Houses, shops, tenements, and other types of real estate are important in understanding the shape of the world in which medieval daughters lived and worked. Yet, inheritance of real estate only presents part of the picture. A portion of daughters in the Husting wills inherited no real estate, and a portion inherited both real estate and movable wealth. It is necessary to explore movable legacies to entertain all of the possible opportunities presented for these women. As with real estate, in the wills we find that parents provided equally for the futures of their daughters and sons with bequests of money and annuities. This support is important in understanding the variety of opportunities with which daughters were presented.

Real estate gives us a very physical construct, an idea of the material shape of the world for London daughters. To complement this image, testators’ cherished belongings help transform those spaces into homes—real inhabited spaces that speak of daughters’ potential experiences. The descriptions of daughters’ possessions, some of which were detailed in the wills of their parents, were imbued with practical, sentimental, social, and cultural meaning. These precious possessions and their descriptions reveal the values of daughters in late medieval London and the function and meanings of the domestic and commercial spaces in which they operated. These goods and chattels give depth and dimension to daughters’ houses and workshops, allowing us to better understand their lived experiences.

A qualitative and quantitative examination of the movable legacies included in the Husting wills reveals that there was a gendered division of space within which these daughters lived and worked. The goods bequeathed to daughters allowed for a substantial amount of flexibility in their lives, which would have been required as most of these women married and pursued occupations supplementary to that of their husbands. Yet, this gendered division of space within the home suggests that the domestic space as a whole was not only a feminine space.

Tracing trends in bequests of movable goods is a thorny matter, because in late medieval London custom held that upon a testator’s
death, his goods were to be divided among his wife and children. There was no limit to how often a citizen of London could make and alter his will. However, in regard to his personal estate, that is, his property that was movable, he was required to follow the custom of the city and leave one third to his wife, known as the *legitim*, and a third to his children. The last third was to be reserved for “the dead, to be distributed for his almes [sic].” The widow’s *legitim*, unlike her dower, was hers absolutely. This custom was possibly established as early as 1100, and was widespread and not particular to London. Glanvill, a twelfth-century legal treatise, sets this custom of thirds into writing, specifying that the general custom across the realm was that the testator was permitted to distribute one third of his movable wealth as he chose, with the remaining two-thirds reserved for his wife and heirs. If the testator had no children, then he was to leave one half of his personal estate to his wife, with the other half at his disposal.

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4 Sheehan suggests that this custom—one third of a testator’s chattels was his own to bequeath as he liked—was established as early as the eleventh century, as he finds evidence of it in the late eleventh-century charter of St. Werburgh’s Abbey in Chester, as well as in some other eleventh- and twelfth-century charters around England. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England*, 290–91.


6 Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills*, I.xxiii. Glanvill notes that if the testator dies without leaving a wife, then half of his movable goods are at his disposal, rather than a third. Glanvill, *Treatise*, 80. On the other hand, the compilers of *De Legibus et Con-