfortunately lost; www.graysinn.org.uk/the-inn/history/inns-of-chancery [Last Accessed 28 September 2022]; www.innertemple.org.uk/who-we-are/history/historical-articles/lost-in-the-past-the-re-discovered-archives-of-cliffords-inn/ [Last Accessed 28 September 2022]; Add MS 33941 ff.32-38, 52, 122-124; Add MS 33942 ff.1-9.

⁵⁶⁰ BL Add MS 33941; Add MS 33942. Add MS 33937 ff.50, 51, 67.

included learning social manners and codes of civility, with diners at Cliffords and the other Inns of Chancery developing their own ceremonies.⁵⁶¹

Philip sent correspondence to his father detailing news coming out of the Inns of Court and Chancery, Westminster, and the Royal Court, either purchased around St Paul's churchyard or gleaned via his various social connections built up during his education, career, and socialising.⁵⁶² He regularly enclosed printed newsletters from the capital, which William Moreton could distribute after reading or divulge to guests visiting Little Moreton.⁵⁶³ William also received regular news updates from William Weld of Eaton, a family friend based at court and another useful source of information.⁵⁶⁴ In November 1628 Weld reports to William in a letter that the taking of a Spanish ship by the Dutch in the Atlantic yielded silver chests, plate, gold, silk, indigo, cochineal, and hides.⁵⁶⁵ Weld indicates a preference, where possible, of relating and discussing news in person with his promise that four gentlemen well known to William Moreton could much better convey the latest news to him about an 'island voyage' 'by conference than by I writing.'⁵⁶⁶ First-hand news held greater cachet than second-hand.

The London sociable venues Philip frequented were closely linked to the networks of London gentry wits and literary figures of the early 17th century, including Ben Jonson in the 1610s and 20s.⁵⁶⁷ These venues included the Mitre Tavern, The Three Cups, The Red Bull, the Devil and St Dunstan (home of the Apollo Room and the sirenian society of Jonson and other 'English Wits').⁵⁶⁸ Such fashionable sites for dining, drinking, discussion, and culture were the

⁵⁶¹ Norman, P. and Griggs, F.L. Cliffords Inn. *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 1, No. 2. (1903) pp.239-255; Lloyd, P. *Food and Identity in England*, pp.31, 67; Herbert, W. *Antiquities of the Inns of Court and Chancery: Containing Historical and Descriptive Sketches Relative to Their Original Foundation, Customs, Ceremonies, Buildings, Government, etc.* London: Vernor & Hood (1804), pp.182-211, 272-275; Headlam, C. *The Inns of Court*. London: Adam & Black (1909), p.180.

⁵⁶² BL Add MS 33936 ff.235, 238, 245, 246, 247, 249, 250, 252, 254, 258. 264.

⁵⁶³ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.106-108, 155.

⁵⁶⁴ BL Add MS 33935 ff. 202, 211, 216, 235, 237, 287, 289, 313.

⁵⁶⁵ BL Add MS 33935 f.237.

⁵⁶⁶ BL Add MS 33935 f.211.

⁵⁶⁷ Working, L. *The Making of an Imperial Polity*. Cambridge University Press (2020), pp.163, 166-167;

Hailwood, M. *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England*. Boydell Press (2014), pp.118-119.

⁵⁶⁸ O'Callaghan, M. *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press (2007).

epicentre of metropolitan socialising, which rejected the hospitality styles of older generations and championed the uniqueness and superiority of new urban social modes, acting as a finishing school for gentry sons away from provincial counties and rural gentry homes.⁵⁶⁹

Philip's notebooks highlight the different ways he consumed food and socialised compared to gentry house hospitality. As well as the notes of beer and sack purchased in taverns, the outlay for his 'sup', for numerous dinners, and the names of people he met with, Philip also records foods purchased from street vendors including oysters, cherries, and prunes.⁵⁷⁰ Purchases of fresh and dried fruits from such vendors have been linked to leisure activities such as playgoing, indicating that Philip's purchases were for tavern gaming or playhouse snacks.⁵⁷¹ Alongside these food items are regular purchases of candied ginger and conserve of roses.⁵⁷² This combination of eating out, time in taverns, and street snacks plus ginger and roses indicate he suffered the consequences of overindulgence as a result of his metropolitan lifestyle. Ginger was a common aid for indigestion and roses regularly used for the relieve of 'surfeiting'.

The way Philip socialised in London contrasted with the earlier model of hospitality centred on the gentry country home where the previous three generations of Moreton patriarchs had centred their commensality and impressive shows of hospitality. Felicity Heal highlights the distinction between earlier expressions of gentry status which were dependent on birth and family homes and later ones which centred on civility and refinement acquired through study, the manipulation of gentry identity attributes, and were removed from gentry estates.⁵⁷³ This effective use of acquired accomplishments relied on the performance of gentry attributes in effortless ways; in the disguising of pre-meditated research and the calculated practice of

⁵⁶⁹ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.161-162.

⁵⁷⁰ BL Add MS 33941 ff.32-38, 52, 122-124; Add MS 33942 ff.1-9. For street food vendors in the area in this period see Taverner, C. Consider the Oyster Seller: Street Hawkers and Gendered Stereotypes in Early Modern London. *History Workshop*, 88 (2019).

⁵⁷¹ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.192-193.

⁵⁷² BL Add MS 33941 ff.32-38, 52, 122-124; Add MS 33942 ff.1-9.

⁵⁷³ Heal, *Hospitality*, p.103.

gentry performance with Castiglione-like *'spezzatura.'* This could garner accusations of metropolitan *'gallantry'* which took on negative connotations in the period, becoming associated with shallowness or attempts to attain gentry status through fakery.⁵⁷⁴ Ben Jonson's poem *Inviting a Friend to Supper* (1616), set in the context of metropolitan commensality, illustrates that a dinner host or companion needed to earn respect, and make a shared meal successful, through their quality as *'good company.'*⁵⁷⁵ Conversation was important here as diners expected a particular level of table talk, whether theological or poetical.⁵⁷⁶ This could explain William Moreton III's desire to amass information and display literary wit to keep Little Moreton hospitality stimulating.

Another Jonson poem, *To Penshurst* (1616), celebrates the more open and less restrictive ideal of country house hospitality.⁵⁷⁷ Part of the openness of the gentry home, for Jonson, came from a sense of plenteous nature and country estates, well away from the contrived performances of competitive metropolitan socialising. Instead, country commensality was based on parity, sharing, and rural harmony.⁵⁷⁸ In contrast, in *Inviting a Friend to Supper*, the emphasis was on the conversational ability of one's dinner companion.⁵⁷⁹ A new dichotomy arose whereby the country house became merely a retreat from urban civility through the idea of fast-paced and demanding urban sociability and the slower-paced and more simple pleasures of the countryside home.⁵⁸⁰ William Moreton's collecting of information, enjoyment of word play, and his reading and extracting of passages from books suggests he wanted to dispel this assumption with a bid to make himself *'good company'* and Little Moreton a nexus for sophisticated discussion on a range of topics. For this he needed to be able to present himself as a source of reliable information and of long-established gentry status, effortless in his displays of knowledge and wit.

⁵⁷⁴ Lancs Archives, Blundell Hodge Podge DDBL Acc 6121 Box 4 – Cavalier's Notebook, ff. 53, 108
Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.102-120; Smith, M.B. *The Rhetoric of Rank in Early Modern Drama from 1590 to 1642*.
Unpublished PhD Thesis (2021). University of Alabama.

⁵⁷⁵ Heal, *Hospitality*, p.104.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.105.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp.108-9.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp.110-111.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp.114, 122

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid*, pp.114, 122.

Socialising and Colonial Connections:

There was another layer to metropolitan socialising that William Moreton appeared keen to absorb and add to his table: colonial conversation and the material culture of tobacco. These projected new images of gentry status tied to colonial involvement and the civilising of distant peoples. Not only was tobacco a fashionable addition to the dinner table, it could be used by William to emphasise his family's colonial connections and therefore continued relevance. If metropolitan circles and colonial contact were changing how displays of status through commensality and socialising operated, William Moreton reflected these changes through his dinner gatherings back in Cheshire. With figures like William Moreton, the dichotomy between metropolitan sociability and consumption and country house commensality is shown to be less clear cut.

London's poetic and dramatic circles combined the wit, performance, conviviality, and commensality of the capital with the colonial influences of the east and new world.⁵⁸¹ Lauren Working's work on colonial expansion, metropolitan society, creative performance, tobacco, and the state in the early to mid-17th century stresses the interconnectedness between these several elements and the way performances of civility and gentry status were deeply entwined with a requirement to 'participate in the colonial.'⁵⁸² Writers such as Hakluyt, Raleigh, Drayton and Purchas used vivid sensual imagery to describe what they experienced on their travels, merging the sensation of smoking tobacco with the sensations of 'virgin' territory, pleasure, and abundance.⁵⁸³ This metropolitan world became a marker of distinction for the gentry and their sons where a lack of warfare provided fewer opportunities to make one's name.⁵⁸⁴ Many of these performances, whether poetic, dramatic, or through participation in commensality and conviviality, were similarly centred on London's chambers, and the taverns, printers, book-sellers, tobacco shops, and playhouses that Philip Moreton frequented.⁵⁸⁵ Aims to

⁵⁸¹ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.160-161, 165-167 186, 197, 208.

⁵⁸² *Ibid*, pp.2, 41, 43, 159, 160-161, 165, 178, 179, 186, 203-5.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid*, pp.191-193.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 43.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp.24, 148, 156-157, 160-198.

civilise Native Americans also had the effect of changing expressions of civility in London.⁵⁸⁶ This adaption to new modes of demonstrating civility extended to goods and material culture coming from, and making reference to, the English colony of Virginia, mainly tobacco.⁵⁸⁷

Philip enabled William to purchase the latest books and tobacco, regularly ordered via his son.⁵⁸⁸ Through emphasising family and personal connections to an emerging empire and colonial outlook through purchases, one could incorporate integral aspects of English nationality and Protestantism, often set in opposition to Spanish Catholic colonial exploits.⁵⁸⁹ With such purchases the family could combine these associations with the exploits of William's son William (b.1598) in Virginia.⁵⁹⁰ Virginia and London were viewed as civilising centres, with correlations drawn between the civilising influence of the English in America and the superior civility of the city compared to the countryside.⁵⁹¹ Partaking in conversations, products, and writing about new colonial landscapes were infused with ideas of superiority and godliness.⁵⁹² Tobacco became entwined with gentry identity and William seemed keen to take advantage of this but in a country house setting.

Philip made frequent purchases of tobacco, recorded in his notebooks as well as pipes and tobacco boxes, all of which were associated with the social spaces around the legal inns but sent back home to his father in Cheshire.⁵⁹³ Lauren Working and Angela McShane note how tobacco boxes were decorated with imagery which allowed the owner to associate with the ideal of the cultured and civil Englishmen bringing civilisation to the heathens of Virginia.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁶ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.2, 12,157-158, 198.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, pp.4, 28, 131-159.

⁵⁸⁸ BL Add MS 33936 ff. 208, 211, 215, 228, 237, 254, 258, 262, 263.

⁵⁸⁹ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.6, 10, 31-32, 49, 138, 152, 154-155, 156

⁵⁹⁰ BL Add MS 33935 f.87.

⁵⁹¹ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp. 15-16, 32, 46-47.

⁵⁹² Ibid, pp.56, 139.

⁵⁹³ BL Add MS 33941 ff. 10, 32, 33, 39, 40, 122, 124, 126, 130, 132, 136, 137, 138, 165; Add MS 33942 ff.2, 3; Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, p.177.

⁵⁹⁴ McShane, A. The New World of Tobacco. *History Today*, April 2017 (2017), McShane, A. Tobacco-Taking and Identity-Making in Early Modern Britain and North America. *The Historical Journal* (2021); Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.132-3, 138, 150,

Several members of the Moreton family are recorded as owning these sorts of boxes.⁵⁹⁵ This was conflated with the image of the Protestant explorer bringing Christianity to pagan lands and fostered a feeling of English superiority through combinations of heraldry, monarchy, religion, wit, and social bonds.⁵⁹⁶ The purchase of things like tobacco, with links to colonial exploits, was closely linked to political and civil discourse and displays of gentry identity.⁵⁹⁷ Thus, even for those without direct connections to the beginnings of empire, one could buy into this ideal which became a new marker of gentry status.⁵⁹⁸

William seemed particularly discerning over what tobacco he smoked. Rather than source his supply from local centres such as Chester, Congleton, or the neighbouring village of Church Lawton, as Philip regularly did when he was at home, William instead got his tobacco from London, indicating which type he required from Philip and which his son sometimes struggled to procure.⁵⁹⁹ William Weld also supplied William with certain types of tobacco, writing in 1627 with 'a smale quantitie of extreame good tobaccou.'⁶⁰⁰ Sourcing such goods from London demonstrate that William wanted to express a certain connoisseurship regarding his tobacco and the material culture that went with it, which could bolster one's social status. This steady flow of tobacco and related accoutrements being sent to Little Moreton highlights how smoking was seen as a requisite part of commensality there.⁶⁰¹ Tobacco became inextricably linked to the identity of gentlemen and the associated material culture a way to display one's connections to colonial travel, goods, and news.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁵ BL Add MS 33941 – 29 March 1559 Philip Moreton is given his deceased brother Peter's tobacco box by his sister Jane (no folio number due to nature of volume binding); Add MS 33942 f.2 11 December 1648 entry for tobacco and tobacco box.

⁵⁹⁶ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.21-22, 132-133, 156, 159; McShane, *Tobacco-Taking and Identity-Making*, pp.4, 7, 15.

⁵⁹⁷ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.22, 23, 148-150, 158; McShane, *Tobacco-Taking and Identity-Making*, p.9.

⁵⁹⁸ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.160-198,

⁵⁹⁹ BL Add MS 33936 ff. 208, 211, 215, 222, 226, 228, 254, 262, 263,

⁶⁰⁰ BL Add MS 33935 f.202.

⁶⁰¹ McShane, *Tobacco-Taking and Identity-Making*, pp.1, 11-13.

⁶⁰² Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, p.159.



Fig. 13. Frontispiece to Richard Braithwait's *The Lawes of Drinking* (1617). STC 3585. Image courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

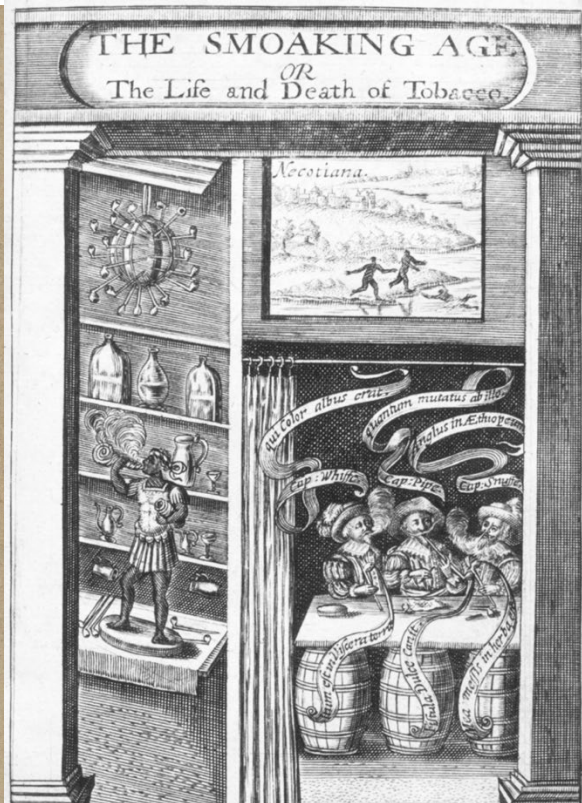


Fig. 14. The Smoaking Age image in Richard Braithwait's *A Solemne Joviall Disputation* (1617). Image courtesy of University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives

Tobacco was inextricably linked to commensality in this period, especially in its role as a bonding agent, one with cultural connections, and colonial contexts and formed another element of the Moreton commensal assemblage.⁶⁰³ That tobacco was considered an accepted additional element of commensality and conviviality can be seen in the way it is anthropomorphised alongside beer and wine in the anonymous *Wine, Beere, Ale, and Tobacco. Contending for Superiority. A Dialogue* (1630). In an imagined dialogue between several intoxicants and associated food stuffs, the case is made for tobacco's inclusion amongst the well-established wine, beer, and ale. This pamphlet demonstrates not only that tobacco was by the 1620s and 30s an essential element of commensal and convivial company but also that, through such entertaining prints sold in London around the same time as Philip Moreton's socialising there, it formed part of a triumvirate of requisite metropolitan skills:

⁶⁰³ McShane, *Tobacco-Taking and Identity Making*, pp.1, 4, 5, 6-7, 9; Withington, *Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England*. *The Historical Journal* 54:3 (2011), pp.646-647.

drinking, smoking, and wit.⁶⁰⁴ Smoking could even act, like jokes or poetry, as punctuation for dinner conversation, and as a means to control the flow of proceedings or project an air of measured and thoughtful discourse.⁶⁰⁵ In 1659 John Beale stated that ‘tobacco is become an alimient entertainment and the means to sustain the livelihood of many millions, and many newly planted nations...’⁶⁰⁶ Smoking was not just fashionable, it was inextricably linked to English colonial endeavours and sociability and was therefore a perfect complement to news, information, and wit back at Little Moreton.

Tobacco was combined with books that equipped the gentry with the ability to discuss colonial expansion and travel and inform fashionable dinner conversation. William Moreton, however, had first-hand information at his disposal via the travel of his sons Peter and William and cousin Matthew. Philip owned a variety of titles which show how he bought into the colonial ideal and image of the metropolitan gentleman. These equipped him with content to discuss and display his membership within fashionable metropolitan urban society in the areas he lived in and frequented.⁶⁰⁷ Colonial conversation and news were regularly combined with table talk, poetry, tobacco, and alcohol over London tavern dinner tables.⁶⁰⁸ The associations between socialising, discourse, and colonial expansion stayed with Philip throughout his life, encapsulated in material manifestations of colonial interest, knowledge, and display through tobacco, maps, books, travel writing, and cosmographies.⁶⁰⁹ He logs twelve maps, a ‘map of the world’, and a pair of compasses, items regularly equated with both gentry management of English landscapes and with colonial expansion.⁶¹⁰ He owned a copy of Sir Walter Raleigh’s *History of the World* (1614) and the works of Du Bartas which he enjoyed sharing with others.⁶¹¹ Du Bartas’ *The Colonies* in the *Second Semaines*, blended theories over the origins of Native Americans with poetic descriptions of the landscape, cities,

⁶⁰⁴ Withington, *Intoxicants and Society*, p.632.

⁶⁰⁵ McShane, *Tobacco-Taking and Identity-Making*, p.10.

⁶⁰⁶ Cowan, B. *New Worlds, New Tastes: Food Fashions After the Renaissance*. In: Freedman, P. (ed.). *Food: The History of Taste*. Thames & Hudson (2007), p.189.

⁶⁰⁷ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.30-1.

⁶⁰⁸ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.169-170.

⁶⁰⁹ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.172,201; Add MS 33941.

⁶¹⁰ BL Add MS 33941 f.225; Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.55, 167,

⁶¹¹ BL Add MS 33941 ff.150, 168 Philip’s copy of Sir Walter Raleigh’s *History of the World*. Add MS 33941 29 December 1663 ‘md that this weeke my sister Jane lent to Jo: Rode du Bartas.’ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity* pp.167, 184-185.

flora and fauna of the new world, aiding the reader's ability to discuss international affairs and the contexts of colonial expansion in more depth.⁶¹² While some of these titles may also have been read by William Moreton III, their content matched that of the letters he received from the younger generation living abroad.

Such books and maps represented another gentry marker of distinction, as captured in Richard Braithwait's *The English Gentleman* (1633) with its image of the educated and religious gentleman who 'fixeth his eye on a globe, or marine map.'⁶¹³ Gentry commonplace books were used to collate information on different colonial ventures such as the Americas, alongside tracts taken from conduct books and guides to civility, showing how colonial participation was used to create a particular image through 'witt', 'wordes', 'drinck', and 'company.'⁶¹⁴ These collections, which members of metropolitan societies and clubs pored over, also included those which recounted European travels.

Travel narratives from the continent and further afield were akin to valuable morsels for consumption around the dinner table. Thomas Coryate's *Crudities* (1611) encompassed both Europe and the east.⁶¹⁵ Coryate offered up tales of his travels as crudities, as partially digested morsels that those back home around the table in England could feast off. Such tales were equated, in poems by the wits of metropolitan London, to seasoning, to salt, pepper, and vinegar with which to 'furnish thy Italian banquet forth.'⁶¹⁶ Some referred to Coryate's tales as 'many a faire collop from the continent, to broyle on wits fire.'⁶¹⁷ Ben Jonson wrote how Coryate served himself up for dinner: 'he is frequent at all sorts of free tables, where though

⁶¹² Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.184-185; Paschal, M. The New World in "Les Sepmaines" of Du Bartas. *Romance Notes*, 11:3 (1970), pp.619-622.

⁶¹³ Braithwait, R. *The English Gentleman* (1633) cited in Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, p.44.

⁶¹⁴ The commonplace book of Edward Hoby, Beinecke Library, Osborn b197, ff.85-6; cosmographical commonplace book, early to mid-seventeenth century, Beinecke Library, Osborn b337, cited in Working, pp.183-4.

⁶¹⁵ *Coryates Crudities: Hastily gobbled up in five months travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany and the Netherlands: newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdome. Vol 1* (1611). Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons (1905).

⁶¹⁶ *Coryates Crudities*, John Jackson's poem, p.96.

⁶¹⁷ *Coyrates Crudities*, John Gryfford's poem, p.67.

he might sit as a guest, hee will rather be served in as a dish, and is loth to have anything of himself kept cold against the next day.’⁶¹⁸

Being able to combine print, manuscripts, travel and historical writing, diplomatic news, correspondence, and colonial reports demonstrated an acute knowledge of statecraft, an ideal image of civility, and worked to recreate the world of political state players at home.⁶¹⁹ Such a merging of different news feeds and texts also saw a preference of first-hand sources over printed published texts which lacked the air of exclusivity.⁶²⁰ Just as with William’s ability to discuss domestic news with dinner guests, and emphasise his awareness of metropolitan trends through the use of colonial products, he was able to relay information from the continent, the East Indies, and the Americas without the need of such published travel narratives.

The Moreton papers contain a vast collection of letters from Italy where Peter Moreton (1601-58) worked as an assistant to the English ambassador Sir Isaac Wake from 1624 to 1631.⁶²¹ Peter regularly sent letters, and self-compiled newsletters, to his father William Moreton III, informing him about the events of the Thirty Years War, sometimes accompanied by maps to aid his father in understanding unfolding events in Europe and which William could then use to explain developments to others.⁶²² This meant William was the recipient of news that was not much different from those of English diplomats and the court and parliament itself.⁶²³ This afforded William the social cache news of such calibre brought, compared to the lesser

⁶¹⁸ Ben Jonson in *Coryate’s Crudities*, p.18.

⁶¹⁹ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.19-20. Millstone, N. Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England. *Past & Present*, 223 (2014), pp.78, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 94, 98, 101.

⁶²⁰ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.19-20.

⁶²¹ Wake, Sir Isaac (c.1581-1632) of London, History of Parliament <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/wake-sir-isaac-1581-1632> [Last Accessed October 29 2022]; Bracken, S. and Hill, R. Sir Isaac Wake, Venice and Art Collecting in Early Stuart England: A New Document. *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol. 24, no 2 (2012), pp.183-198; Larminie, V. The Jacobean Diplomatic Fraternity and the Protestant Cause: Sir Isaac Wake and the View from Savoy. *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 121, no. 494 (2006), pp.1300-1326.

⁶²² BL Add MS 33935, f.261.

⁶²³ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, p.107.

standard of other news gleanings in the period.⁶²⁴ Peter's letters contained news reports which he copied out from published newsletters but also news he had garnered first hand through his diplomatic connections. Circulation of this exclusive and valuable news content, whether around the table or through onward correspondence, allowed William to bolster his image as the head of a prosperous, fashionable, and well-connected family steeped in the attributes of gentry identity.

Peter often reported on the activities of English ambassadors and other acquaintances besides Sir Isaac Wake: Sir Albert Moreton, Sir Thomas Roe, Sir Thomas Edmonds, Lord Conway, Lord Carlisle, the Lord of Dorchester, Francis Vane, Francis Cottingham, Nicholas Lanier, Bishop Thomas Morton, and Sir Richard Weston.⁶²⁵ These figures were impressive and useful contacts. Sir Isaac Wake sent Peter around Italy during his diplomatic training to learn the language and adapt to Italian society, encouraging him to acquire and adopt the fashions, accomplishments, and social behaviours needed to fulfil his duties as ambassadorial assistant. In 1624 Peter wrote that at Chambéry he was 'royally entertained' at the castle and at the Duke of Savoy's house in Rivoli.⁶²⁶ Peter regaled various examples of such meetings:

...the last weeke heere passed through Padua a Scotch Captaine (John Tomas by name, with whom I dynd)...A little before heere passed old Cont di Torre Liefetenant Generall (for they have noe Generall but themselves) for the Venetian forces, a brave gentleman, and a good Protestant (but not publiquely knowen to bee soe).⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ Cust, R. News and Politics in Early Seventeenth Century England. *Past & Present*, 112 (1986); Millstone, Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England; Atherton, I. The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century. *Prose Studies*, 21:2 (1998).

⁶²⁵ Thomas Roe BL Add MS 33935 ff.56, 228, 243; Isaac Wake Add MS 33935 ff.60, 63, 68, 76, 173, 177, 179, 181, 183, 243, 249, 253, 263; Albert Morton Add MS 33935 ff.54, 67, 69, 73, 78, 79, 82, 83, 85, 86, 103, 145, 149; Add MS 33935 ff.177, 183, 191 Nicholas Lanier. Lord Conway Add MS 33935 ff.179,181,183,185,187, Lord Carlisle Add MS 33935 ff.232, 241; Thomas Edwards Add MS 33935 ff.243, 255, 259, 263, 265, Lord of Dorchester Add MS 33935 ff.249, 259, 315; Francis Vane Add MS 33935 f.261; Francis Cottingham Add MS 33935 f.261. Bishop Morton Add MS 33935 f.187. Sir Richard Weston, Lord Treasurer Add MS 33935 f.251.

⁶²⁶ BL Add MS 33935 f.66.

⁶²⁷ BL Add MS 33935 f.77

Peter mentions social events when he sat at Sir Isaac Wake's table, and later comments that Sir Isaac had him sit with the family at dinner, a position Peter clearly saw as being a very privileged one.⁶²⁸ Peter often asked William Moreton III for money for new clothes, stressing that his presence at Sir Isaac's table, and in diplomatic society generally, warranted finer apparel.⁶²⁹ Wake employed Peter 'many tymes to the Duke or Princes heere' which required 'cloathes like the rest of those that follow my Lord.'⁶³⁰ He believed he had lost out on promotion opportunities because of his financial inability to dress as expected.⁶³¹ Peter wrote of other 'occations' where he dined with prominent figures which warranted more outlay from his father 'esppecially in cloths for the entertainment of our extraordinarie Amb[assado]r, my Lord of Carlisle.'⁶³² In 1629 he was present during the feasting of the French Ambassador by Lord Treasurer Sir Richard Weston, where the King and Queen were also present, before following Weston back to his country house and later being at Court with the Lord of Dorchester.⁶³³

All these sources of information, fashions, dinner occasions, descriptions of travels through Italy, and important social connections filtering back into the dining spaces of Little Moreton were of the sort that readers of books such as Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1588) or *Coryates Crudities* craved.⁶³⁴ William had these morsels of information, much sought after as accompaniments to dinner, at hand for discussion around his table, through his instructions that his family write to him and his appetite for content-laden correspondence from his well-placed sons. Noah Millstone writes that Sir Isaac Wake and other diplomats had learned how to interpret various sources of information, from discussions with foreign princes to

⁶²⁸ BL Add MS 33935 ff.191, 232.

⁶²⁹ BL Add MS 33935 f.267.

⁶³⁰ BL Add MS 33935 f.267.

⁶³¹ BL Add MS 33935 f.267.

⁶³² BL Add MS 33935 f.232.

⁶³³ BL Add MS 33935 ff.251, 253, 257. He is at Court with the Lord of Dorchester again in 1631 Add MS 33935 f.336; Sir Richard Weston (1577-1635), History of Parliament, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/weston-sir-richard-1577-1635> [Last Accessed 1 November 2022].

⁶³⁴ Castiglione, B. *The Book of the Courtier* (1588). English Translation by Sir Thomas Hoby.

intercepted documents.⁶³⁵ Foreign travel helped to hone these interpretive skills which could then be used in similarly interpretative discussions amongst friends and neighbours back in England.⁶³⁶ Peter helped his father in this, even sending maps to help William 'in viewing the townes you will find frequently mentioned in any news coms from those parts.'⁶³⁷

As part of William Moreton III's financial support for his children in London and Italy, he also helped fund the merchant trade voyages of his son William Moreton (b.1598) and his cousin Matthew Moreton (d.1631).⁶³⁸ I argue William Moreton III used his support of colonial travel, including his son William's later travel to Virginia, to further highlight and protect his gentry credentials based on the new marker of colonial investment. William (b.1598) wrote from Virginia in 1633.⁶³⁹ William's letter captures the exchange of goods between Virginia and England, as clothing, tableware, and furnishings were all used to build a foundation of civility, order, and English gentry identity overseas.⁶⁴⁰ After the dissolution of the Virginia Company in 1625 and the beginning of the direct involvement of the English state in Virginia, the narrative of colonial expansion became combined with that of gentry civilisation and refinement.⁶⁴¹ This support was equated with personal involvement.⁶⁴² Investment in the colonial travel enabled gentry figures to link their identity to that of Protestant civilisation, cultivation, and virtue and gave William Moreton III another means of highlighting his gentry status using markers far removed from the traditional status symbols of country house estates, patronage, and commensal largess.⁶⁴³

The information that came into Little Moreton from Matthew and William regularly involved news and tales concerning sugar and spices: planting, sourcing, gifting to the Moretons from their voyages, or relating news of the tensions between French, Dutch, and English merchants

⁶³⁵ Millstone, *Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England*, pp.94, 98, 101.

⁶³⁶ Millstone, *Seeing Like a Statesman*, p.101.

⁶³⁷ BL Add MS 33935 f.261.

⁶³⁸ BL Add MS 33935 ff.23, 25, 29, 32.

⁶³⁹ BL Add MS 33935 f.87.

⁶⁴⁰ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, pp.61, 79.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.81-96

⁶⁴² *Ibid*, p.44-48.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid*, p.46, 48.

over pepper.⁶⁴⁴ Matthew had travelled to the Amazon in 1611 to survey the river's course.⁶⁴⁵ Charting new territories and planting became a key colonising tactic closely linked to ideals of civility, responsibility, and Protestant identity between the 1570s and 1630s, ideals that William Moreton could tap into and project back home in Cheshire.⁶⁴⁶ Matthew planned to return to the Amazon in 1619 to help facilitate the plans of several prominent figures in their desire to found a sugar plantation on the banks of the Amazon.⁶⁴⁷ Matthew wrote to his cousin William Moreton in 1619 detailing the plans:

wee goe to make a plantation[n] in the river of the Amazonas. Wee leave there 100 men this yeare & wee meane to plant suger canes & to erectt ingenies [engines] for making suger: My Lord North his brother staeth as governor in the contrey.⁶⁴⁸

Matthew never set out on this second trip and instead turned his attentions to the East India Company.⁶⁴⁹ He took command of the ship the *Unity* and sailed with his cousin William Moreton (b.1598), switching during the voyage to the ship called *The Peppercorn*.⁶⁵⁰ This took him to the Spice Islands of Java, Jakarta, and Sumatra to trade for pepper.⁶⁵¹ Matthew wrote to William that he intended to repay his cousin's kindness and faith in him through the money gained from a bounty of spices he could bring back from his voyages and that would make their way to the dinner table at Little Moreton. In a letter of 1625 Matthew sends William Moreton III and his wife Jane a 'Japan gowne' and a small parcel of pepper.⁶⁵² In a postscript he notes he has since received twelve cheeses from Jane and therefore encloses a further

⁶⁴⁴ BL Add MS 33935 ff.38, 40.

⁶⁴⁵ Tyacke, Sarah. English Charting of the River Amazon, c.1595-1630. *Imago Mundi*. Vol 32, pp.73-89. (1980); Tyacke, Sara. Gabriel Tatton's Maritime Atlas of the East Indies, 1620-1621: Portsmouth Royal Naval Museum, Admiralty Library Manuscript MSS 352. *Imago Mundi*. Vol. 60. No. 1, pp.39-62. (2008). Matthew's work was subsequently used by fellow explorer and cartographer Gabriel Tatton who used Matthew's survey to make his charts of the river.

⁶⁴⁶ Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity*, p.31.

⁶⁴⁷ BL Add MS 33935 ff.23, 27,

⁶⁴⁸ BL Add MS 33935 f.27.

⁶⁴⁹ BL Add MS 33935 f.32.

⁶⁵⁰ BL Add MS 33935 ff.32, 38.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² BL Add MS 33935, f.91.

package weighing 200lb.⁶⁵³ He does not specify the contents of this second package though William Moreton III's son William wrote to his father that he would repay his parents' financial support in 'Indian commodities', demonstrating the flow of pepper and other spices coming back to the Moreton table.⁶⁵⁴

The contexts in which Philip in London, Peter in Italy, and merchant travellers Matthew and William Moreton circulated, partaking in a particular sort of urban sociability and part of a network of diplomatic and colonial contacts, was at odds with the older, country gentry and their styles of hospitality. The culture surrounding these metropolitan venues combined the colonial with the cultural, and the legal or political worlds of London with travel reports, colonial connections, and international exploration. Peter moved in diplomatic circles and learnt the accomplishments he needed to succeed there, living in the centres at Venice, Padua, and Turin which Thomas Coryate wrote so much about. The travel narratives of figures such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Samuel Purchas, John Smith and Thomas Coryate, were fervently consumed by gentry audiences in London. William Moreton was able to cater for this appetite through the correspondence and contacts of his family.⁶⁵⁵ News from far off shores and stories from diplomatic circles combined with packages of spices, tobacco, and family involvement in sugar plantations. All these located Little Moreton as part of a larger network of London, Italy, the Spice Islands, and Virginia, far beyond the country house.

City and Country Commensal Differences:

The way in which the Moreton family combined news, information, spices, and other 'commodities' flowing into their gentry home and around their table demonstrates how they sought to bridge the divide between metropolitan, continental, and colonial commensal fashions and traditional rural gentry hospitality. Through the example of the Moretons the

⁶⁵³ BL Add MS 33935, f.91.

⁶⁵⁴ BL Add MS 33935 f.40.

⁶⁵⁵ For an overview of English travel writers of the period see Das, N. *Early Modern Travel Writing (2): English Travel Writing*. In: Das, N. and Youngs, T. (eds). *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*. Cambridge University Press (2019), pp.77-92.

dichotomy between city and country commensality is blurred. Reciprocal networks of finance and exchange fed a dynamic at Little Moreton that challenged the view of dining in the county home as a retreat from the social stage of metropolitan sociability. For William Moreton III, I argue, country commensality still had relevance and was still an important part of gentry social connection and advancement.

William Moreton and his sons showed no tensions between the more fashionable and more traditional models of hospitality and sociability. Letters from Peter to his father William feature prompts to offer hospitality to Peter's contacts when they travel close enough to Little Moreton or requests to send his best wishes to regular Moreton guests such as Lady Brereton.⁶⁵⁶ The letters reveal a list of friends and relations based in Cheshire and London, travelling between countryside and city and indicating the combining of rural and urban modes of hospitality.⁶⁵⁷ In this Peter worked to extend bonds he had created in London and diplomatic circles to the country gentry setting of Cheshire, using his parents to further his socialising by proxy. Peter felt that influential guests could be suitably hosted by their father in Cheshire, with his frequent suggestions that certain people be entertained at Little Moreton.

Peter Lake argues that the Moretons were 'global' in that they embraced change and sought the prestige that came with colonial exploits, metropolitan contacts, and diplomatic associations but that much of this pursuit of status was founded on relationships maintained back in Cheshire.⁶⁵⁸ In this, there was a reciprocal system at work. Money came from Little Moreton; news, trends, and material culture came back up to it from London; and relationships in Cheshire helped to support the younger generation in their national and international exploits.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁶ BL Add MS 33935 ff.73, 79, 90, 169, 187, 191, 241, 249, 259, 263, 315, 354

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Lake P. 'Global Cheshire? The Moretons of Moreton Hall and Their Worlds.' Institute for Historical Research Tudor-Stuart Seminar March 2022.

⁶⁵⁹ It will be discussed in the next chapter how William's (1574-1654) wife Jane Moreton and her daughters Anne (1603-58) and Jane (1606-74) gifted homemade foods for important figures and sent down packages of pies and brawn to their male siblings when they were in London.

Discussing Combinations of News, Religion, and Politics:

As well as the elements of commensal conversation at Little Moreton detailed above, William Moreton also discussed religion. He was keen to discuss issues concerning the local parish church of St Mary's Astbury with Sir William Brereton of Brereton and the churchwardens at Little Moreton, inviting them to Little Moreton to break their fast in 1609.⁶⁶⁰ William held a reputation as an upstanding Protestant presiding over a well-ordered household: his son Edward became a Doctor of Divinity from Cambridge University, aided in his career by Archbishop Laud.⁶⁶¹ As detailed in the Moreton correspondence, Laud's nephew Thomas Webb had been Edward's friend at university, as well as an important Court contact for the family.⁶⁶² This connection led to the Moretons being singled out as a strong Protestant family where Laud could place his niece Margaret Webb, away from the influence of their Catholic father William Webb.⁶⁶³

County figures who shared William's 'Prayer Book Protestant' identity recognised William and his family for their religious credentials and dedication.⁶⁶⁴ As tensions ramped up during the early 1640s, preceding the Civil War, the news from Philip in London became even more valuable to William Moreton, based back in Cheshire but with a firm handle of events which he could share with his friends and guests. Philip provided a variety of books, pamphlets, and newsheets in his letters back home.⁶⁶⁵ William's studiousness extended to theological matters and the politics of the church. One of the books bought for him by Philip in London in 1641 was Joseph Hall's *Episcopacy by Divine Right* (1640).⁶⁶⁶ In the same letter Philip

⁶⁶⁰ BL Add MS 33938, f.62v.

⁶⁶¹ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, p.206.

⁶⁶² BL Add MS 33936 ff.159, 176, 181, 213, 238, 240, 262,264; Add MS 33937 f.9; For Thomas Webb's loyalty to James Stuart, Duke of Lenox, see Cust, E. James Stuart, Duke of Lenox and Richmond, of Cobham Hall. *Archaeologia Cantiana*, Vol 12 (1878), pp.65, 91-93, 96, 101.

⁶⁶³ Parker, J.H. (ed.). *The Autobiography of Dr William Laud: Archbishop of Canterbury, and Martyr*. Baxter (1839), pp. 343, 350; Wharton, H. (ed.). *The History of the Troubles and Tryal of the Most Reverend Father in God, and Blessed Martyr William Laud, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*. Chiswell, R. (1700), pp.224, 226.

⁶⁶⁴ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.360-361, 363.

⁶⁶⁵ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, p.304; BL Add MS 33936 ff.235, 238, 246, 254, 264.

⁶⁶⁶ Hall, J. *Episcopacy by Divine Right* (1640); Add MS 33936 f.228.

bemoaned the fact he could not locate a book by Bishop Davenant for his father.⁶⁶⁷ Davenant's work addressed issues such as universal salvation, supralapsarianism, and Arminianism.⁶⁶⁸ William's level of information, and interest in national and international events, alongside his pro-episcopacy stance, brought him to the attention of high-level players on the local and national scene.⁶⁶⁹ Sir Thomas Aston addressed William as someone having a 'desire...to p[re]serve ye afflicted church from subversion.'⁶⁷⁰ Aston wrote to William on several occasions and saw William as someone it was important to know and have on side when it came to his campaign in defence of episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer in 1641:

Though I have not had ye good fortune to bee earlier knowne to you...yet finding your heart stood w[i]th us...I have received soe much assurance of your zeale in this soe good cause that I freely profess myself your friend to serve you.⁶⁷¹

Such a reputation raised William's profile among the Cheshire gentry significantly in the years prior to the Civil War.⁶⁷² Sir Thomas's attempts to garner support for the Church of England and his various petitions regarding episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer were usually followed by personal visits.⁶⁷³ William Moreton's connections combined with his religious and political affiliations led to a position on the Commission for Array in 1642 at Aston's behest.⁶⁷⁴ William was jointly responsible for the assessing, arming, and training of soldiers in Cheshire for the protection of the King in the event of war.⁶⁷⁵ This was alongside Sir Thomas, James Stanley, Earl of Derby; Sir Edward Fitton; Lord Brereton of Brereton; Thomas Savage; Sir Robert Viscount Cholmondeley; and Thomas Leigh of Adlington.⁶⁷⁶ Many of these names were of a calibre decidedly above that of the Moretons. This high point for William in terms of repute

⁶⁶⁷ BL Add MS 33936 f.228.

⁶⁶⁸ Lynch, M.J. *John Davenant's Hypothetical Universalisms: A Defence of Catholic and Reformed Orthodoxy*. Oxford University Press (2021).

⁶⁶⁹ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.272, 279; Maltby, J. *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*. Cambridge University Press (1998), p.152; BL Add MS 33936, ff.228, 232.

⁶⁷⁰ BL Add MS 33936 f.232.

⁶⁷¹ BL Add MS 33936 f.232; Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.334, 360-1.

⁶⁷² Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.125, 333-334.

⁶⁷³ Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*, p.152.

⁶⁷⁴ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion*, pp.333-4; BL Add MS 33936 f.237.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

and status also marked the beginning of the end for such lofty ambitions at county and national level with the outbreak of war.

As Royalists with connections to Sir Thomas Aston, Archbishop Laud, and with a record of pro-piscopacy and Prayer Book Protestantism, the family suffered the indignity of heavy punishment for the delinquency. There was evidence of support for Royalist forces including William Moreton III sending gunpowder to Manchester and Philip suspected of going to quarter with Prince Rupert's army at Rodeheath in 1644.⁶⁷⁷ William himself was taken into custody at nearby Biddulph, only released in November 1642, leaving Jane and Anne alone at home, and the estate sequestered in 1643 until 1649.⁶⁷⁸ Parliamentary soldiers were billeted at Little Moreton, with a note in the family papers by Jane, Anne, and Philip Moreton recording a total of 82 men fed 316 meals between August and September 1644.⁶⁷⁹ Jane and Anne's petition to Sir George Booth of Dunham described pressure and intimidation in 1643 at the hands of soldiers sent to levy more money than agreed for compounding for their father's goods and lands and asked for an end to their threats.⁶⁸⁰ Philip Moreton's notebook contains lists of his sister Anne's belongings at her death in 1659 which included a wide range of kitchen and tableware indicating her entertaining at Little Moreton but their social circle appears to have contracted considerably, mainly consisting of local friends and family.⁶⁸¹ Philip continued to socialise in London, when he visited from Little Moreton, or within Cheshire at Congleton, Nantwich, and Chester.⁶⁸² The occasion of Charles II's coronation procession on 22 April 1661, before his coronation ceremony the next day, appeared to be a happy one for the family. Philip's notes recorded how they celebrated with a hunt followed by a 'blaze' or bonfire where they drank ale together.⁶⁸³ Financial problems continued to trouble the Moretons and the gentry home held little appeal for subsequent generations following Peter's death in 1669 and Jane's in 1674. None of William Moreton III's sons or grandsons assumed the role of gentry

⁶⁷⁷ BL Add MS 33940 f.136, Add MS 33937 f.197.

⁶⁷⁸ BL Add MS 33937 f.13, Add MS 33938 ff.297-306; Add MS 33939 f.18; Add MS 33940 f.177.

⁶⁷⁹ BL Add MS 33940 f.136.

⁶⁸⁰ BL Add MS 33940 f.177.

⁶⁸¹ BL Add MS 33941 ff.188-199.

⁶⁸² BL Add MS 33941, 33942.

⁶⁸³ BL Add MS 33941 ff.135-136.

house patriarch and Little Moreton was no longer the epicentre for the family or their ambitions.

Conclusion:

This chapter has shown how meaningful and influential commensality could be in projecting the right image amongst gentry networks at home and amongst the younger gentry social circles of London and other centres of civility. Moreton hospitality in the time of William Moreton II (c.1510-63) centred on the great hall and withdrawing parlours in the traditional fashion and in a similar way to the Norrises of Speke. At an unknown date in the mid-16th century a ceiling was added across the great hall space and William's son John Moreton (c.1541-98) moved the emphasis of commensality away from the great hall towards the parlour but also a long gallery across the courtyard to the south of the property, reflecting changing fashions around dining and hospitality. However, John's son William Moreton III (1574-1654) took this further still with his style of commensality centring less on the house and its contents itself as on the quality and content of conversation and the accompanying spices, tobacco, and other items flowing into Little Moreton from far beyond Cheshire. I have argued that William Moreton III's thirst for information about places far beyond his country base and the items that came from these new horizons attempted to re-envision Little Moreton as the epicentre of gentry networks in new ways as commensality moved away from country homes in favour of metropolitan bases.

William Moreton also worked to infuse his table talk with poetry and intellectual displays of wit and studied how to do this with books such as Leonard Wright's *A Display of Dutie* (1589). The combination of mirth, poetry, news, colonial material culture, consumables, and travel meant William could fulfil the role of the ideal commensal host. Tensions between city and country hospitality played out in published dialogues from the early to mid-seventeenth century are not evident at Little Moreton or in the correspondence between William and his several sons. Instead, such differences were combined and embraced. The investment William

Moreton put into his sons was bearing fruitful opportunities by the 1630s and early 1640s.⁶⁸⁴ Tensions between city and country hospitality extended into the 1630s yet correspondence between the Moretons at this time show William and his sons working together as a gentry unit, recognising the benefit of spreading the net wide amongst city and Cheshire country elites and being able to socialise in both settings. William had the ability to echo metropolitan fashions through Peter, Matthew, William, and Philip and recognised that inter-generational cooperation meant their use of commensality and convivial settings remained fresh and effective. This was until circumstances changed, Civil War intervened, and patriarch William's money ran out.⁶⁸⁵ The expense of funding gentry education at the legal inns, universities, or through European and diplomatic travel was notably costly for families keen to use this route to social elevation and stability.⁶⁸⁶ William's notes from Leonard Wright and his poem, written in the 1650s, perhaps look back to a time before the war when commensality proved a useful tool he used in his quest for social improvement and security.

Despite William's best efforts, William was unable to arrest the change in hospitality during the 17th century which saw the home move from being the centre of gentry commensality to a rural retreat away from the excitements of urban life.⁶⁸⁷ By the 1680s Little Moreton was let to tenants with some rooms retained for the family's use on the occasions they visited their ancestral home. This was partly due to the family's decline in fortunes following the war, but it was also representative of a shift in commensality and the gentry home's role within it. Yet the forces which prevented the Moretons' rise – money, war, and commensal fashions – had less impact on the Hesketh and Norris families who continued to reside at Rufford and Speke well into the eighteenth century. The Moreton tactic of social advancement through gentry connections beyond Cheshire was a precarious one that resulted in failure in

⁶⁸⁴ BL Add MS 33941.

⁶⁸⁵ William Moreton's financial problems are beyond the scope of this thesis. They are detailed in BL Add MS 33937 and 33938 through various requests for payment, debts, acquittances, and warnings from friend William Chappell about living beyond one's means (ff.21, 35). Peter Lake blames the Moretons' ultimate failure to build on their social position on various ambassador deaths, war, money, and bad choices. Peter Lake is currently working on the Moreton family in the context of their activities at home and abroad from a financial and micro-historical perspective: Lake P. *Global Cheshire? The Moretons of Moreton Hall and Their Worlds.* Institute for Historical Research Tudor-Stuart Seminar March 2022.

⁶⁸⁶ Wrightson, K. *English Society 1580-1680*, Routledge (2003), pp.194, 197, 199, 200.

⁶⁸⁷ Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.114, 122.

comparison to the more county-focused strategies of the Heskeths and Norrises, however it temporarily managed to transcend tensions between rural and metropolitan commensality.

Heritage Interlude:

Interpretation at Little Moreton:

Little Moreton staff and volunteers are used to working with academics, having been involved in a collaborative project with the University of Manchester in 2017.⁶⁸⁸ Details of this are given in my journal article which explores the use of affect theory in heritage studies and my use of affect and assemblage theories in my work at heritage properties.⁶⁸⁹ My research will go into a new re-interpretation of the property and its family, particularly regarding the Moretons' combining of domestic Protestant gentry commensality with influences from metropolitan, colonial, and continental connections, their use of domestic dining spaces, and later Civil War experience. Traditionally, interpretation at Little Moreton has focused on the building or general aspects of Tudor life up to 1603. My research will allow the team there to widen the scope of the interpretation to include the 17th century and incorporate more specifics on the Moretons themselves and how they can be explored through the surviving domestic spaces. As a result of my research into the colonial connections of the Moreton family Little Moreton has subsequently been added to the National Trust's lists of properties that will be used to explore colonial history.⁶⁹⁰

Another key element of my heritage collaborations in the past has been working with community groups in the local area with creative workshops, remaking, and planting sessions in the garden. This is an area the team at Little Moreton and I are keen to continue. Discussions are underway for my work to form the basis of creative community drama workshops with the New Vic theatre in Stoke-on-Trent post-PhD, centred on the Moretons and the various dynamics of gentry dinner parties.

⁶⁸⁸ The 2017 AHRC-funded *How We Used to Sleep* with Professor Sasha Handley from the University of Manchester, with myself and Dr Rachel Wincombe, AHRC code AH/P00850X/11.

⁶⁸⁹ Fielding, A. Going Deeper than 'Emotional Impact': Heritage, Academic Collaboration, and Affective Engagements. *History*, 107:375 (2022), pp.408-435.

⁶⁹⁰ For the list of National Trust properties initially included in the report see S. Huxtable, C. Fowler, C. Kefalus, and E. Slocombe, Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties Now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery (Swindon, 2020), <<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/news/weve-published-our-report-into-colonialism-and-historic-slavery>> [Last Accessed 17 May 2021]



Fig.1. Original table in the compass window of the great parlour at Little Moreton. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

Chapter 4:

Food and Bodies: Embodied Experience and Effects Around the Table

This chapter considers the relationship between early modern understandings of physiology, sensory immersion, and food in commensal contexts. It shows how sensory experience and commensal environments impacted body and mind, and that the three study families thought about commensality in these terms. This conception had implications for religious piety around the table, commensal comfort, and expressions of gentry identity and I demonstrate how these considerations were carefully managed by the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons.

The gentry of the northwest had concerns over physical, mental, and spiritual safety when eating and this impacted the three study families' understandings of domestic spaces and food consumption, with the ability to detract from convivial commensality. This chapter explores the issue of manipulation around the table and whether the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons sought to influence guests through the food they served. I conclude that any manipulations where food was concerned were directed at ensuring healthy balance and balancing humoral equilibrium. I also argue that choices over foods served by the study families were based on those that impressed through being expressions of wealth and status. Humoral manipulation of food was not just carried out to make dishes safe to eat for guests but also to demonstrate humoral and dietetic knowledge and the ability to manage the humoral nature of food through expensive ingredients, extensive kitchen equipment, and the gentry resources of land and estate management. Choices over foods served were not made to change dinner guests' humoral complexions, a plausible means of manipulation in theory. Rather the manipulation of ingredients and dishes had affective power through reflections of wealth, knowledge, shared gentry status and concerns for guests' dietary and mental equanimity.

In this and the next two chapters I argue the families' commensal atmospheres were not designed to have adverse effects on guests to achieve the families' aims, encouraging a loss of reason or control as described in religious writing or medical texts. Instead, the families' aimed to influence and shape guests in more subtle ways, to bring people together and alleviate difference. In this commensality could help people to get on and get along around the table. This and chapters 5 and 6 taken together will explore further how this was done through a closer look at the different families' commensal assemblages. The manipulation of dinner environments revolved around more than just dishes served. I demonstrate that whilst people in the northwest of England were aware of the effects of environment, food, the senses, and humours on the body and mind, they could neutralise these anxieties using the resources they had available when feeding diner guests and through the wider commensal sensorium.

The Early Modern Humoral Body and Mind:

Evidence that each study family and wider northwest gentry society thought in humoral terms about environments, bodies, and minds comes from a range of sources including the correspondence and notebooks of the Moreton family; sermons and other religious writing; the commonplace books of contemporaries such as the Heskeths family's friend Christopher Towneley (1604-1674); and the advice of physicians to the Lancashire gentry, namely Thomas Cogan (1545-1607). According to early modern physiological understandings, humoral imbalance caused physical and mental illness and therefore it was important to take care when it came to food consumption. In a letter of 1631 Peter Moreton wrote to his father describing a pain in his arm, caused by vapours ascending to his head from his spleen, indicating an excess of melancholy.⁶⁹¹ This detail suggests Peter was experiencing digestive problems which it was thought would result in foul vapours wreaking havoc on mind and body. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton lists 'bad diet,' 'overmuch use of hot wines and spices,' stomach problems, a lack of proper evacuation of bad humours, or

⁶⁹¹ BL Add MS 33935 f.336.

'immoderate eating' as all engendering melancholy.⁶⁹² Peter's lifestyle in Italy, at his various social 'occasions' with the associated rich diet, had the potential to cause this imbalance. Peter describes his ailment in humoral terms, noting that he has been advised to take a medicinal bath, supposedly effective because it would allow the pores to open, admitting healing ingredients in the water directly into the body.⁶⁹³ A sore arm resulting from such ascending humours demonstrated the ability of humours to interfere in the proper nourishment of the body.

In early modern England the body was believed to consist of similar elements to the natural world around them: air, fire, water, and earth.⁶⁹⁴ All components of the world and cosmos consisted of these four elements. These were linked neatly by Galen to each of the four humoral types: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholy (see fig.1).⁶⁹⁵ The four elements could enter the human body, via the humours, and it was believed that they dictated behaviour with humans immersed in their environment vulnerable to the natural and elemental world around them.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹² Burton, R. *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), p.82.

⁶⁹³ BL Add MS 33935 f.336.

⁶⁹⁴ This was despite changes at an academic level where new theories were increasingly challenging long-held beliefs of Aristotelian theory and Galenism.

⁶⁹⁵ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p. 20.

⁶⁹⁶ Schonfeldt *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, p.3; Paster, G. *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespeare Stage*. Chicago University Press (2004), pp.1-24; Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.50.



Fig. 1. *Theosophische Darstellung zur Alchemie* by Leonhardt Thurneysser zum Thurn (1574). Public domain.

The humours were bodily substances, as Sir Thomas Elyot explained:

A combination of two dyvers qualities of the four elements in one body, as hotte and drye of the fyre: hotte and moyste of the ayre, colde and moyst of the water, colde and dry of the Erth. But although all these complexions be assembled in every body or man and woman, yet the body taketh his denomination of those qualityies, whiche abounde in hym, more thanne in the other.⁶⁹⁷

It was believed that the balance of the four humours in the body provided optimal bodily and mental health. Imbalances could be caused through contact with or ingestion of humoral substances or lifestyle factors, called the six 'non-naturals, which could generate the production of excess humours internally. These 'non-naturals' were: food and drink, sleep, air, motion and rest, excretion and retention, and passions of the mind.⁶⁹⁸ Air could be of a certain

⁶⁹⁷ Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, p.7 citing Elyot's *Castel of Helthe* (1541).

⁶⁹⁸ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.17

humoral nature, for example air perfumed by dry spices or resinous scents such as incense was hot and dry and therefore choleric. Others, such as lack of sleep or passions of the mind, could cause the body to produce more melancholy for example.⁶⁹⁹ As well as humours being ingested, inhaled, or absorbed by porous skins, certain parts of the body produced certain humours. The spleen produced melancholy; the gallbladder, choler; and the brain, phlegm.⁷⁰⁰ Lifestyle and environmental factors could also affect the flow and clear transit of the humours around the body, with blockages causing dangerous obstruction which could lead to corruption inside the body.⁷⁰¹ Eating to excess was one of these potentially obstructing factors.⁷⁰²

There is evidence that the Moreton family understood the world around them in terms of symbiotic bodies and environments. Amongst the collection of books referred to by Philip in his notebooks of the 1640s and 50s was a collection of du Bartas' poetry which included these humoral, elemental, and cosmological concepts in his *La Semaine* or *First Week*.⁷⁰³ Philip's sisters Anne and Jane read and shared du Bartas with their friends, reflecting an interest in works which spoke of the elements, humours, the mind and body, digestion, the senses, physiology, and moderation.⁷⁰⁴

The Hesketh family's friend Christopher Towneley (1604-1674) made notes on this physiological healthcare model in his commonplace book of c.1630.⁷⁰⁵ He copied down understandings of the body, humours and the six non-naturals, including sections on meat

⁶⁹⁹ Albala, K. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.50

⁷⁰⁰ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*; Burton, R. *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

⁷⁰¹ Handley, S. *Sleep in Early Modern England*, Yale University Press (2016), p.21

⁷⁰² Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, p.21

⁷⁰³ BL Add MS 33941 29 December 1663, no folio number discernible; Sylvester J, *Du Bartas His Devine Weekes and Workes Translated and Dedicated to the Kings Most Excellent Majestie* (1611). *Du Bartas his First Week*, pp.1-195.

⁷⁰⁴ BL Add MS 33941 29 December 1663; Sylvester J, *Du Bartas His Devine Weekes and Workes Translated and Dedicated to the Kings Most Excellent Majestie* (1611), pp.24, 26, 158-163, 178, 183, 185, 194.

⁷⁰⁵ Chethams Library, MUN A.2.121.

and drink and 'affections of the mind.'⁷⁰⁶ He also wrote down a list of foods that were 'light of digestion' as 'an abundance of meat and drinke hurteth both mind and body.'⁷⁰⁷

Faulty Faculties and the Spiritual Implications of Commensality:

Dining together had risks due to immoderate eating and drinking and the physiological effect this was believed to have on bodies and minds: a well-known risk and consequence of commensality, particularly in mixed faith company. Fears over commensal excess and its impact on reason and perception meant one could be corrupted, make decisions that were ill-judged, or be easily persuaded around the dinner table. Many of the descriptions from religious texts and sermons warning of these dangers conflated medical and dietetic understandings of the body and mind with spiritual corruption and an inability to hear the word of God. An inability to properly understand what was happening through fumes and vapours clouding and obscuring rendered a diner's sensory faculties incapacitated. As well as this being the result of humoral imbalance through eating, it also resulted from eating and drinking too much or too large a variety of foods during commensal occasions which caused indigestion. Philip Moreton (1611-69) made notes on sermons which expressed these fears, suggesting an awareness of the dangers eating socially posed. The Hesketh and Norris families regularly dined with the Earls of Derby from the 1570s to 1590s, a period that coincided with Protestant sermons which also highlighted the spiritual risks of intemperate consumption.

Philip Moreton listed numerous books and sermons he read in his notebooks, with quotes taken from some of them. One is from the work of Lancelot Andrewes:

⁷⁰⁶ Chethams Library, MUN A.2.121, ff.1-78, f.3 on the four elements, f.4 on temperaments, f.5 tastes, f.6 the spirits, f.10 'of meat and drink' and digestion, f.14 'of affections of the mind'.

⁷⁰⁷ Chethams Library, MUN A.2.121, f.10.

‘God forbid but that concupiscence should be of equal power to good that it is to evill.’⁷⁰⁸

Philip may have been drawn to the issue of concupiscence given his predilection for socialising, urban entertainments, taverns, and the food and drink he regularly logged in his notebook when in London. Lancelot Andrewes’ sermons reflected his desire to heighten the sensory and experiential in the ceremonies of the Church of England and his writing touched on many aspects of the sensory and bodily.⁷⁰⁹ There are several references to the body’s physiological functions in the sermons and these regularly appear when he is concerned with concupiscence.

One instance is Andrewes’ writing on the seventh commandment in *A Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*.⁷¹⁰ Here he warned of the effect of gluttony on the body and mind, and therefore the ability to remain a good Christian: ‘God hath given the body to the soul that it might raise it up to heaven, and not the soul to the body that it should press it down to earth.’⁷¹¹ His advice was phrased so similarly to that of medical and dietary texts that his writing would not be out of place in the latter:

‘...when we make ourselves ‘meet and apt ground’ to receive this vice...when a man is disposed to an evil humour; now this evil humour of wicked lust and concupiscence is fed...by *gula*, ‘gluttony,’ a surcharging of the stomach, called *crapula* when it is with meat, and *violentia* with drink.’

⁷⁰⁸ BL Add MS 33941. The reference for this quote Philip copied out is given as ‘by Andr. 732.3.’ This quote comes from a sermon Andrewes gave in 1618: *A Sermon Preached Before the Kings Majesty, at Greenwich, on the Twenty-fourth of May, AD MDCXVIII, Being Whit-Sunday. XCVI Sermons* (1629).

⁷⁰⁹ McCullough, P. Lancelot Andrewes, Oxford National Database of Biography [Andrewes, Lancelot \(1555–1626\), bishop of Winchester | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(oxforddnb.com\)](https://oxforddnb.com/entry/andrewes-lancelot-1555-1626) [Accessed 14 October 2021; Moshenska, J. *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England*. Oxford University Press (2014), pp.47-80

⁷¹⁰ Parker, J.H (ed.). *A Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine: And Other Minor Works of Lancelot Andrewes, Sometime Lord Bishop of Winchester*. Oxford (1846).

⁷¹¹ Parker, *A Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*, p.230.

Humours were described as ‘festering’ and fed by gluttony.⁷¹² Temperance in eating brought contentment but excess caused ‘sermons and all exercises of godliness’ to be ‘unfruitful’ to the soul.⁷¹³ Andrewes advised regulation in diet as this prevented a person from breaking the Ten Commandments. There is clear evidence of how the body, humours, and the very scene of feasting and commensality could impact on religious observance or conviction. Andrewes listed the ways to govern diet: not eating richly (or ‘delicately’); regulating quantity which could otherwise ‘surcharge our nature’; and, being mindful of quality and ‘exquisiteness’ for which ‘we must not make our belly our God.’⁷¹⁴ Andrewes also warned not to eat greedily like devilish swine, and to eat at regular times and ‘not so often as to hinder our health, not so often as to hinder our calling.’⁷¹⁵ The mirroring of dietetics and religious guidance is clear: health advice regularly included the religious implications of immoderation; religious advice regularly included the impact of immoderate eating on physiological processes which affected pious observation and adherence. Readers of Andrewes’ work, and similar sermons, were aware of the risks to faithful adherence and perception that intemperance and overwhelmed digestion brought. Digestive fumes and humours could ‘surcharge’ the stomach and ‘surcharge’ one’s nature.⁷¹⁶ This warning was as prevalent in the northwest as elsewhere.

Reference to surcharging describes the physiological process of digestion. The stomach was understood as an internal cooking pot where the body’s internal heat would ‘cook’ the food by way of a process called ‘concoction.’⁷¹⁷ The cooking pot stomach was heated by the liver.⁷¹⁸ The order in which foods were eaten, their humoral natures, and textures affected whether good digestion took place or corruption occurred in the stomach. Poor digestion had a bearing on the body and mind’s ability to function correctly.⁷¹⁹ Andrewe Boorde explained that ‘replection [repletion] or a surfet’ was caused through the ‘eating of crude meate, or eatynge

⁷¹² Parker, *A Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*, p.235.

⁷¹³ *Ibid*, p.236.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.237.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.237.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.230, 237.

⁷¹⁷ Andrew Boorde, *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe* (1547), The viii Chapter; Schoenfeldt *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* p.28.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷¹⁹ Andrew Boorde, *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe* (1547), The viii Chapter; Schoenfeldt *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* pp.30, 31.

more meate than doth suffice or can be truly dygested.'⁷²⁰ Too much food and drink had the consequence that 'the lyver which is the fyre under the potte is subpressed yt he can not naturally nor truely decoct.'⁷²¹ Not being able to digest food properly meant 'crude and rawe humours undigested wyll multiply in the body to the detryme[n]t of man.'⁷²² These humours, having had the chance to corrupt and putrefy in the stomach then ascended to the head to wreak havoc with the mind.⁷²³

Philip Moreton was not the only member of the study families who was aware of these warnings concerning food, vapours, and corruption. As detailed in chapters 1 and 2, both the Heskeths and Norrises dined with the Earls of Derby, with the hospitality offered by Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby, regularly including Protestant sermons. One of the sermons heard at New Park, one of three homes of the Earls of Derby, was by the parson of Winwick John Caldwell at Christmas in 1577, given for Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange (and later the 5th Earl of Derby) and his guests.⁷²⁴ Its content included the vulnerability of dinner guests during drinking and dining. Importantly, members of the Catholic Hesketh and Norris families can be placed at the scene of sermons like this one, in the houses of the Earls of Derby.⁷²⁵ The Derby Household Book shows that Sir Thomas Hesketh was present at Lathom in May 1587 during a sermon by a 'Mr Phillyppes' and in 1588 it was recorded that 'Lady [Alice] Hesketh and Mrs Skaresbryke, Mr Ireland of Lydyate and others at dyner, Parson of Sefton pretched.'⁷²⁶ On Sunday 14 March 1589 Robert Hesketh was at Lathom while the Parson of Mobberley preached and on 16 May 1590 he was at New Park: when 'on Sondaye Mr Phillippes pretched, Mr Robert Hesketh, Mr Skaresbrycke, and Mr Henry Stanley junior came to dyn[n]er.'⁷²⁷

⁷²⁰ Andrew Boorde, *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe* (1547), The viii Chapter.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, pp.22-26.

⁷²⁴ Caldwell, J. *A sermon preached before the Right Honorable Earle of Derby, and divers others assembled in his Honors chappell at Newparke in Lankashire* (1577).

⁷²⁵ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*, pp.30, 52, 76, 80.

⁷²⁶ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*, pp.30, 52.

⁷²⁷ Raines, *The Stanley Papers*, pp.76, 80.

Caldwell equated the inability to sense properly to sleeping and darkness. This darkness could result from excessive eating and drinking which caused corruption in the body, created humours and vapours, and impaired reason and judgement. Diners would need an 'armoure of lyght' to get through the Christmas celebrations unscathed.⁷²⁸ Caldwell likens this faulty sensing to Aristotle's description of restricted senses during sleep:

Aristotle therefore doth very well and truely cal waking a liberty of freedom of the sences, and hee calleth sleepe a bande or imprysoninge of them. For when a man is asleepe, he hath all his sences, so tyed up & imprisoned, that he hath neither eyes to see, eares to heare, nose to smell, hands to touche, feete to goe, nor hart to conceive, but is like unto a dead corps that lyeth rottinge in the grave...it is now no time for us, to slugge and sleepe any more, and to followe ye lustes & pleasures of the fleshe...⁷²⁹

The vices of gluttony and drunkenness, Caldwell warns, worked together at occasions such as Christmas,

for in Christmas tyme and at great feasts, gluttony and dronkerdes thincke they maye eate and drinke as much as they will...first they sit downe to their meate like brute beasts, without any calling or thinking upon the name of God...They eate and drinke more than is meete and convenient for the[m], and oftentimes so much as they can not digest...caroussing one to another till they bee out of their wittes like beasts.⁷³⁰

For Caldwell, speaking before a feast, there was a need to remind diners of the bonds that 'knit' the table together in unity, but also the danger that such bonds could be broken and the

⁷²⁸ Caldwell, J. *A sermon preached before the Right Honorable Earle of Derby, and divers others assembled in his Honors chappell at Newparke in Lankashire (1577)*.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

line of temperance, and thus bodily regulation, crossed to the point when ‘they can not digest.’⁷³¹ Thus, eating poorly or to excess could affect the functioning of the soul and therefore one’s spiritual wellbeing.⁷³²

Timothy Bright, in his *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) envisaged the soul as a painter, such as Apelles, whose work is affected by his instruments: the soul is affected if the spirits, humours, vapours and bodily organs of brain, heart, stomach and liver are compromised due to intemperance and excess.⁷³³ The soul was separate from the body but was closely connected to the bodily organs and substances that circulated it. There was a fine balance between the soul being in command of the body and the body overwhelming the soul and marring the whole self. For Bright, the soul and spirits were God given and interacted with the baser corporeal substances of food.⁷³⁴ For the body’s intricate workings he directed the reader to ‘that most excellent hymne of Galen.’⁷³⁵ Similarly, Catholic priest Thomas Wright stipulated in his *Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604) that intemperance when dining affected the soul so that:

A soule drowned in meat, fat, and blood, cannot behold the light of God...when a cloud is interposed betwixt our eyes and the sunne, it hindereth the light from us: even so there riseth from a gluttonous stomacke, a multitude of vapors to the braine, which causeth such a mist before the eyes of the soule, that shee cannot possibly speculate any spirituall matters, concerning her self or the glory of God.⁷³⁶

⁷³¹ Caldwell, J. *A sermon preached before the Right Honorable Earle of Derby, and divers others assembled in his Honors chappell at Newparke in Lankashire* (1577).

⁷³² Barnett, E. *Reforming Food and Eating in Protestant England* p.13 citing Bright, T. *Treatise on melancholy containing the causes thereof, & reasons of the strange effects it worketh in our minds and bodies* (1586), p.46.

⁷³³ Bright, T. *Treatise on melancholy containing the causes thereof, & reasons of the strange effects it worketh in our minds and bodies* (1586) p.43-49.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid*, p.45.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁷³⁶ Wright, T. *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), p.129.

Such vapours and spirits, circulating around the body and corrupted from excess, clouded the soul's love and commitment to God. That Wright was Catholic illustrates that fears around the body, humours, environments, and faith were not the preserve of Protestants alone.⁷³⁷ Neither was the fear that some in commensal company could take advantage of humoral disorder caused by excessive consumption:

...such men, in the heat of their gulling feasts overshoot themselves extreamely, and the excesse of feeding venteth forth in superfluous speaking: for the wit being a little distempered with fumes, the tongue breaketh forth into indiscreet words, and often they utter so much in that foolish veine, that afterwards costeth them both grieffe and paine: whereas a discreet man, observing them in such humours, might get great advantage, and reape no small commoditie.⁷³⁸

Humoral Balance and Food:

Bad digestion and putrefied humours were not the only way that a person's nature could be affected. As mentioned above, a person's humours also had to be kept in balance. Each individual had their own unique blend of humours which, following the theory of the non-naturals, could be managed through diet. This management was allopathic, meaning that opposites were used to counteract one another to remain in a healthful balance of humours (see fig. 3 and 4).⁷³⁹

⁷³⁷ Thomas Wright, *Oxford Database of National Biography*, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30059?rskey=wSPrTR&result=12> [Last Accessed 18 February 2023].

⁷³⁸ Wright, T. *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), p.129.

⁷³⁹ Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Health* (1539), pp.22-24; Thomas Moffett, *Healths Improvement* (1655), pp.32-33; Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.49.

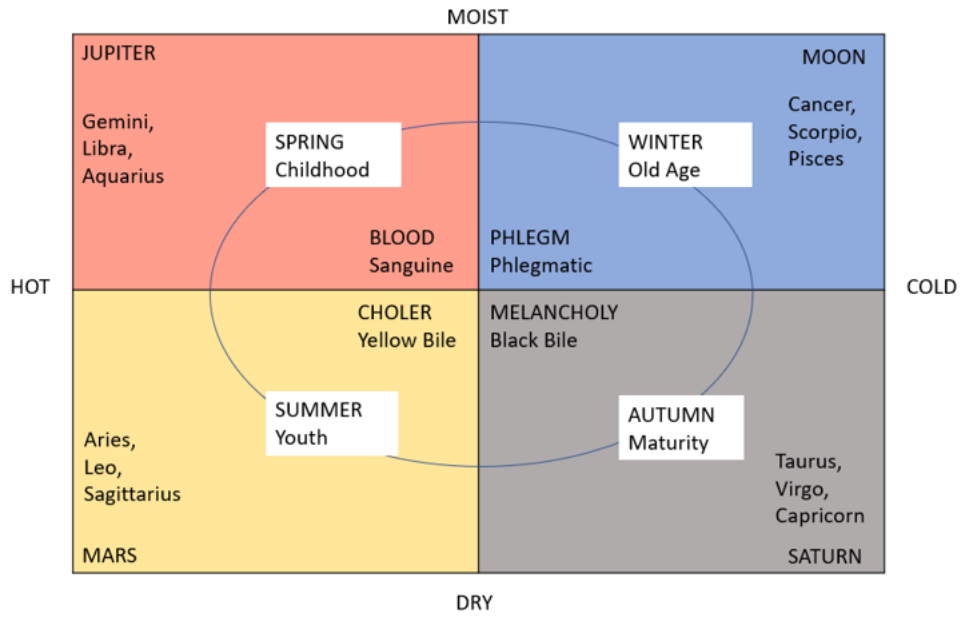


Fig. 2. The humoral system with associated seasons, zodiac, environmental elements, ages of man, temperaments, and personal attributes.

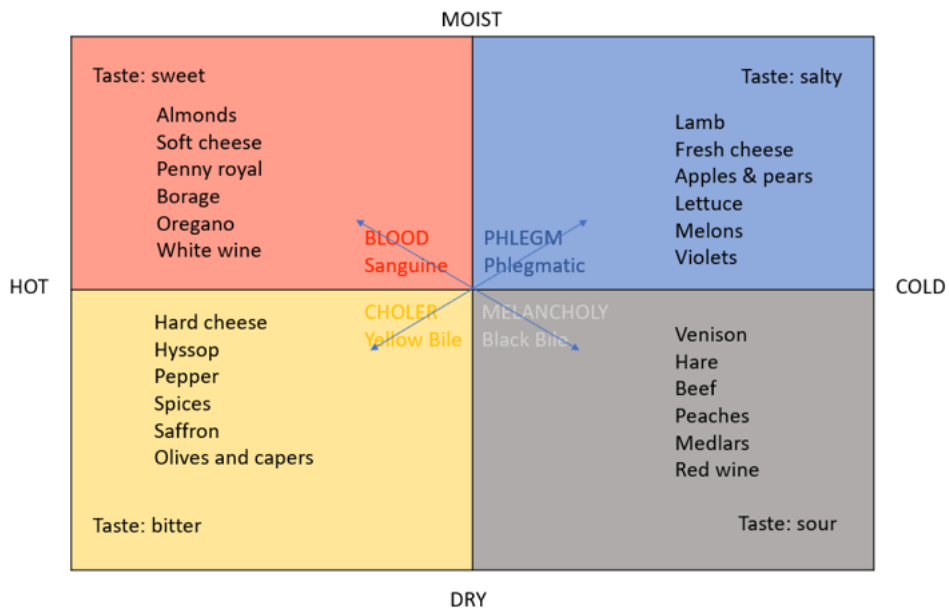


Fig. 3. An example of the humoral qualities of food and allopathic eating.

Cholerics were encouraged to eat phlegmatically, sanguine people should choose melancholic foods, and vice versa.⁷⁴⁰ Humoral temperament had a bearing on emotions and behaviours. A melancholic person needed to counter-balance their nature through foods that moistened and warmed, for example sugar, preventing their melancholic natures from becoming too extreme. Phlegmatics, who were already wet and cold, were advised to consume hot, dry foods such as mustard, pepper, and spices.⁷⁴¹ A choleric person maintained their balance through phlegmatic foods which cooled and moistened their hot, dry nature: fish, salads, pork.⁷⁴² Sanguine people required melancholic foods that dried and cooled such as beef and vinegar.⁷⁴³ Thomas Cogan, author of *The Haven of Health* (1586), espoused the importance of careful management of diet and listed the humoral temperatures of each food according to their degrees of heat and moisture.⁷⁴⁴ One could see, for example, that borage was hot and moist (sanguine), lettuce was cold and moist (phlegmatic), and rose was cold and dry (melancholic).⁷⁴⁵ This had clear bearings in the context of commensality and control of one's diet when eating away from home (see below). Cogan was physician to the Shuttleworth family, friends of the Heskeths, from 1591-93 and linked by marriage to the Traffords of Trafford.⁷⁴⁶ It was Sir Edmund Trafford who had incarcerated Sir Thomas Hesketh in 1581. Cogan's practice and proximity to Lancashire gentry families is reflected in his dietary advice (see below).

In theory, humoral manipulation based on serving foods that disagreed with a person's humoral temperament was possible. However, my research has shown that, in practice, this did not happen. The evidence shows that each study family mitigated the adverse effects

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Health*, p.20; William Bullein, *The Government of Health* (1595), pp.55-56.

⁷⁴² Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (1636 edition), pp.132-135.

⁷⁴³ William Bullein, *The Government of Health*, pp.60, 71

⁷⁴⁴ Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, 'To The Reader', pp.23-24.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.38, 82, 90.

⁷⁴⁶ Thomas Cogan, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5812?rskey=26H3Qr&result=2> [Last Accessed 20 February 2023].

foods on the body and mind instead of encouraging them. This careful management of the humoral qualities of foods extended to concerns over guests' digestive comfort, warding against humoral corruption which could in theory have presented an opportunity to influence diners in calculating and deceptive ways.

Gail Kern Paster argued that people thought overwhelmingly in humoral terms at the expense of other ways of conceiving the world around them, with a clear sense of the vulnerability of humoral, porous, and sensory bodies.⁷⁴⁷ This is supported by written texts of the period which conveyed anxiety over bodies susceptible to influence through bodily experiences they could not control. This raises the question of whether, as well as being aware of one's own moderation and need to guard against sensory influence, one also needed to heed the possibility that others, particularly in social and commensal settings, could seek to manipulate through the humours and senses to serve their own ends. As Michael Schoenfeldt states, whilst a person needed to be wary about the own vulnerability and being overwhelmed by humours, they could also 'exploit similar flaws in others.'⁷⁴⁸ If one could manipulate one's own behaviour through the diet and the humours, it was possible to do so to others as well.⁷⁴⁹ Ken Albala suggests that one might acquire an 'accidental complexion.'⁷⁵⁰

In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the ability to control another's temperament and pliability through control of their humoral intake is demonstrated through Petruchio and Katherine. Katherine is denied choleric food by Petruchio.⁷⁵¹ By the end of the play, through Petruchio's manipulations of Katherine, she has become the placid and pliable wife he desired. This was not how humoral eating was used by the three study families.

⁷⁴⁷ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, pp.1-24.

⁷⁴⁸ Schoenfeldt *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* p.3.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.50.

⁷⁵¹ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.3.

Food at Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton:

The above fears and consequences of dietary and humoral excess, and of corrupting vapours circulating the body and clouding the mind, shows how the idea of manipulation in *The Taming of the Shrew* was a real concern. Encouragement to excess or being served an excess of culinary delights had implications one had to guard against. Christopher Towneley (1604-1674) copied down the following concerning meats, digestion, and how to stop corrupt vapours ascending to the head:

Meats that ingender evell juices are all sutch as are of evell digestion as bacon, salt beefe, hearts flesh, hares, rammes, goates, geese, and all soartes of waterfowls, cheese, all sorts of pulse and all sortes of bread except that w[hi]ch is made of wheat...'⁷⁵²

A close examination of the foods served by the three study families, however, shows that while fears over the implications of commensality were wide-spread, in practice hosts strived to mitigate the effects of foods served. Warnings for diners to be careful when eating communally with a wide variety of 'dainty' food were not ignored, though it might appear on the surface that the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons served food that did not match the advice of dietetic authors. Instead, food was adapted, combined, and managed to avoid potential adverse effects on digestion, sensory perception, and cognition. Gustatory comfort was more important for gentry hosts than excess and the 'corruption' of their guests. Creating a good impression on guests was more to do with demonstrations of humoral management of dishes which were a means to express knowledge, wealth, and status. In this, guests could be said to be manipulated but in much more benign and subtle ways.

⁷⁵² Towneley Commonplace Book, Chetham's Library Mun.A.2.121, f.10r.

The three families' inventories detail well-equipped kitchens and variety of tableware indicating a range of adaptations they were able to make to ensure variety of dishes and humoral tempering and choice.⁷⁵³ Their kitchens included numerous spits, ovens, chaffing dishes, pipkins, which all indicate different cooking techniques such as roasting, baking, frying, the gentle heating of more delicate dishes such as custards and accompanying sauces. Spits and dripping pans indicate the dredging of meat whereby roasts were coated in various flavourings as they were basted, allowing for humoral adaptation whilst roasting.⁷⁵⁴

What appears to be a disregard for the dietary prescriptions of Galen with a superficial look at the foods each family served is instead evidence of the alteration of foods, via various means, to render it safe for gentry consumption. This was not manipulation of food to alter guests' humoral complexion in adverse ways to render them more pliable, more easily persuaded, cloud their vision, or corrupt their religious convictions. The evidence points to careful management of food, from animal husbandry through to cooking methods, ingredients, and accompaniments, to ensure guests were served dishes which were humorally suitable for gentry tables and did not upset balance, health, perception, or behaviour. An in-depth examination of the foods served by the three study families shows how, for every food, considerations were made on how to serve foods safely, particularly where the serving of certain dishes denoted gentry status and wealth.

Beef:

Beef was designated as a melancholy meat and Galen advised against its consumption.⁷⁵⁵ However, the Moreton accounts of 1621 show regular purchases of beef and brisket throughout the year.⁷⁵⁶ The Hesketh inventory for 1620 also shows £4 worth of beef in the

⁷⁵³ Lloyd, P. *Food and Identity in England*, pp.130, 132, 155.

⁷⁵⁴ Saxton, E.B. *A Speke Inventory of 1624*. HSLC 97 (1945); Hesketh 1620 inventory Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/C76A; Inventory for John Moreton 1599 Cheshire Archives WS 1601; Inventory of William Moreton 1654 BL Add MS 33941 ff.144-149; Belongings of Ann Moreton detailed in Philip Moreton's notebook Add MS 33941 ff.192-193, f.199.

⁷⁵⁵ Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe* p.86; Elyot, T. *The Castell of Helth* (1539), p.20.

⁷⁵⁶ BL Add MS 33941 ff.1-6.

larder and a beef fork at Rufford, while at another Hesketh property, Beconsall, there was a 'beefe pott' and a 'beffe tubb'.⁷⁵⁷

Manchester based Thomas Cogan adapted Galen for his readers who were reluctant to give up something so prevalent and linked to their geographic identity.⁷⁵⁸ Cogan argued that Galen had obviously never eaten English beef for if he had he would not have declared it unfit.⁷⁵⁹ In fact, beef consumption actually made one more English and there were concerns that not eating beef would actually change your native humoral nature.⁷⁶⁰ Not eating beef was not inconvenient, it was unthinkable.⁷⁶¹ English beef rather than engendering melancholy through its indigestibility and causing lusty behaviour due to its heat would in effect bring strength.⁷⁶² What appears to be disregard for dietetics with beef eating is more a case of English bodies being able to digest what was reared locally.

As a melancholy meat, beef needed to be balanced with warming and moistening sanguine ingredients such as sugar. Capers, borage, and thyme were also recommended to dry out melancholy foods.⁷⁶³ William Bulleyn advised that a suitable warming sauce to serve with beef made of salt, mustard, vinegar, and garlic ensured that beef was more digestible.⁷⁶⁴ Alongside the Moretons' meat purchases were regular entries for sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and pepper.⁷⁶⁵ The beef pot and tub owned by the Heskeths indicate the salting of beef. Henry Butte and Cogan advised beef could be salted to purify it and then boiled.⁷⁶⁶

Venison:

⁷⁵⁷ Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/C76A.

⁷⁵⁸ Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe* p.86.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* p.12.

⁷⁶² Barnett, *Reforming Food and Eating in Protestant England* p.8; Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* p.12; Andrew Boorde *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Health*, Chapter 16.

⁷⁶³ Bulleyn, W. *The Government of Health* (1595), pp.55-56.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid, p.60.

⁷⁶⁵ BL Add MS 33941, ff.1-6.

⁷⁶⁶ Henry Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599); Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (1636) pp.128-131.

Venison was another melancholy meat that should have been avoided according to Galen though it has been well documented that the gentry and above still consumed venison despite its humoral qualities. The Heskeths were able to gift the meat from their estate to other gentry families, as evidenced in the Shuttleworth Accounts. The Shuttleworth accounts reveal they received a steady supply of venison from various members of the Hesketh family including physician Cuthbert Hesketh, as well as the Leghs of Lyme, the Bold family, the Wilbrahams, and the Earls of Derby.⁷⁶⁷ The Hesketh deer park appears in descriptions of the Hesketh lands in the family papers.⁷⁶⁸ The meat could also be supplemented by gifts from superiors such as the Earls of Derby, again as evidenced through the gifts noted in the Stanley Papers regularly given to local gentry.⁷⁶⁹ The Norrises also ate venison, with evidence in a Speke archaeological report for venison consumption at the site.⁷⁷⁰ However, the report suggested this was gifted or obtained during hunts with superiors rather than having been sourced on Norris land.⁷⁷¹ An opportunity for hunting was possible through their close ties of the Earls of Derby at nearby Knowsley, with its enclosed deer park. The nearby deer park at Tocksteath (present day Toxeth) was owned by family friends the Molyneux, resulting in the likelihood of regular gifts of venison and invites to hunt with their social peers and superiors very close to their own property.⁷⁷²

Venison engendered melancholy and was difficult to digest which went against the usual advice that coarser meat was only suitable for manual workers not gentry stomachs. Some, such as Robert Burton, believed that all venison was dangerous regardless of how it was procured, prepared or served.⁷⁷³ Others, such as Thomas Moffett, believed that it was only

⁷⁶⁷ Harland, J. *The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall*. Chetham Society, Vol 1, pp.39, 53, 59, 60, 63, 67, 75, 82, 103, 113.

⁷⁶⁸ Preston RO, Rufford DDHe/37.

⁷⁶⁹ Raines, F.R (ed.). *The Stanley Papers*. Part III, Vol I. Private Devotions and Miscellanies of James, Seventh Earl of Derby. *Chethams Society*, vol. 66 (1867), p.lvi;

⁷⁷⁰ Higgins, D. A. Speke Hall: Excavations in the West Range, 1981-82. *Merseyside Archaeological Society Journal*, 8 – 1988-89 (1992), p.73.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷⁷³ Fitzpatrick, J. *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays*. Ashgate (2007). p.62. citing Thomas Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).

dangerous if eaten immoderately by 'greedy gourmands.'⁷⁷⁴ There could be a vicious cycle with venison eating where it bred melancholy, which caused greed, which then called for more venison consumption and so on.⁷⁷⁵ In theory therefore, careful venison consumption could be acceptable provided one did not partake in it to excess.

Despite these words of caution, treatment of venison included tempering the meat through warming and moistening, counteracting its dry and cold melancholy quality. Thomas Cogan advised that venison should be 'drowned in wine, as the best manner is to eat it...which way was first devised to amend the noisomeness thereof, because wine is of contrary nature to that humour which venison most of all breedeth.'⁷⁷⁶

Veal:

The Moretons served veal regularly, as seen from their accounts from 1621.⁷⁷⁷ Veal was ordered alongside beef, sugar, spices, and dried fruits.⁷⁷⁸ Being largely cattle and dairy counties, people in Lancashire and Cheshire consumed a lot of veal.⁷⁷⁹ This was because of the number of male calves, born but not required for dairy production, being slaughtered when young. The ready supply of veal did not mean that veal was not a high-status meat.⁷⁸⁰ In the accounts of the Shuttleworths of Lancashire veal was often bought in when entertaining and was considered a suitable meat for guests, as seen when they served it to their physician Cuthbert Hesketh, cousin of the Rufford Heskeths.⁷⁸¹ Veal's status stemmed from the idea it was 'gelly hardened' and so easier to digest for refined gentry stomachs.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁴ Fitzpatrick, J. *Food in Shakespeare*, p.62. citing Thomas Moffett *Health's Improvement* (1655).

⁷⁷⁵ Fitzpatrick, J. *Food in Shakespeare*, p.62.

⁷⁷⁶ Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (1636), p.137.

⁷⁷⁷ BL Add MS 33941.

⁷⁷⁸ Thirsk, J. *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760*. Continuum (2006), p. 85; BL Add MS 33941

⁷⁷⁹ Thirsk, J. *Food in Early Modern England*, pp.45-46, 85, 202-203.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.85.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁸² Thomas Moffatt cited in Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, p.86.

However, it was also a moist, slimy meat, therefore categorised as phlegmatic. It might have been too moist for the stomachs of English people and better suited to those of hotter countries.⁷⁸³ Yet, it was consumed by the English regardless of the warnings.⁷⁸⁴ Veal's status as a refined meat is evidenced in the general rule of veal for the master, beef for the servants.⁷⁸⁵ Therefore, it was important that the Moretons served a desirable meat for guests. David Gentilcore uses veal as a good example of how the English ate things they were, in theory, supposed to avoid, and highlights domestic adaptation of dietary principles as custom and availability clashed with authoritative Galenic advice.⁷⁸⁶ Both Thomas Moffett and Cogan stated that veal should be well-roasted to dry out its phlegmatic nature.⁷⁸⁷ Veal recipes often called for dried fruit, spices, and sugar and so the Moreton orders allowed their veal to be similarly heated and dried.⁷⁸⁸

Waterfowl:

Waterfowl were seen as being particularly noxious and corrupting yet the evidence for Lancashire families is that they consumed it regularly. The Shuttleworth accounts show regular consumption of waterfowl.⁷⁸⁹ Sir Thomas Hesketh's son Thomas gifted puffins to the Shuttleworth family twice in February and March 1612/13.⁷⁹⁰ In a document listing the gifts provided to the Earl of Derby for the coming of James I to Lathom in 1617, Hugh Hesketh, Sir Thomas Hesketh's illegitimate but accepted son, gifted large quantities of waterfowl.⁷⁹¹ Rather than this being a dirty and foul food, as Galen described, waterfowl was deemed so fit for

⁷⁸³ Gentilcore *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe* pp.86/7.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.86.

⁷⁸⁵ Gentilcore *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe* p.57; Lloyd, *Food and Identity*, p.107.

⁷⁸⁶ Gentilcore *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe* p.88.

⁷⁸⁷ Thomas Moffett, *Healths Improvement* (1655), p.58; Thomas Cogan, *The Heaven of Health* (1636), p.130.

⁷⁸⁸ Annie Grey has highlighted, for the 18th and 19th centuries, that veal dishes were largely 'made' dishes.' Rather than being served simply roasted as with beef or lamb, these dishes involved more processing, whether treated as force meat (stuffing), mince, hash, fricasee, or meatballs called 'olives' or 'farts.' This would allow for the addition of extra flavourings. Gray, A. 'Man is a Dining Animal': The Archaeology of the English at Table, c.1750-1900. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Liverpool (2009), pp.47-48.

⁷⁸⁹ Harland, J. *The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall*. Chetham Society, Vol 1,

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.206-207.

⁷⁹¹ Derby Collection, Knowsley Hall, C46.1; Sir Thomas Hesketh of Rufford's will states that he accepts and therefore legitimises Hugh Hesketh as his true son, BL Add MS 32104

consumption that it was gifted to feed the king. This was because of the ability to manipulate waterfowl's humoral nature.

Waterfowl had a reputation for being overly phlegmatic and corrupting because of the habitats it lived and fed in.⁷⁹² In Lancashire, around the Ribble and Mersey estuaries and Irish Sea coasts, large areas of wetlands meant that waterfowl was abundant. However, different waterfowl had different humoral qualities and were not uniformly cold and wet.⁷⁹³ Generally, to eat waterfowl they needed to be roasted and cooked with spices, as evidenced through looking at early modern recipes for the meat, though treatment depended on the type of waterfowl to be consumed.⁷⁹⁴ These ways of adapting involved expense and status was derived from the ability to make it safe through certain ingredients, which for duck included spices, white wine, and lemon.⁷⁹⁵ Paul Lloyd also points to various methods required to humorally neutralise waterfowl including tending and feeding the birds to alter their own humoral makeup and treating in a variety of ways.⁷⁹⁶ These methods also involved resources such as land and labour.⁷⁹⁷

Thus, rather than waterfowl consumption going against dietary advice, eating waterfowl required a much deeper engagement with humoral dietetics.⁷⁹⁸ This is because of the complexity of waterfowl as a food group, and the issue of humoral degrees when it came to the complexion of ingredients.⁷⁹⁹ Gifting and serving waterfowl also demonstrated a person's ability to render the meat safe through their wealth and estate management. Given the idea that food gifts should reflect the best of one's estate, Hugh Hesketh took advantage of a prevalent supply of waterfowl from his Meols wetlands. Being the illegitimate son of Sir

⁷⁹² Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* pp.72, 122.

⁷⁹³ Lloyd, P. Making Waterfowl Safe to Eat: Medical Opinion, Cookbooks and Food Purchases in Early Seventeenth-century England. *Food & History*, 11:1 (2013), pp.40-42.

⁷⁹⁴ Lloyd, Making Waterfowl Safe to Eat, p.43.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, pp.45-46, 48.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, pp.35-36, 41, 49, 55.

⁷⁹⁷ A duck decoy, close to Speke at Halewood, was constructed on the land of the Ireland family of the Hutt. A duck decoy was a way to capture wild ducks and teal. Feeding ducks suitable foods could change their humoral make up. Payne-Gallwey, R. *The Book of Duck Decoys, Their Construction, Management, and History*. J Van Voorst (1886), pp.100-102.

⁷⁹⁸ Lloyd, Making Waterfowl Safe to Eat, p.55.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid, pp42-47.

Thomas of Rufford, Hugh may have been keen to impress through his generous gifts that were noted in the 1617 Lathom document.

Pigeon:

All three families had dovecotes, either on their land or near their houses.⁸⁰⁰ Unlike generally phlegmatic waterfowl which lived close to the ground and fed on muddy water flats, the serving of pigeon meant guests were offered a bird that flew high in the air and was light and lofty.⁸⁰¹ In humoral terms, pigeons were active birds and therefore did not contain superfluities or corrupt humours but were hot and dry (choleric).⁸⁰² Their lightness also meant they were easily digestible and kept humours light rather than thickened.⁸⁰³ Those who consumed pigeon could benefit from quick wits and mental agility.⁸⁰⁴ Pigeons therefore were an acceptable food to offer with clear humoral and mental benefits and reflect the idea that through eating a particular meat one could take on the characteristics of that animal: pigeons were associated with delicacy and a gentle nature.⁸⁰⁵ For those choleric diners who needed to take care with such a hot dry meat, pigeon could be adapted with fruits and vinegar to moisten and cool respectively.⁸⁰⁶

It was not just the humoral link between agility and lightness that mattered but the socially constructed image of pigeons and their consumption. Dovecotes were a symbol of the countryside elite, requiring land and the building of structures, and pigeons granted protected

⁸⁰⁰ The dovecote at Speke survives in the service courtyard, that at Little Moreton is suggested as the holes in the gable to the brewhouse wing though a dovecote is also listed in land descriptions and in the notebook of Philip Moreton BL Add MS 33941; Morgan, J.E. An Emotional Ecology of Pigeons in Early Modern England and America. *Environment and History*, 28:3 (2022).

⁸⁰¹ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* p.169.

⁸⁰² Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* p.170; Morgan, J.E. An Emotional Ecology of Pigeons in Early Modern England and America. *Environment and History*, 28:3 (2022), pp.438-439.

⁸⁰³ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* p.170.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid, pp.169-70.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ Morgan, An Emotional Ecology of Pigeons, p.439.

status from hunting.⁸⁰⁷ This was an image the gentry wanted to project for themselves.⁸⁰⁸ This was not just projecting an image of serving the 'right' foods which could benefit guests in healthy ways, it was projecting an image of oneself. Pigeon represented gentry families secure in their identity and social bracket, conveying the qualities of good education, intellect, delicacy, and refinement.

Salad, Fruits, and Vegetables:

The Speke 1624 inventory listed salad bowls amongst the Norris tableware, suggesting they served salads frequently to guests. Salads were supposed to have been considered both lowly, in the case of where they grew, close to the earth, and dangerously moist.⁸⁰⁹ They were safe, however, provided they were consumed in certain ways. They could be eaten during the first course, allowing ample time for the stomach to cope with their moistness. They also suited the general advice of eating lighter foods first when it came to ordering the sequence of food entering the stomach, thereby encouraging efficient digestion.⁸¹⁰ Salads were fashionable and recipes for a grand salad recipe abounded in early modern receipt books but these featured expensive ingredients. Salad leaves could be altered through hot dressings with spices and the grand salad featured a dressing with which the leaves themselves could be tempered.⁸¹¹

Vegetables were similarly considered generally to be too cold, moist, and lowly. Philip Moreton notes in May 1658 that he has 'sett 29 collyflower plants in the garden – 10 in the border under the 4th plum tree from the door, 15 under the bay tree and 4 next to the sweet manger (trough).'⁸¹² Gentry skill and knowledge when it came to gardens and horticulture was

⁸⁰⁷ Morgan, *An Emotional Ecology of Pigeons* pp.440-443.

⁸⁰⁸ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* pp.169-70

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.165

⁸¹⁰ For more on salads see Lieffers, C. *The Garden, the Library, the Body, and the Table: Ways of Knowing Food in John Evelyn's Acetaria: A Discourse of Sallets. Global Food History*, 4:2 (2018), pp.112-129. Salads, beyond the humoral natures of them, also came to signify different things, for Evelyn these were 'humility, labour, and closeness to God.' Lieffers, p.117.

⁸¹¹ Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.89; *Gentilcore Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, pp.115-131.

⁸¹² BL Add MS 33941, no discernible folio no, 16 May 1658.

another way of displaying gentry belonging as with the use of garden imagery and the configuration of the parlour and gardens at Speke and the horticultural skill of Sir Thomas Hesketh's son Thomas who was regularly consulted by herbal writer Gerard.⁸¹³ Vegetables, instead of being associated with poorer diets, were a status symbol due to the cost of employing people to tend them.⁸¹⁴ Although generally designated as dangerously phlegmatic, vegetables were easily adaptable through combining with spices.⁸¹⁵

The study families also ate and served fruit. On the occasion of James I dining with the Earl of Derby at Latham, Lady Norris of Speke sent a present of cherries and plumbs.⁸¹⁶ In July 1657 Philip Moreton noted that his friend Thomas Rode had told him that now it is 'tyme to inoculate apricocks, they doe them in white plu[m] tree stocks.'⁸¹⁷ Further mention is made to other fruits including bergamot pear and dwarf apple and frequent mentions of the maintenance of the orchard.⁸¹⁸

Fruit eating was also seen as adaptable under the flexible system of humoralism.⁸¹⁹ Fruits, when they appeared in receipt books, were always cooked to render them 'safe'. This was either through baking, poaching, or candying into sweetmeats. Fruit eaten raw was supposed to be too cold and moist, corrupting in the stomach, and causing an excess of moist and foul vapours in the body. Fruit eating for manual labourers and the poor was not seen as a problem because their hard-working bodies could cope with this excess moisture through bodily exertion. However, eating of raw fruit by the gentry was safe if it was combined with other foods that would temper its humoral qualities. Eating fruit with spices, spiced bread, or nuts would counteract the fruit's dangerous over-phlegmatic qualities.⁸²⁰ Apart from combinations eaten with fruit as part of a banquet, fruit was also allowed in hot weather which would deem

⁸¹³ Cogan, S. and Hopkins, L. *Herb Paris, Romeo and Juliet and Thomas Hesketh. Notes and Queries*, 65:4 (2018), pp.530-533

⁸¹⁴ Lloyd, P. *Food and Identity in England*, p.100.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁶ Derby Collection, Knowsley Hall, C46.1

⁸¹⁷ BL Add MS 33941, no discernible folio no, July 1657.

⁸¹⁸ BL Add MS 33941, August 1662; Add MS 33941, 18 January 1663/4.

⁸¹⁹ Lloyd, P. Dietary Advice and Fruit Eating in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 67:4 (2012), pp.553-586.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

it safe and a good source of cold, moist refreshment to balance the temperature of the body.⁸²¹ When serving fruits based on these principles the gentry could express their status and delicate natures through careful management, serving cooked fruits with spices, only serving fresh fruit in the summer, or combining fruits during banquet courses.

Dairy:

Creamy drinks and puddings appear to have been valued by the Norrises. In addition to the syllabub glass already mentioned in chapter 2, there were three 'sellibub piggins' and two 'possett cuppes.' A syllabub piggin was a pail with a long handle. Alcohol would be put in the pail prior to milking so that on the milk stream from the cow hitting the alcohol, a frothy syllabub would result.⁸²² Syllabubs and possets were foods designed for sharing. The alcohol would settle at the bottom of the pot and be drunk by each person in turn, while the frothy cream on the top would be eaten communally with a spoon. These sorts of shared drink-dessert hybrids were often consumed at celebrations, notably weddings, but also during other dinner gatherings (see chapter 2 and 6 about the shared drinking practices at Speke and Little Moreton).⁸²³ Dairy produce was important, preserving milk for long periods in the form of butters and cheeses. It also meant cream, a higher status dairy item due to its perishability and cost, appeared regularly on banquet tables in various puddings.⁸²⁴

William Moreton III's wife Jane used cheese as food gifts to friends and family. The dairy equipment in the inventory for William Moreton for 1653/4 includes cheese vats, two churns, a cheese press, shelves, cheese boards, brass pans for curdling curds and whey, salting tubs

⁸²¹ Lloyd, *Dietary Advice and Fruit Eating*, pp.553-586.

⁸²² Brears, P. *Food and Dining in Tudor and Early Stuart England*. Food historian Ivan Day, however, debates this and states that this results in an unpleasant concoction. He posits that instead a syllabub piggin would be for making frothy syllabub with once back at the dairy/kitchens, when the milk could be poured from height into the alcohol having been strained of any hairs and other unsuitable contaminants and received into a clean bowl, or indeed into the syllabub glass at Speke.

⁸²³ Handley, S. Lusty Sack Possets, Nuptial Affections and the Material Communities of Early Modern Weddings. *Environment and History*, 28:3 (2022).

⁸²⁴ Lloyd, *Food and Identity in England*, pp.83, 149.

and 'butter bason and bowls and dishes.' Jane sent cheese across the country, to her children, but also to those returning from sea to London periodically, such as Matthew Moreton, and friends and acquaintances who helped them discover useful information or who they owed money to. Matthew Moreton, in 1625, while temporarily back in London, thanked Mrs Moreton for the cheeses and hoped God gave him enough time to make amends for her generosity.⁸²⁵ Various references to cheeses in the Moreton correspondence refer to Jane's cheese as evidence of her housewifery skills or to the quality of the cheeses themselves. Archbishop Laud's nephew and secretary at Court Philip Webb wrote to William:

'S[i]r, I have receaved by a messenger from yo[u]r sonn who is here in towne, a present of 2 cheeses out of Cheshire, w[hi]ch I account greate in every respect, for yo[u]r kindness, for ther goodnesse, & bignesse, he hath not told me who I should thanck for them, but I am confident yt I can thinck aright, yt my humble thancks are most due to ye huswiferie of Mrs Moreton...'⁸²⁶

William still gifted cheese after Jane died, possibly recognising the benefit of gifting something that the Moretons had a good reputation for. In 1641 Italian ambassador to England Mr Burllemachi received two cheeses.⁸²⁷ At the time he was helping the family obtain money for Peter Moreton who was stranded in Italy with no income. Edward and Margaret Moreton also followed this gifting of cheeses with two Cheshire cheeses from 'Dr Morton' appearing in the household accounts of Margaret's uncle Archbishop Laud.⁸²⁸

⁸²⁵ BL Add MS 33935 f.91 He does this in part in the same letter where he mentions the parcel of pepper he has sent Jane together with a '*Japan gowne to weare in her cha[m]ber.*'

⁸²⁶ BL Add MS 33936 f.159

⁸²⁷ BL Add MS 33936 f.248

⁸²⁸ James, L. (ed). *The Household Accounts of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1635-1642*. The Boydell Press (2019), p.47 'March 10 1637...2 cheeses Dr Morton. The accounts also show payments towards Edward Moreton's clergy career, p.64 as well as expenses for Moreton family friend Philip Webb, Laud's cousin, pp.54, 83, 106, 110, 111, 119, 127, 138, 179, 183, 189, 191, 195.

Cheese was also taken seriously at Speke. In the dairy in 1624 there were two 'boordes standing without by the brew-house dore to sett things on to drye', an 'irning' tub for storing rennet used to curdle milk for cheese, milking crooks for steadying the cows, three butter churns, cheese ladders for draining the whey from the curds, and cheese moulds and cheese boards for pressing cheese into rounds.⁸²⁹

The climate and topography of Cheshire and Lancashire meant that they were well suited to rearing livestock and were therefore big dairy areas.⁸³⁰ The inhabitants were renowned for their dairy produce and the amount of dairy produce in their diets.⁸³¹ This meant lots of cheese, including the popular Cheshire cheese.

In theory cheese caused putrefaction in the stomach.⁸³² This was particularly the case for more matured cheeses which were drier.⁸³³ Thomas Moffett was clear of the dangers of cheese eating:

'...it stayeth siege, stoppeth the liver, engendereth choler, melancholy and the stone, lieth long in the stomack undigested, procureth thirst, maketh a stinking breath, and a scurvy skin.'⁸³⁴

If this was so, cheese was a dangerous thing to eat: having an adverse effect on body and mind through the causation of blockages, humours, bad digestion, and bad breath. Moffatt argued, however, that certain cheeses would be acceptable to consume because they contradicted cheese's general nature, such as parmesan which retained its youthfulness and would not lie heavy in the stomach.⁸³⁵ Generally, hard mature cheeses were the worse culprits of ill digestion and corruption but Cheshire cheese was eaten younger and also fashionable in the

⁸²⁹ Saxton, E.B. *A Speke Inventory of 1624*, *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* XCVII (1945).

⁸³⁰ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, pp.45-46, 85, 202-203.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

⁸³² Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, pp.66/7.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁸³⁴ Thomas Moffett, *Healths Improvement*, p.131.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.132.

period, with large quantities frequently transported down to the London market, explaining further the Moretons' decision to regularly gift it.⁸³⁶ Thomas Moffett qualified his advice on cheese with Cheshire, stating that it was the best of English cheeses.⁸³⁷ Consuming cheese could also be justified on the basis that cheese eaten at the end of a meal formed a heavy and secure seal on top of the stomach to assist digestion.⁸³⁸ Food fashions and edible markers of status were combined with the provision of foods that helped guests' post-dinner comfort. With cheese the Moretons were able to combine a status symbol with an expression of their estate and housewifery skills and concern for their guests and gift recipients' digestion.

Sweet Banquet Foods to End the Meal:

All the foods so far analysed show how gentry families in the northwest had a good knowledge of the need for humoral balance and how to go about this. They also show how foods that should not have been eaten for fear of humoral imbalance or digestive putrefaction were managed in order to avoid these outcomes. In this, foods served by the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons were markers of gentry status because of their being adapted in a variety of ways. This desire for guests' comfort extended to other foods served at the end of a meal during the banquet course. Banquets were a combination of foods which contained expensive ingredients, helped seal the stomach and aid digestion, and which overlapped with medicinal remedies.⁸³⁹

The Norris inventory of Speke from 1624 includes twenty-six prints for the fruit pastes, marmalades, and marchpanes which formed the centrepieces of banqueting tables. Items surrounding this centrepiece would come on the two 'broad bankett dishes' and placed by diners on the various little glass plates and painted dishes, giving a hint at the delicacy involved in partaking of this refined and exclusive course.⁸⁴⁰ It is unclear whether the two dozen

⁸³⁶ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, pp.278, 280

⁸³⁷ Moffett, *Healths Improvement*, p.133.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid*, p.131.

⁸³⁹ Wilson, A. C. "*Banquetting Stuffe*", p.11.

⁸⁴⁰ Saxton, E.B. A Speke Inventory of 1624. *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 97 (1945).

'paynted dishes' are banquetting trenchers, but the descriptions imply something as delicate. Also featuring on the banquet table may have been the five 'blewe glasse dishes gilt'. Listed amongst the plate is a 'sugar chist with a litle spoone' which complemented the other banquetting dishes. There were two small boxes with locks: chests for expensive ingredients for sugar, spices, and gums. There were also three barrels for fruit, glass bottles covered with little leather lids, a white ewer and basin, with a second one 'paynted' and a little pair of scales. Sir William Norris's wife Eleanor also had a collection which allowed her to create the various sweet treats necessary for the banquet which could be safely stored in some of the other six wood boxes listed. There were fine ceramics that she kept in her closet, away from the rest of the tableware, and forty 'Venise glasses for wyne and beere.'⁸⁴¹

Jane Hesketh was the third wife of Robert Hesketh, who died in 1620. Her belongings, listed as being in 'Mistress Heskeths Closet', included 'banquetting stuff' and 'groceries' in a box. She had ingredients to make a range of sweetmeats for a sweet banquet. There was a sugar loaf together with Shrewsbury cakes, bottles and glasses, a sugar box, napery, and tablecloths. The Shrewsbury cakes would be akin to shortbread and their high sugar content would allow them to be kept for a long time in boxes. There is also a large quantity of liquorice.⁸⁴²

Liquorice, whether in the form of roots or the juice, could be used for several purposes. Hannah Woolley includes in her cookbook *The Queen-Like Closet* (1670) a recipe made of scraped liquorice, sugar, rosewater, and gum dragon then stamped with wax seals which could be made and kept for chest complaints. It had medicinal ingredients such as hyssop which would also help the chest.⁸⁴³ Jane could also make other medicinal recipes with her glass bottles containing 'waters' and her 'still', of which there are two listed at Rufford. There was a good deal of crossover between the medicinal and culinary recipes of the period when it came to the use of sugar, distilled waters, and alcohols. These naturally coincided at the conclusion of a meal, when comforting and aiding digestion were primary concerns alongside the

⁸⁴¹ Saxton, E.B. A Speke Inventory of 1624. *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 97 (1945).

⁸⁴² Lancs Archives, WCW/Disputed/C76A.

⁸⁴³ Hannah Woolley, *The Queen-like Closet* (1670), pp.79, 91-92.

appropriate conclusion of a dinner.⁸⁴⁴ Liquorice would also be a common ingredient in gingerbread, another staple of the banquet course also believed to aid digestion.⁸⁴⁵ Jane was well placed to care for guests and cater to their needs, with an evident desire to comfort guests' digestion through a varied banquet course.

Most manuscript and printed recipe books of the period featured cordial and surfeit waters, the latter taken to ease indigestion. Many contained liquorice and rosewater. They mainly required the use of a still to distil the various ingredients with alcohol. Paul Lloyd notes that such waters were a status symbol due to the extensive ingredients they required and the time taken to make them.⁸⁴⁶ The alternative was to buy them which was costly thus proving wealth, yet the in-house provision of them also allowed for a display of knowledge, fashion, and taste.⁸⁴⁷ Elaine Leong argues that the provision of medicines and the ability to cater for acquaintances' medical as well as culinary needs during social occasions was an important part of a family's gentry image.⁸⁴⁸ This was an important aspect of maintaining the family's 'social health' which blended food and healthcare expertise in order to look after societal bonds as much as their physical and mental wellbeing.⁸⁴⁹

John Moreton and his fourth wife Margaret (and likely those who came before her: Elizabeth, Ann, and Mary) owned expensive tableware, sugar, and extensive napery, with £16 3s 4d worth of 'napparie ware' being listed in the 1599 inventory. There are 'glasses, glass bottles and earthenware pots.' These could be for the table or to hold the various waters John's wives

⁸⁴⁴ Hannah Woolley, *The Queen-like Closet*, pp.3, 6, 20, 24.

⁸⁴⁵ Gervase Markham, *The English Huswife* (1615) lists three different gingerbread recipes, all three of which include liquorice alongside ginger. Two of the recipes also feature pepper, pp.111, 113, 120. Sir Thomas Elyot, in his *Castel of Helth* (1537) advised that ginger 'heateth the stomach, and helpeth digestion, but it heateth not so soone as pepper: but afterward the heate remaineth longer...' See also on ginger's digestive nature Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (1586); John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597); Henry Buttes, *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599).

⁸⁴⁶ Lloyd, *Food and Identity in England*, p.136.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Leong, E. *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England*. University of Chicago Press (2018), pp.47-50, 117-118, 173-174

⁸⁴⁹ Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge*, pp.47-50, 60-70, 99-123.

would have made with the 'lymbecke' or still that is also documented. They could also be pots for the storing of preserved stuff. This still room/food preparation cross-over was supported by the sugar listed in the inventory alongside soap and starch indicating that the sugar, still and vessels were used for a combination of culinary and medicinal/food preservation purposes, sugar work, sweetmeats but also for cosmetics; all forming part of the mistress's still room supplies.

Sweetmeats would be eaten off the 'banqueting dishes' listed at 7s. Listed next to the still/limbeck was silverplate together valued at 42s 10d. 'Trunks, boxes and chistes' worth £4 12s have little information about what might have been inside but the banqueting dishes, sugar, glass bottles, plus 'graters, weightes and trenchers' also listed alongside them could have all been safely locked up there. These entries, listed together in one section of the inventory, point to the fact that these were seen as a requisite set of items and belongings necessary for the fulfilling of the mistress of the household's role in producing the necessary banquet foods, waters and remedies, perfumes, and flavourings required for successful hospitality.

The Moreton accounts for the year 1621 list sugar, spices, and dried fruit.⁸⁵⁰ Spices closed the top of the stomach at the end of a meal and were believed, therefore, to be good for digestion.⁸⁵¹ Gingerbread would be a good way to serve these ingredients. The accounts also include an entry of 'pepper for puddings.'⁸⁵² At the start of January 1621/22 the Moreton accounts include another entry for beef suet together with pepper, currants, cloves, mace, and white bread. These were all ingredients for a panado, a desert made of bread, fruit, and spices, which was known for its help with digestion and sealing the lid of the cooking pot stomach. The Moretons also bought in ready-made sweetmeats such as marmalade and comfits, perfect to serve during the banquet course and designed to also provide an adequate

⁸⁵⁰ BL Add MS 33941.f1-6.

⁸⁵¹ Walking to aid digestion, which the Moretons could do in their long gallery is advocated by William Bullein, in his *Government of Health*, pp.28-29.

⁸⁵² Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, p.23; BL Add MS 33941.

seal for the stomach about to 'decoct' its contents.⁸⁵³ Thomas Cogan advised to eat comfits after meals to 'strengthen the stomacke' and 'represe the vapours ascending to the head.'⁸⁵⁴

The three families ensured the requisite spices and sweetmeats which helped with diners' comfort at the end of the meal. The use of the banquet course, expected amongst gentry dinner circles, ensured that guests left with a favourable impression of the gentry mistress's skill and of the comfort enjoyed during a dinner at the Heskeths', Norrises', or Moretons' home. All three families recognised its importance. Rather than such delicacies being corrupting and excessive, they were necessary for the happiness of dinner guests and aided a sense of wellbeing around the table.

Conclusion:

The Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons hospitality aimed to mitigate the deleterious effect of commensality on bodies and minds described in medical and religious texts. I have shown how effective digestion and humoral balance was important as part of gentry dining. Knowledge of the humoral body and its physiology meant the families were also aware that ineffective digestion could hamper a person's senses and cognition as well as having longer term impacts on health. This was something they wanted to avoid, not take advantage of.

The above analysis shows how the three study families used Galenism in flexible ways whilst still subscribing to the tenets of humoral balance. Such flexibility and adaptation highlights how people in the northwest merged the humoral manipulation of foods with displays of gentry status. What initially appears to be the flouting of dietary rules where the gentry consumed dangerous foods such as venison, waterfowl, cheese, and fruits, on closer inspection reveals they instead employed a deep knowledge of the humoral qualities of ingredients and flavourings to tailor food, creating a sense of gentry identity and belonging

⁸⁵³ Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, pp.46-47, 51.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

through dietary manipulation. The Heskeths, Norries, and Moretons negotiated food rules to express social status and belonging between the northwest gentry. The evidence points to a desire to optimise guests' culinary comfort, aid digestion, and render food safe to eat through the balancing of humoral qualities within and between dishes. Rendering food safe for guests using expensive techniques, through combinations with expensive ingredients such as sugar or spices, or through serving with other dishes and sauces, was an opportunity, alongside one's home, décor, conversation, or social performance, to demonstrate gentry belonging, wealth, and status.

Serving foods that would disagree with certain guests' humoral complexions in the manner of *The Taming of the Shrew* would be at odds with gentry hosts' desire to cater for the temperaments of other guests and provide a variety of dishes. It would be incongruous with the ideals of gentry hospitality. The manipulation of others around the dinner table via the targeted use of particular food stuffs would also be extremely difficult given the variables involved in humoral dietetics. Instead, guests were manipulated through how food was humorally adapted for their benefit. It was the act of changing food's humoral qualities which impressed others through care, knowledge, expense, and attention. All three families used food at every opportunity to convey a multi-layered message of gentry identity, commonality, knowledge, and expenditure.

Chapter 5

Feeding the Humours: Sensory Persuasions

Shakespeare demonstrated through the manipulation of Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew* that the whole atmosphere of hospitality worked to shape guests, not just certain food stuffs as with Petruchio.⁸⁵⁵ This chapter will show through understandings of sensory perception, physiology, and the sensory aspects of dining at the three study properties that the manipulation of guests would not revolve solely around food. This has already been shown in the three chapters on each families' particular style of commensality. The ability to shape guests through commensality involved the interplay of different sensory elements and, like food, each family understood the power of the commensal sensorium in humoral and embodied terms. I argue they used this to their advantage, combining various sensory aspects in their commensal gatherings which worked in different ways on diners. I demonstrate how this understanding of affective dinner atmospheres made commensality an important tool each family could use to maintain, advance, or display gentry status and influence others to achieve these aims but that this was amicably done. In a similar way to the families' careful management of food served to guests, their commensal atmospheres were based on environment and lifestyle equilibrium akin to the medical non-naturals. Amongst the potentially heady atmospheres of commensality, equilibrium fostered conviviality.

The Commensal Sensorium and The Body as Bastion:

The early modern body was seen as porous and susceptible to interference: a common analogy was a house or city with windows or gates that let the inside out but also the outside in.⁸⁵⁶ The body was conceived as a porous and permeable entity, at risk from breaches from the sensory, elemental, and humoral world around it. Health advice and dietary regimens advice reflected this through the language of siege. Early modern sensory understandings created a maelstrom of affects in operation during commensal occasions.

⁸⁵⁵ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, pp.126-129.

⁸⁵⁶ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* p.55.

The title of three of the most popular published medical texts of the period conveyed this sense of the body being either a defensive building under attack or a retreat from external threat. These were Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Castel of Health* (1541), William Bullein's *Bulwarke of Defence Against All Sicknesse* (1579), and Lancashire-based Thomas Cogan's *The Haven of Health* (1584). Health depended on a regulated lifestyle that restricted access to this bodily fortress, only admitting entry to those aspects of life which benefitted the body and regularly purging the corporeal castle from those which had crossed this threshold. This may read as a metaphor for a robust boundary between the internal body and its external surroundings but, instead, it was a worryingly flimsy divide which required a disciplined and rigorous shoring up through rules and regimen. The most explicit embracing of this idea comes from William Bullein who begins his book, in the dedication to Lord Henry Carey, with this prospect for readers:

...that they may resort to thys little Bulwarcke, which I doe Dedicate unto your honorable Lordship, where they shall not onely be defended in the same, from sicknesse, and Woundes: but also being wounded, through cruell Assaulters of thys Bulwarke, or Sicke...they shall have at hand, all maner of Cordials, and wholesome Salves. Whereby they shalbe the abler, to keepe thys holde agaynst all bodyly evils...'⁸⁵⁷

He built the fort walls low, therein showing the fragile defences that will come under attack, but also allowing for things to come and go across the threshold:

I have builded it very lowe, wanting neyther the strength of Ordynance, provision of Victualles, nor the Policye of most worthy Captaynes, & good Souleours: as Hippocrates, Galen, Dioscorides &c...'⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁷ Bullien, W. *Bulleins Bulwarke of Defence Against All Sicknesse, Soareness, and Wounds that Doe Daily Assaulte Mankinde...*(1579).

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

Amongst these soldiers of the bulwark, Bullein also lists on a separate page further names such as Jesus, Averroes, Avicenna, David, and Solomon under the heading 'The authors, captaynes, and souldiours of this Bulwarke.'⁸⁵⁹

Thomas Wright compared the body and the senses to a house and its windows. In order to avoid sin one had to close the windows and doors of the house 'lest all thy house die, that is, thy body and thy soule...death ascendeth into the house of our hearts, by the windows of our senses.'⁸⁶⁰ This idea of the body as a citadel to be guarded had religious implications. Penetration of the bodily fortress could affect one's mind, soul, and therefore faith as much as anything else. This can be witnessed in journals of the period, often concerned with spiritual wellbeing and adherence. Food, digestion, bodily 'motions' and the effects these had on the interiority of the body are constantly listed in the writings of people such as Ralph Josselin and Richard Baxter.⁸⁶¹ For Wright, the building of the body needed to repel threats from passions as well as the humours, outside elements, or food that could alter them:

For these rebellious passions are like crafty pioneers, who, while souldiers live carelessly within their castle, or at least not much suspect, they undermine it, and breake in so upon them, that they can hardly escape: in like manner these affections undermine the understandings of men.⁸⁶²

Bullein also described the assault on the body not just in terms of ailments but in the language of siege and attack from the evil influences of other people:

⁸⁵⁹ Bullien, *Bulleins Bulwarke* (1579).

⁸⁶⁰ Wright, Thomas. *The Passions of the Mind in Generall*, p.152.

⁸⁶¹ Schoenfeldt *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* pp.32, 33, citing Baxter, Richard. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696) and *The Diary of Ralph Josselin (1616-1683)*

⁸⁶² Wright, Thomas. *The Passions of the Mind in Generall* cited in Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* p.49.

And although there wyll bee many peradventure, both malicious, spightfull, and cankred of Mynde, that both wyth slaunder and disdayne, will lay theyr Battry, agaynst thys fort: I shall be able to repulse them...'⁸⁶³

Such writing was loaded with a sense of unseen threat, of someone that could take advantage of dulled wits, confused senses, and a lapse of morality. Such a figure, waiting in the wings, could easily capitalise of this lack of discipline with attempts at conversion or temptation, to distract a diner from the correct path, or to manipulate to get what they want. This fear of those who 'move to delight' raises the prospect of dinner hosts befriending and persuading others through careful study of guests' humoral temperament or personality and catering for it.

Sensory Perception:

For the Moretons, in the mid-17th century, the act of touching and wearing a cramp ring associated with healing had the power to convey curative qualities.⁸⁶⁴ This implies, in the Moreton family's thinking, that bodies were thought of as porous and open to influence from outside, whether through surroundings, physical contact, or the five senses. In his commonplace books Philip Moreton recorded buying cramp rings regularly for friends and family.⁸⁶⁵ The specific designation of these items as 'cramp' rings indicates that they were being used for medicinal purposes, the efficacy of which relied on early modern understandings of touch.⁸⁶⁶ These rings were believed to cure epilepsy, scrofula, muscular

⁸⁶³ Bullien, *Bulleins Bulwarke* (1579).

⁸⁶⁴ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp.51-53.

⁸⁶⁵ There are numerous examples of cramp rings being bought for people in Add MS 339341 and a further example in Add MS 33942 with a cramp ring being purchased for Philip's cousin Mall for 3d. f.4.

⁸⁶⁶The history of cramp rings derives from monarchs touching for scrofula, with cramp rings being forged from either the monetary gift given on Maundy Thursday, or from pre-forged rings which were ceremoniously touched by the monarch. Bloch, M. *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*. Routledge (1973); Cherry, J. Healing Through Faith: The Continuation of Medieval Attitudes to Jewellery into the Renaissance. *Renaissance Studies*. Vol 15:2 (2001); Oxford Reference Website, 'Cramp Rings' [Accessed 14 October 2021] [Cramp rings - Oxford Reference](#); Science Museum Group, 'Metal Clamp Ring 1308-1558' [Accessed 14 October 2021] [Metal cramp ring, English, 1308-1558 | Science Museum Group Collection](#); Crawford, R. The Blessing of Cramp Rings: A Chapter in the History of the Treatment of Epilepsy (1917). In Singer, C. (ed). *Studies in the History of Science*. Oxford. (1917-21), pp.179-182.

pains, and spasms.⁸⁶⁷ Healing qualities transferred to the rings by a monarch's touch could subsequently be transferred to those who wore them.⁸⁶⁸

Sensory experiences had the potential to impress upon dinner guests and affect opinions they might form or decisions they might make in numerous ways beyond the ingestion of food alone. As well as food ingested having a bearing on the internal workings of body and mind, sensory inputs were also believed to affect one's thoughts and behaviours. Two influential early modern theories regarding the senses were those of Aristotle and Lucretius and both were based around touch. These models had been part of medieval understandings of sensory interaction and, despite challenges, had continued to underpin sensory understandings during the Reformation and into the 17th century, as various elements of the Moreton correspondence and notebooks make clear.⁸⁶⁹

Aristotle divided the senses into those which transferred sensory information immediately via direct contact (touch and taste) and those which required a medium to transfer information across space (sight, sound, and smell). Touch and taste worked through the sensory organ, or in the case of touch, the skin, immediately contacting the object sensed. Sight, sound, and smell, however, travelled through the air.⁸⁷⁰ The mechanism by which this transferral occurred was the idea of 'species'.⁸⁷¹ Media, not just air but also water and even bodily fluids, took on the likeness of the object, and this likeness, or *species*, was replicated across the medium or carried by it, until it reached the sensor or person's sensory organ. This domino-like effect allowed a perfect replica of the object sensed to reach a person, where the likeness was imprinted on the receptor like a ring seal imprinted in soft wax. Whilst this process could be

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid. Rings and touch have an interesting association. As well as cramp rings, rings with jewels and precious stones were used for medical purposes, with the setting of the ring having an opening to allow the stone contact with the wearer's skin, see Cherry, J. Healing Through Faith: The Continuation of Medieval Attitudes to Jewellery into the Renaissance. *Renaissance Studies*. Vol 15:2 (2001); Forsyth, H. *The Cheapside Hoard: London's Lost Jewels*. Museum of London (2013), pp.113, 121, 129, 130, 140, 176, 177, 207.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid. In the 1530s Lady Lisle noted that the rings were also affective in relieving childbirth contracts, see Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, p.184.

⁸⁶⁹ Milner, M. *The Senses and the English Reformation*; Woolger, C. *The Senses in Late Medieval England*; Friedlander, P. Pattern of Sound and Atomistic Theory in Lucretius. *American Journal of Philology* 62:1 (1941) pp. 16-34.

⁸⁷⁰ Lindberg, D.C. *Theories of Vision: From Al-Kindi to Kepler*, Chicago University Press (1976), pp.6-9.

⁸⁷¹ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.21

seen to deny any materiality of the senses, because no physical matter from an object was transferred, the fact that sensory perception required a medium meant that theoretically the space between sensor and the object sensed was not just empty space. It was filled with species travelling through it using various substances. The ability of a person to take on the 'likeness' of an atmosphere had implications for commensal gatherings.

For the poet Lucretius, sensory perception did not require such a medium because sensory information was transferred through small particles of an object travelling and entering the sensor's body through a void.⁸⁷² Sight, sound, and smell involved particle transferral: minute pieces of an object were taken in by the eye; sound involved airborne sound particles physically contacting the ear; smell involved the inhalation of the object smelled.⁸⁷³ The size and shape of these particles meant smells could be pleasant or foul, sounds melodious or harsh, and tastes sweet or bitter. For all the senses this meant actual matter being transferred and crossing the body's internal boundary.⁸⁷⁴ While Lucretius did not write anything specifically on the sense of touch, like Aristotle, he believed that touch formed the basis of all the senses.⁸⁷⁵ His idea of atoms, or 'seeds', moving through space was taken up by people such as the Italian Fracastoro as the basis for the process of contagion and infections.⁸⁷⁶ Touching something could alter you and you could alter it, through a 'stream of matter.'⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷² Moshenska, J. *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England*. Oxford University Press (2014), pp.83-84, 91; Eschenbaum, N.K. Robert Herrick and the Five (or Six) Senses. In. Smith, S. Watson, J and Kenny, A. *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558-1660*. Manchester University Press (2015), pp.122-123; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p.2; Warren, J. Lucretius and Greek Philosophy. In. Gillespie, S. and Hardie, P. *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*. Cambridge University Press (2007), pp.27-28; Johnson, M. and Wilson, C. Lucretius and the History of Science, In. Gillespie, S. and Hardie, P. *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*. Cambridge University Press (2007), pp.131-138; Gillespie, S. Lucretius in the English Renaissance, In. Gillespie, S. and Hardie, P. *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*. Cambridge University Press (2007), pp.242-253.

⁸⁷³ Friedlander, Pattern of Sound and Atomistic Theory in Lucretius, pp. 16-34; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p.2-3; Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England*, pp.85-86; Eschenbaum, Robert Herrick and the Five (or Six) Senses, pp.122-123,

⁸⁷⁴ Harvey, E.D. (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. University of Pennsylvania (2003), p.21; Anderson, M. G. Living in a Material World: Margaret Cavendish's The Convent of Pleasure. In. Harvey, E.D. (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. University of Pennsylvania (2003), p.189; Eschenbaum, Robert Herrick and the Five (or Six) Senses, pp.122-123.

⁸⁷⁵ Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, pp.2-3; Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England*, p.84.

⁸⁷⁶ Friedlander, Pattern of Sound and Atomistic Theory in Lucretius, pp. 16-34; Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p.161; Healy, M. Anxious and Fatal Contacts: Taming the Contagious Touch, in. Harvey, E.D. (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. University of Pennsylvania (2003), pp.24, 36.

⁸⁷⁷ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, IV.224-225 cited in Eschenbaum, Robert Herrick and the Five (or Six) Senses, p.125.

Such particle transferral involved penetration of objects, bodies, and matter, and particle qualities were based on the size and shape but also, with touch itself, through force or softness of contact.⁸⁷⁸ In commensal contexts, therefore, touching tableware, viewing décor, hearing music or conversation, smelling food aromas, as well as the physical act of eating, had material physiological consequences.

Sensory Boundaries:

With these early modern connections between health, physiology, and perception in mind, I argue commensality was the perfect opportunity for the three study families to influence people and deepen social bonds. This was through commensal atmospheres that interacted with bodies and minds in sensory ways through the vulnerable points of eyes, ears, noses, tongues, and skin but in less malevolent ways than medical and religious texts feared.⁸⁷⁹ As demonstrated by Chris Woolgar, understanding how the operation of the senses was perceived enriches our subsequent understanding of the sensory environments of Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton, and how they impressed on people within them.⁸⁸⁰

Eyes and Vision:

In the context of northwest commensality there were several visual aspects of note in the food spaces of the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons: wood carvings, bright wall paintings, textiles, and designs on tableware – all containing sensory information which could impact on diners' animal spirits, humours, and perception.

⁸⁷⁸ Eschenbaum, Robert Herrick and the Five (or Six) Senses, pp.122-123, 125

⁸⁷⁹ Here I follow the order and hierarchy of the senses as set down by Aristotle for ease and to recognise the hierarchy's place in historical sensory theory. However, I do this whilst being aware that this hierarchy was not accepted uncritically and not following the assumption that everyone subscribed to this model.

⁸⁸⁰ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp.190-273.



Fig. 1. Plasterwork overmantel in the great parlour at Little Moreton with digital re-instating of the paintwork revealed in the 2008 polychromy report. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.

In the great parlour at Little Moreton is a plasterwork overmantel showing the arms of Elizabeth I flanked by two caryatids (fig.1). The majority of the overmantel, according to paintwork analysis done for the National Trust, was painted bright blue and yellow. Blue was associated with wealth and status due to the expensive nature of blue pigments like azurite, used for the Little Moreton blue paint.⁸⁸¹ Yellow was another colour associated with wealth due to its use in representing gold in paintings.⁸⁸² Though the yellow paintwork in the great parlour used yellow ochre rather than something richer like orpiment, the positioning of the yellow elements and the details it highlighted suggests it was meant to imitate gold. The vivid colours of the overmantel match the brightness of the wall paintings in the little parlour at Little Moreton depicting the story of Susanna and the Elders (see chapter 6).

Galen wrote of the crystalline humour of the eye, an ice-like humour, through which sensory information was transmitted.⁸⁸³ On reaching the optic nerves at the back of the eye the information was conveyed to the brain via the ‘pneuma’ or ‘animal spirits.’⁸⁸⁴ Aristotle spoke of the ‘tunic’ which also captured an ‘imprint’ of the species, in the wax and seal analogy,

⁸⁸¹ Kirkham, A. Pattern and Colour in Late 16th- and 17th-Century Secular Wall and Panel Paintings in Suffolk: An Overview. In. Gowing, R. and Pender, R. *All Manner of Murals: The History, Techniques and Conservation of Secular Wall Paintings*. English Heritage. Archetype Publications (2007), pp.36, 40.

⁸⁸² Gottler, C. Yellow, Vermillion, and Gold: Colour in Karel van Mander’s *Schilder-Boeck*. In. Burghartz, S. Burkart, L, Gottler, C. and Rublack, U. *Materialised Identities in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1750: Objects, Affects, Effects*. Amsterdam University Press (2021), pp.233-272.

⁸⁸³ Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, pp.11, 34; Clark, S. *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture*. Oxford University Press (2007), p.19.

⁸⁸⁴ Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, pp.9-10; Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p.19.

which was conveyed to the brain via animal spirits.⁸⁸⁵ The brain received a simulacra of the object seen, a true replication.⁸⁸⁶ Brightly coloured images like those of the painted schemes at Little Moreton would touch and imprint themselves on diners, interacting directly with the body's animal spirits. These coloured images might emphasise a religious message but ran the risk of overwhelming the viewer through how they affected the eye's crystalline humour, the animal spirits, and the brain.⁸⁸⁷

There were various points at which the transmission of visual information could be interfered with, either externally by evil spirits, or internally through the humours changing the sensory information and the ability of the animal spirits to convey an exact image 'truthfully'.⁸⁸⁸ Evil spirits or the devil could alter the species, meaning the viewer saw something different.⁸⁸⁹ According to William Perkins, the devil could corrupt 'the instruments of sense, as the humor of the eye, or by altering and changing the ayre, which is the meanes by which we see, and such like.'⁸⁹⁰ Temporary imbalance of the humours had the ability to interfere with a person's imagination, thereby confusing external images travelling to the brain with internal images created by the brain.⁸⁹¹ Humoral balance or imbalance caused a person to view things differently.⁸⁹² A sanguine person would interpret what they saw as more cheerful, a phlegmatic person would see something as duller, a choleric's interpretation would be gloomier and a melancholic's sadder.⁸⁹³ Being overtly melancholy clouded the vision by darkening, thickening, and obscuring the animal spirits and the clarity of the image travelling

⁸⁸⁵ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp.14-19, 61.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁷ The mechanics of the eye and sight being understood in these terms is confirmed in Stephen Batman's *Batman upon Bartholome* (1582), pp.17-19.

⁸⁸⁸ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp.47, 48, 48 citing Pico della Mirandola's *De Imaginatione* and Edward Reynold on imagination, p.50 citing Hieronymus Nymann, 51-53 on melancholia, p.61 on Timothy Bright's 'ambassadors' who 'falsifie the report.'

⁸⁸⁹ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp.14-19.

⁸⁹⁰ Perkins, W. *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608), pp.23, 157. Thomas Wright, in his *The Passions of the Mind in Generall* (1604), wrote how 'by secret means [the devil] can enter into the former part of our braine, and there chop and change our imaginations', p.330.

⁸⁹¹ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp.48, 49 citing Pico and La Primaudaye, p.60 citing Du Laurens and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

⁸⁹² Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp.58-59

⁸⁹³ Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, pp.48-49.

via the spirit.⁸⁹⁴ The result would be seeing through a 'splenetick fogge.'⁸⁹⁵ This caused misinterpretation by the viewer who would still be convinced that what they were seeing was real though the cause was 'organically parts' delivering 'corrupt records.'⁸⁹⁶

The potential to misinterpret was useful for Protestant rhetoric on religious sensing. It allowed a medical and physiological foundation for faulty sensing or clouded judgement with which to disparage Catholic belief in miraculous saints' acts and transubstantiation (as seen below in the sermon preached to the Earl of Derby in 1577).⁸⁹⁷

I argue in chapter 6, regarding the décor of the three study properties, that colour schemes had implications for diners' moods. This was understood to be possible due to the interaction of visual sensory information emanating from an object with internal animal spirits which transferred this information to the brain. This flow of 'species', particles, and spirits was believed to cause changes in internal humoral balance. Bright colour schemes could potentially overwhelm guests. At Rufford, in the inventory for 1620, there were '29 pictures' worth £5 plus one other valued at 12^s.⁸⁹⁸ It is not known what these pictures depicted or the colours they involved but other elements of Rufford's great hall décor involved heraldry, traditionally very bright in nature. There were also sixteen cushions and embroidery materials including some described as being 'cullors [colours] for an ancient.'⁸⁹⁹ As well as this sort of embroidered heraldic emblem, possibly the Hesketh ancient emblem of the double-headed eagle, Sir Thomas Hesketh also bequeathed in his will of 1560 'carpets and cushions whereupon his arms or crest were either carved or wrought with needle.'⁹⁰⁰ The Speke inventory of 1624 also lists a variety of different soft furnishings and a painted bed-

⁸⁹⁴ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp.14-19.

⁸⁹⁵ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* p.61 citing Timothy Bright *A Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) pp.100, 101, 102. It is interesting here to see the connections between melancholy, the spleen, 'splenetick frenzy' and madness. Bright stated that: 'this taking hold of brayne...whereby it fancieth not according to truth: but as the nature of that humour leadeth it...'

⁸⁹⁶ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p.61 citing Timothy Bright.

⁸⁹⁷ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p.64 on religious interpretation; Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, p.196

⁸⁹⁸ Lancs Archives WCW/Disputed/C76A.

⁸⁹⁹ Lancs Archives WCW/Disputed/C76A.

⁹⁰⁰ Will of Sir Thomas Hesketh, BL Add MS 32104 and also Lancs Archives DDB 12/13.

chamber.⁹⁰¹ However, I argue that these bright and bold colour schemes, at least in the food spaces of Rufford and Speke, were moderated carefully by the Heskeths and Norrises using a uniting backdrop of green.⁹⁰²

Ears and Sounds:

Various aural elements featured during commensal occasions such as music or other performances at Rufford, diverse conversations or displays of wit at Little Moreton, and sermons, as will be seen with the dinners hosted by the Earls of Derby below. Words could also alter the spiritual nature of a commensal occasion, with the word of God able to sanctify food or change the meaning of an act of eating or drinking at the point of consumption through certain utterances (see chapter 6).

Lucretius wrote of particles which met the ear. Harsh sounds came from rough particles while melodious ones came from smaller, smoother particles.⁹⁰³ Bartholomew the Englishman located hearing as occurring at the ear drum.⁹⁰⁴ This held 'aural spirit' which carried sounds from the ear drum to two sinews which linked to the '*vertue imaginatif*.'⁹⁰⁵ In the Aristotelian model, animal spirit captured the impression caused by the species which travelled to the ear.⁹⁰⁶ This impression was caused by species emanating from the cause of the sound, touching each other through space, passing on simulacra, in this domino-effect, causing vibrations in the air and shaping it: what Stephen Batman described as 'aire rebounding.'⁹⁰⁷ This movement of air was sensed by the two ear sinews.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰¹ Saxton, E.B. A Speke Inventory of 1624. *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 97 (1945).

⁹⁰² Smith, B. *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*. Chicago University Press (2009).

⁹⁰³ Friedlander, Pattern of Sound and Atomistic Theory in Lucretius, pp. 16-34

⁹⁰⁴ Millner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, p.29.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁶ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.63; Batman, S. *Batman upon Bartholome* (1582), chapter 17 'Of the Hearing.'

⁹⁰⁷ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.64; Burton, R. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Subsect VI: Of the Sensible Soul; Batman, S. *Batman upon Bartholome* (1582), Chapter 17 Of the Hearing.

⁹⁰⁸ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.64.

A further theory understood sound as a type of material spirit (*spiritus*) travelling through the breath and the air when someone spoke or sang and touching the ear.⁹⁰⁹ This was believed to explain why music could affect a person's spirit or soul powerfully, because of the likeness between external and internal spirits and their interaction.⁹¹⁰ In all three models, external sound interacted with internal animal spirits which conveyed sound to the brain and related to the soul. This left the transit of this sensory information open to interference from humours inside the body as well as misinterpretation by the brain if it became altered by humoral vapours.⁹¹¹ As with sight, the humours could affect how something audible was perceived.

Sound could disrupt the internal harmony of the body and make it susceptible to resonances. A triumphant sound emboldened, religious music dispelled evil thoughts, but secular music conveyed lustful disharmony encouraging lusty behaviour.⁹¹² A sermon had the potential to convey more than just the meaning of words but also carry morality, as could reading religious texts out loud.⁹¹³ This moral force became an immoral force if the words were sinful.⁹¹⁴ 'Bad' words had heretical qualities or gave extra force to oaths sworn in God's name (a form of early modern swearing) or curses issued.⁹¹⁵ With the operation of the species, or particles, spirits and mediums, words and sounds entered the body and changed an individual.⁹¹⁶ As Chris Woolgar summarises: 'The spoken word might heal or infect, condemn or persuade, save or preserve.'⁹¹⁷ This had implications for those who feared being led astray by false flatterers or sycophants.

⁹⁰⁹ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.64.

⁹¹⁰ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.64, Wright, T. *The Passions of the Mind in Generall (1604)*, p.170.

⁹¹¹ Wright, T. *The Passions of the Mind in Generall (1604)*, p.171.

⁹¹² Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp.81-83; Wright, T. *The Passions of the Mind in Generall (1604)*, p.171.

⁹¹³ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp.87, 88, 91.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.87, 91.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.98-99.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.104.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid*.

Noses, Smells and Scents:

The power of scent can be seen in a letter from Peter Moreton to his father as he travelled back to Italy in 1629. On entering the town of St Geori in Savoy from France, travellers found that ‘them selves and all their carriages, severally, are first perfumed & then remaine there to finish their quarentena, which importeth 40 days stay.’⁹¹⁸ Such dousing of carriages in perfume in plague areas worked to counteract contagious airs and foul smells. This was not to mask them but to act as a protective scented barrier to prevent contagion from permeating the skin. In Peter’s quarantine period he is sent by Sir Isaac Wake to a villa with a vineyard, near Turin, where the air would be clearer and his body less prone to corruptive penetration. The sweeter air would help to combat such potential foul miasma. This is further evidence of the belief in porous bodies vulnerable to contagion or alternation from outside.

In domestic contexts, sweet smells indicated clean households and well-ordered families living virtuous lives.⁹¹⁹ The smells of the kitchen wafting through to dining rooms carried their own associations depending on who smelled them, with different meats, spices, and fragrant herbs adding to the sensorium of the dinner party.⁹²⁰ This sensorium included new smells which became part of the commensal mix such as tobacco, with differing opinions on whether this was a welcome or unwelcome olfactory addition.⁹²¹ Whereas tobacco was a smell likely to have formed part of commensality at Little Moreton, at Speke the Norrises appear to have thought perfume an important sensory element. A perfuming pan was listed in the 1624 inventory alongside tableware, and one also featured in a later list of sold items in 1631, again alongside tableware.⁹²² Andrew Boorde noted that ‘the smel of newe breade’ was a particularly important commensal smell which could ‘comforte, confyrme, and doth stablysshe a mannes herte.’⁹²³

⁹¹⁸ BL Add MS 33935 f.265.

⁹¹⁹ Reinartz, J. *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell*. University of Illinois Press (2014), p.89; Classen, C. Howes, D. and Synnott, A. *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, Routledge (1994), pp.60-61, 62-63.

⁹²⁰ Classen et al, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, pp.66-67.

⁹²¹ Ibid.

⁹²² Saxton, E.B. A Speke Inventory of 1624. *HSLC 97* (1945); University of Liverpool Special Collections SPEC NORRIS 298 – Receipts and Lists of Pewter Sold to Lady Clifton.

⁹²³ Andrew Boorde, *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Healthe* (1547), The xi Chapter.

One's body and mind were open to the direct effects of air and environment. As noted by Thomas Cogan, 'the spirits of our bodies doe naturally follow the motion and inclination of the aire.'⁹²⁴ This had the potential to transfer behavioural and moral attitudes through the nose and even the skin's pores in certain atmospheres.⁹²⁵ Smells entered the body through the nose and were detected by two nasal teats inside which connected to the brain.⁹²⁶ The contact between smells and the brain through this process made a person's perceptive powers vulnerable and open to influence, as noted in Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* (1615).⁹²⁷ Smells were influential because of how the early modern body was believed to be susceptible to the surrounding environment following the theories of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen.⁹²⁸ Stephen Batman, in his translation of Bartholomew the Englishman in 1582 agreed that a person could take on the likeness of the air around them.⁹²⁹ 'Air' was one of the six non-naturals that one had to manage in everyday life in order to keep humours in a healthy balance. Influence from scent could upset this balance and affect behaviour.⁹³⁰ Galen stated that smells had humoral qualities: rose was cooling, frankincense was hot and dry.⁹³¹ In sensing one's environment, humours entered the bodies in other ways besides the eating and swallowing of food.

⁹²⁴ Cogan, T. *The Haven of Health* (1595), p.16.

⁹²⁵ Classen, et al. *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, p.40; Duggan, H. *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*. John Hopkins University Press (2011), pp.11, 12-14, 97-119; Murphy, H. Skin and Disease in Early Modern Medicine: Jan Jessen's *De Cute, et Cutaneis Affectibus* (1601). *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*. 94:2 (2020), pp.181-182; Hennepe, M. Of the Fisherman's Net and Skin Pores: Reframing Conceptions of the Skin in Medicine, 1572-1714. In Horstmanshoff, King, and Zittel. *Blood, Sweat, and Tears*. Brill (2012), p.524; Nieuwenhuis, M. Porous Skin: Breathing Through the Prism of the Holey Body. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 33 (2019), p.3.

⁹²⁶ Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* pp.12-13; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.15; Burton, R. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Subsect VI: 'Of the Sensible Soul.'; Batman, S. *Batman uppon Bartholome* (1582), pp.19-20.

⁹²⁷ Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* p.12 citing Crooke, H. *Mikrokosmographia* (1615). Thomas Wilbraham records he lent this to others in his notebook of accounts, 1648-1656 [Cheshire Archives DBW/P/J/6]

⁹²⁸ Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* pp.8, 11, 105

⁹²⁹ *Ibid*, pp.12-13.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid*, p.106

⁹³¹ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p15.

The air could take on moral characteristics.⁹³² Certain smells had associations they triggered in people's minds: for example, smells of incense following the Reformation could be a scent of corruption or superstition able to affect a person's morality; that of luxurious banquets might stink of debauchery and excess causing a lack of self-control.⁹³³ Apart from these associations, the qualities of these smells could be materially transferred to people who came into contact with them. Scent could also work to bolster morality through odours linked to saints or the church (the odour of sanctity) or through sweet, pure smells that were perceived as virtuous.⁹³⁴ George Herbert, in his poem *The Banquet*, set out the link between God and sweet-smelling pomanders.⁹³⁵

Sir John Harrington separated smells into those which could corrupt, assisting the 'inward corruption of the heart' and those which could 'fortifie'.⁹³⁶ Good smells included those associated with healthy food and dining, able to purify bodies and minds, and facilitate contact with God.⁹³⁷ Good smells protected the body from foul smells which could induce evil or corruption.⁹³⁸

Tongues and Taste:

The analysis of foods eaten and served by the three study families in the preceding chapter demonstrates how they produced a variety of different tastes for their guests. Lancashire recusant and Hesketh family friend Christopher Townley (1604-1674) copied down in his commonplace book the fact that cholera was 'bitter tasted' and melancholy 'sour tasted.'⁹³⁹

⁹³² Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp15-16 and Bartholomew the Englishman.

⁹³³ Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* pp.3-4; Classen et al *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* pp.58-59, 66-67.

⁹³⁴ Classen et al, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* p.77; Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* pp.4, 14; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* pp.118-120, the smell of the devil was sulphurous p.121.

⁹³⁵ Herbert, G. *The Banquet*, cited in Classen et al, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* p.77.

⁹³⁶ Classen et al, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, p.14.

⁹³⁷ Reinartz, J. *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell*. University of Illinois Press (2014), p.25.

⁹³⁸ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* pp.124, 127.

⁹³⁹ Chethams Library, MUN A.2.121, f.5.

The mouth was another vulnerable point allowing access to the spiritual, humoral, and digestive interior of the self.⁹⁴⁰ Taste either acted in a similar way to touch, directly through contact, or needed a medium to convey qualities i.e. saliva.⁹⁴¹ Saliva was phlegmatic (cold and wet) and took on the flavour of foods entering the mouth. The saliva and mouth took on the likeness of the food and this likeness entered the tongue itself through the pores.⁹⁴² The animal spirit inside the tongue took on this likeness and conveyed it to the brain, as seen above with sight, sound and smell.⁹⁴³

The sense of penetration that came from the other senses was also present here, as the quality of the food not only entered the digestive system but also penetrated the body through the tongue while saliva trickled down the throat.⁹⁴⁴ These various penetrations allowed the nature of the food to be sensed but, as with the humours' ability to affect the perceptions of other senses, they also acted to disrupt that of taste perception.⁹⁴⁵ Humoral imbalance caused the saliva to be corrupted, causing the overriding taste of food to be a bitter one if a person was overly choleric, but salty if a person was overly phlegmatic.⁹⁴⁶

The humours gave food its flavour, alongside texture, so that things humorally hot in nature were sweet, spicy, bitter or sharp, whereas those which were cold were insipid or meaty.⁹⁴⁷ As humours affected the taste of foods, they had an impact beyond that of nutrition, the generation of internal vapours, or digestive processes. Taste as a sense interacted with animal spirits linked to the mind.

⁹⁴⁰ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* p.33; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* pp.111-112.

⁹⁴¹ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* pp.25, 33; Burton, R. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Subject VI: 'On the Sensible Soul.'

⁹⁴² Batman, S. *Batman uppon Bartholome* (1582), chapter 20: 'Of the taast'

⁹⁴³ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* p.105.

⁹⁴⁴ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* p.33

⁹⁴⁵ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* p.34; Batman, S. *Batman uppon Bartholome* (1582), chapter 20: 'Of the taast.'

⁹⁴⁶ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, p.34 and Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* p.105; Batman, S. *Batman uppon Bartholome* (1582), chapter 20: 'Of the taast.'

⁹⁴⁷ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* pp.106, 110, 115.

Skin and Touch:

A letter between William Moreton and Sir Richard Wilbraham (1579-1643) further underlines northwest beliefs around touch, imbibing, and vulnerability.⁹⁴⁸ Sir Richard Wilbraham wrote to arrange a meeting with William at an inn but was wary of the nature of the establishment and the safety of their drinking ware:

‘I am more fit to deale with you at Haughton Greene than at Sandbatch, the first being a place where there is nothing but fayre and square dealing, our drink appearing in Venice glasses, the other in earthen and unsanctified potts.’⁹⁴⁹



Fig. 2. Venetian glass, from the London glasshouse of Jacopo Verzelini and engraving by Anthony de Lysle. The glass engraving reads: ‘G&S’, ‘1586’, and ‘IN GOD IS AL MI TRUST.’ © The Trustees of the British Museum.

There was a reluctance to drink from a dirty vessel, not because it was unclean, but because it was spiritually sullied, dangerous, and ‘unsanctified.’ Drinking from a dirty cup was potentially dangerous through it being impure and spiritually contaminated. The body would be laid open to internal corruption through the lips touching the lip of the vessel, or because the vessel may not have been spiritually prepared (for example, the establishment was

⁹⁴⁸ See Bowett. A. An Early Seventeenth Century Armchair from Cheshire. *Regional Furniture Journal*. XXVIII (2014).

⁹⁴⁹ BL Add MS 33936 f.196.

ungodly or the pot did not feature text or motifs which could proffer spiritual protection). Evil could permeate the body through touch.⁹⁵⁰ Eating and drinking were acts which allowed the outside in across the boundary of the self through the mouth, what Michael Schoenfeldt calls ‘that anxious orifice’, a vulnerability Sir Richard Wilbraham expressed caution over.⁹⁵¹

The sensation of touch was likened to a spider’s web, with the soul at its centre.⁹⁵² The skin was not considered a secure boundary between inside and outside the self. The skin’s porous quality was likened to a ‘fisherman’s net’ which, according to Italian Girolano Mercuriale, allowed for bodily excretion but also penetration.⁹⁵³ The skin was a two-way membrane which meant humours could pass through it into the body and people could determine another’s humoral complexion by assessing skin colour, or temporary flushing or blanching.⁹⁵⁴ This flimsy barrier allowed humours and environmental elements into the body almost by osmosis.⁹⁵⁵ Christopher Towneley noted in his commonplace book of c.1630 how the air could affect one’s humours and spirits. It could ‘not only alter and change the bodie, but also the spirits for Hypocrates noteth that the good and evil disposition of spirits and humours dependeth on the constitution of the air and wynde.’⁹⁵⁶

Touching items such as linen table cloths could actively transfer the object’s humoral and spiritual qualities to the person touching just as drinking from a clay cup could similarly transfer the nature of the soil to the lips and body.⁹⁵⁷ This penetration of the body through

⁹⁵⁰ Healy, M. Anxious and Fatal Contacts: Taming the Contagious Touch, in. Harvey, E.D. (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. University of Pennsylvania (2003), pp.25-26.

⁹⁵¹ Schoenfeldt *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* pp.127-128.

⁹⁵² Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* p.29.

⁹⁵³ Waugh, E. Skin Deep. Renaissance Skin. *Historiesofemotion.com* [Last Accessed 10 November 2022]; Murphy, H. Skin and Disease in Early Modern Medicine: Jan Jessen’s *De Cute, et Cutaneis Affectibus* (1601).

Bulletin of the History of Medicine. 94:2 (2020), pp.181-182; Hennepe, M. Of the Fisherman’s Net and Skin Pores: Reframing Conceptions of the Skin in Medicine, 1572-1714. In Horstmanshoff, King, and Zittel. *Blood, Sweat, and Tears*. Brill (2012), p.524; Nieuwenhuis, M. Porous Skin: Breathing Through the Prism of the Holey Body. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 33 (2019), p.3; Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, p.35.

⁹⁵⁴ Storey, T. and Cavallo, S. *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy*. Oxford University Press (2013), pp.70-112.

⁹⁵⁵ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, pp.9, 19, 22, 23; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p.61.

⁹⁵⁶ Chethams Library, MUN A.2.121, f.9v.

⁹⁵⁷ Handley, S. Objects, Emotions, and an Early Modern Bedsheet. *History Workshop Journal*, 85 (2018), pp.169-171; Handley, S. *Sleep in Early Modern England*. Yale University Press (2016), pp.48-51; Handley, S. Lusty Sack Possets, Nuptial Affections and the Material Communities of Early Modern Weddings. *Environment and History*, 28:3 (2022).

the skin's pores allowed foul humours, vapours, and other contaminants into the interior of the person to interact with animal spirits, humoral circulation, and balance.⁹⁵⁸ This highlights the dual nature of the skin as both a vulnerable point at which the outside could access the inside of a person, but also as a barrier it was important to reinforce: whether through the avoidance of cold water which could open up pores, through the use of sweet smells to counteract foul and corrupting humours in the air, or through an awareness that atmospheres surrounding the body might turn internal spirits and humours to evil.

Mis-sensing:

The implications of mis-sensing or being seduced by the senses was a theme of the sermon the rector of Wigan John Caldwell gave for Ferdinando Stanley, the Earl of Derby's son, at New Park in 1577 a part of Derby Christmas hospitality.⁹⁵⁹ Being overwhelmed by the senses or being overly susceptible to them due to commensal eating and drinking, for Caldwell, ran the risk of mistaking what was real and what was false as Catholics did. His sermon took aim at Catholic faulty sensing and the risks of not being alert to such sensory dangers as 'incense, perfume, wax candles, golden capes, and vestments' as those who 'worshipped a wafer cake' were corrupted by such sensory prompts.⁹⁶⁰ Failure to heed this warning over the dangers of sensation was akin to being asleep, when one's senses were 'so tyed up, and bound, that hee cannot doe anything...and verily thinketh yt he is doing this & yt so they which are ignorant of Christ and his worde, yt they cannot move towards heaven, or doe any thinge yt can please God.'⁹⁶¹

This sermon has been cited by several authors, including Eleanor Barnett and Victoria von Hoffmann, for illustrating how sermon writers stressed the dangers of sensory pleasure

⁹⁵⁸ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* pp.58-59; Healy, M. *Anxious and Fatal Contacts: Taming the Contagious Touch*, in. Harvey, E.D. (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*. University of Pennsylvania (2003), p.25.

⁹⁵⁹ Caldwell, J. *A sermon preached before the Right Honorable Earle of Derby, and divers others assembled in his Honors chappell at Newparke in Lankashire (1577)*.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

through taste and eating to excess.⁹⁶² However, despite its relevance in terms of the risk food consumption posed, I also highlight the fact Caldwell stressed concerns over all the senses. Matthew Milner states that early modern reformers in the 16th century were ‘thoroughly Aristotelian in their views on sensation.’⁹⁶³ They incorporated early modern understandings of the material nature of sensation and how forceful the senses could be in leading one astray. Commensality could put a diner in a situation where their senses were likened to that of Catholics who were led into the ‘most horrible and grievous crimes.’⁹⁶⁴

Feeding Humours:

As seen above, sensory information involved the transfer of humoral qualities into bodies as well as food consumption. Someone’s humoral make up could affect the decisions they made and, as I have shown above, humours and perceptions were changed through sensory interaction in early modern understandings of commensal atmospheres. This had perceived implications for the positions people took in Reformation Lancashire concerning the prosecution of Catholics such as the Heskeths and Norrises.

There were concerns over ecclesiastical commissioners in Lancashire who showed sympathy and turned a blind eye to their Catholic friends’ activities. Commissioners were warned that any who followed ‘affection or zeale more than sounde judgement or reason, Mr Anderton wyll moderate their hote humours.’⁹⁶⁵ It was recognised that a person’s humours impacted on their dedication to reform others, in this case being too hot (or choleric) towards protecting those they should pursue.

⁹⁶² Barnett, E. Reforming Food and Eating in Protestant England, c.1560-1640, *The Historical Journal*, 63:3 (2020), pp.518-519; Von Hoffman, *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe*. University of Illinois Press (2016), p.42.

⁹⁶³ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* p.179

⁹⁶⁴ Caldwell, J. *A sermon preached before the Right Honorable Earle of Derby, and divers others assembled in his Honors chappell at Newparke in Lankashire* (1577).

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid.

A belief that the humours could impact on decision-making meant a similar belief that some could capitalise on shaping another's opinions through their humoral and sensory susceptibility. Thomas Wright, in his *The Passions of the Mind in Generall* (1604) warned of 'wicked conversation' and how a person needed to take care in company in case they become like the 'idiots' and 'gallants' around them 'void of reason or religion.'⁹⁶⁶ Manipulation and the potential to take on of the traits of others through socialising with them was also pointed to by Wright. He highlighted how people assessed the humoral make up and preferences of others in society, and how this flattery was used to persuade: '...it is requisite a man consider the inclinations of those persons he would move to delight...and therefore the parasites of princes study dayly & hourelly how by deeds and words they may feed this humor.'⁹⁶⁷ Such manipulation could be through objects, entertainments, or food: all elements of early modern commensality.⁹⁶⁸

Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, recognised how his father Henry Stanley, third Earl of Derby could be swayed through his humours, hindering any chance of significant reformation of Lancashire. It was recommended by Ferdinando to the Bishop of Chester William Chadderton that it was wise to 'folowe his [his father's] humor' and be patient regarding his prosecution of Lancashire's Catholic gentry. Given the understandings of humoral bodies and the ways early modern people conceived of surroundings and personal temperaments, Ferdinando advised that it was possible to steer his father by playing to his humoral complexion to achieve the goal of getting the earl to pursue some in his Lancashire social circle.⁹⁶⁹

As mentioned in chapter 1, Edward Fleetwood, pastor of Wigan, wrote to Lord Burghley in September 1587 stating that the gentry who worked for or socialised with Henry Stanley, third Earl of Derby nourished 'that humour of carelesse securitie in tolleratinge and no way sowndly reforming the notoriows backwardnesse of his whole company in religion, and chefely of the

⁹⁶⁶ Wright, T. *The Passions of the Mind in Generall* (1604), p.322

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp.290-1

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 292

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

chefest abowte him.’⁹⁷⁰ Fleetwood described the ‘unsowndnesse’ of the earl’s council and the ‘evell instruments abowte him’, including William Farrington who diligently recorded the comings and goings at the earl’s properties in the 1570s to 90s.⁹⁷¹

As I have argued in chapter 4, persuasion is unlikely to have been attempted through the humoral qualities of food when it came to eating together. What was more likely was the perceived potential to sway others through domestic surroundings, entertainments, conversation, and other requisite elements of commensality. The Earl of Derby’s son Ferdinando expressed how he would follow his father’s humour or personality to get what he wanted, while the earl’s councillors similarly were accused of ‘nourishing’ his humour to dissuade him from reforming Lancashire too vehemently. Edward Fleetwood suggested to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, that this was through conversation. It could also be through other audible means such as music or dramatic performance, things Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby, was known to enjoy.

Various concerns were expressed in humoral terms about the persuasion of Ecclesiastical Commissioners, or even the Earl of Derby when it came to their Catholic gentry friends. Sir Thomas Hesketh’s potential use of Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby’s love of performance to his advantage was not done in a malicious way. As with much of the northwest commensal assemblages this thesis examines, the use of performance in the great hall at Rufford could create bonds, relax, uplift, and stimulate dinner guests. The use of humours, the senses, and emotive spirits to affect a person was not meant to confuse or overwhelm, but subtly persuade and ingratiate through a use of commensal elements that certain guests were known to respond positively to. Offering hospitality to important figures to ensure gentry survival amid the changes of the Reformation in Lancashire was aimed at emphasising friendship and kinship bonds and promoting them. Sensory elements of commensality in this context worked to cultivate conviviality whether through music, tastes associated with gentry

⁹⁷⁰ BL Cotton Titus B.ii, ff.239-40, cited in George, D. (ed.). *Lancashire: Records of Early English Drama*, University of Toronto Press (1991), p.223 – Letter from Edward Fleetwood to Lord Burghley 7 September 1587.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

status, smells that prompted certain emotional and humoral responses, or conversations that stimulated and demonstrated gentry belonging.

Conclusion:

This chapter has considered sensory experience in commensal contexts and the interplay of this with humoral surroundings and inputs. It has illustrated how commensality was understood in such terms by the three study families and wider social circles in the northwest. An exploration of how the senses were thought to operate in conjunction with the sensorium of dinner parties has shown that eating together was an opportunity for the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons to exert influence over guests and shape them. In chapters 1, 2, and 3 it has been demonstrated that the families did indeed use commensality in this way, capitalising on chances to mould and sway through entertainment, domestic space, and conversation. However, this was within the parameters of gentry hospitality and lifestyle balance. Such commensal environments, whatever power they exerted over guests, also worked to give the impression of easy and effortless gentry sophistication and a sense of civil *sprezzatura*.

The study families utilised sensory atmospheres to shape guests and dinner proceedings and, in this way, manipulated the commensal sensorium to have particular effects on guests. Sensory information conveyed messages about each family's status, it could trigger certain associations in people's minds, or work on their emotions through the interaction of species, spirits, humours, and emotions.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the Lord who attempts to change the lowly Sly's character does so through sensory aspects connected to hospitality. He couches this in medical terms:

Seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood,
And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.
Therefore they thought it good you hear a play,

And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.⁹⁷²

This quasi-medicinal prescription of a play highlights how sensory experiences were recognised ways to manage careful balancing of lifestyle and environment, based on the idea of the six non-naturals.⁹⁷³ Management of one's everyday life through moderation of daily lifestyle and surrounding environments involved the conscious balancing of different inputs that could affect the body with the aim of achieving equilibrium. I argue the study families strove for this balance through their considerate use of sensory elements in commensal atmospheres. This balance was spread through affective aspects across the dinner table and dining spaces. As with food served, any sensory manipulation involved the equilibrium needed for conviviality at its heart.

Chapter 6 will look in more depth at the sensory experiences at Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton through a detailed look at the material culture in these food spaces which, as with the foods served and the sensory elements explored in this chapter, also worked more to unite and mitigate differences than create discomfort, confusion, or overwhelm guests.

⁹⁷² *The Taming of the Shrew*, 2:132-136; Paster, *Humoring the Body*, p.128.

⁹⁷³ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, p.127.

Chapter 6

Material Culture: Faith, Reassurance, and Negotiating Difference

Added to the mixture of our families' 16th and 17th century social and religious contexts, environmental embodiment, food, and the senses was the material culture of commensality. In this chapter I include within material culture the dining spaces and décor of each study property alongside the cups, plates, and soft furnishings on and around the table. I argue that, as with food and sensory environments, material culture was also geared towards the creation of convivial atmospheres that mitigated discomfort and avoided unnecessary difference. However, my examination of commensal spaces also includes elements that were points of difference, set against this overall atmosphere of togetherness. Though some were a source of anxiety for diners, others acted as the compasses and anchors that made eating together in mixed-faith company navigable.

Each family tried to render food spaces spiritually safe through décor, marks, and actions which sanctified the fabric and atmosphere of a dining room. This was through carvings, painted schemes, apotropaic marks, and material culture. With this they managed any concerns their guests might have between faith and diabolical influence, gentry commonality and religious difference, vulnerability and pleasurable sociability. The material culture of the three study properties worked to foster conviviality. The Reformation did not create such deep social divisions that these could not be overcome in commensal spaces. Overall, the three study families worked to create surroundings which were conducive to coming together, creating bonds, and relaxing guests. I demonstrate how each family created reassuring dinner spaces in very similar ways. However, harmonious dinner environments were also facilitated by the inclusion of material culture which kept an important but barely perceptible degree of difference in place.

The Moretons' Communal Vessels:



Fig. 1. Large communal vessel from Little Moreton. Collection/accession number LMH/C/27. C.1700. Burslem, Stoke on Trent. Image courtesy of the National Trust Images.

Drinking vessels from the 16th and 17th centuries that survive at Little Moreton illustrate the communal nature of some of the tableware: a small tyg and a larger posset pot. A tyg was a communal piece designed to facilitate the sharing of drinks. The vessel was passed around the group, aided by the several handles. Tygs may have contained wine or beer. A posset pot was a similarly communal vessel, used for the sharing of a drink/desert hybrid called a posset. The inscription featured on the pot in fig. 2 below, in the collections of the V&A, makes the intended filling for the vessel clear: (sic) ROBART POOL MAD THIS CUP AND WITH A GUD POSSET FIL.'



Fig. 2. Posset pot, c.1710, Inscription reads '(sic) ROBART POOL MAD THIS CUP AND WITH A GUD POSSET FIL.' V&A, Museum no. C.24-1949. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The large Little Moreton vessel worked in a similar way to syllabub glasses and wassail bowls, with participants passing around the pot as part of communal drinking rituals.⁹⁷⁴ These vessels were a feature of conviviality at social gatherings, their several handles helped the passing and sharing of the vessel and indicated which part of the rim they were to sip from, and furthermore, they worked to cement connection, to seal and extend oaths and promises, and allow physical expression of social ties.⁹⁷⁵ Finds and survivals labelled as posset pots are of two main varieties in museum collections: those with a spout and those without. The one at Little Moreton is of the latter type. To drink a posset or syllabub communally involved drinking

⁹⁷⁴ Cumberpatch, C. Tradition and Change: The Production and Consumption of Early Modern Pottery in South and West Yorkshire, p.90, in. Blinkhorn, P. and Cumberpatch, C. (eds.). *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artefacts in Archaeology*. BAR International Series 2677. Archeopress (2014). Also Gibson, J.H. On a Beaker, Tyg &c, Lately Found at Rainford; and on the Meaning of the Term "Tyg" as Applied to a Drinking Cup. *Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*. Vol. 30. (1877-1878), pp. 167-169: 'The three-handled tyg, a kind of loving cup, had the handles so arranged that three different persons drinking out of it, and each using a separate handle, brought their lips to different parts of the rim.' pp.168-9; Handley, S. Lusty Sack Possets, Nuptial Affections and the Material Communities of Early Modern Weddings. *Environment and History*, 28:3 (2022); Cope, S. Making Time Material: Domestic Dated Objects in 17th Century England.' Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Birmingham (2019), pp223-234.

⁹⁷⁵ Hodgkin, J.E. and Hodgkin, E. *Examples of English Pottery: Named, Dated and Inscribed*. The Press of Cassell (1891) ix, 2-23; Cope, Making Time Material: Domestic Dated Objects in 17th Century England, pp.223-234; McShane, A. Material Culture and 'Political Drinking' in Seventeenth-Century England. *Past and Present*, Supplement 9 (2014), pp.247-276; Handley, S. Lusty Sack Possets, Nuptial Affections and the Material Communities of Early Modern Weddings, *Environment and History*, 28:3 (2022), pp.375-395.

the liquid alcohol from the bottom of the vessel, via a spout, and spooning the floating whipped cream, sugar, and egg mixture on top from the wide aperture of the pot. In those without a spout the whipped topping would be eaten first with spoons and then the mixture passed around to be sipped in turn. Consuming a posset or syllabub in this way would further strengthen communal bonds through the combination of drinking and eating a shared sweet dish, akin to breaking bread together and sharing communion wine. The use of these vessels at Little Moreton show how sharing drinks was important for the family and their guests in supporting friendships and fostering convivial bonds.

Visual motifs and dates could help to highlight the symbolic nature of the act of sharing through commemoration of meaningful events such as weddings in the commissioning of particular communal vessels.⁹⁷⁶ There is nothing in the design of the Moreton tyg and posset pot which could alienate through specifically Protestant or Catholic religious decoration. However, the context of communal imbibing had the ability to dictate meaning, whether celebrating something, drinking to someone's health, or re-enforcing bonds.⁹⁷⁷

Communal vessels were symbolic of bonds formed at the table, a performative act which re-enforced the convivial nature of dining together. Angela McShane has argued that people had to make personal decisions over whether to partake in communal drinking rituals, with the social pressures exerted on drinkers to join the collective act and therefore bond over a particular oath or toast.⁹⁷⁸ Words spoken had the power to turn an act of commonality into one of damnation by changing the nature of a toast immediately before a drink was taken.⁹⁷⁹ Those under pressure to share a drink communally would need to consider the implications of them refusing to imbibe: spiritual damnation if they partook, social ostracisation if they abstained.⁹⁸⁰ Divisions within the Protestant faith meant that secular drinking practices took on religious connotations, with drinkers having to negotiate whether to imbibe or not should

⁹⁷⁶ Cope, *Making Time Material: Domestic Dated Objects in 17th Century England*, pp.223-234; Handley, *Lusty Sack Possets, Nuptial Affections and the Material Communities of Early Modern Weddings*.

⁹⁷⁷ McShane, *Material Culture and 'Political Drinking'*, pp.247-276.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.264.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

the nature of an oath suddenly change during the act.⁹⁸¹ Cheshire puritan John Bruen, at a high sheriff of Cheshire feast, held no qualms over refusing a drink passed to him to toast the prince's health, stating that 'you may drink to his health, and I will pray for it, wishing you may do the same for yours.'⁹⁸² He was seemingly unconcerned with causing offence but this refusal to drink or repeat the same oath went against the united act of drinking in unison and was a potential cause for anxiety.

McShane points out that words spoken before the act of imbibing could also serve to sanctify both the vessel and its contents.⁹⁸³ That this might be required of vessels has been shown with Sir Richard Wilbraham's comments to William Moreton about 'unsanctified pots' potentially being those without religious textual design. Though there is no evidence vessels with protective religious text on them were used at Little Moreton, religious décor and text elsewhere in the family's dining spaces shows how spiritual sanctification when eating and drinking was something they valued and incorporated in order to make their guests feel safe (see below).

The Norrises' Wassail Bowl and Syllabub Glass:



Fig. 3. Syllabub glass, British Museum c.1675, museum number 1910,1017.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

⁹⁸¹ Ibid.

⁹⁸² Hinde, W. *The Very Singular Life of John Bruen, Esquire, of Bruen Stapleford, Cheshire* (1641), p.88.

⁹⁸³ McShane, A. *Material Culture and Political Drinking*, pp.249, 262.

For early modern people communal drinking was closely aligned with the act of communion.⁹⁸⁴ As shown in chapter 2 with the Norrises' great parlour, the act of sharing a drink was also linked to the Catholic eucharist and Catholic suffering. Various communal vessel types indicate that shared drinking rituals were important for the Catholic Norrises at Speke. The inventory of 1634 lists a syllabub glass as well as three syllabub piggins for making the syllabub, and two posset cups.⁹⁸⁵ Also listed are two wassail bowls, one large, one small.⁹⁸⁶ One of these is believed to be the wassail bowl in the collections at Speke, see fig.4. All of these drinks had associations with the banquet course which places them regularly in circulation around the table in the Speke parlour.

As I argued in chapter 2, for the Norrises the act of collective imbibing involved the reenforcing of Catholic identity as much as it did the smoothing over of difference. The meanings bound up in the sharing of drinks at Speke was different depending on whether one shared in a mixed faith or solely Catholic group. It was also different depending on what associations individuals had in mind when they took a sip: that of cementing gentry bonds or thinking of an underlying Catholic faith reflected on whilst raising a glass or passing round a posset pot or wassail bowl. What happened in this act of drinking depended on what positions each diner brought to the table and how they were able to negotiate this performative drink. Whatever the context, the examples of communal drinking vessels at Speke and Little Moreton highlight the fact that drinking together as part of a meal or social occasion was a meaningful act that could be at once divisive and inclusive, potentially during the same seemingly harmonious act.

⁹⁸⁴ McShane, A. *Material Culture and Political Drinking*, pp. 248, 249, 251, 257

⁹⁸⁵ Saxton, E.B. *A Speke Inventory of 1624*.

⁹⁸⁶ Saxton, E.B. *A Speke Inventory of 1624*.



Fig. 4. Wassail bowl, 17th century, lignum vitae. Speke Hall, Image Courtesy of National Trust Images.

Decorative Motifs:

Archaeological remains at Little Moreton include earthenware and stoneware pieces. The earthenware items had decorative slip designs without textual or figurative elements, however, this possibly is a result of only peripheral elements of designs remaining. German stoneware remains found at Little Moreton did not contain any fragments featuring decorative details yet German stoneware commonly imported into England throughout the 16th century regularly carried moulded religious imagery which would stand out in relief.⁹⁸⁷ Alexandra Walsham and Andrew Morrall have both shown that Protestant pots affected Catholics around the table in their propagandist, anti-Catholic designs.⁹⁸⁸ Morrall notes how the ubiquity of religious designs on tableware put the issues of the Reformation at the heart of social interaction as well as episodes from the Bible in the minds of diners during everyday experiences.⁹⁸⁹ Such tableware also shaped the behaviour of diners in the conflation of

⁹⁸⁷ Hamling, T. Living with the Bible in Post-Reformation England: The Materiality of Text, Image and Object in Domestic Life. In. Doran, J. Methuen, C. and Walsham, A. *Religion and the Household. Studies in Church History*. Ecclesiastical History Society Vol 50 (2014), pp.229-30. Allen Archaeology Ltd. *Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation Report: The Orchard at Little Moreton Hall, Congleton, Cheshire. Report No: 2009052* (2009), pp.13-14.

⁹⁸⁸ Morrall, A. Protestant Pots: Morality and Social Ritual in the Early Modern Home. *Journal of Design History*, 15:4 (2002); Walsham, A. History, Memory and the English Reformation. *Historical Journal*, 55:4 (2012).

⁹⁸⁹ Morrall, *Protestant Pots*, pp.266, 268.

religious piety with appropriate table manners, both coming together in the morality of civility.⁹⁹⁰ A well-ordered house, with rules of civility and hierarchy around the table being followed and clearly set out, reflected a well-ordered Protestant household, with the tenets and prescriptions of the faith also rigorously followed.⁹⁹¹ Likewise, it denoted a household with family members capable of holding down positions of civil responsibility.⁹⁹² Whatever the motivation of John Moreton (c.1541-98), his inclusion of Susannah and the Elders in a food space indicates he appreciated the power of such designs in the context of dining.

The plate shown in fig.5 was made at the Rainford Pottery near to Speke in Liverpool and found during an archaeological dig at the site. I argue, as does curator Jeff Speakman at the Museum of Liverpool, that the pomegranate design is Catholic imagery hiding in plain sight.⁹⁹³



Fig. 5. The Rainford Pottery pomegranate plate, archaeological reconstruction from decorative fragment. © National Museums Liverpool.

⁹⁹⁰ Morrall, *Protestant Pots*, p.268.

⁹⁹¹ Morrall, A. The Family at the Table: Protestant Identity, Self-Representation, and the Limits of the Visual in Seventeenth Century Zurich. *Art History* 40:2 (2017); Morrall, *Protestant Pots*, pp. 268, 269.

⁹⁹² Ibid.

⁹⁹³ Stewart, L. Liverpool Museums/Archaeology, <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/plate-full-of-meaning> [Last Accessed 9 January 2023]; Philpot, R. (ed.) *The Pottery and Clay Tobacco Pipe Industries of Rainford, St Helens. New Research*. Merseyside Archaeological Society (2015).

As discussed in chapter 3, regarding the Norris plasterwork ceiling, pomegranates symbolised fertility and abundance in the early modern period and it was due to this association that they were also used to represent the Virgin Mary. The juice from the pomegranate also represented the blood of Christ.⁹⁹⁴ In a significant detail, the plate speaks to the interior decoration of Speke's great parlour, with pomegranates and palm fronds being mentioned in the Song of Songs and equated with the *hortus conclusus* of the Virgin Mary. Plates like this had the ability to alienate, bond, or reassure in the northwest depending on who was using them and their feelings regarding imagery with religious associations, however generic, specific, or ambiguous. Although the Rainford plate was not found at Speke itself, this type of decoration may demonstrate the sort of designs on finer ceramic plates and the motifs they incorporated. Given both Edward and Margaret Norris and their son William Norris's preference for Catholic imagery evidenced in the great parlour, it is likely that some of their painted ceramics included motifs which could be interpreted as Catholic.

The inventory for Speke of 1624 lists a range of painted plates alongside banqueting items.⁹⁹⁵ Other painted ceramics at Speke include a painted chafing dish, '2 dozen payneted dishes & 3 odd ones', valued at 12^s, a painted basin and ewer, and a little painted dish. Sir William and Lady Ellinor Norris's son-in-law Edward Fleetwood, in 1615, gifted his sister Talbott his 'bigger Cheney dishe' while his sister Katherine received 'the lesser Cheney dishe.'⁹⁹⁶

There are several descriptions in northwest wills and inventories of painted plates indicating either maiolica, faience, delftware, or other painted styles, including porcelain and china, from the early 17th century.⁹⁹⁷ 'Cheney' ceramics appear, otherwise known as decorated earthenware, with the word 'cheney' deriving from 'china', giving an indication of the style of

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁵ Saxton, E.B. A Speke Inventory of 1624.

⁹⁹⁶ Will of Edward Fleetwood of Penwortham, Co.Lanc, Gentleman, 1615. In. Earwaker, J.P. Lancashire and Cheshire Wills and Inventories 1572-1696 Now Preserved at Chester with Appendix of Wills and Inventories proved at York or Richmond 1542-1649. *Chetham Society*, Vol 28, New Series (1893), p.183.

⁹⁹⁷ Black, J. *British Tin-Glazed Earthenware*. Shire Publications (2001), pp.4, 20-23, 35;

pot and its decoration, often used to describe tin-glazed earthenware or porcelain.⁹⁹⁸ Northwest inventories include descriptions of plates labelled 'overseas' or 'foreign' ware which indicate the presence of such imported European and Asian ceramics alongside their English imitations amongst Lancashire and Cheshire ceramic dinner collections. Katherine Moore, wife of Edward Moore of Bank Hall, near Speke, had in her closet in 1632 'oversea dishes with little banquettinge dishes' worth 5s together with 'dyvers oversea jugs with covers and without.'⁹⁹⁹ These continued to be used or purchased for Bank Hall, another inventory of 1670 on the death of Sir Edward Moore listed 'a pare of Porsly [porcelain] Pots. Cheny and other things to a very great value.'¹⁰⁰⁰

Various painted plates, china dishes, and platters are mentioned in the inventories of Lancashire and Cheshire collected as part of the Intoxicants and Early Modernity project.¹⁰⁰¹ Mainly from inventories of alehouse- and inn-keepers in Chester and Manchester, there were a large number of 'painted wooden dishes', 'painted wooden trenchers', 'china dishes', 'overseas dishes', 'painted fruit dishes', 'foreign ware', 'painted plates' and 'a cheney cup with a silver foot'.¹⁰⁰² Though there is no note of the motifs they featured, it is clear that these are either displayed amongst other tableware in domestic settings, or when they feature amongst the other serving wares of alehouses and inns they are deemed a pre-requisite of

⁹⁹⁸ Pennell, S. *Birth of the English Kitchen*, p.104; Pennell, S. 'Pots and Pans History': The Material Culture of the Kitchen in Early Modern England. *Journal of Design History*. 11:3 (1998), p.207; Kent, O. Pots and Texts: Understanding Pots in Use. In. Allen, J. Alock, N. and Dawson, D. *West County Households, 1500-1700. The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, Monograph 9*. The Boydell Press (2015).

⁹⁹⁹ Ashmore, O. Household Inventories of the Lancashire Gentry, 1550-1700. *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*. Vol 110 (1958).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Intoxicants & Early Modernity, England, 1580-1740*. University of Sheffield, V&A Museum, Digital Humanities Institute Sheffield, ESRC, and AHRC (2013-2017): www.dhi.ac.uk/intoxicants/browse.jsp [Last Accessed 1 March 2022].

¹⁰⁰² Inventories include CRO WS/1627 Alice Mercer, WS/1609 Miles Sumner, WS/1614 Thomas Benson, WS/1616 Thomas Revington, WS/1617 Henry Crosby, EDA/2/2/1618 Edward Button, WS/1619 Jane Hunt, WS/1619 Thomas Allerton, WS/1620 William Hockenhall, WS/1623 Ralph Morgan, WS/1624 Thomas Marsland, WS/1624 John Blanchard, WS/1625 William Ashton, WS/1625 John Garnett, WS/1625 Daniel Thropp, WS/1625 Thomas Ince, WS/1627 Ellen Holbrook, WS/1628 John Inglefield, WS/1628 Gilbert Eaton, WS/1630 Robert Lloyd, WS/1631 Ellen Tilston, WS/1633 George Hinkley, WS/1633 Robert Francis, WS/1633 Richard Olton, WS/1635 Robert Coddington, WS/1635 Edward Pemberton, WS/1637 Thomas Jones, WS/1640 George Warrington, WS/1641 John Williams, WS/1642 Richard Thropp, WS/1647 Edward Roberts, WS/1648 William Jackson, WS/1665 John Bannion, WS/1660 William Rymer, WS/1660 William Fisher; PRO WCW 30 October 1599 Roger Bexwick, WCW 12 February 1644 Abel Ashworth, WCW 14 May 1628 Robert Sorocold, WCW 23 May 1660 Elizabeth Radcliffe, WCW 15 June 1624 Samuel Dickinson, WCW 10 October 1632 Elizabeth Wharmby.

commensality and conviviality. The ubiquity of painted ceramics in both private houses and inns show they were a regular feature of Lancashire and Catholic commensality.

Given the presence of wooden banqueting trenchers elsewhere on the tables of Lancashire and Cheshire several descriptions of trenchers in the Hesketh, Norris, and Moreton inventories are likely of the highly decorative banqueting kind. The inventory attached to John Moreton's will of 1599 lists banqueting and cosmetic items stored together, indicating these belonged to his wife Anne.¹⁰⁰³ There were 'grates weightes and trenchers,' 'sugar sope and starche,' and 'banquetting dishes.'¹⁰⁰⁴ The Heskeths in 1620 owned cases of trenchers in the buttery at Rufford and Jane Hesketh's chamber, Robert Hesketh's third wife, housed a chest full of 'banketting stufte and grocerie.'¹⁰⁰⁵ At another Hesketh property, Beaconsall, amongst ceramics, pewter, and ewers and basins, were 'one doosen trenchers and case', 'doosen and a half round trenchers', and 'one sealed firm [case of trenchers]'. The largest collection of tableware specifically for banqueting was at Speke where, amongst glass plates, the syllabub glass, and forty-six 'pottes and glasses for preserved stufte' were twenty-eight 'prints' and two dozen 'paynted dishes and 3 odd ones.'

Banqueting trenchers were small and very thin roundels, usually made of sycamore or similar woods, on which to serve banqueting sweet meats such as sticky suckets, candied fruits, and pastes.¹⁰⁰⁶ Once the sweet treats had been eaten, the trencher could be flipped over to reveal a design, commonly drawn or printed onto paper, pasted on the other side.¹⁰⁰⁷ The designs regularly included the following elements: floral designs; witty messages, riddles, poems, or parts for a play; and decorated in bright colours.¹⁰⁰⁸ In the schema of sweet banquets and parlours, the trenchers also heightened the connection between indoors and out through

¹⁰⁰³ Will and inventory of John Moreton, esq. Cheshire Archives WS 1601.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/C76A

¹⁰⁰⁶ Yeoman, V. *Speaking Plates: Text, Performance, and Banqueting Trenchers in Early Modern Europe*. *Renaissance Studies*, 31:5, pp.755-779; Jackson, V. 'The Persian Sibyl' Banqueting Trencher. In. Richardson, C. Hamling, T. and Gaimster, D. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, pp.222-223.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Yeoman, *Speaking Plates*; Jackson, 'The Persian Sibyl' Banqueting Trencher, pp.222-223.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid.

their floral designs (see chapter 2 on this in interpretation at Speke Hall). This was echoed by the placing of banquets in compass windows, in the regular movement of banquets to gardens in good weather, and the repeated connections between gardening, nature, and the banquet course.¹⁰⁰⁹ Use of these trenchers held several opportunities for mistakes by guests.

Banqueting trenchers were prompts to conversation and a way to keep guests entertained towards the end of the meal. Their use could reinforce bonds as guests worked together to play out the roles in a short play, or solve riddles together, or recite verses of poems. They could bond participants together through the cultural capital needed to complete the display of wit, education, and creative flair.¹⁰¹⁰ Elements of the trenchers' design and literary content required a certain level of education and scholarly ability to be deciphered.¹⁰¹¹ Guests were therefore required to be able to interpret the pieces as a way of continuing their 'belonging' to this privileged and learned class.¹⁰¹² Failure to demonstrate the requisite cultural knowledge and powers of interpretation would cause a rift in the party's shared identity and abilities and single out the individual as being different to the rest of the gathered guests.¹⁰¹³ The ways in which decorated trenchers prompted a performance of gentry credentials equally applied to decorative ceramics: their use also requiring competent interpretation and provided a chance to display education and erudition.¹⁰¹⁴

Jennifer Stead argued banqueting trenchers went out of fashion by the Civil War/Protectorate period yet they are still being gifted in the north west in the later 17th century.¹⁰¹⁵ In 1677, Lucy Hesketh's second husband John Molyneux sent recognisable banqueting trenchers to Lucy's cousin Alice Kenyon (nee Rigby), of Peel Hall, remarking in the accompanying letter how he did:

¹⁰⁰⁹ Stead, J. Bowers of Bliss: The Banquet Setting. In. Wilson, A.C. *'Banquetting Stuffe' Papers from the First Leeds Symposium on Food History and Tradition*. Edinburgh University Press (1991), pp.115-157.

¹⁰¹⁰ Yeoman, *Speaking Plates*, pp.770, 771, 778.

¹⁰¹¹ This worked in similar way to the skill required to interpret maiolica ceramic tableware in Italy, see Syson, L. and Thornton, D. *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy*. The British Museum Press (2001), p.221.

¹⁰¹² Yeoman, *Speaking Plates*, pp.770, 771, 778

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Syson and Thornton, *Objects of Virtue*, p.221.

¹⁰¹⁵ Stead, J. Bowers of Bliss: The Banquet Setting, pp.115-157.

heartily wish you may live to weare them out, that I may send you more when those are done...You often make us remember you by yore puffings [puffins] which prove exceeding good; we heartily give you thanks for them. But indeed, you doo heape soo many kindnesses upon us, one after another, that you scarce leave us time to make our acknowledgements for them.¹⁰¹⁶

There is further evidence that trenchers remained as suitable additions to the dinner table well into the 17th century, with prints for trenchers still being sold by the London print seller Peter Stent in the mid to late 1640s.¹⁰¹⁷ The idea that these could 'other' in a commensal setting, as Victoria Yeoman describes, did not apply to all trencher sets. In this case the trenchers gifted by Lucy Hesketh's husband carry out a more commemorative role. Alice Kenyon might have been reminded of the Hesketh/Molyneuxs just as they remembered Alice Kenyon when they ate puffin.

Shared drinking vessels, slipware, German stoneware, painted plates, and trenchers had the ability to unite and divide. They might feature imagery seen as predominantly Protestant or Catholic, reminding of differences around the table even during seemingly convivial acts. Tableware was also able to convey statements about status and the adoption of new fashionable items such as imported painted ceramics. Diners using these items were potentially united in their ownership of similar tableware that denoted gentry membership but the interpretation of decorative content on plates or trenchers gave the opportunity for another layer of unity or exclusion. Just as words uttered changed the meaning of communal acts of consumption such as drinking, some tableware demanded verbal performances that either highlighted distinguished gentry accomplishments or risked social embarrassment. The tables of Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton contained various tableware items where motifs, text, and images featured. Though the specifics of the decoration no longer remain in

¹⁰¹⁶ Lancs Archives, DDKE/HMC/349 Letter from John Molyneux to Mrs Kenyon at Peele 20 March 1676/7.

¹⁰¹⁷ Yeoman, *Speaking Plates*, p.771.

evidence, the effect dinnerware's visual imagery and text had on diners was able to shape in several ways, either divisively or through foregrounding common religious or gentry bonds.

Infusing Buildings with Faith: 'God is Al in Al Things':

The Material Culture of Dining: Food Spaces, Architectural Fabric, and Decorative Schemes

Apotropaic Markings:

As seen in chapter 2 and above, religious content was not just reserved for tableware. All three gentry homes featured religious content in their interiors. As discussed in chapter 5, anxieties over spiritual interference when eating and commensal environments involving vulnerable and porous bodies made it particularly important that food spaces were rendered safe. This meant the need to protect diners through religiously infused spaces. This involved the use of marks and imagery on the very fabric of houses and food spaces themselves. A lot has been written over the past few decades about protective markings arguing that such marks protected against evil spirits which brought misfortune or threatened the spiritually secure home.¹⁰¹⁸ Sasha Handley, Tara Hamling, and Sara Pennell have all argued that these protected homes, families, and individuals from spiritual harm or interference, whether from the events this could cause, e.g. fire, or through penetration of the body by evil forces.¹⁰¹⁹ It is the latter which I argue the three study families were concerned with in the context of food consumption. A need to protect diners from spiritual harm when dining extended to the

¹⁰¹⁸ Easton, T. Apotropaic Symbols and Other Measures for Protecting Buildings against Misfortune. In: Hutton, R. (ed.). *Physical Evidence for Ritual Acts, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Christian Britain: A Feeling for Magic*. Palgrave (2016); Champion, M. *Medieval Graffiti: The Lost Voices of England's Churches*. Ebury Press (2015); Easton, T. Ritual Marks on Historic Timbers. *Weald and Downland Open Air Museum Journal* (1999), pp.22-28; Easton, T. Scores on the Doors. *SPAB [Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings Journal]* (2018) pp.52-57; Easton, T. Understanding and Preserving Apotropaic Symbols on Timber Surfaces. *New Horizons in the Conservation of Wooden Built Heritage, 21st International ICOMOS Wood Committee*, University of York, Historic England, York Minster, (2018); Champion, M. The Graffiti Inscriptions of St Mary's Church, Troston. *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeology*, 43:2, (2014), pp. 235-258; Angus, B. The Apotropaic "Witch Posts" of Early Modern Yorkshire: A Contextualisation. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*. 14:1 (2018) pp.55-82; Fearn, A. A Light in the Darkness: The Taper Burns of Donington le Heath Manor House. *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture*. 6:1 (2017), pp.92-118; Easton, T. Candle Powers. *Cornerstone Journal*, 32:4 (2011), pp.56-60; Hewitt, P. *The Material Culture of Shakespeare's England: A Study of the Early Modern Objects in the Museum Collection of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Birmingham (2014), pp.146-152.

¹⁰¹⁹ Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, pp.140-145.

vulnerable spaces people ate within, areas of food preparation, and the movement of food along 'food axes.' A wide variety of apotropaic marks found in spaces associated with food and dining extends across the country, in the homes of Catholics and Protestants alike.

I argue that these marks sanctified food and removed both the threat of spiritual interference in food that entered the body and the anxieties of guests over this threat. Tara Hamling claims that apotropaic marks and religious decorative schemes worked in various ways to allow faith to permeate and suffuse through the home.¹⁰²⁰ I share this belief due to the way apotropaic marks and religious decorative schemes were used in Hesketh, Norris, and Moreton food spaces. The presence of such marks and schemes indicate anxieties over the vulnerable act of eating were felt by the three families in Lancashire and Cheshire. Burn marks, stars, cross-hatches, and inter-connected circles appear in the food spaces of all three houses, as well as in the kitchen at Martholme, another of the Hesketh family's properties (see fig.6). The need to protect from supernatural intervention during the vulnerable act of eating and to sanctify food is evidenced by the families' positioning of protective elements in low- and high-status food areas.

¹⁰²⁰ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.270-271



Fig. 6. Burn marks in the kitchen at Martholme, another of the Hesketh properties. Photos author's

Apotropaic marks are believed to have functioned to protect domestic spaces from evil spirits or demonic powers which early modern people thought could enter a house through weak points – windows, doors, fireplaces, chimneys. This made kitchens particularly vulnerable and in need of ritual protection marks to the early modern mind. Evidence of this belief can be seen at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire (fig.7).¹⁰²¹

¹⁰²¹ See also Bedfield Hall, Suffolk in Easton, T. *Ritual Marks on Historic Timber*, p.23.



Fig. 7. Apotropaic markings burned into the kitchen wall at Haddon Hall, Derbyshire. The proliferation of marks here indicate there was something unnerving about areas where food was prepared and that required action to mitigate the danger posed. Image author's own.

Food travelling away from this protected space, along a food axis that included an open screens passage, or a long journey in which time food could be re-interfered with spirituality, may mean that further protective markings were required.

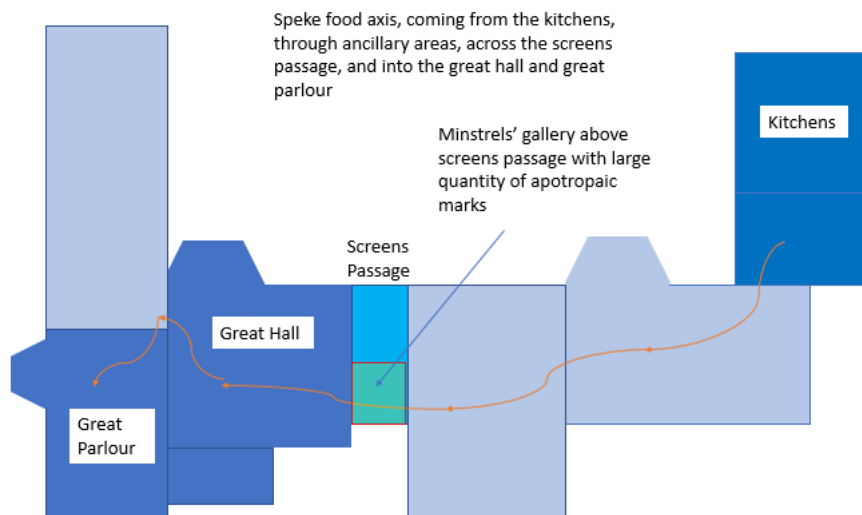


Fig. 8. Concentration of apotropaic marks at Speke.

Apotropaic markings at Speke are situated above the principal route food took on its way from the kitchen to the great hall and oak parlour, along what Sara Pennell calls the 'food axis.'¹⁰²² These burn marks are centred in a room above the screens passage that suggests an anxiety about the spiritualisation of food for the Norris family.

¹⁰²² Pennell, *Birth of the English Kitchen*, pp.39-40, 57.

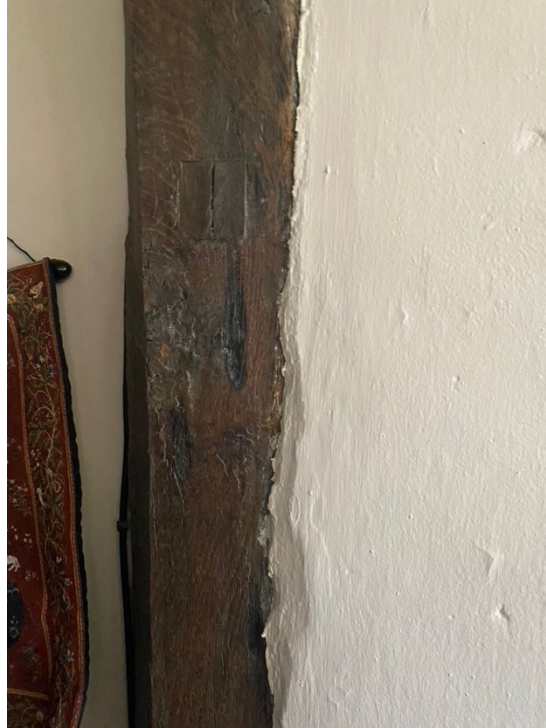
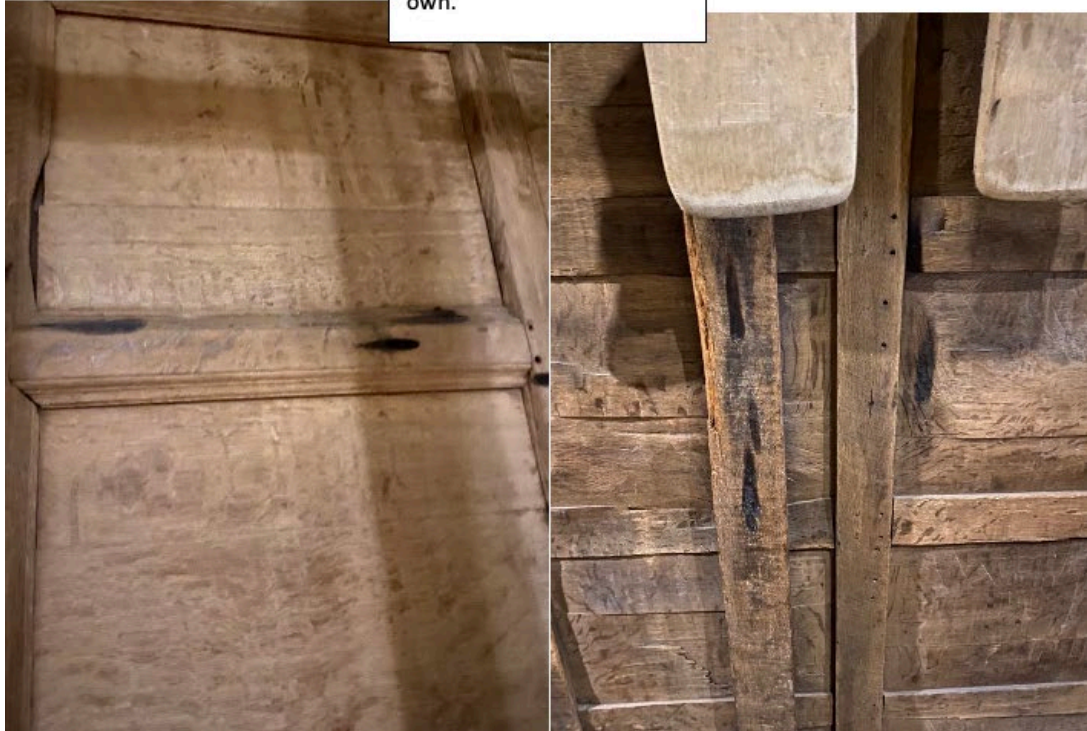


Fig. 9. Burn marks at Speke in the minstrels' gallery above the screens passage and the principal route to the great hall and great parlour. Images author's own.



Fig 10. Burn marks along the passageway from the kitchen to the great hall at Haddon. Images author's own.



At Salmesbury Hall, home to Catholic and friend of the Heskeths, Sir John Southworth, they were even incorporated into the decorative scheme of the screen passage. The screen itself was cut up and reconfigured in the 19th century and the door arches that were over the different doors for the kitchen, buttery, and pantry were incorporated into the design. The arches include the hexafoil or 'daisy wheel' motif.



Fig. 11. Door arches, with hexafoil carved motifs, in the 19th century hall woodwork at Salmesbury. These are the 16th century arches that were over the entrances to buttery, kitchen and pantry. Image author's own.

The Norrises were not alone in their desire for food spaces and routes to be protected, showing a concern for the spiritual safety of food and the belief that food should be imbued with faith and shielded from unholy corruption. I argue the placement of apotropaic hexafoils at Salmesbury within decorative schemes shows the importance of wholesale protection and spirituality in the food spaces of the gentry home and the need to assuage people's anxieties over the spiritually vulnerable act of eating. Such protective designs were not just reserved for kitchens or low-status passageways but also for high-status food consumption areas.

At Little Moreton, the Moreton family and their household also used combinations of burns, 'daisy wheels', circles, cross-hatches, and VV marks throughout the building. There was a concern over principal dining spaces and protective designs were included in panelling and ceiling beams. A large 'daisy wheel' mark is positioned opposite the fireplace in the great

parlour. The 'daisy wheel' is in a dark corner of the ceiling and high up, difficult to see amid the dark panelling. What seemed to have been more important was the fact that it was there offering protection. In this, it has a similar placement to the carved image of the Five Wounds of Christ at Rufford, which I argue also offered protection from evil corruption in a dining room (see below).



Fig. 12. 'Daisy wheel' mark in the great parlour at Little Moreton Hall, opposite the fireplace. Image courtesy of National Trust Images.



Fig. 13. Image of VV mark scratched onto panelling in great parlour at Little Moreton. Image courtesy of Jill Owen.

Similarly, a VV symbol has been scratched onto the expensive wooden panelling in the same room, being positioned equidistant between the windows of the great parlour and the banqueting table nestled in the compass bay (fig.13). Both windows in the great parlour were considered points of ingress for malevolent spirits. This suggests the scratched VV mark between the two was deemed important enough an inclusion to merit someone marking the mark on top of expensive panelling. It also suggests that the desire to protect and infuse dining with spirituality was as important for the Moretons as the desire to display expensive décor to guests as a marker of status.

Another high-status room associated with dining and entertainments was the long gallery at the top of the building. This features a star made out in inlaid metal above the door leading from the gallery to the gallery chamber. This six-pointed star, I argue, worked to infuse the household and hospitality spaces with faith in two ways: in terms of further apotropaic protection, but also as an example of how the very fabric of domestic food spaces could be imbued with religiosity. This star is similar to the one printed in *The Map of Mortalitie* (1604).¹⁰²³ This star shows attributes of the Protestant faith woven through it, symbolising the all-encompassing and interrelated nature of faith with daily and family life and espousing God's love.¹⁰²⁴ The text written in the 'knot' of the star reads:

A thre-fold knot this wisely tide 'gainst all
As all is fast will abide for god is love
& true love guide & ever is on true loves side
That brothers live in unity & neighbours dwell
In amity & man & wife well agree
Both god and man rejoice to see.

¹⁰²³ [Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640] STC 17294, featured in Watt, T. *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640*. Cambridge University Press (1991), pp.244-5.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid.

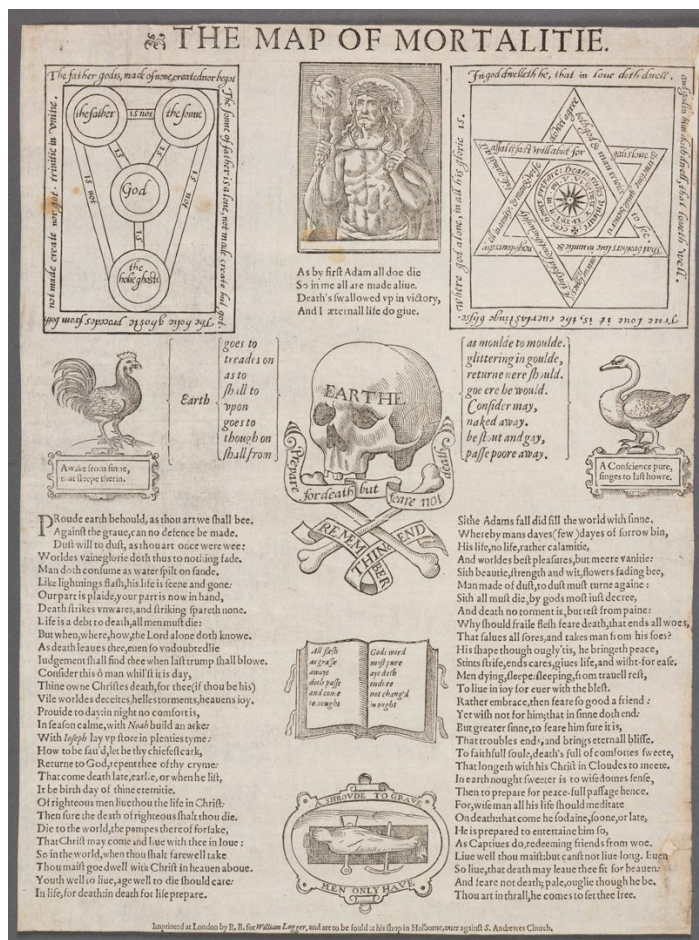


Fig. 14. *The Map of Mortalitie* (1604). Shelf mark Britwell 18319. © The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

Devices such as this helped to prompt religious meditation. Such mnemonic emblems and symbols became increasingly widespread as they were printed in popular texts.¹⁰²⁵ Working in a similar way to the parlour ceiling at Speke, it was not just Catholic gentry families who chose such devices to aid religious meditation and regulate behaviour through their incorporation in domestic decorative schemes.

Stars and crosses were related to the apotropaic power of the Five Wounds, a symbol with protective qualities, as seen in its placement in the great hall at Rufford (see below). Five-pointed stars matched the points of the Five Wounds of Christ, though they also could have been an 'endless knot' as described in the 14th century poem *Gawain and the Green*

¹⁰²⁵ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p.246.

Knight.¹⁰²⁶ Six-pointed stars appear to have been interchangeable with five-pointed ones, and the pentangle or 'knot' mentioned as being emblazoned on Sir Gawain's shield is substituted by the anonymous author with a six-pointed one.¹⁰²⁷ In fact, the five- or six-pointed star seems to have been regularly interchanged with the six-petalled hexafoil and X crosses on church consecration crosses.¹⁰²⁸ The detailed description of the power of the star or 'knot' on the shield of Sir Gawain gives an idea of how people viewed them: it is the symbol of Solomon, it inspires as it protects, it is the Five Wounds of Christ, and it gave its user power over demons.¹⁰²⁹ Thus, alongside more impromptu marks in gentry food spaces, families such as the Moretons also featured spiritually protective motifs within preconceived decorative schemes. Regardless of whether the star example was apotropaic or part of a religiously conceived design, it worked to suffuse faith through the fabric of the building and another entertainment space. Galleries could be seen as particularly vulnerable spaces because of the amount of glazing providing ample opportunity for evil spirits to enter and interfere.

In the great hall at Rufford the image of the five wounds of Christ is situated high among the hammer beam roof, nestled in a corner and carved directly into the beam itself. The placement of the image is reminiscent of the positioning of the daisy wheel in the Great Parlour at Little Moreton.¹⁰³⁰ The wounds were a common and popular motif throughout medieval Catholicism but one that underwent semiotic changes through the Reformation.¹⁰³¹ When the wounds were carved at Rufford (c.1530) they carried no subversive meaning, and while understood in varying ways within Catholicism, they were overall conceived of as a means of meditation on the suffering of Christ, a prompt to an embodied reaction to Christ's wounds on the cross, and a symbol which also incorporated elements of *caritas* (love and hospitality),

¹⁰²⁶ Angus, B. The Apotropaic "Witch Posts" of Early Modern Yorkshire, pp.68, 70; Champion, M. Graffiti Inscriptions of St Mary's Church, Troston, p.249, citing *Gawain and the Green Knight*; Champion, M. *Medieval Graffiti*, pp.48-49.

¹⁰²⁷ Champion, M. *Medieval Graffiti*, p.49

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid*, pp.32-33.

¹⁰²⁹ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, quoted in Champion, M. *Medieval Graffiti*, pp.48-49.

¹⁰³⁰ For Hamling's ideas on things being difficult to see when up high but being efficacious despite this see Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.271-272; Hamling, T. To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household. *Art History*, 30:2 (2007).

¹⁰³¹ Gayk, S. Early Modern Afterlives of the Arma Christi in Cooper, Lisa.H. (ed) *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture: With a Critical Edition of 'o Vernicle.'* (2014); Muessing, C. *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Oxford (2020).

transformation or conversion, achieving grace, and salvation.¹⁰³² Their position, beneath the beams in a discreet corner, however, gives them additional significance. As the Reformation took hold the wounds may have taken on subversive qualities as a hidden reminder of the Heskeths' Catholicism, and of particular importance when hosting mixed-faith commensal gatherings.¹⁰³³ Visible, if one knew where to look, from the dining table at the high end of the great hall, the wounds may have acted as a 'compass' and 'anchor' for the Heskeths as a deep-grained symbol of their now outlawed faith.¹⁰³⁴ The Heskeths could not necessarily see it but they *knew* it was there, over them, much like the priest holes over the great hall whispering galleries at Rufford and Speke. However, the fact that the image is not immediately visible when in the great hall space means that it is also, I believe, apotropaic. Another meaning of the five wounds of Christ, as seen above with the star at Little Moreton, is that it was a protective symbol.¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰³² Muessing, C. *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, pp.23-59.

¹⁰³³ The image had been chosen as an emblem of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 (as well as the Northern Rebellion of 1569) and the five wounds' became a symbol of Catholic resistance for some. Yet the Heskeths, influenced by the Earls of Derby and their reluctance to become involved either uprising, kept their distance from these movements, as did Lancashire and Cheshire on the whole. Davies, C.S.L, *Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace*. In. Fletcher, A. and Stevenson, J. *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press (1985) pp.58, 59, 75; Kesselring, K.J. "A Cold Pye for the Papistes": Constructing and Containing the Northern Rising of 1569. *Journal of British Studies*. 43:4 (2004), p.426; Davies, *Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace*, p.64; Haigh, C. *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.129-130; Coward, B. *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby*, pp.97-99; Baggeley, J.J. *The Earls of Derby*, pp.38-41.

¹⁰³⁴ Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p.567; Walsham, *Bare Ruined Choirs*, p.117; Walsham, *Holy Families: The Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household*, pp.152, 153, 154.

¹⁰³⁵ Muessing, *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, pp.23-59; Angus, B. *The Apotropaic "Witch Posts" of Early Modern Yorkshire*, pp.68, 70; Champion, M. *Graffiti Inscriptions of St Mary's Church, Troston*, p.249, citing *Gawain and the Green Knight*; Champion, M. *Medieval Graffiti*, pp.48-49.



Fig. 15. The Five Wounds of Christ high above the dining space in the great hall at Rufford. Photo courtesy of Jane Garside.

The five wounds were a palimpsest, or as Shannon Gayk calls them, a ‘chameleon.’¹⁰³⁶ This is indicative of the ambiguity concerning the image of the five wounds of Christ as their deep significance depended on who saw them and what they associated with the image. Their equivocal nature meant that the five wounds, and the *arma Christi* regularly accompanying them, were not regular targets of the iconoclasm that affected other Catholic imagery, nor were they seen as dangerously Catholic or ‘suspicious’ to Protestants. The five wounds are also found in the Moretons’ local parish church at St. Mary’s, Astbury, again in a similar position, high up in the open roof space. In fact, the five wounds of Christ and the *arma Christi* were both reinterpreted in ways that were meaningful to Protestants. They were a symbol which equated the suffering of Christ with the suffering of St Paul and therefore of Protestant preachers and their battles on behalf of the reformed faith.¹⁰³⁷ The wounds of Christ reminded the faithful of the inner marking or scarring they endured for the survival of Protestantism, in a similar way to Catholic meditation on the wounds potentially causing an internal imprint on the heart and body.¹⁰³⁸ Similarly, the *arma Christi* were used by Protestants to stand in for the body of Christ, enabling one to meditate on Christ’s Passion and crucifixion without the representation of his body itself.¹⁰³⁹ Due to this reinterpretation of such symbols which evoked

¹⁰³⁶ Gayk, S. Early Modern Afterlives of the Arma Christi in Cooper, Lisa.H. (ed) *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture: With a Critical Edition of ‘o Vernicle.’* (2014), p.303.

¹⁰³⁷ Muessing, *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, pp.218-248; Gayk, Early Modern Afterlives of the *Arma Christi*, p.303.

¹⁰³⁸ Muessing, *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, pp.218-248.

¹⁰³⁹ Gayk, Early Modern Afterlives of the *Arma Christi*, p.303.

Christ's Passion, the wounds of Christ in the great hall at Rufford were not an overt Catholic symbol and therefore would have been acceptable to Protestants who noticed them, but may have held a particular meaning to the Heskeths and other Catholics dining at the high end of the great hall. The wounds could at once be subversive, ambiguous, protective, salvic, a mnemonic device, or an emblem of Christ's love and acceptance both at the Last Supper and on the cross.

I argue there was an overlap for Catholics' and Protestants' domestic decorative schemes between sacralising the home for religious education and worship and imbuing houses and internal spaces with spiritual protection. Tara Hamling believes religious wall paintings had a similar protective effect. Alexandra Walsham also makes the connection between the Catholic desire to infuse homes with faith through décor and the spiritual protection given through spaces which had housed and harboured priests.¹⁰⁴⁰ The star motif in the gallery at Little Moreton might also have invoked the protection of the five wounds of Christ. Therefore, as well as the Heskeths' infusing of the food space with religiosity in the ceiling and its decorative feature of the angels (see chapter 1), the five wounds furthered this imbuing of the very fabric of the building with faith and God at the time it was built. The five wounds could both viewed as a symbol of faith, whether Catholic or Protestant, and yet simultaneously be located in a 'hidden' position because it was designed to protect.¹⁰⁴¹ As a shared symbol by both faiths, the Rufford five wounds could act as an inconspicuous 'compass' and 'anchor', a sign of their Catholicism while they ate with others. Catholics and Protestants used the same means to protect food spaces but these could be read differently by different people simultaneously during commensal events.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Walsham, A. Holy Families: The Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Revisited. *In Religion and the Household*. Ecclesiastical History Society (2014), pp. 153-4; Stonyhurst MSS Anglia A.I. 73 – protection from Devil where priest has been.

¹⁰⁴¹ Young, L. *The Book of the Heart*. Harper Collins (2002), pp. 166-172; Bearing the Stigmata in Muessing, C. *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Oxford (2020); Angus, B. The Apotropaic "Witch Posts" of Early Modern Yorkshire, pp.68, 70; Champion, M. Graffiti Inscriptions of St Mary's Church, Troston, p.249, citing *Gawain and the Green Knight*; Champion, *Medieval Graffiti*, pp.48-49.

Imbuing The Fabric of the Building with Faith

The star in the long gallery at Little Moreton and the five wounds at Rufford both straddle the line between less formal protective practices and formal schemes commissioned by the study families. Religious wall paintings and carved and painted text also were deemed as an important part of the home. Hamling elides apotropaic protection with Biblical imagery in decorative schemes in this need to write on walls and posts to embody spiritual purity throughout a household, and this is reflected in the decoration at Little Moreton.¹⁰⁴² Above the imposing bay windows of the central courtyard the words ‘*God is al in al things*’ looked down upon those below, enveloping the hall within, and ready to greet dinner guests on their arrival.



Fig. 16. The inscriptions above the bay windows at Little Moreton Hall: ‘(sic) GOD IS AL IN AL THING. THIS WINDOWS WHIRE MADE BY WILLIAM MORETON IN THE YARE OF OURE LORDE MDLIX’ and below ‘(sic) RYCHARDE DALE CARPE[N]DER MADE THEIS WINDOVVS BY THE GRAC OF GOD.’ Photo author’s own.

¹⁰⁴² Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.270-273; Hamling, T. To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household. *Art History*, 30:2 (2007), pp.191-194.

This phrase echoes Ephesians 4:6: 'One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' On the building, the word of God was intended to exert control over those beneath, who were expected to modify their behaviour, beneath the watchful eye of God. The words also served to protect the building as well as edify those who looked upon them. As Tara Hamling suggests, from marks such as the Moreton 'daisy wheel' it is a 'short step' to religious wall paintings and inscribed mottos in rooms and on buildings.¹⁰⁴³ At Little Moreton the apotropaic marks, religious schemes, and inscriptions all act in the same way to permeate households; to protect, moderate behaviour, and edify.

John and William Moreton II's inscribing of Little Moreton Hall with Biblical imagery, texts, and other reminders of God simultaneously strengthened, surveyed, and sanctified the building and those inside it. A combination of 'visual and material signs' could provide protection. The devices Hamling observes in spaces of sociability, commensality, and hospitable recreation acted to temper overly lively or sensuous behaviour which could contaminate and corrupt the household's purity and avoid lapses in piety.¹⁰⁴⁴ In William Perkin's *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608) he encapsulated the necessity of protecting food spaces spiritually:

Looke as we are wont to sanctifie our meate and drinke, by Gods word, and by praier, and thereby procure his blessing upon his owne ordinance for our refreshing: so in like manner may we sanctifie the places of our abode, and thereby procure the blessing which we want, and also avoid many curses and dangers, which otherwise would fall upon us.¹⁰⁴⁵

As well as an overall need to keep Little Moreton spiritually pure and protected, spaces in which foods were consumed were one area where efforts were concentrated.

¹⁰⁴³ Hamling, T. *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.270-271.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.271-272; Hamling, T. *To See or Not to See?* pp.181, 182, 184, 190, 191-194

¹⁰⁴⁵ William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608), p.225.

Edification:

The Protestant concept of edification was used to argue that the process of Reformation was not on the correct path. Faith, and the community of the faithful, was likened to a building in which all the bricks, in fact all structural facets, must be pure and godly.¹⁰⁴⁶ If this was not the case then the edifice would be structurally unsound and might topple. Jesus Christ was seen as the cornerstone of this metaphorical building and in this God had provided a firm foundation on which to build the Christian faith.¹⁰⁴⁷ While such a metaphorical building was an abstract concept, it did overlap with ideas about the ideal Protestant household, the governance of family members, and the way the fabric of the house could be used to instruct, educate and create God's building in microcosm. Thus, just as God's building must be made of pure building blocks, so the family unit (including servants) must consist of pure and spiritually well-educated members, with the home made up of elements that contributed to that aim.¹⁰⁴⁸ As Alexandra Walsham has argued the very structure and decorative spaces of the Protestant home could be used to 'educate and edify.'¹⁰⁴⁹ Walsham goes as far as saying that the use of the physical structure of a home to educate children worked as a material and physical manifestation of the mental memory palaces constructed as aids to remembrance.¹⁰⁵⁰ Through Little Moreton and Speke I argue Protestants and Catholics both used the physical fabric of their homes to instruct and educate while simultaneously supporting their faith on a larger scale. This was through the idea of the metaphorical Protestant church and edification or, as seen with the parlour at Speke, through links to Catholic survival and longevity. In both manifestations of this faith was infused into the fabric of the home.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Oates, R. *Moderate Radical: Tobie Matthew and the English Reformation*. Oxford University Press (2018). pp.26-28; *Bethel or a Forme for Families* (1634).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Oates, R. *Moderate Radical*, pp.26-28; *Bethel or a Forme for Families* (1634).

¹⁰⁴⁸ Oates, R. *Moderate Radical*, pp.26-28; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.106-111; Griffith, M. *Bethel or a Forme for Families* (1634).

¹⁰⁴⁹ Walsham, A. *Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory, and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England*. *Renaissance Quarterly* 69:2 (2016), p.575.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Walsham, *Domesticating the Reformation*, p.574 referencing Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp.129-159, 320-341.

Matthew Griffith's *Bethel, or a Forme for Families* (1634) sets out the duties of each Protestant family member to ensure the household is as God's building. The father's duty, amongst others, is to ensure the proper instruction and governance of children and servants. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson have shown how Protestant patriarchs used the fabric of the home to do this and how this was combined with a responsibility to structure the day around faith, prayer, and meditation – particularly mealtimes.¹⁰⁵¹ As seen with the Norrises at Speke in chapter 2, there is evidence in the inscriptions above the great parlour's doors that they too structured their day in similar ways, using their home and its various rooms to prompt different reflections as instructed by priest Robert Southwell.¹⁰⁵² Dinner times were one of several prescribed moments for a review of one's actions. Griffith's *Bethel* also stresses the need to structure family life around these necessary times of worship and to have children remember God in all they do. In his instructions on how to furnish God's building, i.e. the family home, one must have:

set times of reading the scriptures; and diligently observing such things as may profit and edifie us...set times of prayer, without interruption...Conference; Thou shalt talke them when thou lyeest down and when thou riseth up [Deut 6:6].¹⁰⁵³

Edification went hand in hand with education. Learning could be used not just to create worthy members of God's building but also help reform the entire Protestant faith.¹⁰⁵⁴ Building on St Paul's declaration 'let all things be done unto edifying' [1 Cor 14:26], educational edification allowed for instruction of the faith and its tenets which strengthened the faith, God's building, and the family and 'patriarchal house.'¹⁰⁵⁵ Suitably instructed

¹⁰⁵¹ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.98, 120, 122,127-130; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.263, 265, 268,

¹⁰⁵² Robert Southwell, *A Short Rule of Good Life to Direct the Devout Christian in a Regular and Orderly Course* (1596-7).

¹⁰⁵³ Griffiths, *Bethel*, pp.418-9.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Kneidel, G. Samuel Daniel and Edification. *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 44:1 (2004), p.59.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Kneidel, Samuel Daniel and Edification, p.60.

members of God's family would become part of a 'living building.'¹⁰⁵⁶ Edification was a dual-process of building a sound structure, a church, and maintaining order within it.¹⁰⁵⁷ Such order related to the Protestant faith and also to the internal order of the pious household. If edification was about the spiritual growth of individuals (the building blocks) as well as the faith (the building), then household instruction was important as a means to regulate behaviour and ensure the elect lived godly lives.¹⁰⁵⁸ The incorporation of scripture of Biblical imagery in the household could inform behaviour in spatial and temporal ways related to when and where to pray, meditate, gather as a family to study the bible, sign psalms, or eat together. All this moderation and shaping of thoughts and behaviours was important in rooms where food was consumed as well as in spaces where families engaged with their social peers and superiors.

In the continual building analogy, every element of a building should be pure in order to keep the whole structure pure.¹⁰⁵⁹ Just as Tara Hamling has written, this idea was transferred to elements of a Protestant household and how they instructed, purified, and protected the members of that household.¹⁰⁶⁰ Though Matthew Griffith made clear to readers that the building he referred to in his Bethel was a metaphorical one, he still spoke of the elements that made up God's building and the Protestant family home in terms of 'timber, framing, setting up, finishing, and furnishing.' Devout people were the very building materials (the timber, the frame), and their actions were the furnishings. Each household being orderly run, and each member edified within it, contributed to the prosperity and strength of the family and the faith as a whole. The house was the faith in microcosm, and so its fabric and materials also needed to be pure, spiritual, and each element edifying. Through including edifying elements in a household, the home is made pure and spiritual. This imbues the building and its fabric with a protective sanctity. This idea of strengthening a structure through faith also

¹⁰⁵⁶ Coolidge, C. Liberty and Edification in The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible (1970) pp.23-54, cited in Kneidel, Samuel Daniel and Edification, p.60.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Kneidel, Samuel Daniel and Edification, p.60.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Oates, R. *Moderate Radical*, pp.26-27.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.106.

acted to allow piety and spirituality to permeate through a house's walls, beams, ceilings, and roofs: it was edifying and it was pure.

Griffith uses Proverbs 24:22 and Deuteronomy 11:18 to exhort the householder to avoid the temptations of the devil and to 'serve God in life':

Keep the ordinances of God, for they are your wisdom, and your judgement, and your understanding, and life...teach them to your children; speaking of them when you sit in your houses, and when you walke by the way, and when you lie downe, and when you rise up, and write them upon the doore-postes of your houses, and upon your gates; that your days on earth may be multiplied, and the days of children as the days of heaven.¹⁰⁶¹

Hamling shows how this was interpreted by Protestant householders as a requirement to put God's word physically onto the walls and posts of their houses in order to instruct others.¹⁰⁶²

In fact, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:18 were interpreted as instruction to the householder themselves to ensure that whenever people looked and moved around a house they would be prompted to think of God.¹⁰⁶³ William Moreton II (c.1510-63) did this by writing on the compass/bay window exteriors, carving it into the very wooden fabric of his building. His son John also pasted and painted it on the walls. And, importantly for the purposes of considering commensality and hospitality, they did this in food spaces and visible points inside the courtyard at Little Moreton: in the little parlour and on the compass windows. If a house was made pure and strong through edification, and the word of God was put on the posts and walls to ensure those inside the household remained devout and pure, then this could protect

¹⁰⁶¹ Griffith, *Bethel*, pp.452-3.

¹⁰⁶² Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.106.

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid.*

permeable buildings from outside spiritual attack.¹⁰⁶⁴ This idea of writing on door posts could equally be applied to scratched or burned apotropaic marks such as those at Speke or carved woodwork decoration such as that of the Hesketh five wounds, showing this was not just something Protestants subscribed to. Even the plasterwork ceiling in Speke's great parlour had potential protective qualities, with its roses symbolising the five wounds and meditations on the Virgin Mary incorporating the idea that she could intercede on Catholics' behalf.¹⁰⁶⁵ A decorative scheme such as the Speke parlour ceiling infused the building with Catholicism but it also protected during the vulnerable act of eating through its representation of Christ's wounds and Mary's protective *hortus conclusus*.

Decorative Schemes:

Andrew Morrall cites various Protestant authorities who justified the use of visual imagery taken from the Bible in the home, despite the previous idea of a Protestant 'visual anorexia' claimed by Patrick Collinson.¹⁰⁶⁶ Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, Erasmus, Thomas Elyot and William Perkins all saw the usefulness of visual scenes in domestic spaces.¹⁰⁶⁷ Protestant householders could create colourful and instructive decorative schemes without crossing the line into proscribed images and accusations of Catholic iconography through images from the Old Testament and Apocrypha which subtly referenced the life of Christ.

Susanna and the Elders:

The little parlour at Little Moreton is adjacent to the great parlour and off the high end of the great hall. In this food space is a painted depiction of Susanna and the Elders, commissioned

¹⁰⁶⁴ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.271; Hamling, *To See or Not to See?* p.193.

¹⁰⁶⁵ McLean, T. *Medieval English Gardens*. London (1981), p.129; Daley, B. E. The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4:12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary. In: MacDougall, E. (ed.). *Medieval Gardens. Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape and Architecture IX*. Meriden-Stinehour Press (1986); Larson, V. A Rose Blooms in Winter: The Tradition of the Hortus Conclusus and its Significance as a Devotional Emblem. *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology*. 52:4 (2013), pp.309-310; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.269-273.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Collinson, P. *Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, pp.117-119 cited in Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.7-8 and Hamling, T. and Williams, R.L. (eds.). *Art Re-formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2007), p.3.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Morrall *The Family at Table* pp.340-342. Walsham, *Domesticating the Reformation*, p.575.

by John Moreton (c.1541-98) around 1580, though it may have been covered up by the panelling in the room by the early 17th century.¹⁰⁶⁸ John had six daughters. Not only did he use his domestic food spaces to convey an image of the ideal Protestant patriarch, he also used them to edify and educate his children: the story of Susanna was typically used in order to instruct on the proper nature and conduct of women and was also associated with the virtue of marriage.¹⁰⁶⁹

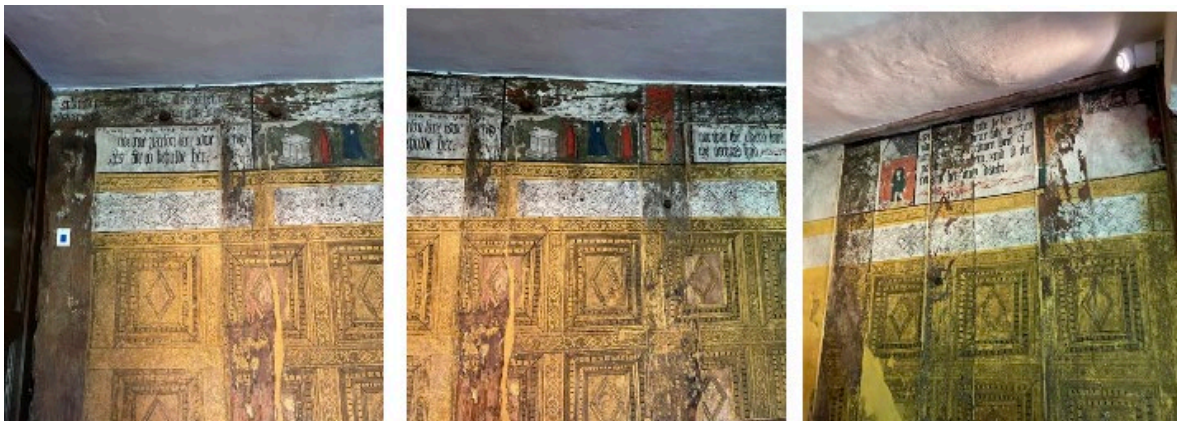


Fig. 17. Susanna and the Elders scheme in the little parlour at Little Moreton Hall. The images show: Susanna ready to bathe with her two maids; the two maids leaving her to get the oil and wash balls while the elders hide in the orchard; the elders proposition Susanna to lie with them and they will not accuse her of lying with another man having sent her maids away; God sends Daniel as a witness to the deception; Daniel testifying against the elders; the judges giving their judgement and condemning the elders in death in place of Susanna. Images authors own.

¹⁰⁶⁸ The trend for intensely decorated wall paintings is centred on the late 16th to early 17th century, see Davies, K. *Secular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marshes*. In: Gowing, R. and Pender, R. *All Manner of Murals: The History, Techniques and Conversation of Secular Wall Paintings*. Archetype Publications (2007), p.24; Kirkham, A. *Pattern and Colour in Late 16th- and 17th-Century Secular Wall and Panel Paintings in Suffolk: An Overview*. In: Gowing, R. and Pender, R. *All Manner of Murals: The History, Techniques and Conversation of Secular Wall Paintings*. Archetype Publications (2007), pp.33-34.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household - Susannah and the Elders represents marriage*, p.215.



It has black letter text which is a prose *précis* of the story of Susanna and the Elders taken from verses 15-46 of the Apocrypha.¹⁰⁷⁰ Tessa Watt believes that the pictorial rendering of the story is taken from a pattern book, possibly from the six images of the French printer Gyles Godet and his contemporaries.¹⁰⁷¹ The scheme also features Renaissance-inspired black and white ‘antique work’ below the frieze narrative story, a common feature of early modern wall painting.¹⁰⁷²

Susanna and the Elders featured not just in wall paintings but in a variety of embroideries and canvas paintings, as well as in poetry. That John Moreton chose the story of Susanna for this space gives an indication of the sorts of messages he wanted his children to ingest as they ate, prayed, and entertained in this space. Robert Aylett, in his *Susanna: Or, The Arraignment of the Two Unjust Elders* (1622) set out the sort of woman Susanna was thought to be and that young women should therefore emulate:

At vacant hours it was her chiefe delight,
To reade the stories of God’s glorious might,

¹⁰⁷⁰ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p.209.

¹⁰⁷¹ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p.209 citing Rouse, C. Elizabethan Wall Paintings at Little Moreton Hall, in. Jackson-Stops, G. *National Trust Studies 1980* (1979), pp.113-118; For Gyles Godet’s work see Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, pp. 181-192, particularly on the six-image series format and the use of black letter text, strapwork, Renaissance grotesque or antique work, and the replication of designs and formats taken from woodcut borders.

¹⁰⁷² Watt, T. *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p.214.

When all the choicest precepts she could find,
She stor'd as heav'nly Manna for her mind.¹⁰⁷³

In Aylett's text, Susanna worked hard at her domestic strengths, centred her life in the home, organised the food and read and sang psalms with her kitchen staff.¹⁰⁷⁴ She assumes the role, for Aylett, of good Protestant domesticity and womanhood, caring, nurturing, and educating the household in religion.¹⁰⁷⁵ Susanna was therefore a role model of feminine virtue but also strength.¹⁰⁷⁶ Tessa Watt demonstrates that Susanna and the Elders was popular in broadsheets and ballads printed in the 16th and 17th century.¹⁰⁷⁷ Susanna was regularly invoked when an ideal image of constancy and filial behaviour were required, as in the example of *The Ballad of Constant Susanna* (1562-3):

She feared God, she stood in awe,
As in the storie we have read
Was well brought up in Moses' law
Her parents they were godly folke.¹⁰⁷⁸

Her story became a popular one for wall paintings, particularly for Protestants who could include it in their decorative schemes safely because of the lack of holy figures such as Jesus, and because of its position on the lower 'rungs' in terms of biblical status.¹⁰⁷⁹ As such, Susanna and the Elders was a story that had a firm place in the 'stock' of images that reoccurred in the visual culture of the period.¹⁰⁸⁰ Susanna and her behaviour in the story became synonymous with chastity.¹⁰⁸¹ Chastity involved exerting control over one's body and mind, 'to imbrace

¹⁰⁷³ Geuter, R. Embroidered Biblical Narratives and Their Social Context, in. Morral, A. and Watt, M. (eds.). *'Twixt Art and Nature: English Embroidery from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1580-1700*. London: Yale University (2008), pp.59-61.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Geuter, R. Embroidered Biblical Narratives, pp.62, 234.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid, pp.63, 65.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, pp.118, 119, 127.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* quoting *The Ballad of Constant Susanna* (1562-3), p.119

¹⁰⁷⁹ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, pp.202, 203.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid, p.202.

¹⁰⁸¹ Peters, C. *Pattern of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*. Cambridge University Press (2009), p.251, citing D. Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing*, Ch.9 reprinted in Brown, (ed.), *Women's Writing in Stuart England*, pp.27-30.

chastity, without which we are meere beasts, and no women.'¹⁰⁸² Susanna is also a model of religious obedience to God.¹⁰⁸³

The scheme echoed the morality and orderliness of the family that ate beneath it and infused a meal with an 'atmosphere of sober piety to inculcate virtue even as one ate.'¹⁰⁸⁴ Referring back to the language of Griffith's *Bethel*, food and sensual enjoyment were things that needed attention when dealing with sons and daughters:

...the Cooke is this Belly-god's Priest; the Kitchin his Temple; the Dresser boord his High-altar...good Appetite his devotion...his owne belly; is the whole body of his Religion. Now he studies onely Kitchin Commentaries; and is not ashamed openly to professe and practice cookery (with Lucullus) rather than hee will want the true art to please his Pallate.¹⁰⁸⁵

In the context of a dining space, Susanna was a paragon of self-control, an important reminder for both sexes. Her perceived virtues also included a lack of interest in 'vain delights' and eschewing of earthly pleasures, encapsulating a life of humility and Christian living.¹⁰⁸⁶ The story had relevance for all the family and their guests, heightening its edifying effect through its guarding against spiritual corruption, and telling of how Susanna was tested by God as a warning against complacency and the sustained attempts of the devil to corrupt.¹⁰⁸⁷ The story can be meditated on from the position of the elders and their succumbing to the temptation of the devil, which Robert Green, in *The Myrroure of Modestie* (1584) read as a seduction by contrary religious arguments and persuasions and diversion from the godly path by others.¹⁰⁸⁸

¹⁰⁸² Ibid.

¹⁰⁸³ Peters, *Pattern of Piety*, p.252.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Morrall, *The Family at Table*, p.342

¹⁰⁸⁵ Griffith, *Bethel*, p.181. Lucullan, when used as an adjective, denotes 'lavish, luxurious, a Lucullan feast' – Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Peters, *Pattern of Piety*, p.252.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Peters, *Pattern of Piety*, pp.258, 259, 260. This appears to be an English reading of the story according to Peters with Susanna used as a 'model for all.' Peters, *Pattern of Piety*, p.256 on Susanna as edifying.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Peters, *Pattern of Piety*, p.263.

The flipping of the story of Adam and Eve in Susanna and the Elders, with men succumbing to temptation and the woman resisting it, also gives the story power in the context of commensality.¹⁰⁸⁹ The scheme chosen by John Moreton provided a safeguard from religious corruption supernaturally within a food space as well as a reminder to diners to be on their guard in cases of mixed company or when they dined elsewhere.

The Moreton Susanna and the Elders scheme reflected a confidence in the family that they were able to dine beneath the eyes of God through their righteousness.¹⁰⁹⁰ If décor acted in the early modern home as a ‘CCTV camera’, as a portal through which one could be observed by God’s ‘all-seeing eye’, then one would need to be confident in your worthiness to eat beneath such imagery.¹⁰⁹¹ Such confidence may be reflected in the brightness of the scheme’s colours, which also intensified the vehemency with which the moralistic and religious message was conveyed by the Moretons.

When thinking about the visual impact of the Moreton scheme it is worth remembering the physical interaction believed to take place between something viewed and the physiological processes which took place in the viewer (chapter 4). A vivid colour scheme could work to excite one’s animal spirits as a combination of visual imprints on the eye and the materiality of early modern concepts of vision as the very colour and intensity of sensory perception passed through and affected mind and soul. This idea of images being imprinted and affecting the soul was applied to Catholic interactions with devotional emblems such as the five wounds of Christ, described above, with the image’s ability to move the viewer through material means. Morrall and Hamling note the suspicion of bright colour schemes and how some preferred monochrome or white schemes which allowed a ‘middle way’ style of decorative scheme without being overly sensuous and distracting for the senses.¹⁰⁹² However, colour could be used in exactly that way, in exciting the senses, in order to achieve the aim of either

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid, pp.252, 265

¹⁰⁹⁰ Morrall, *The Family at Table* pp.344-345

¹⁰⁹¹ Walsham, A. *Holy Families: Spiritualisation of the Early Modern Household Re-visited*, p.130.

¹⁰⁹² Hamling, T. *The Appreciation of Religious Images in Plasterwork in the Protestant Domestic Interior*. In. *Art Re-formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2007), pp.153-157; Morrall, *The Family at Table* p.350.

conversion (as noted by Helen Smith with embroidery) or edification.¹⁰⁹³ Conrad Meyer, in his *Sterbenspiegel* (1650), saw his skill as a painter as a useful tool with which to edify his neighbour, 'to plant virtue', through God's calling.¹⁰⁹⁴ The senses needed moderation and control but could be affective in the right way if used with caution.

The main yellow colour in the wall painting of the little parlour, which used ochre pigment, had several associations in the minds of early modern people. It was recognised that yellow could affect emotions through having the ability to make people happy due to its brightness, a desirable consequence when used in dinner spaces. One association that appears most common was that of marriage, sexual relations, and fidelity.¹⁰⁹⁵ This association matches those connections guests in the parlour were likely to make between the scenes in the Susanna story and ideal female conduct. The decision by John Moreton to use a bright colour scheme for the apocryphal scene might be because this was believed to help convey a religious message more forcefully. However, this needed to be approached with caution. Bruce Smith has stressed that a colour's meaning was dependent on what it was combined with.¹⁰⁹⁶ Too many colours in a room could confuse and disorient people, as shown in one of the 'disappointed' chambers in Spencer's *The Faerie Queen*, where the colours 'buzzed':

...all the chamber filled was with flies,
Which buzzed all about, and made such a sound,
That they encombered all mens ears and eyes.¹⁰⁹⁷

Soft Furnishings:

¹⁰⁹³ Morrall, *The Family at Table*, p.351; Smith, H. and Canavan, C. *The Needle May Convert More than the Pen': Women and the Work of Conversion in Early Modern England*

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁵ Tobit Curteis Associates. *Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire: Condition Survey, Analysis and Proposals for the Conservation of the Wall Paintings and Polychromy* (2008), p.7; Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, pp.138-139; Preyer, B. *The Florentine Casa*. In: Ajmar-Wollheim, M. and Dennis, F. *At Home In Renaissance Italy*. V&A Publications (2006), p.40; Giese, L.L. *Malvolio's Yellow Stockings: Coding Illicit Sexuality in Early Modern London*. *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 19 (2006), pp.236-240.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Smith, B. *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*. Chicago University Press (2009), p.73.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.92.

Whereas a scheme such as Susanna and the Elders were likely commissioned by the male head of the household, embroideries for food spaces were under the auspices of women. Details of the soft furnishings in the food spaces of the three study families confirm this. Jane Hesketh, John Moreton's second wife Anne Davenport, and Jane and Anne Moreton all added to domestic spaces with their own embroidered pieces.¹⁰⁹⁸ In this, they not only contributed to the overall sensory nature of food spaces, but also continued the drive to fill food spaces with faith and to affect others who dined within them. Religious content was common with embroidered cushions often set in the compass windows of food spaces for guests.¹⁰⁹⁹ From middling households through to the embroideries of Bess of Hardwick and Mary Queen of Scots, adorning the home with carefully chosen and worked embroideries was an important part of a woman's domestic role.¹¹⁰⁰ The pieces created by women complimented the more expensive items of turkey carpets, tapestries, and upholstery. This showcased a woman's skill and mastery of needlework, represented a marker of respectable status, of leisure and privilege, but also was evidence of a woman's devotion to learning, status, and domestic dedication.¹¹⁰¹

Sixteen cushions were listed in the great hall at Rufford in the 1620 inventory of Robert Hesketh. It is not recorded what was on these cushions though there was a significant amount of embroidery materials listed as being in Mistress Jane Hesketh's chamber in the same inventory. These materials include some that are described as being 'cullors [colours] for an ancient' indicating a heraldic design. Such designs were also referenced in the will of Sir Thomas Hesketh which described 'carpets and cushions whereupon his arms or crest were either carved or wrought with needle.'¹¹⁰² Carpets were placed on tables and cupboards rather than floors due to their fineness and expense (see fig.17). These were combined with

¹⁰⁹⁸ Lancs Archives WCW/Disputed/C76A; Will and inventory of John Moreton, esq. Cheshire Archives WS 1601.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp.211, 213.

¹¹⁰⁰ Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England*, pp.212-215; Frye, *S. Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England*. University of Pennsylvania Press (2010), pp. 30-74, 117; Lancs Archives WCW/Disputed/C76A; Will and inventory of John Moreton, esq. Cheshire Archives WS 1601; BL Add MS 33941 ff.144-149 Inventory of William Moreton 1654; BL Add MS 33940 f.113, Add MS 33941 ff.195, 199.

¹¹⁰¹ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, pp127/8.

¹¹⁰² Will of Sir Thomas Hesketh, BL Add MS 32104.

the heraldry on display in the carved woodwork of the Rufford passage screen and ceiling which conveyed status, longevity, and gentry belonging (chapter 1).

At Little Moreton, there were 'cheeres, quyssions, and buffetesstooles' in the inventory of 1599 for John Moreton (c.1541-98) as well as a carpet, sewing materials including 'crule' (crewel), and another entry for more 'cheeres, quyssions, one table, one stoole and one boxe'.¹¹⁰³ In the 17th century there are various cushions, hangings, coverlets and curtains listed amongst the belongings of Anne Moreton.¹¹⁰⁴ The commonplace book of Philip Moreton includes number of requests for embroidery materials from his sisters when he went to Chester or London and Anne's belongings at her death include a wide range of sewing equipment.¹¹⁰⁵ At Speke there was also a whole range of coloured and worked fabrics in many of the rooms of the hall mention in the inventory of 1624, describing a home where colour appears to be everywhere.¹¹⁰⁶

Susan Frye highlights the potential of women's agency through soft furnishings: 'women's needlework transported the narratives of women from the classical and biblical past into the early modern household, and women from their households into the mix of contemporary events.'¹¹⁰⁷ Much of women's embroideries in the period fell into certain categories, including samplers and embroidered pictures.¹¹⁰⁸ The latter regularly included scenes from the Bible that also reoccur in wall paintings: Susanna and the Elders, Esther, Deborah, and Judith.¹¹⁰⁹ In these pictorial choices, women participated not just in the domestic sphere of aesthetic

¹¹⁰³ Will and inventory of John Moreton, esq. Cheshire Archives WS 1601.

¹¹⁰⁴ Add MS 33941 ff.144-149 Inventory of William Moreton 1654.

¹¹⁰⁵ Add MS 33941

¹¹⁰⁶ There are Mortlake tapestries at Speke but these were purchased in the 19th century by a subsequent owner. Many of the windowsills had long embroidered cushions recorded on them and William Norris's bedroom had long window cushions made of cloth of gold and cloth of silver. Bed curtains for William were yellow and green taffeta and the window curtains were red and white. Sir Thomas Gerard's room had a coverlet of orange tawny and his vallance was satin with blue and yellow silk fringing. There are curtains of blue and yellow taffeta but also a crimson taffeta covered chair fringed in red silk. Another long 'needlework' cushion filled the windowsill.

¹¹⁰⁷ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p.116

¹¹⁰⁸ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p.117

¹¹⁰⁹ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, pp.117-8; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household* p.211. Depictions of monarchs also made up a good proportion of embroidered subject matter, particularly Charles I and II, Henrietta Maria and Catherine of Braganza, Frye, *Pens and Needles*, pp.117-118.

decoration but showcased the socially valued female morals of piety and virtue while commenting on religious topics through their narrative scenes.¹¹¹⁰ Books devoted to needlework skills show how necessary a display a gentlewoman's needlework ability was.¹¹¹¹ In the *mise en scene* of gentry domestic food spaces, embroideries would be doing as much work as wall paintings and more expensively commissioned decorative furnishings. This work was not merely decorative additions but, in the words of De Certeau 'simultaneously expressive and useful.'¹¹¹²

Embroidery was also a means by which to set an example to others. Frye makes this clear where she points to the word 'sampler' as being an early modern synonym for 'example' 'for others to follow, or to take heed by.'¹¹¹³ For Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, women created 'curious Needle-workes, Cut-workes, spinning, bone-lace, and many pretty devices of their owne making, to adorne their houses, Cushions, Carpets, Chaires, Stooles.'¹¹¹⁴ These were not only to be viewed in private or in passing, but were actively presented: creations that women '*shew to strangers*.'¹¹¹⁵

A wide variety of soft furnishings in a food space had the potential to make guests feel uneasy. Andrew Boorde warned of the effect of hangings and soft furnishings on those who were suffering from mental disturbance, stating that a room must have 'no paynted clothes, nor paynted walls, not pyctures of man nor woman or fowle or beest: for suche thynges maketh them ful of fantasies.'¹¹¹⁶ Soft furnishings could over-stimulate guests as much as wall paintings. William Harrison, in his *Description of England*, described the walls of houses as

¹¹¹⁰ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p. 118; Morrall, A. and Watt, M. *Twixt Art and Nature: English Embroidery from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1580-1700*. Yale University Press (2008). Randles, S. 'The Pattern of All Patience': Gender, Agency, and Emotions in Embroidery and Pattern Books in Early Modern England. In. Broomhall, S. *Authority, Gender, and Emotions in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*. Palgrave Macmillan (2015).

¹¹¹¹ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, pp.128/9

¹¹¹² De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p.21 in Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p.131.

¹¹¹³ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p.118.

¹¹¹⁴ Burton quoted in Smith, H. and Canavan, C. 'The Needle May Convert More than the Pen': Women and the Work of Conversion in Early Modern England. In. Ditchfield, S. and Smith, H. *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*. Manchester University Press (2017), p.113.

¹¹¹⁵ Burton quoted in Smith and Canavan, 'The Needle May Convert More than the Pen', p.113.

¹¹¹⁶ Andrew Boorde, *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Health* (1542) cited in Hamling T. and Richardson, C. *Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles*. *Textile History*, 47:1 (2016), p.21.

being 'hanged with tapestry, arras work, or painted cloths, wherein either divers histories, or herbs, beasts, knots, and suchlike are stained...whereby the rooms are not a little commended, made warm, and much more close than otherwise they would be.'¹¹¹⁷ Here 'close' seems like the equivalent of cosy and intimate. But 'close' could also mean oppressive, and not just in reference to the atmosphere of the room, but also to a feeling of surveillance or unease.¹¹¹⁸ In several plays of the period people are hidden behind tapestries and arras work, either hiding from suspicion or listening to proceedings in the room undetected: *Hamlet*, the anonymously penned *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon*, and William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* all have instances of someone spying or hiding from indiscretions.¹¹¹⁹ Such anxiety would be coupled with fears over eavesdropping and the disclosure of secrets or candid conversations.¹¹²⁰

The level of furnishings at the three study properties could create just such an oppressive atmosphere in food spaces. As with much of the material culture of dining, wall hangings and other decorative textiles could sooth and comfort guests whilst also potentially unsettling them.¹¹²¹ The decisions John Moreton made over a bright impactful scheme such as with the Susannah and the Elders wall paintings, designed to be affective for diners in its powerful religious message, could also provide discomfort. However, in contrast, at Rufford and Speke, the main colour scheme in the principal dining rooms of the great hall and great parlour respectively was more monochromatic and calming: green.

I argue green was chosen by the Hesketh and Norris families in their principal food spaces because it soothed guests and fostered feelings of intimacy without overwhelming. Though there is no evidence of religious content amongst the textiles in these Catholic families' dining rooms, green had the ability to moderate its visual intensity, in contrast to the brightness of the Little Moreton Susannah scheme. For Catholics keen to downplay their faith and any

¹¹¹⁷ Harrison, *Description of England*, cited in Hamling and Richardson, *Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles* p.17.

¹¹¹⁸ Hamling and Richardson, *Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles*, p.18.

¹¹¹⁹ Hamling and Richardson, *Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles*, pp.19-20.

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid*, pp.18-19.

¹¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.22.

religious difference when entertaining certain guests, green I argue worked to calm and relax and emphasise commonalities.

The 1620 Rufford inventory describes a green colour scheme in the great hall: there was a green hanging on a curtain rod, plus a 'longe table, 2 formes and a greene carpet covering.' Another drawing (or extendable) table had two forms and a 'carpet cloth,' with a third table having a 'cupboard cloth.'¹¹²² A further table with a cloth sat in the compass window, creating a more intimate space, perhaps for occasions where there was only a select number of guests. This might also have been the setting for the sixteen cushions listed in the hall inventory. Table and cupboard cloths were made not just of expensive carpet but also of tapestry or embroidered. Cupboard cloths would grace the shelves which displayed plate as a marker of status, whether silver, pewter, or fine ceramics. Several examples of embroidered tablecloths survive which demonstrate the flora and fauna that would feature on them, as seen in the examples from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and V&A (fig. 17). Overall, there is good evidence indicating that the majority of the furnishings were green.

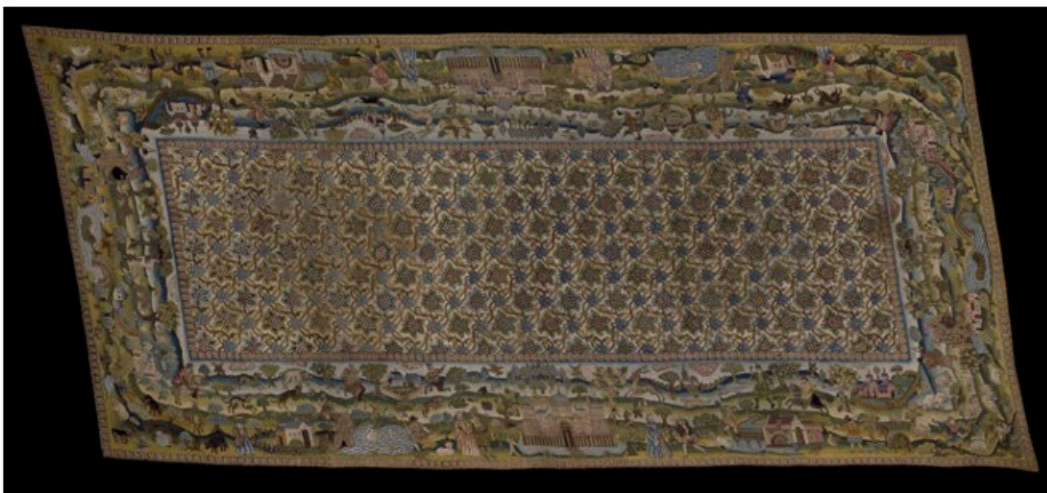
In the great parlour at Speke in 1624 there was 'one greene carpet for the table fringed with greene,' 'ii forms covered with greene and fringed,' twenty-four green fringed stools, three green covered chairs fringed with green silk, two smaller green and fringed chairs, a cupboard with a green fringed carpet, green window curtains and another small table with a fringed green carpet. Alongside all this green in the oak parlour at Speke are six 'quishens' of Arras work. These would be made from tapestry and include scenes including figures, flora, and fauna.¹¹²³ As with the furnishings at Rufford, there is no note of what the cushions in the oak and little parlours depicted. Yet their presence raises the question of how chosen scenes depicted in Arras-, loom-, or needlework could add to the affective impact of this dining space.

¹¹²² Cupboard cloths would grace the shelves which displayed plate as a marker of status, whether silver, pewter, or fine ceramics.

¹¹²³ Saxton, *A Speke Inventory of 1624* (1946) notes from the O.E.D that Arras work is a 'rich tapestry fabric, in which figures and scenes are woven in colours', p.121.



Fig. 17. Above: Embroidered Table Carpet, late 16th/early 17th century. Collection no: STRST: SBT 1997-43. CC-BY-NC-ND Image courtesy of Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.
Below: The Bradford Table Carpet, V&A, Accession No: T134-1928. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Green was a common colour in communal dining spaces because it was moderating and relaxing. For Bruce Smith, it was a middle-ground between reason and passion; it was a liminal colour that invited fantasy, concentration, meditation, pleasure, knowledge, and discovery.¹¹²⁴ Heskeths and Norrises appear to have shared this belief about green furnishings, as they chose green overwhelmingly in key commensal areas instead of other vivid schemes which featured throughout the rest of their homes. Smith considered green to be halfway along the early

¹¹²⁴Smith, B. *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*, pp.7, 50, 54, 59, 61, 64, 71-74, 82-84, 141, 146, 150, 151, 152, 215-221, 223, 229, 232-235, 244, 245, 246, 247.

modern colour spectrum, equidistant between black and white on Aristotle's scale of colours.¹¹²⁵ Aristotelian and Galenic ideas on sight, sensing, and the body meant that colour correlated to the four elements and four humours, and 'fiery beams' interacted with the eye, the internal spirits, and the heart.¹¹²⁶ If black was earth and white was water, then green was the temperate mid-way point, perfectly suited to the eye because it shared a likeness with the eye's watery humour, and this materiality reveals domestic environments that were embodied and immersive with the ability to affect one's emotions.¹¹²⁷ Green did not disturb the eyeball like black or white did thus green was the most comfortable colour – thus green settings allowed for better understanding.¹¹²⁸ Green rooms were thought to aid contemplation and conversation, balanced humours, and allowed for greater perceptiveness.¹¹²⁹ It is possible that green aided the process of coming together as one around the table, smoothing out differences between Catholic and Protestant, and assisting diners in their negotiation of commensal gatherings. In this it worked alongside tableware, such as communal drinking vessels, and the bonds strengthened through gentry identity, shared pursuits, and status symbols as employed by Sir Thomas Hesketh and Sir William Norris (see chapter 1 and 2). If green did stand to mean sensory pleasure, 'a pleasurable sweetness', *and* the acquiring of knowledge through experience, as Smith suggests, then it could potentially act to calm anxieties around the table concerning culinary excess, the seductions of earthly pleasures, distractions from faith, or the clouding of sensory and spiritual perception.¹¹³⁰

Bruce Smith refers throughout his study of green to the number of green table carpets, hangings, and curtains in commensal spaces listed in early modern inventories as verdure hangings, foliate tapestries, 'boscase' and 'park-work'.¹¹³¹ Early modern tapestries of this nature survive at Rufford and Speke though with no evidence that they were purchased by the Heskeths and Norrises in the 16th or 17th centuries. However, the prevalence of green in

¹¹²⁵ Smith, B. *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*, pp.27, 50, 58, 71-72, 84.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid*, pp.27, 29, 30, 58-59, 71-72

¹¹²⁷ *Ibid*, pp.27, 29, 50, 56, 58, 64, 71-72, 82-83.

¹¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp.71-74.

¹¹²⁹ *Ibid*, pp.18-22, 83, 84, 150, 151, 152, 215-221, 229, 232-235, 247.

¹¹³⁰ Paolo Lomazzo, *Tratatto dell' Arte de la Pittura* (1584, English translation 1598) cited in Smith, B. *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*, p.229.

¹¹³¹ Smith, B. *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*, pp.3, 7, 9, 18, 45, 46.

dining rooms was as a direct result of textiles that featured floral imagery. Given the flora of the great parlour at Speke and the links between hunting, landscape, gardens and banqueting it is likely that foliate schemes featured in these study family spaces. Six cushions of 'arras' or tapestry work amongst the green fabrics of the Speke great parlour also suggest floral and foliate designs. Elizabeth Isham took inspiration for her embroideries from samples she had collected from gardens and beyond, combining them with her interest in herbal medicine, designs from herbals, and comparing the collection of images she embroidered to Solomon's biblical garden.¹¹³² Her choices were motivated by wonderment at the beauty of God's creations in nature as well as a visual joy that would 'entertain my eyes.'¹¹³³

Conclusion:

When it came to the agency spread through gentry commensal spaces and assemblages, material culture did more than one thing at once dependent on context and interpretation. Decorative elements such as the Hesketh five wounds of Christ or the parlour ceiling at Speke could have dual roles within food spaces. They could act as a compass and anchor to Catholics entertaining Protestants while also sanctifying and protecting the space for all as they ate. Colourful wall paintings and soft furnishings could moderate behaviour through religious content and promote gentry commensal bonds in convivial atmospheres filled with markers of status. They could interact with diners' bodies and minds in sensory and material ways which had the potential to overwhelm but also sooth and promote understanding and togetherness. Décor could simultaneously instruct, protect, and be subversive. Tableware similarly worked to bring people together through shared acts of drinking or decoration that created an air of exclusivity.

Not viewing these items alone but as part of dining assemblages shows how contexts changed what items, and the acts they facilitated, symbolised. Words spoken during an oath could sanctify but also quickly alter what a shared drink represented. The context in which drinks were shared through the various communal drinking vessels at Speke meant that Catholics

¹¹³² Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p.125.

¹¹³³ Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p.126.

and Protestants might drink to celebrate shared gentry bonds while also thinking differently about this eucharistic act taking place within a sanctified domestic space. Decorative plates or trenchers could cause discord through religious imagery but also unify through displays of cultural accomplishment. And imagery seemingly Catholic or Protestant in nature could be equally meaningful and necessary to both. Aspects that may have divided also had the ability to unite, objects that seemed to want to unite contained the power to alienate.

It should be borne in mind how our families understood the world around them. This included how domestic interiors and dining affected body and mind through the five senses and an idea of self that was open to influence and interference. The network of affective relationships around the table resonated through interactions with food, colourful furnishings, the materiality of dinnerware, and the cumulative effect of all these on people's thoughts and emotions. The materiality of sensation, via 'species' or particles corresponding to sensory organs and animal spirits, had implications for a person's humoral balance, behaviour, and soul. I have argued that each study family understood these forces at work during commensal occasions and capitalised on them but in subtle ways to achieve their aims of social advancement or maintenance of status. Elements of commensality were combined to have an impact on guests but in ways that reassured and mitigated any inhospitable or pernicious consequences of embodied environments.

As Alfred Gell argued, the agentic power of objects came through their interactions with humans, artists, patrons, and contexts.¹¹³⁴ Whilst explicit references to the Heskeths', Norrises', and Moretons' intentions when it came to the material culture they chose for their food spaces do not exist, the surviving material culture suggests that the sensory and affective commensal atmospheres they created were designed with particular effects in mind, namely to infuse a space with faith, bring people together, and alleviate difference. However, whether items were purchased, made at home, commissioned, or inherited, the families had no control over the ways such objects and decorations impacted on their guests. Things that may have

¹¹³⁴ Gell, A. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Clarendon Press: Oxford (1998). Chapter 2: The Theory of the Art Nexus. pp.12-27, 31, 34, 51

been intended to relax and calm or provide a safe environment in which to dine also had the potential to provoke tensions and discomfort, whether through the use of religious motifs or colours. Yet, crucially, the aspects that caused some diners to feel excluded or different had the power to also help others acquiesce and reach compromises when eating with those of the opposite faith: the 'anchor' or 'compass' that allowed a firm mooring from which to negotiate the commensal table.

In this examination of the material elements of dinner spaces, there was discomfort, vulnerability, and 'othering' as much as unity and the heightening of social bonds. This difference was an important element necessary to create commensal atmospheres which allowed negotiations of identity, social status, and faith. Coming together to share food was a complex affair, as demonstrated throughout each of my thesis's chapters. Early modern commensality was only possible if bonds could be maintained without diners deviating too far from their sense of self, their religious community, and their particular negotiating tactics when it came to eating together.

Conclusion

Early Modern Commensality in the Northwest and Dining Assemblages

Commensality provides insight into the changes and challenges of the Reformation. In my study of the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons I have shown how some social challenges of gentry families in the 16th and 17th centuries were met through commensality. I have established that the early modern gentry of the northwest thought of the effect that commensal environments and food spaces had on one's body, mind, and behaviour in embodied ways. The study families used commensal dining spaces located around the early modern house to influence, manipulate, or defy their guests in order to maintain or increase their social position. However, this was done within convivial atmospheres which worked to make guests feel relaxed, helped highlight shared bonds of gentry identity, and showed a concern for guests' comfort. The conclusion provides an overview of religion, food, and sensory experiences in the commensal contexts of the three families.

In employing affect and assemblage theory I have been able to consider the different areas of early modern commensality. An investigation of the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons has shown how they were able to cover all the elements that made a successful dinner party. Food, tableware, décor, conversation, entertainment, and meaningful interactions allowed the families to socialise in mixed company as well as use their homes in spiritually prescriptive ways. I have adapted the affect and assemblage theories of Hamilakis and Barrett to foreground the role of people in the commensal experience. This reflects Margaret Wetherell's criticism that some conceptions of affect theory demote human interactions and representational elements of assemblages to the point of vagueness.¹¹³⁵ As a result I have shown how commensality worked on diners through humoral and sensory interactions between them and other people, spaces, objects, and food. My thesis has considered both

¹¹³⁵ Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*, pp.61-68

tangible and intangible aspects of commensal assemblages, and elements that worked in representational and more-than-representational ways.

Below I have created three diagrams showing each study families' commensal assemblages. The placement of the various aspects has no bearing on importance attached to them. Elements within these assemblages would change in predominance based on circumstance. Each visual schematic represents the variety of affects that would work on diners. Each one might combine in different ways with others depending on contexts.

The Heskeths' Commensal Assemblage:

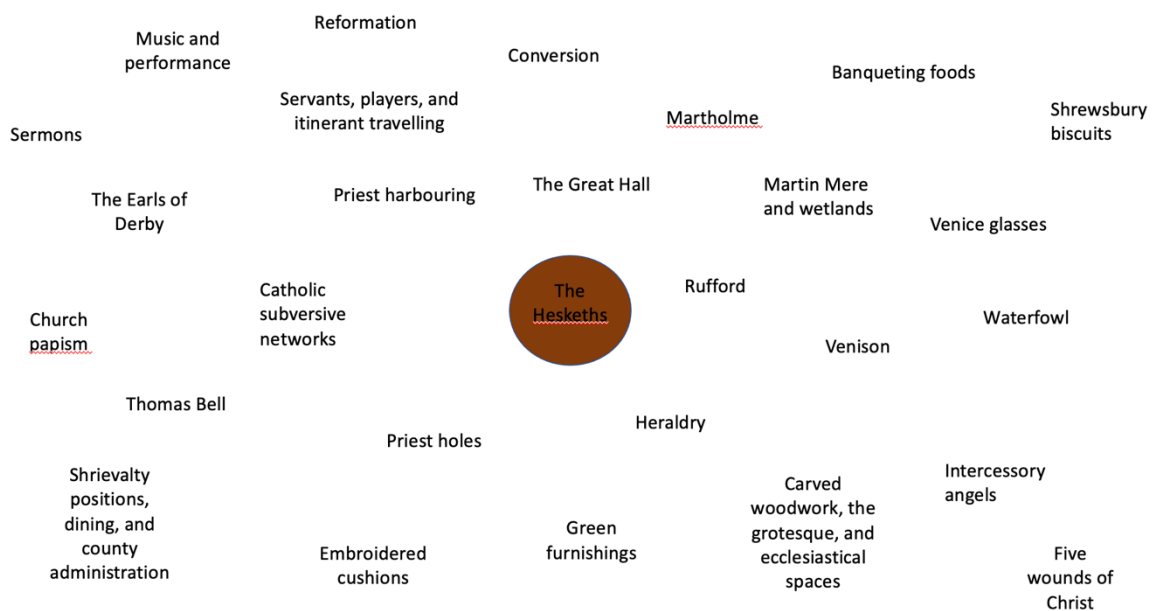


Fig. 1. The Hesketh Commensal Assemblage

The Hesketh family used dramatic and musical performances to remain close to useful members of the nobility despite their Catholicism. Bonds maintained by commensality and hospitality allowed them to avoid the worst of 16th- and early 17th-century prosecution for recusancy and priest harbouring. Dining at Rufford was replete with sounds and other sensory

stimulation. Two aspects of these performances were useful for the Heskeths. They tapped into the interests of figures such as the Earls of Derby, helping keep them close. They also allowed participants and audiences to reflect on their positions within gentry commensal networks and during the wider Reformation. Using the understandings of sensory interaction explored in chapter 5, the entertainments of the Hesketh family through music had the ability to bring people together. Thomas Elyot wrote about music's ability to create a sense of peace and togetherness, soothing anger and promoting harmony.¹¹³⁶ Emilie Murphy argues that performance in domestic settings was heavily infused with Catholicism and was a part of the Catholic Lancashire network stretching across Lancashire.¹¹³⁷ Players could facilitate convivial atmospheres and entertainments but they could also perform pieces that emphasised Catholic identity amongst certain audiences. The Heskeths belonged to a subversive Catholic network facilitated by dramatic or musical performers who travelled between Catholic homes in the area. These networks are revealed in the evidence Thomas Bell provided to Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby, and which the earl and his son Ferdinando failed to act upon to the extent Bell wanted.

While Sir Thomas Hesketh (1526-88) built up a profile of a 'notable housekeeper', his son Robert (1560-1620) used his positions as a JP and Sheriff of Lancashire to connect with Protestant figures of authority and continue close links to the Earls of Derby. This included the associated commensality provided at assizes and other gatherings provided by Robert in his shrieval capacity, and during the visit of James I to Houghton Tower and Lathom House in 1617.

The 1620 Hesketh inventory lists green hangings, table carpets, and the embroidered cushions made by several generations of Hesketh women featuring Hesketh heraldry.¹¹³⁸ The great hall was far from the sparsely furnished space it is today. Its green colour scheme could bring

¹¹³⁶ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Govenour* (1537), pp.39-40.

¹¹³⁷ Murphy, E. Making Memories in Post-Reformation English Catholic Miscellanies. In. Walsham, A. Wallace, B, Law, C. and Cummings, B. (eds.). *Memory and the English Reformation*. Cambridge University Press (2020), pp.408-410; Murphy, E. Music and Catholic Culture in Post-Reformation Lancashire: Piety, Protest, and Conversion. *British Catholic History*, 32:4, pp.492-525.

¹¹³⁸ Lancs Archives – WCW/Disputed/C76A; Will of Sir Thomas Hesketh BL Add MS 32104.

understanding and clarity through the easy way the colour green interacted with the crystalline humour of the eye. Combinations of colourful décor, tactile embroideries, the sounds of performers, and the physically imposing size of the hall with its woodwork carvings and large passage screen created a heady commensal atmosphere but one that was believed to calm and unite.

The Norrises' Commensal Assemblage:

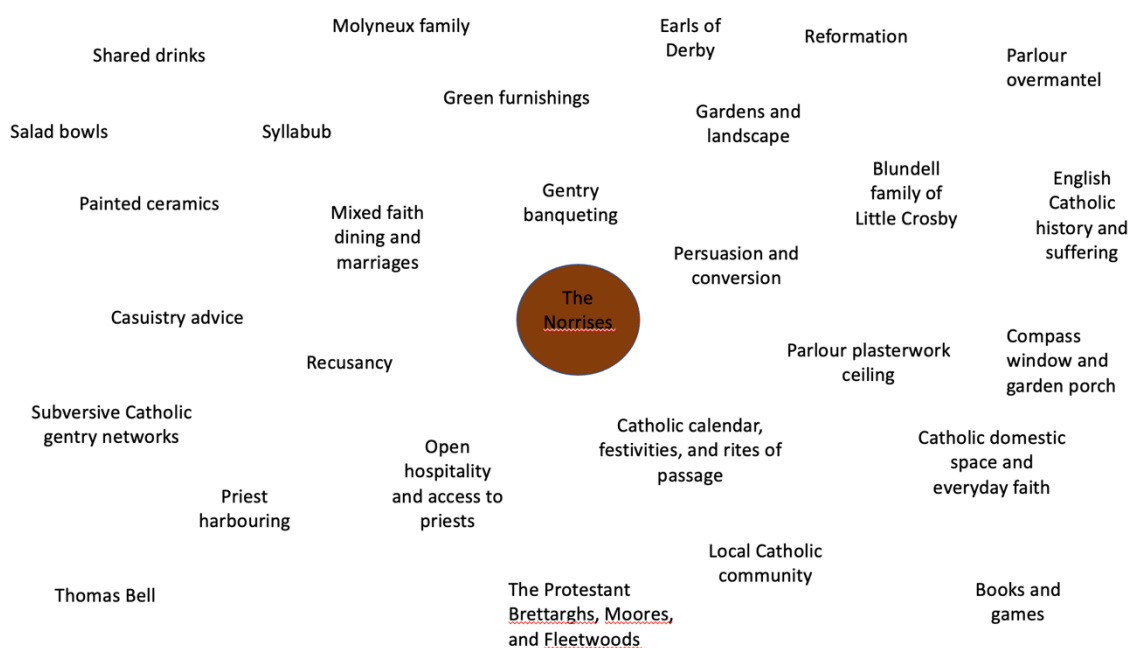


Fig. 2. The Norris Commensal Assemblage.

As I argued in chapter 2, the Norrises and their conception of Catholic commensal space facilitated religious meditations based on prompts discreetly incorporated into the Speke ceiling. These domestic pious practices could be carried out in the knowledge that other Catholics did the same in their homes. This dispersed community spread over the landscape

was similar to 'emotional communities' described by Barbara Rosenwein.¹¹³⁹ In Lisa McClain's vision of these Catholic connective relationships across space, membership was not mutually exclusive: 'a Catholic might belong to one...or to many, depending on her beliefs and the rituals she chose to practice.'¹¹⁴⁰

As well as these unseen feelings of belonging, other intangible aspects of commensality can include elements remembered after the event, as highlighted by Yannis Hamilakis.¹¹⁴¹ The affective atmosphere created by the Norrises in the great parlour operated over time and space through the potential effect the family portraits in the oak overmantel had on diners, overseeing behaviour and Catholic conduct, connecting present social interactions with a history of religious devotion, and referring Catholic suffering and perseverance, all of which have been explored in Tara Hamling's work. This affective focal point above the fireplace was joined by the plasterwork ceiling featuring flora and fauna linked to Catholic identity, outside spaces, and the non-figurative representations of the Virgin Mary and Christ's Passion through roses, lilies, columbine, and pomegranates.

The Norris family also used their great hall for entertaining. The hall was the location for the larger scale 'open house' celebrations around key festive points in the year, described by Protestant spy John Bird to Sir Robert Cecil in 1599 and apostate priest Thomas Bell in 1589-91.¹¹⁴² Material culture such as wassail bowls also point to the links between commensality, hospitality, and community at Speke. The family opened their doors to all comers during traditional festivals and the celebrations of family rites of passage and this coincided with opportunities to offer access to priests, merging gentry landowner responsibilities with their responsibilities as wealthy Catholics able to accommodate priests and large numbers of guests.

¹¹³⁹ Rosenwein, B. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Cornell University Press (2006); Rosenwein, B. *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700*. Cambridge University Press (2016).

¹¹⁴⁰ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p.263.

¹¹⁴¹ Hamilakis, *Sensorial Assemblages*, pp.169, 170, 172, 173, 175, 176, 177, 180.

¹¹⁴² 'Cecil Papers: January 1599, 1-15', in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 9, 1599*, ed. R A Roberts (London, 1902), pp.3-29. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol9/pp3-29> [accessed 17 January 2020]; Westminster Diocesan Archives, A Series, VI, ff.429-452.

The Norrises' close friend and relation William Blundell (1620-1698) wrote about older community celebrations that linked celebration with place and Catholic identity. Recorded in the family 'Hodge Podge' journals, Blundell captures a nostalgia for the local Catholic community festivities suppressed by Protestant authorities through songs and poems which could then be performed during social gatherings.¹¹⁴³ Both the festivities and the collective remembering of them later linked Catholics across space and time through contemporaneous celebrations or abstinence, sensing the holy nature of particular days, engaging in the same bodily actions (i.e. in eating or drinking), and sharing and repeating ritual experiences.¹¹⁴⁴

There were clear links between gardens, landscape, and Catholicism for the Norrises, reflected in the décor of the great parlour. Yet this was not necessarily divisive in mixed company. Décor such as the parlour ceiling could pass as common gentry decoration found in parlours and banqueting tableware. Garden imagery also had relevance for Protestants, though without the links to domestic meditation of the Virgin Mary's *hortus conclusus*. As Susan Cogan writes, such décor could also act to forge social bonds based on shared gentry interests such as gardens or architecture.¹¹⁴⁵ The colour green, found in many foliate tapestries and hangings in food spaces, was also dominant in the great parlour and acted to relax and comfort guests in affective ways linked to embodied experiences of environments. Such furnishings were also easily associated with the shared gentry love of hunting.

The Moretons' Commensal Assemblage:

¹¹⁴³ Murphy, *Making Memories in Post-Reformation English Catholic Miscellanies*, pp.408-410.

¹¹⁴⁴ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p.274.

¹¹⁴⁵ Cogan, *Building the Badge of God*, p.165; Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England*, pp.129-156.

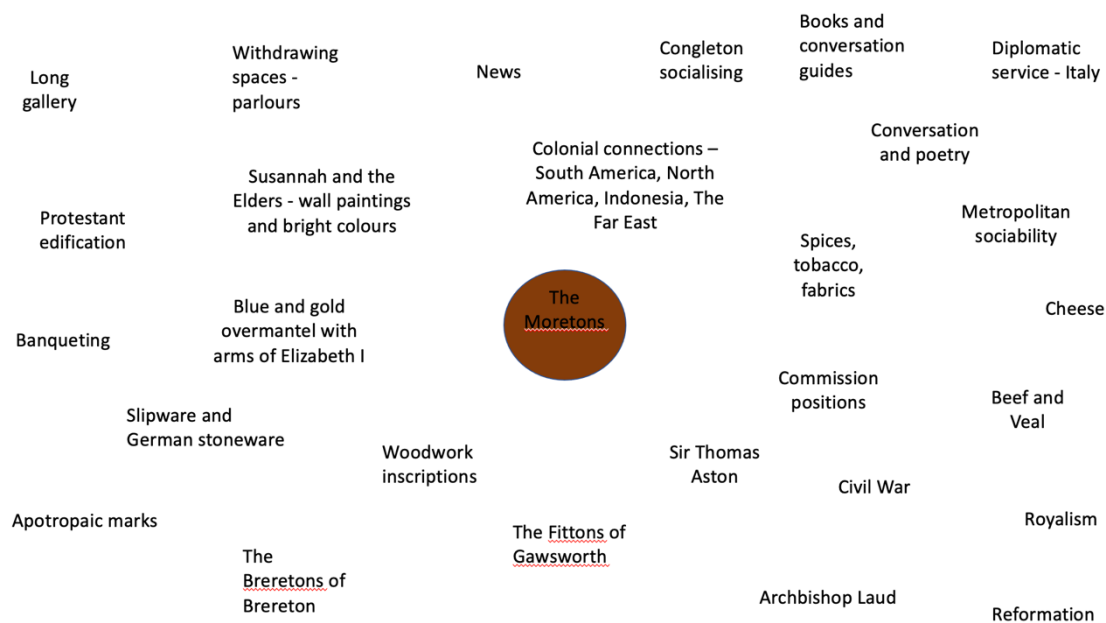


Fig. 3. The Moreton Commensal Assemblage

Unlike at Rufford and Speke, where green was the dominant colour in food spaces, the Moreton’s dining spaces either used yellow in the little parlour, blue in the long gallery, or blue and gold in the great parlour in the painted overmantel.¹¹⁴⁶ The various cushions listed in several Moreton inventories added to the colourful palate of dining spaces at Little Moreton as well as adding textural elements. The painted overmantel in the great parlour featured rich colours to emphasis gentry status. The yellow of the little parlour linked associations the colour had with marriage, piety, and fidelity with the story of Susanna and the Elders. This was important to reflect the Moretons’ Protestant credentials and John Moreton’s (c.1541-98) image as responsible patriarch.

Different visual interpretations were possible for different diners, even within a seemingly straight-forward scheme such as Little Moreton’s Suzannah and the Elders. There is a

¹¹⁴⁶ Tobit Curteis Associates. *Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire: Condition Survey, Analysis and Proposals for the Conservation of the Wall Paintings and Polychromy* (2008), p.4.

possibility that the Moretons' use of colour represents less need for them to use a calming and harmonious decorative scheme given their Protestant faith, compared to the Catholicism of the Heskeths and Norrises. However, I have also explored how the use of the decoration in the parlour at Little Moreton was used to protect diners in the vulnerable act of eating, providing a food space which considered the spiritual needs and comfort of all guests, whether Catholic or Protestant.

Sound was also part of the assemblages at Little Moreton which I have explored through William Moreton's use of conversation and news. Verbal sharing of topical events and the travels of various Moreton offspring combined with references to continental and metropolitan socialising and networks. Added to the commensal assemblage of the Moretons were the smells and associations of spices and tobacco. These had connections to colonial expansion, trade, and English civilisation of distant lands. As explored in chapter 3, they were intricately connected to gentry identity. These items also brought with them the associated material culture of pipes and tobacco boxes which conflated new commensal trends with a link to the idea of civilisation projects in the New World.

All these elements of Moreton commensality worked in three ways: they foregrounded gentry identity and associations, they emphasised Protestant credentials in the case of religious painted schemes, and in the 17th century they reminded of William Moreton's links to the wider world beyond Cheshire. All worked to foreground the Moreton family's social status as they sought to increase their position in gentry society.

Food:

I have demonstrated that the consumption of food and immersion in commensal environments was believed to affect diners amid embodied understandings which saw bodies, minds, and souls as open to influence and interference and in need of control and protection. However, as with sensory environments and material culture, these effects were

balanced to ensure overall commensal comfort ensuring healthy food, good digestion, and mental clarity.

Chapter 4 showed how the implementation of dietary knowledge can be seen in the manipulations that the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons made to foods to render them safe to eat. The permeability of early modern bodies made commensality an affective experience, and an understanding of early modern thought concerning physiology has helped me to get closer to how all the senses interacted in a synaesthetic immersive commensal arena. Early modern physiology shows how different areas of commensality were interconnected: faith intersected with food consumption, sensing, and bodily processes; the decoration of food spaces affected social and spiritual conduct. Written texts about faith incorporated understandings of humoral bodies and minds and the associated risk of corruption through internal inference with physiological consequences. Discourse over dining and overindulgence similarly warned of the potential for blurred cognition and sensing through bodily processes such as digestion. In all areas (diet, religion, and sensory interaction) the language of infection appeared. Even in the rounding up and imprisonment of recusants in 1580-81, following the activities of Edmund Campion, suspects were to 'be kept from infecting of others that are well disposed subjects...'¹¹⁴⁷ Dinner gatherings were often conflicted affairs involving intricate navigations of spiritual, humoral, and social influences. However, I have shown that often the rhetoric of division between faiths and of corrupting influences through sensory immersion, food, and religious difference were not barriers to eating together in everyday gentry life.

Foods served were an important part of the sensorial assemblages of each family, and they were aware of the various tastes, textures, and qualities which had the ability to effect diners in different ways: humorally, spiritually, and through the origins and associations of ingredients. The variety of foods available spoke to the wealth, status, and knowledge of each family by highlighting how each ingredient could be managed and manipulated humorally.

¹¹⁴⁷ Wark, K.R. *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, p.21; Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa* I, 87; Acts of the Privy Council, 1580-1, 77.

Negotiating the balance between food, sensory seduction, faith, and conduct was something diners needed to be skilled at. Whilst these anxieties existed, managed somewhat through religious décor and tableware designs, discussions over food were unproblematic and even welcome in certain contexts. Jennifer Richards has linked conversations around dietetics and the humoral manipulation of ingredients, seen with the three study families in chapter 4, to diners using the forum of commensality to make sense of things and reach a position.¹¹⁴⁸ This is another way the commensal table was also a ‘negotiating table’ for the gentry.

Rather than interiorise knowledge regarding diet and food, it appears people were keen to openly discuss dietary advice and how to moderate food, with the early modern gentry modifying foodstuffs to render desirable food safe and demonstrate their financial and cultural ability to do so. When it came to dietary regimens, what may at first seem to be something one would read alone and then act upon, could instead be a starting point for conversations surrounding food, working more like a commonplace book than a prescriptive text.¹¹⁴⁹ Debating at dinner was seen as healthy for body and mind, ruminating and digesting books not just through reading but through discussing them around the table, extracting conversation points from medical and dietary texts.¹¹⁵⁰ In this respect, dietary advice books became akin to guides to dinner conversation, conduct books, or published commonplace books in their construction and use which one had to navigate. Elaine Leong has shown how men and women showcased their medicinal as well as culinary knowledge when in social situations.¹¹⁵¹ The expertise of female members of the gentry family in food and medicinal remedies linked to comfort and digestion played a key role in the creation of affective commensal atmospheres and heightened feelings of shared gentry identity.

¹¹⁴⁸ Richards, J. Health, Intoxication, and Civil Conversation in Renaissance England. *Past and Present*, Supplement 9 (2014), pp.168-186.

¹¹⁴⁹ Richards, J. Useful Books: Reading Vernacular Regimens in Sixteenth Century England. *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol 73: 2 (2012), pp.258, 260, 265, 226-227, 269, 270; Richards, Health, Intoxication, and Civil Conversation, pp.171-2, 177.

¹¹⁵⁰ Richards, Health, Intoxication, and Civil Conversation, pp.170, 179, 180, 184.

¹¹⁵¹ Leong, E. *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge*, pp.71-98, 99-123.

Friendship and Social Navigation:

From this examination of commensality in the northwest of England through the case study of the three families, it has been seen how boundaries were overcome to eat together and how gentry friendships and concepts of commensality and hospitality often took precedence over religious and state exhortations to pursue or avoid those of the opposite faith.

As well as using the dinner table to negotiate faith and dietetics it also acted as a space in which to negotiate social relationships. Gloria Goldstein in her work on dinner parties in early modern Antwerp highlights Plutarch's words on commensality and how those friendships formed at the dinner table were the most enduring:

‘The Romans...are fond of quoting a witty and sociable person who said, after a solitary meal, “I have eaten, but not dined today,” implying that a “dinner” always requires friendly sociability for seasoning...’¹¹⁵²

Chapters 1 and 2 on the Heskeths and Norrises have shown how the importance of commensality in providing political protection was recognised. These two Catholic families used it to maintain a relationship with the Earls of Derby, ecclesiastical figures, and other members of the gentry outside of Catholic networks. Likewise, the Earls of Derby, clergymen, and those in positions of authority such as JPs and Ecclesiastical Commissioners also understood the need for social bonds to remain intact. The pursuit of Catholics engaged in practices such as priest harbouring, secret masses, or the sharing of Catholic material culture too vigorously risked the breakdown of social connections and the operation of county administrative networks altogether. Even those that risked a more robust clampdown on Catholic practices amongst the gentry felt the backlash from others within these northwest social gentry webs. When Emilia Blundell, Edward and Margaret Norris's daughter, was imprisoned by Sir Richard Molyneux there was sufficient anger at Emilia's treatment that Sir

¹¹⁵² Goldstein, G. *Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party*. Ashgate (2013), p.xii, 13; Plutarch, Table Talk Book VII.

Richard back-tracked and lobbied the Bishop of Chester and Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby, to release Emilia.¹¹⁵³ Sir Richard seemed to have made an error of judgement, underestimating the outrage that act would cause amongst his gentry peers.¹¹⁵⁴ In a study that has been particularly interested in the relationships between elements in assemblages, and the connections between different groups in society, this idea of webs and ‘messy’ interactions has been central. Sir Richard pursued Emilia and William Blundell but not Edward and Margaret Norris. The rest of Sir Richard’s family were Catholics and he was recorded by apostate priest Thomas Bell as sitting the presence of priests in his home.¹¹⁵⁵ He ‘sitteth at table w[i]th priests when they come & saieth they are welcome.’¹¹⁵⁶ Around the early modern tables of Lancashire religious identities were blurred as much as they were displayed. Some priest harbourers relieved priests at their home and then tacitly acknowledged them amongst guests at other tables. Thomas Bell also recalls of Mr Ireland of Lydiate that he ‘countenanced mee and James Forth [priest] at Crosby...by sitting at the table with us etc.’¹¹⁵⁷ This dual identity depending on contexts can equally be applied to Robert Hesketh in his position as county official, schismatic, commensurate host, and his admittance of Catholic priests into his home.¹¹⁵⁸

During the English Reformations, friendships were tested and relationships morphed depending on need. But they also remained intact. We have seen this through the various interactions of the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons. The gentry of Lancashire and Cheshire continued to socialise with one another across the religious spectrum. People disregarded the warnings and prejudices that prevailed in print and sermons about mixing, and the Heskeths, Norrises, and Moretons all displayed evidence that they enjoyed other people’s company and the sharing of food. The Shuttleworth family, puritan in religious outlook, travelled across Lancashire to dine with the Heskeths at Rufford despite them being at differing points along

¹¹⁵³ Gibson, T.E. *The Crosby Records: A Chapter of Lancashire Recusancy. Chetham Society*, vol 12 (1887), p.xi.

¹¹⁵⁴ Gibson, *The Crosby Records*, p.xi; Tyrer, F. *The Recusant Blundells of Crosby: Part Two. North West Catholic History*. Vol. VI. (1979).

¹¹⁵⁵ Westminster Diocesan Archives 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁷ SP 12/243 f.158.

¹¹⁵⁸ Westminster Diocesan Archives 'A' series, VI, ff.429-452.

the religious spectrum: recusant, schismatic, and puritan. William Moreton maintained friendships with Catholics despite the disapproval of some of his more forthright friends over the company he kept.¹¹⁵⁹ In 1626 friend and Cambridge tutor William Chappell warned William over swearing oaths and the ‘company w[i]th w[hi]ch you have occasion to converse [who] hath got som advantage upon you, especially in yt hateful oath of ye mass.’¹¹⁶⁰

Early modern friendship was full of anxieties regarding the nature and motivations of others, but true friends offered comfort and support. The particular concept of friendship in this period had certain characteristics, concerning favours and usefulness, that reveal the complexity of such bonds that were at odds with the ideals of friendship put forward by classical scholarship.¹¹⁶¹ Friendship is mentioned in Leonard Wright’s *A Display of Dutie* (1589), as read by William Moreton, with the author giving advice on the nature and pitfalls of such relationships and the rarity of good friends.¹¹⁶² Wright warned his reader to keep good friends close as they were hard to find.¹¹⁶³ For him friendship was an ‘agreement of minds’ but he did not allow in this any differences in religion, noting that a relationship without consensus on religion ‘cannot possible long continue.’¹¹⁶⁴ He was also doubtful about relationships with those who did not share social status or the same standard in manners.¹¹⁶⁵ This is especially so when faults of perception could make one prey for false friends, a common fear in early modern writing on the nature of friendship and another reason to keep one’s wits around the table:

But since by prooffe they have been taught,

A fained friend to know:

¹¹⁵⁹ Letter from William Chappell to William Moreton, 26 April 1626, BL Add MS 33935, f.106. William Chappell was the Moreton son’s tutor at Cambridge University and closely aligned to Archbishop Laud, see Oxford Database of National Biography, Chappell, William (1582-1649)

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5129?aulast=Mahaffy&date=1903&genre=book&sid=oup%3Aorr&title=An+epoch+in+Irish+history> [Last Accessed 2 March 2023]

¹¹⁶⁰ Letter from William Chappell to William Moreton, 26 April 1626, BL Add MS 33935, f.106.

¹¹⁶¹ Brown, C.C. *Friendship and its Discourses in the seventeenth century*, Oxford University Press (2016), pp.37, 197-198.

¹¹⁶² Wright, *A Display of Dutie Dect*, pp.18-21.

¹¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p.18.

¹¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.19.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

I will not trust such glossing tongues,
More then my open foe.
Where fairest face doth harbour foulest hart,
And sweetest tongue most treason doe impart:
Oh false deceat, I'le trust to such no more,
But learne to keepe a hatch before the doore.¹¹⁶⁶

For every true friend, there were some who were only interested in what they could get from you. Wright warns of the backbiter and likens the false friend to a 'bee, who carrieth honny in her mouth: and a sting in her tayle...so his countenance is friendly, and his wordes pleasant: but his intent dangerous, and his deedes unholosome...His fetch is to flatter, to catch what he can/His purpose obtained a figge for thee than [then].'¹¹⁶⁷

This image of bees, honey, and stings highlights concerns over sensory experiences that deceitful flatterers might employ to render one pliable and bendable to their ulterior motives. I have argued that while the study families did create commensal environments full of elements that could have a persuasive effect on their guests, this was done in non-malicious ways aimed only at tending friendships and ensuring they remained part of gentry social networks. The early modern idea of practical friendships blurs the line between those who were merely false friends or flatterers and those who were only using the well-established mechanisms of early modern friendship and hospitality to gain something.¹¹⁶⁸ Early modern friendship could disagree with Aristotle's classification of three types of friend in two ways.¹¹⁶⁹ Firstly, a 'good' friendship was not exclusive (one could have more than one 'good' friend). Exclusive friendships went against early modern concerns with charity, neighbourliness, and

¹¹⁶⁶ Wright, *A Display of Dutie Dect*, p.21.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.19.

¹¹⁶⁸ Hutson, L. Afterword, in. Lopez, M. Lochman, D.T. and Hutson, L. (eds.). *Discourse and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*. Taylor & Francis: Abingdon on Thames, (2010), p.243. Cassidy, E. "He Who Has No Friends Can Have No Friend": Classical and Christian Perspectives on the Limits to Friendship. In. Hasledine, J. (ed.). *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, Stroud: Sutton (1999), p.49.

¹¹⁶⁹ Hutson, Afterword, p.243; Cassidy, E. "He Who Has No Friends Can Have No Friend": Classical and Christian Perspectives on the Limits to Friendship, p.49.

hospitality. Secondly, many authors who wrote about friendship recognised that it was based on exchange, benefit, and what your friend could do for you.¹¹⁷⁰

Though it was recognised by all that commensality was vital to keep social connections open and maintain influence amongst gentry networks, this was done with religious elements of dining and hospitality that acted as what Alexandra Walsham has called a ‘compass’ and ‘anchor’, allowing manoeuvrability and navigation of these gentry negotiating tables. This is particularly true of those Catholic families, the Heskeths and Norrises. Like material culture and decorative elements, affinity and belonging to certain imagined or emotional communities gave diners the leeway to engage with those of the opposite faith. In the same way as physical aspects of the commensal scene, other identity groups one associated with provided an intangible ‘compass’ and ‘anchor’ enabling the negotiation of the table.¹¹⁷¹ Throughout this thesis has been a desire on the part of gentry hosts and guests to control social situations in two ways: to ensure the smooth running of dinner parties and the comfort of guests through balanced conversation and spiritual moderation; and, to think in certain ways about one’s identity configurations as someone dined. The knife edge of mitigating difference and yet remaining true to one’s spiritual convictions required a commensal dance any courtier would be proud of.

Decisions over the spiritual nature of food spaces were often a joint endeavour between husband and wife, as shown with the image of Margaret Norris in the Speke overmantel, depicted as a wife taking on the responsibility for the spiritual health of the family. The creation of soft furnishings by various members of the three study families demonstrates, as with food served, how subversive or conspicuous religious imagery intersected with comforting elements designed to calm and reassure dinner guests. The spiritual risks of dining and conversing together needed negotiation, with the dangers involved weighed up against the need to mix socially to fulfil the role of the gentry in society in their authoritative and

¹¹⁷⁰ Brown, *Friendship and its Discourses*, pp.1-3, 12-13, 17, 26-27, 37.

¹¹⁷¹ Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p.567; Walsham, *Bare Ruined Choirs*, p.117.

administrative capacities. Mixing socially around the table also helped maintain superior social status in the region.

Catholics were advised to use their Protestant fellow-gentry for their own benefit and that of the wider Catholic community and the faith's survival in England. Explicitly set out in Catholic casuistry advice was the suggestion that one use hospitality and dining to ingratiate oneself with prominent Protestants: 'a Catholic may also entertain heretic bishops or judges in order to soften their hearts towards Catholics and may use other acts of kindness to mollify powerful Protestants.'¹¹⁷² This ambiguity regarding 'feigned' or 'true' friends made problems for people like Bishop Downham, amongst the social circles of the Lancashire gentry, in discerning the motivations for generous hospitality.¹¹⁷³ As argued in chapter 2 (the Norrises), hospitality of important figures allowed bonds to be strengthened over meals. Elements of the Catholic gentry of Lancashire used this to placate Bishop Downham during his visitation of 1568, allowing some to avoid the attention of Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Privy Council.¹¹⁷⁴ This use of commensality both helped persuade those in potential persecutory roles and reinforced existing friendship and social bonds. The stark contrast between Downham, Bishop of Chester, and other Protestant persecutors was that the Bishop did not take action against the main 'ringleaders' because they were his friends.¹¹⁷⁵ In contrast others could: 'The speech is that they have mass daily...and not this unknowing, and though they be my very friends, yet conscience is above friendship...'¹¹⁷⁶ Some friendships were worth feeding.

I have argued that a lot of socialising and sharing of food was done to smooth over difference and keep the networks that helped society and government in the northwest flow. Protestants charged with the prosecution of Catholics in their roles as JPs and Sheriffs, in Lancashire

¹¹⁷² Holmes, P. *Elizabethan Casuistry*. Catholic Record Society (1981), pp.3, 122 [Part II, Chapter II, The Allen-Persons Cases, Case 29].

¹¹⁷³ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p.210; William Downham, ONDB; Cox, P. *Reformation Responses*, pp.302-304, 320, 368.

¹¹⁷⁴ SP 12/48 f.71a, SP 12/48 f.87v; Haigh. *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.210-211, 223-4, 259, 263, 265, 267; Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*, pp.37, 46, 47, 49; Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, pp.4-5, 10.

¹¹⁷⁵ SP 12/118 f.108.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

especially, expressed reluctance to pursue their gentry peers because of the effect this would have on their standing amongst others in their social and cross-county networks. Commissioners and JPs were often to be found celebrating with Catholics during cock-fights and illegal Sunday games and even bailiffs were entertained by Catholics to afford them intelligence from within the Ecclesiastical Commission.¹¹⁷⁷ Paperwork intended to effect the raiding of Catholic properties could be 'lost' by JPs, hindering the efforts of the authorities, as ex-Priest Thomas Bell reported.¹¹⁷⁸ The gentry across Lancashire also reacted badly to the treatment of Edward and Margaret Norris's daughter Emilia by Sir Richard Molyneux which caused him to regret his harsh treatment and try to mitigate some of the effects of his persecution of her.¹¹⁷⁹ In many cases it seems friendship and commensal networks came before commitments to root out Catholic recusancy or priest harbouring. Friendship, connection, and community cohesion was reiterated throughout early modern society, from the Ten Commandments to sermons and conduct books, and this provided a motivation to keep relationships open and adaptive.¹¹⁸⁰

That some members of gentry social networks in the northwest did not want to pursue their friends reveals the 'sinews of the commonwealth' and 'little commonwealths' that existed throughout the region.¹¹⁸¹ Cohesion based on shared identities rather than disparate ones was important, with identity and relationships negotiated differently depending on social and administrative contexts.¹¹⁸² If friendships and gentry social connections were not maintained in the northwest, at stake would be the entire web of relationships at county administrative and society level.¹¹⁸³ Keith Wrightson lists commensality as one of the ways people created 'harmony and goodwill' through 'integrative rituals.'¹¹⁸⁴ Tensions within regional communities had to the power to disrupt society and the networks that kept it functioning therefore it was

¹¹⁷⁷ SP 12/240 f.222.

¹¹⁷⁸ Westminster Diocesan Archives, A Series, VI, ff.429-452.

¹¹⁷⁹ Gibson, Crosby Records: A Chapter of Lancashire Recusancy, p.xi

¹¹⁸⁰ Wrightson, K. Mutualities and Obligations: Changing Social Relationships in Early Modern England. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol 139 (2006), p.169.

¹¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.167.

¹¹⁸² Wrightson, Mutualities and Obligations, pp.186, 193; Cogan, S. *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England*, pp.129-156, 202.

¹¹⁸³ Wrightson, K. Mutualities and Obligations, pp.167, 174

¹¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.175.

essential that culturally the emphasis was on curbing this possibility.¹¹⁸⁵ I have shown how affective commensal atmospheres helped to ease these anxieties and tensions, aiding people in their negotiations and making coming together more comfortable for all concerned.

Bill Sheils has argued that Catholics 'retained access to local political elites' and I have shown this to be case in Lancashire society, as people of different faiths mixed in a variety of commensal gatherings and Catholic families were keen to remain close to important figures.¹¹⁸⁶ Sheils argued that regional communities, on the whole, decided to 'get along', with national politics attempting to disrupt this consensus.¹¹⁸⁷ The various concerns raised over the conduct of figures such as the Earls of Derby or the Bishop of Chester, detailed in chapters 1 and 2, highlight how figures within Elizabeth's Privy Council did not appreciate the ways Lancashire governance continued to revolve around social networks and hospitality.

Commensality and socialising were in continual review in the minds of diners. Published primary sources give the impression that friendship could not and should not cross the religious divide but a study of publications and sermons alongside notebooks, correspondence, and accounts shows this was not the case on the ground. There were examples where commensal tables could be flash points as in the case of the Hoby and Eure families in Yorkshire.¹¹⁸⁸ There are some community tensions in the northwest. In Lancashire, the Norris family had fraught relationships with the Protestant Moore and Brettergh families due to their clash of faiths (see Chapter 2). But these appear as anomalies when looked at alongside the rest of the northwest gentry who negotiated this difference for the good of Lancashire and Cheshire overall.

¹¹⁸⁵ Wrightson, *Mutualities and Obligations*, p.174.

¹¹⁸⁶ Sheils, W. *Getting On and Getting Along*, p.80; Cogan, S. *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England*, p.202.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁸ Heal, *Hospitality*, pp.13-14, 390; Moody, J. (ed). *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599-1605*. Sutton Publishing (1998), pp.xlvi-li, 108.

Alexandra Walsham sees Catholics and Protestants socialising together as the creation of a new space in which people came together in lieu of local church communion.¹¹⁸⁹ This re-conception of social contact happened as domestic space was also reenvisioned as an alternative to ecclesiastical space as seen in the great parlour at Speke. Therefore, coming together to dine was necessary for society and county administration to continue to function but it required certain things to help people overcome religious difference. This was either through décor that acted as a ‘compass’ and ‘anchor’ that allowed negotiation or through aspects of dinner spaces that gave everyone a sense of security, such as apotropaic marks. Furthermore, elements like tableware could emphasize bonds of commonality such as shared gentry identity through the use of decorated plates or drinking from communal cups. In conclusion, I have shown how all aspects of the commensal assemblages at Rufford, Speke, and Little Moreton were designed to aid the negotiations the three study families made over identity, status, and faith.

Throughout the thesis I have demonstrated how gentry families in the northwest used commensality in affective ways and how early modern diners conceived of domestic dinner environments. Each family used commensality to navigate the Reformation, smoothing over difference while also holding on to certain elements which gave a sense of reassurance in affective and embodied environments. While the priorities of the Catholic Heskeths and Norrises were the maintenance of existing bonds through commensality, the Protestant Moretons used food and dining to portray themselves in a new light, as a well-connected and fashionable family until they were overwhelmed by national events, shifts in hospitality, and the financial implications of their social and commensal strategy. The curtailing of the Moretons’ social trajectory and utilisation of hospitality trends due to the Civil War speaks to forces beyond the control of the three study families and beyond the ability of community commensal bonds to overcome long term.

¹¹⁸⁹ Walsham, A. *Supping with Satan’s Disciples*, p.55.

This thesis has only scratched the surface of how commensality was used to foster feelings of connection and unity despite Reformation differences between members of the gentry in England and the changes of the 16th and 17th centuries surrounding commensality and hospitality. A wider study incorporating more families from the northwest and beyond would uncover further ways in which the gentry employed different means to shape and influence guests using dinner invites and food spaces. Further study would also map the changes in commensality after the Civil War and Interregnum, comparing in greater depth the differences between pre- and post-war food and dining. As illustrated with the example of the Moreton family, commensality and hospitality in the later 17th-century had changed with the gentry home no longer being the focus for social advancement, negotiation, and the continued survival of gentry families. What this study has done is show how rewarding an investigation of commensality can be, illustrating how the early modern period in England can be understood through looking at food and dining using affect and assemblage. I have considered food as a prism through which to explore the Reformation but also widened the scope of food history to incorporate associated realms, not viewing food in a vacuum isolated from other important commensal contexts.

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Appendix 1: Journal Article

Fielding, A. Going Deeper than 'Emotional Impact': Heritage, Academic Collaboration, and Affective Engagements. *History*, 107:375 (2022), pp.408-435.

[file:///Fielding, A. Going Deeper than 'Emotional Impact' / Heritage, Academic Collaboration, and Affective Engagements. History, 107/375 \(2022\), pp.408-435.](#)