

**LOOKING FOR PRIVACY IN SHAKESPEARE:
WOMAN'S PLACE AND SPACE IN A SELECTION OF
PLAYS AND EARLY MODERN TEXTS**

by

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in a multi-faceted theoretical framework that examines the dynamic interaction between the public and the private spheres of Elizabethan everyday life, this thesis aims to trace how the concept of privacy and its associated terms were developed, constructed, evoked, and configured both in Shakespearean drama and in other illustrative early modern texts. The author suggests that Shakespeare's configuration of space results from a combination of the conditions of representation – empty stages – metaphorical language, technical dramatic devices, and textual markers that create a sense of space in the texts and onstage.

The research also explores the place and space of early modern women and of Shakespeare's female characters in terms of their relation to the private space; that is to say, their construction of 'self-in-relation-to-space', as well as their movements and activities within and outside the private's real or imagined boundaries, thus their ability to fashion the public sphere from within the private. Rather than analysing the role of women in the plays exclusively from the point of view of opposition between spheres – public man versus private woman – the study wants to question and pose, at the same time, the relevance of approaching Shakespearean texts from a spatial perspective, a choice that may have an impact on the very interpretation of them.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who have shared the ‘space’ of marriage and home
for more than sixty years...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Experience shows that very few people read acknowledgements. For most of them, these pages are reduced to a long list of names – experts, researchers, and librarians – they do not know; thus, they do not mean much to them. Usually the author of the thesis or book starts by telling about the effort that writing his/her work has entailed. This is usually followed by another list of people – family, friends, and colleagues – without whose patience, support, love, and professional help the final work would not have been accomplished. Now that I have to write the acknowledgements for my own thesis, I can state that this is true. If it were not for the assistance and company of those persons, and my trust in God, I would not have been able to carry on with this project.

First, I want to especially thank my parents. I owe them my education, the possibility of having had access to many good opportunities in life, the taste for good books, good art and good music. I also want to thank my brothers and sisters, for they provided constant support, especially when my dad's long illness was diagnosed. We have cared for him with love and dedication during all these years.

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My sincere gratitude goes to the kind and helpful staff at the Bodleian Library in Oxford where I worked most of the time I spent in England; and to Susan Griffin, librarian at Hertford College where I obtained my Master's degree. Special thanks to the friendly staff at the Shakespeare Institute Library, who facilitated my research during the short periods I spent in Stratford over these years; they made me feel at home despite being an external student.

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My Literature students have certainly been a source of joy and learning. Teaching them is always a challenge that inspires me every day. Some of their questions have given me the occasion to explore new areas of research, as they shed light on dimensions of the thesis that were still not clear in my mind.

The support of all my friends has been invaluable. I am very grateful to those in “Winton”, Oxford, where I have stayed every time I have travelled to England. To the girls and staff in “Antullanca”, a private residence in Santiago where I went to work almost

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Thanks to so many people I may forget at this moment...

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This thesis has been like a long life journey. I have enjoyed and suffered its stages at the same time. I can say that I'm not the same person who began writing some years ago. I have changed in the process and the initial idea I had of Shakespeare has also evolved.

What does Shakespeare mean to me? He evokes life and death, light, knowledge, poetry, wisdom, humanity, company, meaningful words, tempests, the ocean breeze, tears, impossible love, hatred, knots that need to be disentangled, magic, the best and the worst of human nature, theatre, England, my ancestors, the fields, the sheep, trains, the Thames, the stone-paved streets of Oxford, long nights spent with books, heavy rain, the wind in the willows, the smell of yellowed pages, sonnets and songs, an island full of noises, a monster with a sweet heart, the moon, the sky, kings and queens trying to fulfil their royal duties, heroic battles and wars, the 'happy few', a little life rounded with a sleep...

Shakespeare is words and poetry...He expresses human feelings superbly, like very few authors have done. He is forgiveness and loss, dreams, misunderstandings, smells, betrayal, ambition, solitude, madness, a river that flows like the continuing stream of life...

I knew from the very beginning that the topic I chose for the thesis was a challenge, but I decided to engage in this adventure, hoping to open up new spaces in the study of Shakespeare. There are still many facets of the private space that have not been reflected in the mirror of literary criticism. I hope those aspects that were studied in the thesis will shed more light on some of them. Shakespeare is an infinite and limitless space...

NOTE ON THE TEXT AND REFERENCES

I discussed the use of the term ‘private’ in the thesis with my supervisor. It is not clearly endorsed in *OED* and, being a back formation from the adjective, it raises the question: ‘the *private* what?’ I use it, as some critics have done, and set it up as a specific and quasi-technical term that is useful to my analysis because it includes not only space but also situations and experiences within that space.

With respect to the references, I would like to note that I had to use different editions of some of the texts because they were not all available in Chile. Because I started writing my thesis while in England, I had access to online resources such as the *Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED)*, from which later I had a printed facsimile copy to work with. The same happened with other online databases like *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* that were not available in Chile. A similar situation occurred with the editions of Shakespeare’s plays. In most cases I used the Arden Third Series; in others, I cited the Cambridge or Oxford versions. However, all of them are academic editions that provide useful and insightful ideas in their notes. On the whole, I had most of the material I needed to study, but sometimes I could not quote the original sources and resorted to other authors who have referred to these writings, while always acknowledging this in the footnotes.

I have followed the *MRHA Style Guide* for footnotes and bibliography, but when the guide did not offer a solution, I have appealed to common sense and endeavour to be consistent; for example; when more than one work by the same author has been cited, I have used the author name and a short form of the title. In the case of early modern editions of household texts, sometimes I have offered a double reference in the footnotes: one for the pre-1650 edition and another taken from a modern edition that may contribute to trace quotations more easily. Due to the type and amount of information of these footnotes, I

have avoided the use of *Ibid* in these chapters and I have preferred to repeat details regarding the number of the book, section and title of chapters. For the final bibliography, I have divided it into primary and secondary sources, thus trying to separate the texts I examined in depth (text analysis) and those that were consulted to provide examples, definitions, and cite relevant ideas for the overall discussion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
NOTE ON THE TEXT AND REFERENCES	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
INTRODUCTION: THE PATH TO PRIVACY	1
METHODOLOGY	16
CHAPTER I: MAPPING THE PRIVATE FIELD	29
A. PRELIMINARY CONCEPTS	30
1. De Certeau's Concept of Place	31
2. Lefebvre's Concept of Space	35
B. THE PRIVATE BEFORE SHAKESPEARE: BRIEF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DICHOTOMY	39
CHAPTER II: LOOKING FOR CONCEPTS: THE PRIVATE IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY MODERN ENGLAND AND AFTER	50
A. ETYMOLOGY OF THE PRIVATE: MEANINGS OF THE CONCEPT DURING THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD	51
1. The Private as Opposite and/or Complementary of the Public	58
2. The Private as Familial or Domestic	61
a. Early Modern Woman: Unstable Category	67
b. Woman's Relationship to the Private and/or Domestic	71
c. Woman's Body and its Relationship to the Private	73
3. The Private as Individual, Intimate, Secret, Withdrawn	76
B. THE PRIVATE AFTER SHAKESPEARE: MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL AND POLITICAL APPROACHES TO THE PRIVATE	80
CHAPTER III: LOOKING FOR THE MATERIAL PRIVATE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND	91

A. ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORIANS' PERSPECTIVES: THE MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS OF PRIVACY	93
1. W. G. Hoskins and The Great Rebuilding of Early Modern England	93
2. Philippe Ariès's History of Private Life: Household Physical Boundaries	97
3. Michael McKeon's Subdivision of Spaces	101
4. Lena Cowen Orlin's Attempt to Locate Privacy in Tudor England	104
5. The Paradox of Outdoor Privacy	114
 B. EARLY MODERN TEXTS: CONDUCT LITERATURE	119
1. Preliminary ideas	119
2. The Nature and Impact of Conduct Literature in the Configuration of the Private	122
3. Space in Early Modern Household Manuals	129
a. Xenophon's <i>Oeconomics</i> or <i>Treatise of Household</i> translated	129
b. Juan Luis Vives's <i>The Instruction of a Christian</i> <i>Woman</i>	134
c. Edmund Tilney's <i>The Flower of Friendship</i>	148
d. Dod and Cleaver's <i>A Godlie Forme of Householde</i> <i>Government</i>	158
 CHAPTER IV: WOMEN'S VOICES: THE INNER SIDE OF PRIVACY	167
A. READING AND WRITING: PRIVACY AND THE EXPRESSION OF THE SELF	168
B. INWARDNESS: THE INNER SIDE OF PRIVACY	183
C. AUTOBIOGRAPHY: THE DIARY OF LADY MARGARET HOBY	193
D. CLOSET DRAMA: <i>THE TRAGEDY OF MARIAM</i> BY ELIZABETH CARY	202
 UNMASKING A SPACE: PRIVACY IN SHAKESPEARE	214
CHAPTER V: "I PRITHEE, NOBLE FRIEND, HOME TO THY HOUSE': CORIOLANUS AWAY FROM HOME"	215
 CHAPTER VI: NO HOUSEHOLD IN VIENNA: WOMEN'S SPATIAL MOBILITY IN <i>MEASURE FOR MEASURE</i>	246

CHAPTER VII: FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC: SHAKESPEARE'S "SPATIAL GAMES" IN <i>THE MERCHANT OF VENICE</i>	266
CONCLUSION	289
BIBLIOGRAPHY	294

A clearly defined realm is set aside for that part of existence for which every language has a word equivalent to “private”, a zone of immunity to which we may fall back or retreat, a place where we may set aside our arms and armor needed in the public place, relax, take our ease, and lie about unshielded by the ostentatious carapace worn for protection in the outside world. This is the place where the family thrives, the realm of domesticity; it is also a realm of secrecy. The private realm contains our most precious possessions, which belong only to ourselves, which concern nobody else, and which may not be divulged or shown because they are so at odds with those appearances that honor demands be kept up in public.

Paul Veyne, ed., ‘Foreword’, in *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), II, p. viii.

INTRODUCTION: THE PATH TO PRIVACY

O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and
count myself a king of infinite space – were it not that
I have bad dreams.
(*Hamlet*, 2.2.251-59)¹

O indistinguished space of woman's will!
(*King Lear*, 4.6.266)²

We dwell in space. We explore it and colonise it every day. We create new spaces, reform them, divide them, and build imaginary boundaries around them. Sometimes we share space; at others, we fight in wars for it. We live in real spaces that somehow frame our lives, yet, like Hamlet – who considers his world a bad dream – we may imagine that the reduced space inside a nutshell could become an untroubled kingdom of which we would wish to become kings and queens.

Literature can acquire a cartographic function.³ It can define and map space, as well as represent real and immaterial spaces through metaphors that not only hold and configure spatial relations, but also shape critical discourse on them. In fact, language aims at identifying and distinguishing one space from another, yet sometimes, as is the case in *King Lear*, recognising a specific space may become a difficult task. When Edgar describes female space, he acknowledges that it is apparently indistinguishable, thus positing its problematic nature: a sphere that seems to be beyond apprehension.

Due to fundamental changes mainly in philosophy, religion, architecture, and household economy in early modern England, spatial relations went through significant transformations. Material spaces were reshaped and acquired different functions, especially

¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 1982; repr. London: Thomson Learning, 2003).

² William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R.A. Foakes, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997; repr. London: Thomson Learning, 2002).

³ Robert T. Tally, 'Literary Cartography: Space, Representation, and Narrative', Texas State University, Faculty Publications-English, Paper 7 (2008), 1-13 <<http://ecommons.txstate.edu/englfacp/7>> [accessed July 2009]. Tally developed this notion on the basis of 'Pour une approche géocritique du texts', in *La Geocritique mode d'emploi*, ed. by Bertrand Westphal (Limoges: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 2000).

within the home. In politics, private and public spheres were frequently understood as part of a dichotomy or opposition with clear distinctions – public state versus private household – yet not necessarily as an antithesis between separate domains, in part because the state commonwealth was analogically associated with the home or little commonwealth. Hence, the reconfigurations of space in the domestic realm became directly intertwined with social, cultural, and literary issues. To a certain extent, the new and sometimes contradictory early modern relations among city, court, theatre, and household were embodied in spatial manifestations that were in turn dramatised onstage.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries could determine the space they wanted to represent and map it in a dramatic mode. But how did Shakespeare specifically experience, imagine, represent and then indicate a specific space in the text, given its immense variety? Was his dramatic language able to show the differences between inhabited or empty space? Inner or outer? Virtual or real? Private or public? Moreover, how did he create a sense of place and space on an empty stage?

A quick glimpse into a selection of Shakespearean passages reveals that the words “space” and “private” (one of many kinds of space) were part of the dramatist’s vocabulary. The two brief epigraphs at the beginning of this Introduction show that Hamlet employs “space” to refer to a physical extent or area, whereas in *King Lear* the disguised Edgar takes it in a different sense, complaining to his father about Goneril’s disloyal behaviour, thus expressing the ambiguous and limitless extent of female space, which has been understood by critics either as passion and power, or identified with woman’s body.⁴

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, the soothsayer helps Antony realise that Caesar’s fortune might become an obstacle to attain power, so he advises him to leave his

⁴ In the Arden edition, for instance, Kenneth Muir proposes that Edgar is complaining about the chaotic and unknown extent of female desire. Editors of the Norton Shakespeare suggest that Edgar’s disgust is better understood as a more basic misogyny.

company: 'therefore/ Make space enough between you.'⁵ (2.3.21) In this line, space refers both to a physical and spiritual distance; Antony not only needs to separate himself physically from Caesar, but also must not depend on his authority and influence. Another illustrative example is that of *The Tempest* where space plays a key role, since every action in the plot occurs in the enchanted island. In the first act, Ferdinand explains to Prospero that his love for Miranda will turn his imprisonment into a condition he will joyfully embrace: 'All corners else o'th' earth/ Let liberty make use of; space enough/ Have I in such a prison.'⁶ (1.2.492-3) Thus, the space of the island becomes sufficient for him to transform his service into freedom through love.

Shakespeare also specified this general notion of space in many of his plays when he qualified it as private, though, again, attaching different meanings to this "private". In *2 Henry VI*, when York tells Warwick and Salisbury about his claim to the throne, both become convinced that he should be crowned as England's true king, so Warwick declares: 'And in this private plot be we the first / That shall salute our rightful sovereign / With honour of his birthright to the crown.'⁷ (2.2.60) The meaning of private in these lines carries a negative connotation because, according to Conal Condren, an office-holder had the responsibility and moral duty of serving the common good or public wealth and this was opposed to selfish interests.⁸ Warwick needs to keep his plan secret because it is a conspiracy against the king and this action would go against the commonwealth.

A different sense of the private is presented in *Twelfth Night* when Malvolio seems to be possessed and does not want to speak to either Fabian or Sir Toby; he replies to their

⁵ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by John Wilders, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 1999; repr. 2003).

⁷ William Shakespeare, *2 Henry VI*, ed. by Ronald Knowles, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 1999; repr. 2001).

⁸ Conal Condren, 'Public, Private and the Idea of the "Public Sphere" in Early-modern England', *Intellectual History Review*, 19.1 (2009), 15-28 (p. 21).

questions: ‘Go off, I discard you. Let me enjoy my private [...]’⁹ (3.4.79). The interesting point here is not only the different meaning attached to the private¹⁰ as synonym of privacy – understood as retirement or solitude – but mainly that Shakespeare shows how a character is aware of his space and endeavours to control it. Moreover, private in this line is used as a noun; it gives a name to a condition or state, rather than qualifying or describing something as the term “private”, a back formation of an adjective, usually does. Hence, Shakespeare’s use of this sense is quite original if we think that *The Oxford English Dictionary* online (*OED*) provides only three examples of authors who used the term in this case, including Shakespeare.¹¹

The list of Shakespearean characters who deal with the notion of space is unquestionably long; therefore, the objective of mentioning some of them in this introductory chapter is to show how very relevant the analysis of spaces may be in Shakespearean studies if it is possible to establish key elements or markers that contribute to our understanding of the different layers of meaning in a text as well as of the relationships among characters; furthermore, being able to distinguish a private from a public space in a script and how each is configured may not only have an impact on our interpretation of Shakespeare’s plays, but also on staging and performance decisions. The study of space in drama constitutes a semiotic exercise in which its meaning is seldom considered in isolation, but as part of a group of categories that act as a background to other objects and relationships. In other words, space is always relative to something else

⁹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; repr. 2001).

¹⁰ Ibid., n. 79. The editor makes a reference to C. T. Onions’s *A Shakespeare Glossary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911) that records the use of the word with this connotation. In *OED*, 6.a. this use is classified as obsolete.

¹¹ *OED*, I.1.b. (a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Twelfth Night* (1623) III. iv. 88 Go off, I discard you: let me enjoy my priuate. ?a1638 J. WEBSTER *Appius & Virginia* (1654) II. i, I see there’s nothing in such private done, But you must inquire after. a1657 G. DANIEL *Idyllia* in *Poems* (1878) i. 58 Perhaps I have To my owne Private, had reflects, as grave On my Condition).

and someone else; it becomes alive, leaving behind its static nature, when it is mediated by objects, actions, and people in a specific period of time.

The aforementioned examples clearly show that the notion of private space was already used by Shakespeare and, as I will illustrate in the following section of the thesis, was becoming active in early modern England, acquiring new connotations as it did so. As a playwright producing dramatic works for the highly-demanding Elizabethan market, Shakespeare constantly worked with space. He needed to create it for his characters, to design spatial movements onstage, and to endeavour to represent on the almost empty stage at the Globe, at Elizabeth's and James's court, or at the Blackfriars, what might have seemed inconceivable: a shipwreck in *The Tempest*, or the two armies mounted on their horses that the Prologue in *Henry V* so realistically describes. How does Shakespeare achieve this? How does he make the audience see what is not "seen" onstage? According to Katharine E. Maus, performances 'foster[ed] theatre goers' capacity to use partial and limited presentations as a basis for conjecture about what is undisplayed and undisplayable.'¹² What Shakespeare showed to his audiences was not a replica of reality but a re-creation of it. Not only technical conventional devices such as stage directions, stage properties, costumes, among many others, contribute to create this sense of place and space in his plays, but also the role Shakespeare assigns to his characters in constructing their 'self-in-relation-to-space'. Therefore, another aspect of space that is of interest for this research is the function Shakespeare gives to his female characters in the development of the plot, mainly with respect to their experience in the private sphere, as well as the way in which he moves them from that space to the public and vice versa. Elizabethan women were supposed to be at home during that period; however, some of the playwright's female characters, such as Portia, Isabella, Rosalind, move with great fluidity and inhabit almost

¹² Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 32.

all possible spaces. Nevertheless, why do Virgilia, Ophelia, and the merry wives remain within the private domestic household? From issues such as these I came to examine Shakespeare's plays from a spatial perspective; that is to say, from the point of view of the spaces the playwright/director creates for his female characters as well as the way in which he specifically represents the associated notion of privacy in his plays.

Behind the aforementioned theoretical cruxes regarding the configuration and performance of spaces, lie a series of research questions I will endeavour to answer: Could the correlative notions of private and public spheres become analytical instruments in early modern drama? Could I take these concepts as a point of departure when studying Shakespeare's plays? Would it be possible to comprehend every element in a play – plot, characters, setting, conflicts, language, space – through this spatial lens? Is it feasible to establish a set of categories or elements that allow us to identify one space from the other? Furthermore, given the scant and inconsistent evidence we have on theatre performances at the period, are we in a position to determine exactly how did Shakespeare configure and signal different spaces, except by relying mostly and mainly on the text?

My analysis will aim at determining the notion of feminine place and space in a selection of Shakespeare's plays and, in so doing, I shall also examine changing notions of the concept of privacy and its dramatic configuration. In order to provide evidence – historical and textual – to understand women's role both in the fashioning of early modern England as well as in the development of Shakespearean drama, some more specific research topics will be addressed. How does Shakespeare conceive privacy? Does he share a discursive field with the non-dramatic texts of the period when portraying the private? What are the markers or signs of the private space, if there are any, in his texts and onstage? What role does he attribute to female characters within the private/public

framework? What kind of spatial mobility does he empower them with? And finally, why and where do these women move?

In spite of the fact that many recent studies¹³ have dealt with the idea of female privacy in early modern drama, most have assumed the premise that during this period most men became oppressors of women; so much so, that Phyllis Rackin has stated that ‘misogyny is everywhere’¹⁴ in critical approaches when they focus on patriarchal structures and on women’s possible transgression of them through adultery, murder, or unruliness. Nevertheless, as Laura Gowing explains, ‘the idea of patriarchy in early modern society has rested on a linguistic slippage between two different meanings of the word.’¹⁵ In fact, the original sense of the term: ‘ruled by the father(s)’¹⁶, has been subsumed by the feminist sense of a ‘wide-ranging domination of women by men.’¹⁷ Consequently, discussions have sometimes become biased in their very origins, thus preventing the achievement of more universal and meaningful conclusions. In other words, when theoretical approaches see male/female relations in literature exclusively through the lens of woman’s subordination, then their understanding of the issue usually results in a partial view that does not offer a comprehensive interpretation of the problem. Even though a number of early modern women were sometimes absent from the public arena, their life within the private domestic household was not always as secluded and confined

¹³ Corinne S. Abate, *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England* (England and New York: Ashgate, 2003); Viviana Comensoli, *‘Household Business’: Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, ed. by Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2004); Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994); Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006); Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Phyllis Rackin, ‘Misogyny is Everywhere’, in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 42-56.

¹⁵ Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 5.

¹⁶ Gowing, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

as it has been frequently thought by modern interpreters. Furthermore, many of Shakespeare's female characters are almost never in their private households; they seem to enter the public sphere quite often and, even when they stay at home, they exert considerable agency upon public affairs.

The current state of research in the field of woman's space in early modern society and in Shakespeare's drama is extremely varied and complex. It will be briefly outlined in order to provide a theoretical framework. Critics could be divided into three groups whose perspective is mostly based on comparisons – oppositions, rather – between man and woman with respect to their sexuality, their economic and political roles, and their access to culture and education, all of these in the context of the ideology about woman during that period.¹⁸ In a somewhat schematic description, which is certainly limited, the first group presents women as victims of male misogyny; the second, more optimistic than the former, attempts to demonstrate that women could transgress and subvert male authority; and the third acknowledges woman's marginal position – mainly in politics and public decision-making –, yet tries to show their active role in other areas of society.

Feminist critics like Coppélia Kahn, Peter Erickson and Lisa Jardine present women as objects of male misogynist anxieties; hence, they see female characters as constantly silenced and subordinated by male authority.¹⁹ The same could be said of the collection of feminist essays edited by Carolyn R. Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely²⁰, in which most of the contributors consider that gender was a source of power or submission during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods; hence, women were either victims or monsters depending on their degree of subversion against men. In a

¹⁸ This criteria for determining the powers of Renaissance women and the quality of their socio-cultural experience is developed in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, Oxford Readings in Feminism, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 22.

¹⁹ Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Totowa: Barnes, 1983).

²⁰ *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. by Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely (USA: Illini Books, 1983).

similar vein, yet referring specifically to domestic tragedies, Frances Dolan accounts for what she calls the ‘demonization of women who transgress and subvert the meaning of femininity.’²¹ The distribution and balance of power between the sexes seems to be the key point that most of these early modern scholars stress. According to Peter Erickson, patriarchal structures in Shakespeare’s drama show that there was an asymmetry in power – a conflict between male/female relations – that shaped the overall early modern social system.²² On the one hand, the inequality of power would be reflected in the opposition between private woman and public man; on the other, many early modern scholars such as Patricia Parker, argue that it is also revealed in language. According to her, the supposed antagonism between genders is expressed in the traditional saying that ‘women are words, men deeds’²³, thus indicating that women’s verbosity constitutes a transgression of their private role, as they are not considered suited for public speech.

Other critics belonging to the second group assume the same premise of the subordinate position of women as the starting point of their analysis, yet they focus on assertive female characters and celebrate their shrewishness, wit, and unruliness.²⁴ Such is the case of the twentieth-century feminist foundational work by Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*²⁵, which, like Irene Dash’s investigation,²⁶ emphasises women’s virtues, thus presenting a more optimistic view. Nevertheless, they sometimes ignore contextual historical issues as regards the often marginal situation of women with respect to politics, property, education, and marriage. The current state of this

²¹ Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representation of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 212.

²² Peter Erickson, *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare’s Drama* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1985), pp. ix-1.

²³ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 23.

²⁴ Carol Thomas Neely, ‘Feminist Criticism and Teaching Shakespeare’, *ADE Bulletin*, 087 (Fall 1987) <<http://web2.ade.org/ade/bulletin/n087/087015.htm>> [accessed June 2009], 15-18 (p. 2).

²⁵ Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (New York: Barnes, 1975).

²⁶ Irene Dash, *Wooing, Wedding, and Power: The Women in Shakespeare’s Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

perspective has been developed in Dympna Callaghan's edition²⁷ of a collection of articles that deal mostly with issues of gender, woman's body, and female oppression.

The third group – whose main representatives are Margaret Ezell, Laura Gowing, Amy Louise Erickson, and Phyllis Rackin – examines and challenges preconceived assumptions about patriarchal power in early modern England and give a surprising amount of evidence about woman's agency during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ezell, for example, focuses on the active role that Elizabethan women played in arranging marriages for their children²⁸; Gowing offers records of women's litigation in London, establishing that 'moral frailty was the foundation of feminine weakness.'²⁹ According to her, the vision of morality during that period blamed women, not men, for illicit sex³⁰; therefore, they were once again in a somewhat inferior position to men. Erickson argues that early modern Englishwomen participated in economic activities and had a certain financial power, sometimes even going against legal prescriptions.

Even though Rackin is included in this group because she advocates woman's active role in society, she questions the theories that present misogyny as the dominant social view during the period. The critic argues that 'there is ample evidence for a history of misogyny and of women's oppression in Shakespeare's world and that there are good reasons why it needed to be told.'³¹ However, she thinks, as I also do, that this evidence should be viewed more critically so as to realise that some anecdotes and passages have been repeatedly cited both in early modern texts and in current critical works in order to

²⁷ *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dympna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

²⁸ Margaret Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

²⁹ Gowing, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ Rackin, 'Misogyny', pp. 42-56 (p. 48).

support ‘the pervasiveness of masculine anxiety and women’s disempowerment in Shakespeare’s world.’³²

Most of these views tend to assume that patriarchal control was the norm, thus almost completely shaping scholarly consensus about woman’s space in early modern England and in Shakespearean drama. In addition to feminist criticism, literary scholars influenced by Marxism, Psychoanalysis, New Historicism, and Derridian Deconstruction³³ theories have also explored the role female characters play in Shakespeare’s work from a more historical and cultural perspective, yet, they tend to present women as prisoners within their home or as passive victims of male discourse, hence deprived of any participation in the public realm. Such perspectives not only deny the role of the private sphere in the fashioning of the public domain, but also depict men and women in a constant negotiation of power that eventually leads them towards incompatible domains: private women, public men.

In addition to the work of these critics, political philosophers and architectural historians have also made valuable contributions to set the theoretical framework for the public/private dichotomy; however, it seems to me that there is still ground to cover regarding the discursive question, since the way in which early modern dramatists represented, translated into metaphors, or ignored the dominant, prescriptive early modern literature has not been completely scrutinised by literary critics. The complexity of power relations within a culture is not merely the result of gendered oppositions, as most of the aforementioned critics suggest. According to Gillian M. Kendall, the very question of where power lies is complex, since ‘the center of power is always temporarily located,

³² Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women*. Oxford Shakespeare Topics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 15.

³³ Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), French philosopher, best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction.

often in unlikely characters, and is frequently wielded at unlikely moments.’³⁴ In spite of the fact that there is historical evidence to determine how women were deprived of public power during the early modern period, these should become elements for analysis rather than determinants of their conduct. It is undeniable that, as Joan Kelly and Lorna Hutson point out, female and male regulation of sexuality was different in early modern England, as was the kind of work women could perform, and their access to property.³⁵ Nevertheless, women’s role in such a culture should not be reduced to relations only count of power and subversion, rebellion and containment; this is only part of the story, but, as the thesis will attempt to tell, it is definitely not the whole story of women’s life in sixteenth-century England. It is precisely from their private position that they could participate in the brokering of power, as they became mediators between two worlds that to this day need to be integrated.

Women’s search for a space of their own was not what might be called a dialectic negotiation of power, but rather a redefinition and readjustment of boundaries; that is to say, a negotiation of spaces not necessarily related to issues of power and subordination, but to diversified functions, activities, and relationships within the spaces they inhabit. Recognising this does not mean ignoring women’s experiences of misogyny and discrimination; on the contrary, it might help expand one’s vision to observe other fields where female activity was as crucial as the involvement in public affairs. Life in a separate sphere, as Amanda Vickery claims, was not impoverished in all senses; it was in the private space that one could discover and celebrate ‘a rich women’s culture of sisterly cooperation and emotional intimacy.’³⁶

³⁴ *Shakespearean Power and Punishment: A Volume of Essays*, ed. by Gillian Murray Kendall (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Presses, 1998), p. 10.

³⁵ *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, Oxford Readings in Feminism, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1-2.

³⁶ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), 383-414 (p. 384).

As this thesis will also strive to demonstrate, it may be possible to analyse the relation of Shakespeare's female characters to the private space according to the ways in which they dwell in it, transform it through diverse activities, move into it and outside of its real or imagined boundaries, as well as the ways in which they fashion the public sphere from within the private rather than interpreting the role of women in Shakespeare's plays exclusively from the point of view of a constant opposition between male power and female subversion. Shakespeare created female characters as varied as the women who lived in England during the early modern period: silent or loquacious, chaste or promiscuous, obedient or rebellious, discriminated against or taken as equals, weak or powerful, and so forth. On that account, my approach will aim to open up new valid interpretative paths that will broaden the sometimes-narrow view of woman's agency both in early modern society and in Elizabethan drama. Likewise, it will avoid formulating the risky argument that depending on the space – public or private – Shakespeare assigns to his female characters, he could be considered a proto-feminist, a rebel against cultural prescriptions, or a compliant dramatist subject to the conventions of the period. Moreover, taking ideas from Mary Thomas Crane's insightful research on privacy³⁷, I will question and challenge the widespread belief that during the early modern period the private space was a synonym of indoor places or referred exclusively to the household.

In order to be able to consider the diverse approaches to the private space, my research has had to move beyond the bounds of Shakespeare Studies, since the analysis of the private/public dyad is crucial to many areas of knowledge. My interdisciplinary and multi-faceted perspective has taken into account semantic, philosophical, socio-historical, architectural and literary readings of privacy, so as to build a more comprehensive

³⁷ Mary Thomas Crane, 'Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9.1 (2009), 4-22. I'm especially grateful to Dr Alison Findlay for having suggested this reading during my Viva because it gave a different scope to my research.

category of analysis. I would like to make clear, however, that the focus of my investigation is the configuration of the private space and, consequently, of privacy both in a selection of early modern texts and in a group of Shakespearean plays because I believe that the examination of a variety of works composed or published at the period contributes to place Shakespeare as a member the Elizabethan society who was not only aware of social and ideological development, but was deeply imbued with them. Looking for the private in a selection of his plays has implied searching for evidence of the birth and existence of this sphere in a very specific context: the English early modern period in London during the playwright's life, although also including relevant antecedents. In doing so, I have tried to avoid reducing the dramatic representation of privacy exclusively to technical devices with no relation to the socio-historical context, so, when possible, I have referred to its cultural and literary contexts.

The challenges of determining the idea and place of the private in early modern England are manifold. The dynamic interaction between the public and the private spheres of Elizabethan and Jacobean everyday life entails analysing the ways in which their meanings were established and sometimes contested. At the same time, it presupposes the previous acknowledgement of the location, relationship, and function of real spaces within early modern society – city, court, theatre, and household – so as to realise how different modes of privacy were built and then evoked and represented in the dramatic texts and onstage. In other words, taking the private as the focus of this research means dealing with a space that is neither neutral nor purely material, but, as Janette Dillon points out, ‘a representation of material place apprehended as a space occupied and understood in particular and changing ways.’³⁸

³⁸ Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5.

I consider the private space to be a given social reality that has its own characteristic features and that can be represented by drama, thus assuming that social life and the dramatic representation of it are ontologically different and that it is not possible to show this reality exactly as it appears in its original form. In this sense, I am not referring merely to a correlation between social space – private or public – and its representation. Drama, as a form of artistic representation, is not limited to correlations, but can go beyond reality and imitate both the actual material social space considered historically in its own time and space, as well as the ideas and social and historical discourses associated with that space and which are not subject to temporal or spatial categories.

Advancing some ideas of Henri Lefebvre's philosophy of space that I will develop in the first chapter, I would like to address three aspects of the private space: the physical or material, the mental or more abstract, and the social, sometimes historical, and contextual space.³⁹ In this line, A. D. Nuttall's notion of mimesis as the imitation of something other than itself⁴⁰, grapples with the many faces that artistic imitation may take; that is to say, that although ideas, discourses, objects, and spaces exist in different modes, they are prone to imitation and can become objects of representation; everything that exists can be represented: from the most abstract idea to the very physical aspects of nature. Consequently, despite the transformations a space may undergo as a result of human action, it cannot become a mere mental construct without reference to reality. Dramatic representation needs the grounds of the real world to play in. Hence, when examining the relationship of some of Shakespeare's female characters to the private space and their movements from, within, and towards that space, I shall refer to a social space that is simultaneously referred to and imitated in the plays; that is to say, a double-aspected

³⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), p. 11.

⁴⁰ A. D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (USA: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 182.

configuration of space that involves both the representation of places, activities, and objects –, as well as the characters’ construction of ‘self-in-relation-to-space’ within the plays. In a similar way in which social space is the context for human actions, so theatrical space is the stage for dramatic performance of those actions.

METHODOLOGY:

The methodology used in this research consists firstly of mapping the private sphere by building on theoretical notions related to the nature of place and space so as to trace back the origin and historical development of the private and particularly, the associated idea of privacy. On the one hand, this initial approach is intended to point out the cultural, historical and conceptual antecedents that long before Shakespeare was born started to shape the public/private dyad and, on the other, to discuss how after and beyond Shakespeare philosophers and critics appropriated these notions and attached to them new and sometimes ideological connotations, thus then sometimes anachronistically applied them to the playwright’s works. Then, I will analyse some of the meanings and uses of the private by Shakespeare and by early modern non-dramatic authors – mainly conduct literature and texts written by female authors – that show evidence of the different theories about the private sphere that circulated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the development of the concept in relation to Elizabethan women and their experience of privacy. In my view, this section has a two-fold relevance: it shows how Shakespeare’s private might be read by twenty-first century audiences and it provides accounts of privacy or lack thereof written directly by female authors. Even if their writings are fictional, these women are the only ones I can “interview” through a close reading of their texts. The next step of the research consists of analysing a selection of Shakespearean plays in search of key elements that may contribute to the configuration of

the private in its different aspects, either material: places, settings or locales chosen for each play, as well as furniture and objects distributed in them; or, what I call, socio-historical or cultural elements: gendered activities or tasks performed by the characters within the private sphere; or textual: stage directions; or devices such as descriptive language and poetic images that refer directly to the private space or that can be deduced from characters's speeches.

The Shakespearean plays⁴¹ studied in this research are: *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-7), *Measure for Measure* (1603-4; adapted 1621)⁴², and *Coriolanus* (1607-8). I will also give examples from other Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean works when I find it necessary to illustrate or reinforce my arguments. The selection of these three works is based on several specific textual and internal characteristics of the plays, as well as on extra-textual issues that I think will contribute to support and inform the possible answers to my research questions. The features in these works that I find particularly relevant for the study of the private space are: the places where the characters interact, especially in *Measure for Measure* for their variety, but also in *The Merchant of Venice* due to the contrast that can be established between them. I have been especially concerned to select plays with mostly urban settings because in these cities or towns – Venice, Belmont, Vienna, Rome, and Corioles – the characters experience their everyday dealings in relation to the rest of their community and their public institutions, so that their situation can be

⁴¹ The dates correspond to the order in which Shakespeare wrote the plays. I have listed them in chronological order.

⁴² Regarding the date of the possible adaptation of *Measure for Measure*, see: *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd edn (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), pp. 77-87; “With New Additions”: Theatrical Interpolation in *Measure for Measure*, in *Shakespeare Reshaped: 1606-1623*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Jowett, Oxford Shakespeare Studies (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 107-236; ‘*Measure for Measure*: A Genetic Text’, ed. by John Jowett, in *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, with assoc. eds., Macdonald P. Jackson, John Jowett, Valerie Wayne, and Adrian Weiss (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), pp. 681-89.

paralleled to that of Elizabethan Londoners who strived to attain privacy while at the same time having to share the streets, the market, the square, and even their dwellings.

Another crucial element in these plays is the variety and number of female characters they introduce. This allows me to scrutinise a series of elements related to privacy, such as, among others, the activities they perform and the role they play – private, public, or both – in the development of the plot and of the main male characters. I consider, for instance, that Volumnia and Virgilia in *Coriolanus*, Portia in *The Merchant* and Isabella in *Measure*, are appropriate for analysis because of their particular relation to private space, as well as because most of them are still young or unmarried, a fact which moves them to leave the domestic sphere. Other elements that make these works appropriate for spatial scrutiny are: the spatial mobility of female characters from one space to the other, as well as the movement or trajectory of objects from and within these spaces. The idea is to determine how the private space is dramatically and linguistically articulated through these elements. Consequently, key to my examination of the private is the language used to evoke this domain – usually through the deployment of poetic metaphors. Looking for traces of the private from this point of view will require careful analysis of textual information and of the devices used by Shakespeare in the dramatic construction of this sphere.

Determining the metaphorical and symbolic meaning of these elements might be complex. Early modern playgoers envisaged part of the spatial metaphors from theatrical conventions, properties, objects, furniture and the actions of the characters/actors onstage; yet one cannot tell exactly how space was conjured up in their minds. With an almost empty space⁴³, as Peter Brook describes Elizabethan stages, audiences had to imagine spaces and situations prompted almost exclusively by language, yet we do not know what

⁴³ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 86.

early modern playgoers exactly saw onstage. This is, according to Alan C. Dessen, part of the interpretative dilemma that theatre historians have to face because they count with very few eyewitness accounts, some drawings, and other external records of theatrical practice; consequently, in order to get a more informed sense on how early modern theatre worked, he argues that it is fundamental to recover Shakespeare's theatrical vocabulary and properties since, most of the external evidence that has survived is often unreliable or hard to interpret.⁴⁴ Moreover, Dessen insists on focusing on stage directions to understand how the spatial imagination of playwrights, players, and playgoers worked because 'those surviving signals in italics provide the only reliable window into a theatrical practice, vocabulary, and underlying mindset that at times is alien to our ways of thinking.'⁴⁵ But stage directions in Shakespeare can become quite problematic regarding their origin (who wrote them or added them?), and their chronology (when were they composed?). Thus, the evidence they provide does not answer all the questions about the illusion of space, so much so that Dessen concludes: 'To build edifices on stage directions, however, is to confront a series of problems. For example, in many instances a reader still cannot distinguish between what was actually displayed onstage and what was left for an auditor's imagination, especially in "fictional" signals where the author of a stage direction slips into a narrative mode so as to tell the story rather than provide instructions for an actor.'⁴⁶ In spite of this, stage directions may shed light on the configuration of specific places and spaces because in plays such as *Coriolanus*, for example, it is possible to find some scenes that follow a pattern in the way they configure a public or private sphere.

⁴⁴ Alan C. Dessen, *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 6.

⁴⁵ Alan C. Dessen, 'Staging Space and Place in English Renaissance Drama' (unpublished conference given at the Shakespeare Association of America, San Diego, 2007), 1-8 (p. 1), cited by kind permission of the author. Most of the material from this conference has been included in 'Stage Directions and the Theatre Historian' [forthcoming in *A Handbook on Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Richard Dutton (Oxford University Press)].

⁴⁶ Alan C. Dessen, 'The Body of Stage Directions', *Shakespeare Studies*, 29 (2001), 27-35 (p. 28).

The first chapter, 'Mapping the Private Field', aims to establish the theoretical relationship between place and space, as well as tracing back the historical origins of the private – from the Hellenistic period to the medieval centuries just before the early modern age, in order to understand its development and be able to examine in later sections the elements Shakespeare took from these notions and those that were his own creation.

In the second chapter, 'Looking for Concepts: The Private in Shakespeare's Early Modern England and After', the discussion will be focused on key concepts of this research: private space and privacy, and the relationship of women – thus, female characters – to these spheres. The objective of this section is to explore the semantic evolution of the notion of privacy and to examine its connection with terms such as: domestic, intimate, familial or pertaining to the household, thus to investigate the meanings in which the term was specifically used in early modern England. Because the private space will be analysed mainly in relation to woman's role within it, this chapter offers a preliminary analysis of the notion of woman during the period. After discussing some of the meanings the private acquired in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I will close the chapter with a brief account of modern philosophical ideas underlying the public/private dyad that explain both the uninterrupted debate on this issue over the years and the reasons why many of these theories have influenced literary criticism so deeply.

Chapter Three, 'Looking for the Material Private in Early Modern England', is divided into two major sections. The first will draw on theoretical readings of the private by architectural and social historians who insist on the material requirements to attain privacy. Then, I will study the notion of space in representative conduct literature by authors such as Xenophon, Juan Luis Vives, Edmund Tilney, John Dod and Robert Cleaver, so as to determine whether their configuration of the private sphere in relation to women is similar or differs to that presented by Shakespeare in his plays. This chapter will

also address the problems of hermeneutics when reading early modern discourses of the private and interpreting the Humanist context they were immersed in.

Chapter Four, 'Women's Voices: The Inner Side of Privacy', focuses on two examples of early modern women's narratives: *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby* and Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*. It starts with a discussion on the nature of reading and writing and the implications of these activities – particularly in the case of women – for the construction of self-in-relation-to-space. The second section considers privacy understood as inwardness and examines its relationship to issues of private devotion, literacy, and the possibilities that literary genres, such as diaries and closet drama, offered to early modern women in order to construct and express their subjectivity within the texts, thus their own experience of privacy.

The objective of the chapters already described is not purely theoretical. Even though the interdisciplinary path followed in order to reach Shakespeare's concept of the private space might seem too long, each of these sections will contribute in different ways to the understanding and interpretation of the configuration of this space in the plays. In addition to this, examples from Shakespearean drama have been included in every section, so as to use this framework not only as a solid theoretical basis for the whole thesis, but also as a point of reference and comparison, since privacy is not only a concept present in the literature of the period, but also a philosophical and cultural phenomenon that had significant manifestations in early modern society.

In the section, 'Unmasking a Space: Privacy in Shakespeare', I will aim to identify the playwright's own approach to the idea of privacy and the ways in which he represented it in the texts selected for the study. Even though most of the theoretical discussion has been advanced in the previous chapters of the thesis, by directly analysing these plays, I will trace the early modern conceptions of the private and the metaphors that Shakespeare

employed in order to represent this space. If Shakespeare dealt with privacy in his plays, did he work with a conventional concept of the private? Was it a more abstract paraphrase or translation inspired by the myriad connotations of the term found in prescriptive manuals, legal documents or classical writings? Can we speak of a Shakespearean private at all?⁴⁷

This section aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice, or between Shakespeare's application of the concept to drama and the theoretical approaches to it – sustained by philosophers, social historians, and literary critics – who have subsequently used it and, in some cases, made it problematic or, at least, introduced it anachronistically into literary criticism. In each of the plays chosen, I will look for markers or indicators that may identify a private space and examine how Shakespeare configures a sense of place and space.

Chapter five in this section, “‘I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house’”: *Coriolanus Away from Home*, will focus on the household both as an idea and a place that localises the diffuse conflicts in family and state. Even though the play depicts only two scenes with domestic interiors, the private *locus* has a persistent verbal presence in the play and goes beyond the household. After *The Comedy of Errors*, it is the play where the word ‘home’ occurs more frequently within the Shakespearean corpus⁴⁸, yet it becomes a sphere the hero constantly rejects. The presence of the domineering Volumnia and the silent Virgilia at home constructs a feminised realisation of the private space, a situation that *Coriolanus* does not seem to accept. The second play to be studied in this section is

⁴⁷ Unfortunately, when I first wrote the thesis, I didn't include a separate chapter dealing with theatrical space. While making corrections, I wanted to include it, but because of space constraints I was not able to do so. I hope I will be able to add this material in further research.

⁴⁸ The word “home” (possibly related to words: homely and homes) occurs 345 times in 321 speeches within 38 works, including the *Sonnets* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. It occurs 36 times in *The Comedy of Errors*, whereas in *Coriolanus* only 35 times. In any case, it is a high frequency if we think that the plays that follow them in the list are: *All's Well that Ends Well* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, with a frequency of 16 and 14 times respectively. *Open Source Shakespeare*, <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/o/?i=763774&pleasewait=1&msg=sr> [accessed 23 April, 2013].

Measure for Measure. In what I have called ‘No Household in Vienna: Women’s Spatial Mobility in *Measure for Measure*’, I will examine the spaces that the female characters – Isabella, Mariana, Juliet, and Mistress Overdone – occupy instead of the private and well-protected domain of their homes. In addition, I will look at the motivations, whether ‘broken nuptials’⁴⁹ or ‘substitution games’⁵⁰, that lead them to abandon their households. Even though there is a great degree of female spatial mobility in this play, the direction of that movement is still not as clear as it is in *The Merchant of Venice*, where Portia transgresses the private boundaries of her household to enter the Venetian court. In ‘From Private to Public: Shakespeare’s Spatial Games in *The Merchant of Venice*’, I will chart the many movements between Belmont and Venice that Shakespeare designs so that Portia can travel from one place to the other. I will analyse the process through which she finally conquers the masculine arena of the court, and the way in which cross-dressing and her clever use of language endow her with the freedom to move from the private to the public space. From studying the plays, I will endeavour to determine whether there are correlations between the senses of the private expressed in early modern prescriptive literature, in women’s writing of the period, and in Shakespeare’s work. This comparison could provide useful material to decide in the conclusion whether one can define a specific Shakespearean private with its own characteristics, or if the notion of privacy found in the plays is mostly conventional.⁵¹

The range of early modern writings about the private space in relation to female household management is vast. For example, publications from the period regarding women’s role show an increasing anxiety that tested their sexuality, rationality, and agency

⁴⁹ Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare’s Plays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 2.

⁵⁰ Alexander Leggatt, ‘Substitution in *Measure for Measure*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (Autumn 1988), 342-59 (p. 342).

⁵¹ Here, again, I would like to add a section on theatrical space that would enrich and strengthen my research.

in the development of society.⁵² Because from this perspective potential feminine power constituted a threat to the early modern patriarchal ideology, some critics have stated that male discourses attempted to restrain possible female unruliness by means of prescribing and advising both wives and husbands on how to behave within the boundaries of marriage. To a certain extent, these authors allotted Elizabethan and Jacobean women a restricted space that defined their gender role. However, the constant interplay between this allegedly dominant male discourse and women's own perception of the private sphere gave way to parallel and usually contradictory narratives. Moreover, these contradictions were also generated between written discourse and real life. According to Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, 'because discursive boundaries were not static but were always shifting, [...] understandings of woman changed throughout the period and in different contexts. Furthermore, there were contradictions and ambiguities as well as similarities and reinforcements between one discourse and another, and even within the same discourse.'⁵³ Thus, it may be argued, that the instability of discourses – prescriptive, legal, religious – that generated different notions of womanhood, might have also fashioned the myriad early modern conceptions of the private that circulated in printed form or were preached from the pulpits.

Early modern authors and contemporary scholars have acknowledged the complex ideas of 'woman' and 'private' as well as the changeable narratives underpinning the public/private conceptual paradigm. Hence, they have approached the terms from many

⁵² Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* translated into English by Richard Hyrde (London, 1529); Xenophon, *Treatise of Householde*, translated into English by Gentian Hervet (London, 1532); Edmund Tilney, *A brief and pleasant discourse of duties in Marriage called The Flower of Friendshippe* (London: Henric Denham, 1568); John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government: For the Ordering of Private Families, According to the Direction of God's Word* (London, 1598); Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentleman: containing sundry excellent rules, or exquisite observations* (London, 1630); William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*, Printed by George Miller, for Edward Brewster, and are to be sold at the signe of the Bible, neere the North doore of Saint Pauls Church, 1st edn (London, 1622), 3rd edn (1634).

⁵³ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 15.

different angles: historically, sociologically, philosophically, legally, and economically, to mention but a few. However, the debate over women's place within the private has been focused mainly on questions of female private submission versus male public authority, as I have previously explained. My belief is that although these issues are relevant to the analysis of the private in Shakespeare's plays, to limit the scope of the public/private dichotomy to a negotiation of power between men and women would constitute, at the very least, an incomplete view. Patriarchal interpretations that define women's role in early modern society according to their social position and duties, or to their sexual and economic relations with men have been thoroughly explored by literary critics hitherto, yet they do not give a full account of their problematic relation with private spaces. In fact, many literary critics and early modern historians such as Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, argue that 'the history of women is the history of their finding a voice [since] at first they spoke through others, that is, through men.'⁵⁴ This affirmation, though historically valid, is certainly not complete because for most early modern women – those whose lives unfolded between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – finding a voice was not only a question of participating in the public rhetoric of politics, nor of appropriating men's authority, but first and foremost, of finding a space of their own.

In the context of this research 'voice' is not merely understood as 'the ability to speak'⁵⁵, 'to dissent or protest'⁵⁶; not even as 'an expression of choice or preference given by a person'⁵⁷ or 'the power to take part in the control or management of something; a right to express a preference or opinion.'⁵⁸ Following the idea of female voice posited by Danielle and Elizabeth Clarke, the notion refers more directly to the creation of a voice

⁵⁴ *A History of Women in the West: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, with Pauline Schmidt Pantel, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Mass.: Cambridge, and England: London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992), I, p. xiii.

⁵⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED)*, 2nd edn, Draft revision, September 2008 (Oxford University Press, 1989), 'Voice', I.1.e.

⁵⁶ *OED*, 1.f.

⁵⁷ *OED*, 3.a.

⁵⁸ *OED*, 3.b.

that proceeds from female ‘interior spaces of experience, maternity and privacy [.],’⁵⁹ rather than to always visible or linguistic expressions of power. To an extent, it could be argued that if early modern women’s agency were to be judged only by mainstream historical fact and public rhetoric, most of them would remain powerless and silent. Nevertheless, there are abundant minor or pluralised histories within history, which show that women could attain a voice without necessarily being involved in the public exercise of politics or decision-making. Moreover, in the case of Shakespeare’s plays, women’s voice should not be limited exclusively to questions of length of speech, pre-eminence in conversation, or style – prose or verse –, since although these linguistic categories might become signs of authority, they do not account for the power of silence, of action, and of movement between spaces that Shakespeare grants to some female characters in a variety of situations. Silence is not always the synonym of submission; it can become a particularly powerful tool in a determined context. Building a space of one’s own cannot be solely equated to freedom *from* something or someone, but rather freedom *for* something or *to do* something. In this sense, Shakespeare’s female characters do not subvert male dominion (freedom *from*) just for the sake of it, but they do it because they want to attain something else (freedom *for*): choosing the right suitor, having a voice in the public sphere and so forth.

Female activities such as the household chores of educating children or supervising servants, commonly performed in a private sphere, would probably be interpreted today as synonymous with servitude and lack of choice; nevertheless, they often endowed early modern women with a voice, since their fulfilment was linked to spaces that men could not control, as they formed part of what Mendelson and Crawford have called “female culture”: a series of linked female spaces to which women freely resorted, making use of

⁵⁹ ‘*This Double Voice*’: *Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. by Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, 2000), p. 6.

neighbours' dwellings and going to each other's houses.⁶⁰ Other sites associated with women included the church, the death-bed, and even the household doorway, where they freely partook in gossip or informal communication networks which served as 'the "glue" that held female collectivities together.'⁶¹ Early modern women were involved in many other public dealings, such as, among others, writing letters of petition on behalf of family or friends⁶² and the participation in lawsuits where they sometimes engaged in litigation and served as executors of wills.⁶³ Some women, depending on their social level, also participated in the more specialised trades or crafts of the middling classes.⁶⁴ For example, in her study on early modern women involved in the book trade between 1550 and 1650, Helen Smith provides illustrative figures of their participation in the Stationers' Company. The critic makes clear that the role of women in this business was not necessarily marginal because of their gender or their number; on the contrary, more than a hundred women worked in the production or sale of books for the British market in London and other cities. She emphasises the fact that 'women, or more particularly wives and widows, were accepted and unremarkable members of the trade.'⁶⁵ Besides reprinting popular works they could easily sell, they also disseminated many classical and learned works such as those by Aristotle, Cicero, Erasmus and Francis Bacon, thus contributing to the expansion of culture.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Mendelson and Crawford, p. 206.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 218.

⁶² James Daybell, 'Scripting a Female Voice: Women's Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition', *Women's Writing*, 13.1 (March 2006), 3-22. The author shows how early modern women exerted their influence through letters of petition, requests for favour to monarchs and government officials.

⁶³ Rackin, *Shakespeare*, p. 33.

⁶⁴ Mendelson and Crawford, p. 343.

⁶⁵ Helen Smith, "'Print[ing] your royal father off': Early Modern Female Stationers and the Gendering of the British Book Trades", in *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies*, 15 (2003), 163-86 (p. 183).

⁶⁶ Smith, p. 175. Another interesting study in this field is: Maureen Bell, 'Women Writing, Women Written', in *A History of the Book in Britain*, ed. by J. Barnard and D. F. MacKenzie with the assistance of M. Bell, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), IV, 431-451. Stephen Orgel also offers some insightful information about women's participation in trades and guilds in 'Call me Ganymede', in *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 53-82 (p. 73).

Other women were involved in the production and distribution of goods which required knowledge of textiles, food, herbs, and medicines, as well as the art of selling. In her study on women in Shakespeare's times, Phyllis Rackin shows interesting visual evidence about women's prominence in the marketplace when she mentions 'the drawings of thirteen London food markets produced by Hugh Alley in 1598, which include numerous images of women, both alone and with other women or men, both buying and selling.'⁶⁷

If we look at women in Shakespeare's plays, besides performing some of the activities already mentioned, we will find that many of them venture in spatial movements – from the private to the public space – much more often than we think, thus being able, at least temporarily, to leave their household and find a space of their own from where they subtly exert influence on the public sphere.

⁶⁷ Rackin, *Shakespeare*, p. 21.

CHAPTER I:
MAPPING THE PRIVATE FIELD

A. PRELIMINARY CONCEPTS

In her study on material London around 1600, Lena Cowen Orlin explains how London was able to exert great power in early modern thought because of its political, trading and cultural features. She acknowledges the fact that defining the capital city constitutes an important enterprise that involves grasping its meaning not only from the variety of writings published during the period, but also from the ways in which early modern people understood it. The same could be said of the private space since its rich and intricate texture transforms it into a symbolic marker of early modern life and, as such, it has attracted a wide range of scholars to interrogate its scope and multiple meanings. To review London's numerous identities and, in the case of this research, to unveil the shifting senses of the private sphere, 'is metonymically to call a roll of academic disciplines and sub-disciplines: [...] urban studies, sociology, cultural anthropology, political history, [...] literary history, [...] the history of art and architecture.'¹ In fact, the notions of public and private domains were present in many areas of early modern society and are part of almost every field of knowledge in modern thought.

This first chapter aims at examining the etymology and historical origins of the private space from the Hellenistic period to the Middle Ages in order to trace back its semantic evolution – if there is such – and realise whether the early modern private inherited previous connotations or shifted towards new and different definitions. The idea of this conceptual journey is to arrive at the uses of the term that were becoming active in the late sixteenth century, thus familiar to Shakespeare and so represented in his plays.

¹ *Material London, ca.1600*, ed. by Lena Cowen Orlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 3.

According to Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, the notions of private and public sphere are ‘neither mutually reducible nor wholly unrelated’,² the definition of one of the terms will usually make reference to the other; that is to say, when describing the private space, the public sphere will be often addressed by contrast. In addition, because this research on the private domain is specifically focused on the role early modern women and Shakespeare’s female characters played within this space, I will also refer briefly to the theoretical association and identification of women with the private/domestic space, since this relationship seems to have been widely promoted in household writings translated or published during this period.

Drawing on purely theoretical works in this section could be regarded as unnecessary considering the specific emphasis of this research on the concept of privacy in the early modern period and its relationship to women’s lives. However, it seems fundamental to elucidate the theoretical relationship between ‘place’ and ‘space’ before attempting to define and describe the private sphere.

1. De Certeau’s Concept of Place

The experience of everyday life with its repetitive rituals shows that each individual occupies a *locus* that is in permanent interaction with the plurality of spaces he intends to appropriate. A place, as Michel de Certeau explains, is ‘the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence.’³ Thus, a place indicates a location that tends to be stable, whereas a space ‘is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed

² Jeff Weintraub, ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction’, in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 1-43 (p. 2).

³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984), p. 117.

within it.⁴ Space is created, shaped, and delimited not only by its physical boundaries, but also by the variety of ways in which it is experienced. It is transformed by the actions or movements of individuals as well as by the physical disposition of elements, be they walls, doors, objects or pieces of furniture. Likewise, it is dependent upon conventions and contexts so that individuals may exercise their influence on a determined space only to a certain extent, since ‘once space has been bounded and shaped it is no longer merely a neutral background: it exerts its own influence.’⁵ In other words, spaces are interrelated and may affect each other.

The influence that individuals can exert on places is not limited to the architectural or topographic design of buildings and institutions, but also to the functional modifications within the rooms inside them. A specific place that has usually been considered a private space could change its function and in future years become a different space: a bedchamber in a house can be transformed into an office and as such could lose part of its former privacy.⁶ Therefore, as de Certeau concludes, a ‘space is a practiced place’⁷ since it is not merely a physical or material location, but a fluid construct built by people’s experiences through time. In this sense, the philosopher and historian reveals that the distinction between place and space is conceptual since these terms are bound up in practice in such a way that it might be argued that one is entwined with the other.

A space, in de Certeau’s specific perspective, is a place lived in and modified by individuals. Therefore, perhaps the distinction that he suggests when he states that ‘space is like the word when it is spoken’⁸ lies, in broad terms, in the contrasting characteristics of written and spoken speech, namely the durability of a text versus the volatility of speech,

⁴ De Certeau, p. 117.

⁵ *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps*, ed. by Sherley Ardener (England: Oxford University Women’s Studies Committee, 1981), p. 12.

⁶ This idea was suggested to me by Professor Kate McLuskie during a tutorial in the office that was formerly Marie Corelli’s room in her home at Mason Croft in 1901, currently The Shakespeare Institute (13 September, 2007).

⁷ De Certeau, p. 117.

⁸ De Certeau, p. 117.

the different time it takes to produce text and speech, and the diversity of contexts that spoken words can address, to mention but a few aspects. Both written and oral speech will also vary according to their register: formal or informal. All of these features of speech make analogical reference to the same idea: the stability of place versus the varying and equivocal nature of space. It is important to note however, that in a more specific sense a text is also susceptible to transformations and different readings.

Drama could be a good example to illustrate part of this interaction between place and space. As Alison Findlay indicates, it is in drama that the written script is at the same time a static and a ‘practised’ place in de Certeau’s sense, since ‘it fixes boundaries around the action by allotting each element a “proper” position, spatially and temporally, in the play, giving each a local habitation (a created space) and a name’⁹; yet when that script is performed, the spatial practices of drama superimpose fictional playing spaces onto those given places, thus transforming them into ‘practised’ or ‘lived’ spaces. Moreover, a written script, adds the critic, may become a practised place because ‘it spatialises (mobilises and interprets) the places of everyday life in its representations of actions within defined settings.’¹⁰ Following this argument, it can be said that de Certeau contrasts place to space, seeing the former as a somewhat fixed geographical location that he sublates within the more dynamic nature of the latter.

From a historical perspective – indeed within early modern social organisation – the term ‘place’ was used to refer to ‘a person’s position in the social hierarchy, a clearly structured and easily visualizable ladder of rank’¹¹ since social relations were usually constructed in spatial ways. Therefore, reaching a social position implied, on the one hand, the attainment of a personal space from which and within which a person could move and

⁹ Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women’s Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹ Russell West, *Spatial Representations and the Jacobean Stage: From Shakespeare to Webster* (England, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), p. 15.

interact, and, on the other, the participation of a social group in shared space. I should like to consider, for instance, the relationship between city, court and theatre during the English Renaissance. In the case of these spaces the blurring of boundaries might have resulted precisely from the constant interaction among those who inhabited them, what I would call – following Janette Dillon’s idea of social spaces – a negotiation of boundaries. Even though she analyses social spaces in early modern England from a historical perspective, there are reminders of de Certeau’s ideas in her work. She points out that although there were visible boundaries during that period, like the city walls in London, there was also an ambiguous continuity between places inside and outside those walls. From the early thirteenth century the city had extended beyond the walls, as she explains, and the suburbs had expanded and encroached on the fields and villages that surrounded London.¹² In the most restricted use of the term, the early modern city referred, as Dillon suggests, to ‘the area within the old city walls, which still had powerful symbolic force in the way the inhabitant or visitor experienced the space of London.’¹³ However, because of the growing population that by 1700 had transformed London into the largest European city¹⁴, the enclosed city soon outgrew its own physical restrictions, thus giving rise to the suburbs that remained outside the city’s jurisdiction. The outskirts of the early modern city in which Shakespeare lived, presented a variety of ambivalent spaces such as leper houses, hospitals, brothels, and dozens of playhouses scattered near the banks of the Thames, thus showing that spatial boundaries were more flexible than might be imagined for a historical period in which the structure of society and the jurisdiction of the city were supposed to be strictly delineated. Another part of the city’s encroachment, she adds, extended in the direction of Westminster and the court, but as the court moved around with the reigning

¹² Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 1.

monarch, it could not be perceived to be in a particular place, so much so, that in accordance with Dillon's argument, Findlay has stated that 'the early modern court was a mercurial space characterised by movement.'¹⁵ In this same line of thought and also from a socio-historical approach, Steven Mullaney argues that it was from the conflict between court licence and city prohibition that popular drama was born in England;¹⁶ moreover, from the very beginning it took up a place 'on the margins of society, in the Liberties located outside the city walls, and to the south, across the natural barrier of the Thames.'¹⁷ The relationship between these spaces – city, court and theatre – endowed the city with a variety of meanings which reveal that none of these spheres was a passive geographical location prone to be realistically described by early modern dramatists, but a space immersed in a social context likely to be transformed by objects and people's actions. In other words, as Dillon concludes, 'crucial though boundaries are, however, to the production of space, their demarcation is never absolute. Social spaces interpenetrate one another.'¹⁸

2. Lefebvre's Concept of Space

So far, it has been asserted that the private seems to be a porous space that, analogically speaking, is actualised by people's practices and experiences. In other words – in metaphysical terms – as potency is actualised by the act of being, so, similarly, a place has the potential to become a space; it passes from one state to another because the modification of its qualities changes its mode of being. From this Aristotelian

¹⁵ Findlay, p. 110.

¹⁶ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8. See also Dillon, p. 3, where the author affirms that the conflict between court and city over public performance was especially fierce between 1580 and 1584.

¹⁸ Dillon, p. 21.

perspective¹⁹, places would always have the inherent possibility of becoming something else. I believe there is an interesting connection to performance spaces at this point because, to a certain extent, stage spaces are constantly actualised not only by the actions of the actors, but also by stage properties such as furniture, costumes and hand-held objects.

Our modern concept of space as an unlimited extension is not recorded in medieval Germanic or Romance languages. Drawing ideas from the works of the French medievalist, Paul Zumthor, Karen Newman comments that ‘the Latin word *spatium* is first found in French before passing into other European languages, but until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it designated simply a topographic interval or, as Zumthor points out, more often a chronological space or gap.’²⁰ So when we speak of a private or public space, we are giving a name to this span, interval, or gap, thus delimiting its scope to a specific type of space.

In his attempt to create a philosophy or science of space, Henri Lefebvre, the French neo-Marxist sociologist of urban and rural life, also refers to the difficulties of establishing the boundaries of specific spaces, due to their own permeability as well as to alterations produced by individuals. Although his phenomenology is not directly related to literature, it is certainly applicable to this field as he sets out the basic notions of what spaces are and how they are given cultural meaning. Most modern critics incorporate and build on his ideas when interpreting the relationship between the private and the public domain in dramatic texts. Lefebvre considers space in three aspects: the ‘perceived space’ of everyday social life and commonsensical perception; the ‘conceived space’ used by

¹⁹ In very broad terms, Aristotle believed that in every change there is something which persists through the change, and something else that comes into existence as a result of that change. See Aristotle, ‘On being as being’, in *Metaphysics*, trans. by Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library, 271, 287, 2 vols (USA, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933-35), books 1-9.

²⁰ Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 5. The author paraphrases ideas from Paul Zumthor’s *La mesure du monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 4, and ‘Lieux et espaces au moyen âge’, *Dalhousie French Studies*, 30 (1995), 3-10.

cartographers, urban planners or property speculators, and the ‘lived space’ produced by the imagination and kept alive and accessible by the arts and literature. This ‘lived space’ might illustrate the ways in which theatrical space was understood and recreated by early modern dramatists. In other words, it seems that set places on the stage became ‘alive’ when they were represented by the actors and decoded by the audience. The ‘practice’ of movements, voice and gestures that acting conveys, as well as stage properties, and the audience’s interpretation of all these elements, transfigures set locations or places of a play into ‘lived spaces’, be they cities, battlefields, islands, or small closets in a lady’s chamber.

The Lefebvrian notion of ‘lived space’ could well be equated to de Certeau’s ideas, since both authors recognise that the operations carried out within a place actuate it and transform it into a space. Individuals, Lefebvre emphasises, experience spaces ‘in ways that are more fluid than walls, laws and rituals might seem to indicate’²¹ as they are ‘confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next.’²² In spite of the separation produced by the visible boundaries of spaces, social spaces are not entities whose contours might collide, or passive containers – ‘empty mediums’²³ – that can be fitted into one another. On the contrary, each domain has its own characteristics and peculiarities that can be neither suppressed nor fully appropriated by the other. In other words, spaces have a two-fold property: they can be differentiated yet at the same time they can intermingle by means of human agency. So it seems that when speaking about the public/private dichotomy, one is not dealing with separate worlds, but with worlds within worlds; that is to say, spaces within spaces or, more specifically, situations that can occur within public or private limits. The public arena may be considered as a macro space within which private micro spaces or situations may be found and vice versa. These notions of macro and micro spaces will become very useful when

²¹ Lefebvre, p. 97.

²² Ibid., p. 8.

²³ Ibid., p. 87.

analysing the plays, since each setting functions as a macro space or spatial framework comprising a variety of micro spaces – private and public – within which the characters move and interact, thereby creating different spatial relations.

Scholars such as Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa agree on the fact that ‘Elizabethan staging was symbolic rather than realistic. Audiences had to work at visualizing the spectacles the words described.’²⁴ In a similar vein, Peter Brook argues that the Elizabethan stage ‘was a neutral open platform – just a place with some doors – and so it enabled the dramatist effortlessly to whip the spectator through an unlimited succession of illusions, covering, if he chose, the entire physical world.’²⁵ Nevertheless, as Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda point out, the emptiness of the stage cannot be applied to all theatrical productions from the period since ‘Stuart court masques and even the children’s company plays involved elaborate scenery, machinery, costumes, and props.’²⁶ Acting companies performing at the Globe or the Blackfriars theatres counted with some props and elaborate costumes. When referring to the Globe, Gurr points out that there was a central discovery-space that was necessary ‘for the bringing of large properties such as the chair of state or throne, for all court scenes, and the curtained bed for Desdemona in *Othello*.’²⁷ After examining the list of properties that Henslowe compiled in March 1598²⁸, which includes cages, wooden canopies, a little altar, to mention only some examples, the critic comments that these were ‘matters of stage business as spectacle, besides their function in the dramatic action.’²⁹ Moreover, it is likely that props contributed in the imaginative and sometimes conventional construction of place and space onstage.

²⁴ Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare’s Theatres*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics, ed. by Peter Holland and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 1.

²⁵ Brook, p. 86.

²⁶ *Staged Properties in Early Modern Drama*, ed. by Jonathan Gil Harris and Korda, Natasha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 2.

²⁷ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage: 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Third edition, 2004), p.146.

²⁸ Philip Henslowe’s Diary, as cited by Gurr, p. 187.

²⁹ Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, p. 187.

B. THE PRIVATE BEFORE SHAKESPEARE: BRIEF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DICHOTOMY

Given the complex nature of spatial interaction, isolating and defining a private space in itself seems an unattainable goal, since as Andrew Hiscock argues, the concept of space is considered in a variety of different ways, such as matrix, medium, site, function, or product of social action.³⁰ In fact, as I explained in the ‘Introduction’, I will firstly examine space from a multi-faceted perspective that includes etymological, historical, architectural, and social dimensions, and then I will look at specific experiences from women’s everyday lives within the private sphere, as represented in some of Shakespeare’s plays and in other early modern texts. Because I believe that an understanding of the private and its representation in early modern drama should make reference to its cultural context, I will briefly explore the ways in which this notion was understood during the centuries preceding the Elizabethan period, as well as how it was appropriated by critics to analyse the playwright’s works. This brief retrospective view will shed light on the socio-historical and philosophical antecedents for the configuration of this space in early modern England, thus contribute to the analysis of the private in Shakespeare. The more fully we grasp the private in its different dimensions, the better that we will be able to understand Shakespeare’s configuration of it.

For a long time, historical research on the religion, laws, and institutions of pre-classical Greece and Rome carried out by Fustel de Coulanges was the only recognised source for a serious study on antiquity. Nowadays, it has been complemented with modern investigations that offer more evidence and a different perspective on life in the ancient city, yet some ideas from this classic work may be helpful to introduce this section. De Coulanges refers to private life within the Greek and Roman household and links it to

³⁰ Andrew Hiscock, *The Uses of This World: Thinking Space in Shakespeare, Marlowe, Cary, and Jonson* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 4.

religious beliefs and practices. Worship was not public, and most religious devotions were practised within the house rather than in temples, as each home in the ancient city had an altar with a sacred fire; furthermore, ‘the fire ceased to glow upon the altar only when the entire family had perished; an extinguished hearth, an extinguished family, were synonymous expressions among the ancients.’³¹ What happened in the succeeding centuries? Was this sacred hearth extinguished and familial privacy buried in its ashes?

The most widespread notion of ‘public’, and contrastingly that of ‘private’, finds its historical roots in Greek classical antiquity³² where the public domain is related to the administration of the state. ‘Politics’ in this context refers to ‘a world of discussion, debate, deliberation, collective decision-making, and action in concert.’³³ The Greek division between nature (*physis*) and culture (*nomos*) resulted in the contrast between the *polis* – the open and free space of politics – and the *oikos* or private world of familial and household relations; that is, the *res publica* as opposed to the *res familiaris* in the Roman world; however, it was only after Aristotle advocated for the primacy of public life over private in his *Politics*³⁴ that the former gained value over the latter, at least in the Western world. In his political theory, the philosopher argues that ‘while the head of the household rules over both wife and children, and rules over both as free members of the household, he exercises a different sort of rule in each case. His rule over his wife is like that of a statesman over fellow citizens; [...] The male is naturally more fitted to command than the female, except where there is some departure from nature.’³⁵ Therefore, the Greek philosopher not only

³¹ Fustel de Coulanges, p. 17.

³² Hellenistic Period (323-146 BC).

³³ Jeff Weintraub, ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction’, in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice. Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 1-42 (p. 12).

³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, Oxford World Classics, trans. Ernest Baker, rev. by R. F. Stalley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For the relationship between city and family, see 11.1253a18 where the philosopher clearly explains that ‘the city is prior in the order of nature to the family and the individual. The reason for this is that the whole is necessarily prior to the part [...]’

³⁵ Aristotle, 1259a37-1259b10. Scholars such as Michael McKeon have recently commented on Aristotle’s perspective explaining that even though the *polis* and the *oikos* – the public and the private – were inevitably

argued for a dialectical polarity of ‘separate spheres’³⁶ between home and *polis*, but also gave prominence to one over the other, insisting on the ancient Western trope that women, uniquely fashioned for the private realm, were inferior, and so was private life. Variations of the Aristotelian model of oppositions – private subordinate women and public authoritarian men – were adopted not only by early modern authors of household manuals to support their ideology on women’s role in society, and more specifically within marriage, but also by contemporary scholars in order to interpret the role of female characters in Shakespearean drama.

Later in classical history³⁷, but from a different discipline, Horace, the Roman poet, dealt with the public/private dyad by juxtaposing life in the city with that of the country. Particularly in the *Satires*, he states his rejection of public life and expounds on the joys of the simple country life. When Horace needed peace, he escaped from Rome to his farm, a site he praises in the second book of his *Satires*: ‘At Rome you long for the country; in the country you praise the absent city to the stars in your fickleness.’³⁸ These lines show the poet’s inner conflict between his public duties, which require his presence in the city, and his longing for the serenity of the country.

Even though Horace’s notion of the private is presented through opposing views – the split between urban and rural life – the term is associated with solitude, as opposed to the turmoil of the civilised world that appears to prevent the poet from finding inspiration. Like most Romans from the first century BC, Horace lived a divided existence because he

related in practice, Greek political philosophy conceived their relationship in terms of absolute difference. In this way, ‘[b]y theorizing the antithesis between the political activities of the citizen and the economic activities of household management in terms of the philosophical antithesis of freedom and necessity, Aristotle’s *Politics* laid the ground for a more definite separation between the family and the state.’ See Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 7-8.

³⁶ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), 383-414 (p. 383).

³⁷ Classical Roman Antiquity (63 BC- 476 AD).

³⁸ Dionysii Lambini Monstroliensis, *Satyrarvm, Liber Secvndus* in Q.Horativs Flaccvs (Apud Ioannem Macaeum, bibliopolam, in Clauso Brunello, sub scuto Britanniae, LXVII), 1567. The original Latin words read: ‘Romae rus optas; absentem rusticus vrbem / Tollis ad astra levis.’ 2.7.28-29.

experienced, as Stephen Harrison explains, ‘the tension between his natural inclination for the quiet life in the country, with its peaceful space for reading, writing and thinking, and the bustle of Rome, with its round of social and other duties.’³⁹ The poet’s search for solitude rested on the ideal conception of life in the country: a pastoral world where he could find inspiration and pleasure. Shakespeare also employed the town/country topos in comedies such as *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*⁴⁰ in which he included pastoral scenes that show the idealised life of rural and country tranquillity as opposed to the more public and agitated city life. Even though according to T. W. Baldwin there are few parallels between Shakespeare’s works and Horace’s satires, he acknowledges that ‘Shakespeare had read the *Odes* of Horace in the detailed fashion which was demanded in grammar school [...]’⁴¹, probably in the unannotated text or in the 1567 Lambinus edition that ‘was the current annotated Horace when Shakspeare was in grammar school, and so is a logical form to be suspected.’⁴² Evidently, this does not imply that the Stratford boy read all of Horace’s works, but he must have been familiar with his style and topics.

With the end of Roman rule⁴³ in the Mediterranean circa AD 800 a distinctive period in history started during which pagans and Christians coexisted. The very quality and status of private life were transformed and hence some manifestations of the public/private dichotomy.⁴⁴ Scholars such as Peter Brown and Garth Fowden show that Christian communities clearly distinguished between the private and the public sphere.

³⁹ Stephen Harrison, ‘Town and Country’, in *Cambridge Collections Online* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 235-247 (p. 235).

⁴⁰ Shakespeare’s use of pastoral conventions is also present in *The Winter’s Tale* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

⁴¹ T. W. Baldwin, ‘Upper Grammar School: Shakspeare’s Latin Poets: Horace’, in *William Shakspeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), II, 497-525 (p. 512).

⁴² T. W. Baldwin, II, 497-525 (pp. 512-13). For the influence of the Classics on Shakespeare see: T. W. Baldwin, ‘Genesis of Jonson’s Aphorism: “Small Latine, and Lesse Greeke”’, in *William Shakspeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), I, 1-18 (p. 1); *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. by Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 10; Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 22; Leonard Barkan, ‘What did Shakespeare Read?’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 31-47 (p. 37).

⁴³ From the accession of Diocletian in AD 284 to the end of Roman rule c. AD 800.

⁴⁴ Late Antiquity or Post-Classical Period (AD 250-800).

While the former explains how each community ‘created through its public ceremonies its own sense of a new form of public space’⁴⁵, the latter adds that the early church’s self-organisation had established this public place of assembly in the *ekklesia* or church where all the community’s gatherings took place, especially the liturgy.⁴⁶ Later, the household became a domestic church in a similar way as it was considered a domestic kingdom in early modern England.⁴⁷

From the above brief account it is possible to identify an incipient development of the private through history until the Middle Ages⁴⁸, a period that covers almost ten centuries of public and collective life. In *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* Johan Huizinga gives one of the best accounts of the public nature of the medieval world:

all things in life had about them something glitteringly and cruelly public. The lepers, shaking their rattles and holding processions, put their deformities openly on display. Every state, order, and craft could be recognized by its dress. The notables, never appearing without the ostentatious display of their weapons and liveried servants, inspired awe and envy. The administration of justice, the sales of goods, weddings and funerals – all announced themselves through processions, shouts, lamentations and music. The lover carried the emblem of his lady, the member the insignia of his fraternity, the party the colors and coat of arms of its lord.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Peter Brown, ‘Late Antiquity’, in *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. by Paul Veyne, gen. edn by Phillipe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (USA: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1992), II, 235-297, (p. 280). See also Béatrice Caseau, ‘Sacred Landscapes’, in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 21-59.

⁴⁶ Garth Fowden, ‘Religious Communities’, in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 82-106 (p. 88). See also: Éric Rebillard, ‘The Behavior of Christians’, in *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, trans. by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci (USA: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 18-35, and Jon Davies, ‘Christian Burial’, in *Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 191-200.

⁴⁷ Parallel to public premises, the villas or Roman houses constituted an example of more private buildings. Such dwellings, both urban and rural, underwent a renaissance and became the homes of the elite. Usually they were divided – apart from a kitchen and sometimes a temple – into three parts: a space where the owner and family lived, another for slaves, and lastly a storage room for oil, wine and grain. The villas functioned both as dwellings and ‘as centers of social and economic activity’. See Brown, pp. 258, 274.

⁴⁸ Middle Ages (5th to 15th centuries AD).

⁴⁹ Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. by Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 1.

In a world that was communal in most senses given the social organisation and material living conditions, people of the Middle Ages spent much of their lives in the company of others; they were expected to work, sleep, play, and even travel in groups. According to Georges Duby, ‘Feudal society was so granular in structure, [...] that any individual who attempted to remove himself from the close and omnipresent conviviality, to be alone, to construct his own private enclosure, to cultivate his garden, immediately became an object of either suspicion or admiration, regarded as either a rebel or a hero and in either case considered “foreign”– the antithesis of “private.”’⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Dillon adds that most writers before 1500 ‘define the individual not from within, in isolation from society, but as a part in a greater whole, meaningful only in context. The ideal therefore is not, as in classical times, self-sufficiency, but mutual support, and individual virtue is measured by its contribution to the common good.’⁵¹ In other words, isolating oneself was condemned and did not constitute a valid alternative, but rather an escape from social duties, so much so that solitary wandering was a sign of anti-social behaviour, if not of madness.

Following Duby’s argument that almost everything was public during medieval times, it becomes quite evident that if there was any possibility of privacy, this was a collective privacy shared by members of the same group or household. According to the historian, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries collective privacy did exist, but ‘[i]f private life meant independence, it was independence of a collective sort.’⁵²

Were there any signs of personal privacy within that collective situation? One possible answer might be found in a recent publication by Diana Webb in which the author investigates the medieval antecedents of privacy by looking for the reasons why medieval

⁵⁰ Georges Duby, ‘Solitude: Eleven to Thirteenth Century’, in *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), II, 509-534 (p. 510).

⁵¹ Janette Dillon, *Shakespeare and the Solitary Man* (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 7-8.

⁵² Duby, p. 510.

people needed to retreat permanently or temporarily from society, thus acknowledging a certain personal privacy that was recognised as a form of withdrawal. She claims that privacy, as such, came ‘hand-in-hand with the emergence of a middling sector in society, whose members inclined towards intellectual pursuits and were at greater liberty than the great or lowly to employ living space as they pleased.’⁵³ According to Webb, this socio-cultural fact contributed to the search for solitude among the wealthier groups who chose two forms of withdrawal: the religiously motivated quest for solitude by monks and nuns; and the lay quest for the pursuit of literacy and recreation. Although England was primarily rural at that time, life in towns should not be underestimated in this sense, since it was quite crowded and people very often had little or no access to moments of privacy. Therefore, even though medieval withdrawal or privacy was an ideal likely to be desired by many, it was attained only by a few.

It was much later that privacy interpreted as solitude recovered a good reputation thanks to Petrarch who, reviving late antiquity and the Roman ethos, promoted the *vita solitaria* or life of solitude during the Italian Renaissance, thus presenting it as a means for personal improvement rather than a mere detachment from public responsibilities. The poet was able to reach a syncretism of classical and Christian thought that considered solitude as a condition for intellectual and spiritual cultivation.⁵⁴ His idea of *vita solitaria* as a consequence of *otium* or leisure is against the notion that idleness encouraged vice and laziness, as it was frequently understood in Roman culture and later by some Christian authors who considered it a sin.⁵⁵ In contrast, Petrarch considers *otium* as an occasion to cultivate and develop the intellect in its various forms. It presupposes the freedom to be alone, yet paradoxically Petrarch’s solitude is one shared with male friends.

⁵³ Diana Webb, *Privacy and Solitude in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), p. xi.

⁵⁴ Ursula Hoff, ‘Meditation in Solitude’, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1.4 (April 1938), 292-294 (p. 293).

⁵⁵ As it has been explained in the previous pages, during the Middle Ages some Christian writers saw *otium* as an opportunity for contemplation and the service of God.

In her rereading of *otium* in *De vita solitaria*, Julia C. Bondanella, examines Jean-Marie André's positive view of leisure, modeled after Greek *skolé*, which refers to the contemplation of truth, whereas in classical Latin, the term *otium* 'consistently refers to an immoral idleness perilous for citizens and soldiers'⁵⁶ and 'frequently connotes [...] laziness, luxuriousness, and voluptuousness.'⁵⁷ Furthermore, as Brian Vickers argues in his study of the meaning of these concepts in the Renaissance, the ambivalence of *otium* is also present in the distinction 'between *otium negotiosum*, leisure with a satisfying occupation [...] and *otium otiosum*, unoccupied and pointless leisure'⁵⁸ which the Romans rejected because of its potential for abuse. In fact, Cicero defended political inactivity only if it was for the benefit of others; in other words, if the works he wrote in this free time contributed to the welfare of the state. In Virgil, as André comments, the 'freedom from occupations'⁵⁹ is often 'associated with classical pastoral and love poetry [...]'.⁶⁰

Petrarch's rhetoric of *otium* as cultured leisure – 'a state defined by simple habits, self-restraint, proximity to nature, diligent study, reflection, writing, and friendship'⁶¹ – sometimes became an ideal that only a reduced number of sixteenth-century early moderns could pursue. In fact, as Janette Dillon points out, although the notion of privacy had gained a little ground by Shakespeare's time, a character such as 'Hamlet, the solitary muser, was an *innovation*'⁶² since he did not represent the common early modern man involved in public affairs, but rather an isolated wanderer. Solitary life was considered ultimately an individualistic and suspicious behaviour, and very often a sign of insanity rather than a means for personal development.

⁵⁶ Jean-Marie André, *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), pp. 17-45, as cited in Bondanella, 14-28, n. 9 (p. 15).

⁵⁷ Bondanella, 14-28 (p. 15).

⁵⁸ Brian Vickers, 'Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of *otium*' (Part I), *Renaissance Studies*, 4.1 (1990), 1-37 (p. 6).

⁵⁹ *OED*, 2.a.

⁶⁰ André, as cited in Bondanella, 14-28, n. 9 (p. 15).

⁶¹ Bondanella, 14-28 (p. 14).

⁶² Janette Dillon, 'Shakespeare and the Cult of Solitude' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1977), p. 261.

Regardless of the almost two centuries that the Italian Renaissance took to reach England,⁶³ Petrarch's writings influenced many Elizabethan writers, not only regarding the *topos* of solitary life, but also the development and popularization of the sonnet⁶⁴. In the sixteenth century, pastoral literature constituted a form of *otium*, thus a manifestation of privacy as a withdrawal for specific purposes, which was often equated to a time for leisure and freedom rather than retreat for contemplation or cultivation of the mind. Despite the fact that the pastoral dealt with shepherds and rustic life immersed in an idealized world, the genre cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between nurture and nature – life in the court versus life in the countryside – since, as Sharon Yang suggests, 'the pastoral is a rustic green world that is much less complicated and more "natural" than the urban or court world.'⁶⁵ *Otium* is not only Horace's longing for solitude, nor is it Petrarch's occasion for contemplation and learning; in the pastoral mode Shakespeare explored, this notion is associated, on the one hand, with unemployment, laziness and inertia, as in the case of *Julius Caesar* when the commoners are not engaged in work and Flavius scolds them with the name of 'idle creatures' (1.1.1)⁶⁶. A similar example is presented when Antony replies to Cleopatra's objection that he returns to Rome saying, 'But that your royalty/ Holds idleness your subject, I should take you/ For idleness itself' (1.3.92-94)⁶⁷, thus implying that if she lacks a meaningful occupation, her complaint is frivolous because he must fulfil state obligations. On the other hand, *otium* in Shakespeare is an entrance into a different and, sometimes, magic world where the connection between

⁶³ Wiggins, p. 19.

⁶⁴ Petrarch's poetry was one of the most influential in Europe for at least two centuries from 1400 to 1600, and in Britain he was imitated by Chaucer, the Elizabethans, and other lyric poets until the end of the eighteenth century. See *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 years*, ed. by Martin McLaughlin, Letizia Panizza, and Peter Hainsworth, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 146 (Oxford University Press and British Academy, 2007).

⁶⁵ Sharon Rose Yang, *Goddesses, Mages, and Wise Women: The Female Pastoral Guide in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century English Drama* (USA: Rosemont Publishing and Printing, 2011), p. 12.

⁶⁶ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, 3rd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).

⁶⁷ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by John Wilders, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

man and nature transforms the characters even to the point of changing their identities. Conventional pastoral implies that escaping to the countryside will provide new insights to improve personal education, but retreat from the court often ends in disorder in the playwright's pastoral comedies. Even though Shakespeare follows the structure of pastoral drama – exile from the city, retreat to a rural setting, and return –, he goes beyond this pattern and often his pastoralism is ambivalent⁶⁸ because the green world is not as ideal as it should be; in the forest, for example, the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* find similar political and social divisions than at court and in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Falstaff is mocked in the Windsor forest. In these plays, as well as in *As You Like It* and in *Titus Andronicus*, nature's wildness contaminates the characters' behaviour making them transgress moral codes. Particularly in the latter, as Jonathan Bates comments, the forest is a space where 'desire can be acted out: Tamora comes to make love to Aaron, Chiron and Demetrius rape Lavinia.'⁶⁹ As a consequence, this space is transformed into a site of horrors, as Titus describes: 'Patterned by that the poet [i.e. Ovid] here describes, / By nature made for murders and for rapes' (4.1.57-58).

Taking these few examples into account, we could say that Shakespeare is able to represent subtle states of privacy-as-withdrawal as he gives *otium* his own turn going thus beyond the mere imitation of the classics to make of this notion also a door into other worlds, as well as a state of being that immerses idle characters in their own and sometimes vile doings. According to Mary Thomas Crane, Shakespeare's green worlds afford certain licence related to the pastoral genre and to rural festivity, but can also be

⁶⁸ Some of the scholars who challenge whether some of Shakespeare's comedies are anti-pastoral or merely ambivalent include: Laurence Lerner, *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry* (Chatto and Windus, 1972), Peter Lindenbaum, 'Shakespeare's Golden Worlds', in *Changing Landscapes: Anti-Pastoral Sentiment in the English Renaissance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 91-135, Alastair Fowler, *Pastoral Instruction in As You Like It*, The John Coffin memorial lecture at London University (University of California Press, 1984), Brian Gibbons, 'Amorous Fictions and *As You Like It*', in *Fanned and Winnowed Opinions: Shakespearean Essays Presented to Harold Jenkins*, ed. by John W. Mahon and Thomas A. Pendleton (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 52-78.

⁶⁹ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 7.

associated to ‘common early modern social practice that used outdoor space to achieve just this kind of privacy, and freedom from regulation.’⁷⁰ In fact, as Crane argues, this social practice was clearly reflected in the ‘literary pastoral tradition that included outdoor sexual activity as a convention’⁷¹ which was not exclusive to Shakespeare.⁷² However, I would like to argue that in early modern England illicit privacy in its sexual aspect is also achieved in enclosed spaces such as brothels, regardless of the fact that these places have a more public connotation. Early modern London was known for its criminal life and it may be said that brothels fulfilled the same function than outdoor spaces such as forests because they offered a temporary relief from order.⁷³ Shakespeare does not only show brothels in many of his plays, but also introduces characters related to illegal activities: Mistress Overdone’s brothel is frequented by Lucio in *Measure for Measure*; the Boar’s Head Tavern is Falstaff’s and Prince Hal’s meeting place in the *Henry IV* plays; and the comic trio of Pander, Bawd and Bolt discuss on how to transform Marina into a prostitute to work in their brothel at Mytilene in *Pericles*.

On the one hand, this concise historical overview shows that the meanings the private acquires in each period are very much associated to the dominant culture where privacy is developed; on the other, it illustrates a linguistic and literary process and how writers inherit these definitions as a kind of raw material they can adapt, transform and recreate in new and innumerable ways.

⁷⁰ Mary Thomas Crane, ‘Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9.1 (2009), 4-22 (p. 10).

⁷¹ Crane, 4-22 (p. 10).

⁷² Crane gives examples of other dramatists who used this convention, such as: Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy*, when Horatio and Bel-Imperia meet in a bower: ‘Come Bel-imperia, let us to the bower, / And there in safety pass a pleasant hour’ (2.4.4-5), and Middleton and Rowley in *The Changeling* when Alsemero sees De Flores and Beatrice together in a garden (5.3.2). Crane suggests that writers may choose their outdoor setting in part because of pastoral convention, but certainly because it was part of common social practice.

⁷³ I will deal with the topic of prostitution in the chapter dedicated to *Measure for Measure*; however, I think these examples here contribute to the argument of illicit privacy. Cfr. Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Paul Griffiths, ‘The Structure of Prostitution in Elizabethan London’, *Continuity and Change*, 8.1 (1993), 39-63.

CHAPTER II:

**LOOKING FOR CONCEPTS:
THE PRIVATE IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY
MODERN ENGLAND AND AFTER**

The title of this chapter indicates its two objectives: to provide more examples of Shakespeare's own use of different variants of the private and of privacy, as well as to begin examining the expression of these notions in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both as a cultural background and as the social setting where privacy was shaped and developed.

A. ETYMOLOGY OF THE PRIVATE: MEANINGS OF THE CONCEPT DURING THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The history of the private is the history of a series of revisions and transformations. The etymological study of words in this section does not set out to provide unequivocal definitions of the terms; on the contrary, it might show how the instability of language during the English Renaissance, as well as in previous historical periods, generated different notions of the private. Therefore, instead of attempting to define the private as such, I shall consider the public/private category as a paired set of terms where one is explained in relation to the other. Thus, what I intend to do is to describe the private space, to set its limits, and to outline its degree of distinctiveness with respect to the public sphere. In doing so, I will be able to look both for the metaphorical configurations and poetic modes in which these spheres were expressed in early modern narratives, as well as in a selection of Shakespearean plays. By collating different conceptions of the private, I shall compile some of its varied and intricate senses, in order to propose a multi-faceted approach to privacy which does not account exclusively for the opposition – private versus public – but considers it in the light of social practice within a historical and cultural context which, in turn, was represented in drama.

Etymologically speaking, the word 'private' comes from the Latin *privatus*, an adjectival use of the past participle of the verb *privare*, meaning 'to be deprived' or

‘limited’ which was probably first used in Britain during the fourteenth century.¹ This sense of dispossession that the private space originally conveyed did not only refer to an undetermined state of isolation or separation from the world or from society, but it specifically meant – as adopted by the German *privat*, the French *privé*, the Spanish *privado*, and the English *private* – withdrawn from the public body or ‘restricted to one person or a few persons as opposed to the wider community; largely in opposition to *public*.’² ‘Public’ in turn is defined as ‘of or pertaining to the people as a whole; that belongs to, affects, or concerns the community or nation; common, national, popular.’³ When public is linked to action, it accounts for something ‘done or made by or on behalf of the community as a whole; authorized by, acting for, or representing the community.’⁴

Other senses of the private are registered in *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* where they are presented in different sections related mainly to people’s relationships, property, and activities. In the case of relationships, most definitions emphasise the opposition between private and public; thus many entries register contrasts, for instance, between individual or personal vs. shared or communal,⁵ as it is well expressed by Julius Caesar when he tells Decius about Calpurnia’s dream that he will die: ‘For your private satisfaction, / Because I love you, I will let you know.’ (2.2.73-4);⁶ or restricted to the use of a particular person or group of people vs. open to the public⁷ as in Shakespeare’s and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII* when Cardinal Wolsey asks Queen Katherine to go to her chamber

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED)*, 2nd edn. Draft revision, September 2008 (Oxford University Press, 1989), ‘private’, adj., adv., and n.

² *OED*, A.I.

³ *OED*, ‘public’, a. (n.), I.1.

⁴ *OED*, ‘public’ A. *adj.* 3.a.

⁵ *OED*, ‘private’, adj., adv., and n., A.I.3.a.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

⁷ *OED*, A. I.2.a.

in order to explain to her the reason for his visit: ‘May it please you, noble madam, to withdraw / Into your private chamber, [...]’ (3.1.27-8).⁸

With respect to property, ownership becomes the key element to determine whether possessions are private; that is to say, belonging exclusively to a particular individual or company.⁹ When referring to activities, they can be limited to one person or a few people, so ‘private’ becomes the synonym of reserved, unsociable, or of someone living a quiet or secluded life,¹⁰ usually alone or undisturbed by others.¹¹ In this sense, when a place is unfrequented or secluded, it affords privacy.¹² A private activity is also described as that of a person not holding a public or official position; therefore, not officially recognised.¹³ The dictionary also accounts for more specific senses of the private: a conversation, intended only for the person or persons directly concerned; confidential,¹⁴ kept or removed from public view or knowledge.¹⁵

The examples already mentioned contribute to realise both the fact that Shakespeare uses the concept of privacy with many of the aforementioned senses in his tragedies and comedies indiscriminately, and that there are two main conceptual characteristic features within the private: its usual opposition to the public and its restrictive nature; that is to say, deprivation of public life or public office. This could also be seen inversely, since affording privacy in the crowded Elizabethan London might have been an achievement and a privilege rather than a deprivation or loss.

Shakespeare was neither the first, nor the only Elizabethan to use the terms “private”, “privacy” and its derivatives during the sixteenth and the beginnings of the seventeenth centuries in England. A basic Boolean search in *EEBO* Early English Books

⁸ William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, ed. by Jay L. Halio (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹ *OED*, A. *adj.* 1. I. 5.a.

¹⁰ *OED*, II. 10.

¹¹ *OED*, II. 11.

¹² *OED*, II. 9.

¹³ *OED*, 4. b.

¹⁴ *OED*, 7. a.

¹⁵ *OED*, I. 6.

Online¹⁶ shows that there are twenty-two (22) registered variant spellings of the term “private” being used before or at the time Shakespeare was writing.¹⁷ One of the main variations is the use of v or u (private/priuate), i or y (either when the term is used as a noun and/or adjective: private, or in the adverbial form: privately, priuately, privatly, priuatelye, etc.). Some of these terms share the same semantic field, whereas others show a different connotation of the word. I have selected some illustrative examples that may widen the scope of the analysis and at the same time substantiate the claim that the notion of private space, thus of privacy, was invoked during the early modern period, even if in some respects the everyday practice of privacy was still not fully attained in all its modes, or at least not in the ways we understand it nowadays. The criteria behind the choice of these authors is firstly that they were contemporary to Shakespeare or were born only a few years before than the playwright, and second, that their texts preferably do not belong to conduct literature or drama because these areas will be analysed later in specific sections of the thesis.

The authors who make use of the variants of private are diverse. Some of them are associated directly to literature (dramatists such as Ben Jonson and John Marston); others are prominent Humanists such as Erasmus, or translators of household manuals and classic texts; however, many of them are associated to politics and government (acts by King Henry VIII, a discourse by Francis Bacon on the union of the kingdoms of England, and Scotland), and a good number of them are linked to religion. Such is the case of William

¹⁶ <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/select_variants.cgi> [accessed May 2013]. I also checked *Early English Books Online, Text Creation Partnership*, <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/>> [accessed May 2014].

¹⁷ The basic Boolean search shows the variations between private and priuate as noun, adjective, adverb and superlative form of the adjective. It also shows the number of times that these words were used in publications between the years 1500 to 1650. Because of space limitations, it is not possible to analyse each of these occurrences separately: private (85500), priuate (28070), priuat (3096), privat (2734), pryuate (538), prviate (3), priuated (8), privately (9833), priuately (2248), priuatly (736), privatly (569), priuatlie (103), priuatelie (96), priuatelye (52), privatelie (31), privatlie (13), priuatlye (10), priuatelely (1), privates (15), priuates (5), privatest (85), priuatest (16) <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/select_variants.cgi> [accessed April 2013].

Tyndale, sixteenth-century scholar and theologian, who makes use of the variant “private” in some of his writings. In *The obedience of a Christian man* (1528)¹⁸, he refers to the ‘private interpretation’ of the scripture to which he objects arguing that ‘[n]o place of the Scripture may have a private exposition.’¹⁹ In this case, private refers to an individual judgement or personal opinion, especially in religious matters, as opposed to that of the community or body of authorities. Another religious figure from the period using the notion of private in his writings is John Panke, Church of England clergyman and author²⁰. In his *Eclogarius, or briefe summe of the truth of that title of Supream Governour* (1612)²¹, he refers to the duties of the monarch ‘not only as a private man, but as a king [...]’ This occurrence is more related to the idea of an individual without office or rank as opposed to a public figure such as a monarch who, in contrast to a common man, is supposed to perform an official duty for the service of his subjects.

The variant spelling “priuate” is the second most frequently used in publications between 1475-1640, according to *EEBO* records.²² Heinrich Bullinger,²³ convert from Roman Catholicism who became a major figure in securing Switzerland for the

¹⁸ *STC* (2nd ed.), 24446: *The obedie[n]ce of a Christen man and how Christe[n] rulers ought to governe, where in also (yf thou marke diligently) thou shalt fynde eyes to perceave the crafty conveyau[n]ce of all iugglers*, [At Marlborow in the la[n]de of Hesse [i.e. Antwerp]: the seconde daye of October. Anno. M.CCCC.xxviii, by me Hans luft [i.e. J. Hoochstraten], [1528]]. [*EEBO: Early English Books Online*, <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/authors/authorbrowse.pl#mark>> [accessed May 2013].

¹⁹ William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introduction to Different Portions of the Holy Scripture*. The Parker Society for the Publication of the Works of the Fathers and Early Writers of the Reformed English Church (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, M.DCCC.XLVIII), pp. 127-344 (p. 317).

²⁰ John Panke (fl. 1604–1618), frequent and noted preacher of his time and very zealous enemy against the papists. He may have attended Oxford University (Wood, *Ath. Oxon.*, 2.274). Some of his famous works are: *A Short Admonition by Way of Dialogue* (1604), dedicated to his patron, Lady Katherine Wroughton, and *The Fall of Babel, by the Confusion of Tongues* (1607). Of his further activities, or his death, nothing is known. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21232>> [accessed May 2013].

²¹ John Panke, *Eclogarius, or briefe summe of the truth of that title of Supream Governour given to his Maiestie in causes spirituall, and ecclesiasticall, from the Kings of Israel, in the old Testament; the Christian emperours in the Primitive Church; confirmed by 40. epistles of Leo the Bishop of Rome, vnto the Emperours, Theodosius, Martianus, and Leo. Not published before. By Iohn Panke.*, At Oxford: Printed by Joseph Barnes, 1612. *STC* (2nd ed.), 19170.

²² These years correspond to the 125,000 titles listed in Pollard & Redgrave's *Short-Title Catalogue (1475-1640)*, recorded in *Early English Books I*, (*STC I*, Pollard & Redgrave).

²³ Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575). During his lifetime, his works were translated in several languages and counted among the best known theological works in Europe. The most popular were the *Decades* and the *Helvetic Confession* (1566). His letters testify to his influence on the English reformation. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/84467/Heinrich-Bullinger>> [accessed May 2013].

Reformation refers to the idea of a ‘priuate congregation’ in his *Commentary upon the second epistle of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians* (1538)²⁴. He comments the apostle’s advice to his community: ‘these wordes of ye Apostle seme vnto some men, to be vnderstonde of your priuate cuersacion of men: that is to saye, that euery man shulde abstayne so muche as he coulde from the companye and familiaritie, of suche as are dysobedyente [...]’²⁵ Private here is used to distinguish something that affects a group of persons apart from the general community. As in the previous examples, the private denotes something that separates an individual or differentiates his duty or office from the others. In the field of education, Roger Ascham²⁶, private tutor to Princess Elizabeth, wrote *The Scholemaster* (1570)²⁷, a guide to pedagogy or handbook for schoolmasters where he developed a pattern of education for the English aristocracy that became popular in Shakespeare’s days. The title of Ascham’s work specifies that his book is intended for the ‘*priuate brynging vp of youth in ientlemen and noble mens houses* [...]’²⁸, thus suggesting that individual teaching and learning of Latin is more effective, especially when pupils are young and it is easier to instil good habits in them. According to him, the ill choice of words may produce a perverse judgement; therefore, it is the duty of the tutor to teach the right choice and placing of words as soon as possible because ‘[t]hese faultes, taking once

²⁴ Heinrich Bullinger, *A commentary vpon the seconde epistle of S Paul to the Thessalonia[n]s In the which besydes the summe of oure faythe, ther is syncerelye handled [and] set forth at large, not onely fyrst co[m]myng vp [and] rysyng with the full propeyrtie [and] dominion, but also the fall and viter confusion of the kyngdome of Antichriste: that is to say of Machomet [and] the byshop of Rome* [Printed in Southwarke: In S. Thomas hospytall by Iames Nicolson], 1538, *STC* (2nd ed.), 4054.

²⁵ Bullinger, sig. liiii^r.

²⁶ Roger Ascham (1514/15–1568): humanist scholar, author and royal tutor to the young Elizabeth I from 1548-1550. He became ‘a significant figure in English intellectual circles, mainly due to his work on educational theory. *The Scholemaster* (published posthumously), argued against corporal punishment and advocated learning through moral and mental discipline.’ <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-97801953993010167.xml>> [accessed May 2014].

²⁷ Roger Ascham, *The scholemaster or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong but specially purposed for the priuate brynging vp of youth in ientlemen and noble mens houses, and commodious also for all such, as haue forgot the Latin tonge*, An. 1570. At London: Printed by Iohn Daye, dwelling ouer Aldersgate. Cum gratia & priuilegio Regiæ Maiestatis, per decennium, [1570], *STC* (2nd ed.), 832.

²⁸ Ascham, title page.

roote in the yougthe, be neuer, or hardlie, pluckt away in age.²⁹

The figure of Ascham's schoolmaster is interesting not only for its connection to the private activity of teaching which shows an early modern facet of the private, but also because it links it to Shakespeare's recreation of teachers in plays such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and especially in *Love's Labor's Lost*³⁰ with the ludicrous and tyrant Holofernes.

In the *Folio*, we find sixty-four (64) occurrences of the variant spelling "priuate" in Shakespeare's plays, which are headed by *Henry VIII* where the term appears 10 times³¹. The frequency of all the other variants used by Shakespeare in his works (priuat: 1, privately: 6, priuately: 5, priuatly: 1, privates: 2, priuates: 2) ranges between 1 and 6 times, which compared to the recourse to "priuate" is rather low. Due to space restrictions, I will not be able to analyse each of these uses with their corresponding meanings separately; however, it is interesting to point out that although the term "priuy" or "privy" does not appear as a variant of "private"³², its frequency is nine (9), and it is sometimes used indistinctively with private, especially when it refers to specific places or duties, such as a 'privy chamber' (1.4.98) and 'Privy Council' (4.1.112) in *Henry VIII*³³, or in the second

²⁹ Ascham, 'The first booke for the youth', C1r.

³⁰ These are only a few examples of plays where Shakespeare includes a schoolmaster or makes reference to their work. In *King Lear*, for example, the Fool makes a derogatory comment about schoolmasters: 'Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie' (1.4.170). In *Pericles*, Simonides asks Pericles to become her daughter's schoolmaster, but he feels unworthy of that task (2.5.39). Other examples can also be found in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tempest*. In the latter, Prospero is, at the same time, father and schoolmaster.

³¹ The search includes 36 plays. It does not consider the sonnets or long poems. *The First Folio of Shakespeare* prepared by Charlton Hinman, Published by The Oxford Text Archive, 2nd edn (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), The University of Chicago Library, <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/OTA-SHK/restricted/search.form.html>> [accessed January 2014]. I also checked The Shakespeare Concordance Online, <<http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/findform.php>> and found some slight difference in frequency numbers, probably because of the variant spellings and because this search engine includes the Sonnets and long poems. While the Folio website registers the original Elizabethan spelling, the Concordance shows the modern variants and indicates the number of speeches in which the word appears in each listed work.

³² I think this is likely to occur because modern databases usually do not consider old spelling of words.

³³ William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, ed. by Gordon McMullan, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 2000).

case, to perform a ‘privy order’ (*Richard III*, 3.5.106)³⁴.

I will refer now to three of the many dimensions of the private that can be identified in Shakespeare’s works, thus can prompt further discussion of the public/private spatial multifold definitions, as well as shed light on the relational and contextual elements that frame their meaning: the private as opposite and/or complementary to the public, the private as familial or domestic, and the private as individual, intimate, secret or withdrawn.³⁵

1. The Private as Opposite and/or Complementary to the Public

According to Conal Condren, the early modern public, often opposed to the private, was strongly linked to office-holding; however, the problematic issue when defining it is that the notion of office during the sixteenth century did not refer exclusively to specific public offices, but

[a]ny office-holder expressed or exhibited a distinct and contingent moral *persona*, had a field or range of responsibilities to others and to the office itself, and ideally, the *persona* needed to manifest a certain mix of virtues, capacities and technical skills of varying specificity to those ends. Claimed office-holding, then, brought with it an ornate justificatory vocabulary of rights and liberties, responsibility, duty and authority to act.³⁶

Taking into account this usage, Condren explains that an official *persona* was almost always a public figure with public responsibilities in a specific sphere. Within this defining context in which the public was understood, the private became the sphere of those who were subordinate or had to obey those exercising office; therefore, it denoted a passive position, lack of rights for a determined office, and certainly an opposition between those

³⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. by Janis Lull, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁵ Some ideas for this tentative classification have been taken from: Sasha Roberts, ‘Shakespeare “creepes into the womens closets about bedtime”’: Women Reading in a Room of Their Own’, in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices, Bodies, Spaces: 1580-1690*, ed. by Gordon McMullan (UK: Hampshire, Palgrave 2001), pp. 30-63 (p. 32).

³⁶ Conal Condren, ‘Public, Private and the Idea of the “Public Sphere” in Early-modern England’, *Intellectual History Review*, 19.1 (2009), 15–28 (p. 21).

holding public office and those who lacked it and became the passive components of the relationship.

Along this line, Erica Longfellow argues that ‘[b]efore 1700, *private* was essentially a negative term: whatever did not pertain to the nation or community.’³⁷ To some extent, not holding a public office meant being separated or isolated, not engaging actively in a shared sphere of the nation or commonwealth, as Condren also points out when he refers to the range of connotations associated to the private. Sometimes it ‘could mark the defining limit of office, occasionally it was used to designate the worthlessly isolated or trivial’³⁸; however, this antagonism between private and public was relative in everyday life because, regardless of the status that having a public office granted, the ‘whole interlocking aggregation of offices’³⁹, as Sir Thomas Smith describes England, did not necessarily imply to place emphasis on opposition. Moreover, ‘public or private status was also highly contingent and variable; for to assume an active role in office, or to take on a responsibility was to gain a [...] set of liberties of office, which could then easily be expressed as public duties.’⁴⁰ Condren also explains that by extension, the private could include those who wanted to exercise a right that did not correspond to their office, an attitude that was not seen as positive at all.

Modern conceptions of the public, especially the idea of “public sphere” developed by Jürgen Habermas, which considers the public as a potential democratic utopia or a social space of democratic participation where public and private are conflated and jumbled, was definitely not a characteristic of early modern society, as I will discuss when analysing the Habermasian model. When Shakespeare uses the terms public or private, he

³⁷ Erica Longfellow, ‘Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (The North American Conference on British Studies, April 2006), 313–334 (p. 315).

³⁸ Condren, 15–28 (p. 24).

³⁹ Ibid., p. 22. The author makes reference to Sir Thomas Smith’s idea of the nation in *De republica Anglorum: A Discourse of the Commonwealth of England*, ed. by L. Alston (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), pp. 31–46.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

neither refers to this notion of public sphere, nor does he contrast it to the private, as we would understand it in the twenty-first century.

Both in the Introduction and in previous pages of this chapter I have given some examples of different uses of the notion of private, with different semantic connotations that are present in Shakespeare's works. I shall concentrate now, with Condren, on some of the senses that express the absence of public office. In his detailed list of occurrences, the critic points out that almost always Shakespeare uses "public" to indicate a responsibility, whereas "private" qualifies 'actions, circumstances and identities in thirty-two plays, in one sonnet and in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Only once or twice, and then in the mouths of dubious characters, does it refer, in passing, to what might be construed now as a private sphere.'⁴¹ Therefore, the early modern contrast between public and private is not necessarily a question of belonging to different spheres, but rather to be engaged in a different office. Despite the fact that the private is usually invoked as the passive aspect of an official relationship, Condren observes that at the same time it could be 'heavy with the implications of office.'⁴² In this sense, the critic mentions an example from Francis Bacon for whom 'the quintessentially private activity is that of the monk, not one living in a sphere beyond office, but engaged in his offices of devotion to God.'⁴³

An explicit contrast between a given public office or responsibility and the private condition is found in *2 Henry IV*. After Feeble tells Falstaff that he is a woman's tailor and the latter decides he should go to war, the former says that he wishes Wart were going instead of him, but Falstaff explains that he '[...] cannot put him to a private soldier, that is the leader of so many thousands' (3.2.164-65)⁴⁴, a use that in Condren's analysis 'clearly

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 27. See pp.27-28 for more examples of Shakespeare's uses of "private".

⁴² Ibid., p. 23.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 23. The critic cites Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (London, 1606), in *Works*, ed. by Basil Montague, 16 vols (London, 1825), II, pp. 233-4.

⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, ed. by A. R. Humphreys, *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series* (London: Methuen, 1981).

invokes the private as the passive aspect of an official relationship.⁴⁵ I would add that it also reinforces the fact that in that perspective it would not be appropriate to lower rank or responsibility to someone that has been in charge of many. In *Antony and Cleopatra* the Ambassador speaks to Caesar on behalf of Antony and states that ‘A private man in Athens’ (3.12.15) is without public responsibility; that is to say, he does not need to explain or justify his actions to anyone. A similar idea is expressed in *Titus Andronicus* when Tamora and Saturnius are talking about Lucius’ fame and leadership and the emperor expresses his fear that Titus’ son may take revenge of the city as Coriolanus did because when he has ‘walked like a private man’ (4.4.74)⁴⁶ he has heard that common people love him. In the note to this line, Jonathan Bate comments that ‘the motif of the ruler going among his people in disguise and discovering what they think of him is common in both classical history and Renaissance drama [...]’⁴⁷; it means, in Condren’s opinion, to move as a nonentity in the city; that is to say, hiding his public office.⁴⁸ To a certain extent, this example shows that office holding is sometimes vulnerable to circumstances, and to the assessment of others who scrutinise and control the fulfilment of the responsibilities associated to a particular office. In other words, if holding an office corresponds to a private or public ‘practiced place’ in de Certeau’s perspective or to the Lefebvrian ‘lived space’, then it comprises the possibility of being accommodated.

2. The Private as Familial or Domestic

Behind the private/public dichotomy there lies an analogy between public kingdom and private household. It must be noted, however, that these spaces, although related, were not equivalent or interchangeable domains during the early modern period, nor would they be

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 1995).

⁴⁷ Jonathan Bate, n. 74, p. 241.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

nowadays. They shared similar structures – mainly that of male authority: king and patriarch respectively – that made them likely to be contrasted and compared; yet they had different manifestations in everyday life. According to Susan Amussen, ‘the family and the state were inextricably intertwined in the minds of the English women and men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’⁴⁹; so much so that ‘the dichotomy so familiar to us today between private and public is necessarily false when applied to the experience of early modern England.’⁵⁰ In other words, even though within the framework of this analogy the public is specifically contrasted to the private space of home and family, household politics and state politics were closely linked.

‘Home’ makes reference to the ‘household’ and this in turn is defined as ‘the holding or maintaining of a house or family; housekeeping; domestic economy’⁵¹, including both ‘the contents or appurtenances of a house collectively; household goods, chattels, or furniture; household-stuff’⁵² and ‘the inmates of a house collectively; an organized family, including servants or attendants, dwelling in a house; a domestic establishment.’⁵³ In its earliest uses of the English word in Old and Middle English ‘home’ is identified with a community of dwellings and a possession and, as Alison Findlay clearly explains, it makes reference to a double dimension:

At one level, home is something that belongs to one, a place that is idiomatic in the sense of being peculiarly suited to an individual. At the same time, that experience is communal. However different the individual places evoked by the term are, “home” is a concept we all identify with, even if from the outside. Home is architectural, emotional, geographical, and virtual. It can refer to houses, to a feeling of security (being at home), and to wider geographical sites such as a street, town, region, nation.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 2.

⁵⁰ Amussen, p. 2

⁵¹ *OED*, ‘household’, I. 1.

⁵² *OED*, I. 2.

⁵³ *OED*, I. 3. a.

⁵⁴ Alison Findlay, ‘Remaking Homes: Gender and the Representation of Place’, *Home Cultures*, 6.2 (2009), 115-122 (p. 116).

Precisely because of its multi-faceted meaning, giving an unequivocal definition of home is not an easy task. It does not only refer to different things, but is also related to the private in quite complex ways because the early modern home did not only have an indoor supposedly more private dimension, but also a public and communal nature. Besides, due to the fact that privacy is not automatically identified with indoor spaces, the association between home and privacy can become quite problematic. In her thorough analysis of indoor and outdoor privacy that I will discuss in the third chapter, Mary Thomas Crane observes that early modern spaces had different spatial configurations than those we attribute to them at present. Houses in Elizabethan England were ‘colder, darker, smokier, and smellier than ours, so that outdoor space would often be more comfortable and appealing than the indoors.’⁵⁵ Moreover, many early modern dwellings had rooms that opened into each other; therefore, the possibility of achieving privacy indoors was, at least, a very hard task.

In addition to the vexed issues already mentioned, there is also a close semantic relation between “home” and “household”. These definitions can be associated to those of family and domestic⁵⁶, thus transforming them almost into synonyms, since a ‘family’ stands for ‘the servants of a house or establishment; the household’⁵⁷, and ‘the body of persons who live in one house or under one head, including parents, children, servants.’⁵⁸ In fact, as Keith Wrightson argues when dealing with these terms in the context of the early modern period, ‘the household of the sixteenth century – and for long afterwards – can be defined in the first instance as a unit of residence and of authority: a group of people living under the same roof and under the authority of the household head – usually,

⁵⁵ Mary Thomas Crane, ‘Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces In Ealy Modern England’, *The Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9.1 (Spring, 2009), 4-22 (p. 6).

⁵⁶ *OED*, 2. a., ‘domestic’: Of or belonging to the home, house, or household; pertaining to one’s place of residence or family affairs; household, home, ‘family’.

⁵⁷ *OED*, ‘family’, I. 1. a.

⁵⁸ *OED*, I. 2. a.

though not always, an adult male.⁵⁹ In other words, when we speak of the household in this sense, we mean the physical building or house; the group of persons or family that dwell in it, and the furniture and objects that adorn or decorate it, all combined in a hierarchical disposition. Moreover, “home” is also associated to the notion of domesticity, since according to Marilyn Frye, ‘privacy and domesticity comprise overlapping spaces and habits’⁶⁰; therefore, their meaning coincides when privacy is linked to the household, and to domestic chores; yet, it differs because the private is not always equivalent to the household. The semantic link between private and domestic has more to do with the relationship between family and everyday domestic chores such as cooking, embroidering, washing clothes, looking after the children’s education, and the endeavours of household production for the market. It can also be argued, as Georges Duby explains, that although privacy is not only a matter of place, the fact that the household is contained within an enclosure and circumscribed by walls, transforms it into a protected zone, much like a fortress under siege where private domestic life may be safeguarded.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the association between private and domestic does not imply that the concepts can be totally interchanged, because privacy comprises many more activities and situations than exclusively domestic or familial ones. Furthermore, the early modern idea of private domesticity refers, as Duby points out, to the life of the family, not of the individual [,]⁶² thus emphasising its communal nature. As such, the concept does not seem to coincide with the modern idea of individual isolation with which we tend to associate a private sphere. Furthermore, Erica Longfellow argues that the aspects of modern life that we view

⁵⁹ Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 30.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne S. Abate, ‘Introduction: “indistinguished space”’, in *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England*, ed. by Corinne S. Abate (England and USA: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 1-17 (p. 3). The authors quote Marilyn Frye’s ‘To Be and Be Seen. The Politics of Reality’, in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1983), pp. 152-74.

⁶¹ Georges Duby, ‘Introduction’, in *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), II, 1-32 (pp. 6-7).

⁶² Duby, II, pp. 7-8.

as private – ‘religious belief, sexual activity, and family relations – were considered more closely embedded in the community in the early modern period’.⁶³ Paradoxically then, it is not always the individual, but the family, with its social and communal features, that becomes the centre of the private world during this period.

Another issue regarding the term ‘domestic’ is that it is not always identified with a peaceful, familial sphere; sometimes the domestic household has negative connotations. Findlay takes notice of this when she comments that together with the positive experience of a ‘household as a physical summation of past history, dynasty, inheritance’⁶⁴, home can also become ‘a site of claustrophobia and disappointment.’⁶⁵ My opinion is that this unfavourable view of the domestic household was affected partly by the preconceived status the home acquired in domestic tragedy. Henry Hitch Adams defined these works as tragedies of ‘common people, ordinarily set in the domestic scene, dealing with personal and family relationships rather than with large affairs of state, presented in a realistic fashion, and ending in a tragic or otherwise serious manner.’⁶⁶ In fact, adds Nuttall, domestic tragedies did not deal with the domestic world in general, but with real-life murders and scandals within the domestic household.⁶⁷ Even though these plays are set within the household, they do not portray the ordinary everyday life of the domestic sphere; their authors present the household as a contested space where criminal behaviour becomes the norm since extraordinary events such as murder, adultery, and theft between husband and wife occur indoors.

⁶³ Longfellow, 313–334 (p. 326).

⁶⁴ Findlay, 115-122 (p. 116).

⁶⁵ Ibid. (p. 116).

⁶⁶ Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic 1575-1642* (New York: B. Blom, 1965), pp. 1-5, as cited by Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 5. The most popular domestic tragedies were: *Arden of Faversham*, anon. (1592); Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607); Middleton’s (?) *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608), and Rowley, Dekker, and Ford’s *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621).

⁶⁷ Nuttall, p. 133.

A. D. Nuttall refers to two other problems when dealing with the concepts of home and domestic. First, '[t]he word 'domestic' was used of 'what goes on in a house' (in accordance with its etymological derivation from *domus*, 'house') and also of national as opposed to foreign affairs.'⁶⁸ As such, this term simultaneously incorporates the household microcosm and the macrocosm of one's country, nation, or homeland. Before Shakespeare used the term with this last meaning, the anonymous author of *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549), had attached this sense to the word when he stated: 'I hef vsit domestic scottis langage, maist intelligibil for the vlgare pepil.'⁶⁹ Later, Shakespeare also incorporates it, for example, in *King Lear*, when Albany tells Edmund, Regan and Goneril first that the king is coming to see his daughter and then that France is invading their lands, the latter replies: 'For these domestic and particular broils/ Are not the question here' (5.1.30-31), making clear that these internal quarrels do not matter at that moment and that they should concentrate then on fighting the 'external' enemy. Shakespeare particularly plays with the connotations of home/domestic/national in *Coriolanus*, which will be analysed separately in chapter five.

Due to its domestic dimension, the private is usually identified with a feminine space, one that is enmeshed in familial relations, and analogically functions as a microcosm of the State in terms of its interactions and patriarchal hierarchy. In fact, when referring to the literary representations that engage with the gendered quality of home, Findlay defines this space as 'a female space but a male possession.'⁷⁰ Therefore, when dealing with the early modern home, it is necessary to consider gender relations within it.

⁶⁸ A. D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality*, with a new preface by the author (USA: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 133.

⁶⁹ Anon., *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549), Prol. 16, as recorded in *OED*, 3. a. I will omit other examples for space restrictions.

⁷⁰ Findlay, 115-122 (p.119).

a. Early Modern Woman: Unstable Category

Because one of the goals of this study is to unveil the relationship between early modern women and the private space as portrayed by Shakespeare in some of his plays, it will be necessary to refer briefly to the concept of woman during the Elizabethan period. In this way, it will be possible to show how neither the notion of privacy nor that of woman constituted fixed decontextualised units of meaning. Moreover, as Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright point out, ‘one of the most important insights of recent scholarship has been that there is no single homogeneous category of “the early modern woman”. Women’s experiences were affected by many different factors, including rank, age and family situation.’⁷¹ Likewise, the impact of early modern politics, religion and literature on the private had a serious effect on the construction of their identity.

According to Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, ‘the category “woman” was the subject of plenty of writings in early modern England. Through the lenses of medical, scientific, legal, and political frameworks, woman was characterised and known.’⁷² Nevertheless, they argue that this knowledge was provided by male writers whose narratives transmitted the official stereotype of femininity, mainly by preventing women from subverting masculine power.

Most scholarly texts of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, whose main sources were the works of Aristotle and Galen, depicted woman as an imperfect version of man. In fact, as Ian McLean indicates, ‘[f]rom the earliest times, and in the most far-flung cultures, the notion of female has in some sense been opposed to that of male, and aligned

⁷¹ Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, ‘Piety and Sociability in Early Modern Women's Letters’, *Women's Writing*, 13.1 (2006), 44-59 (p. 55).

⁷² Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 15.

with other opposites.⁷³ If man is identified with rationality, eloquence, power, and with outdoor work in the public arena, then woman is associated with emotionality, silence, fragility, and with indoor domestic chores appropriate to the private space. Underpinning this representation of woman as a set of negatives was the assumption that she was also physically and morally inferior to man – a ‘weaker vessel’⁷⁴ – and thus not entitled to the same civil rights as her male counterparts. In fact, very few women became citizens although they constituted roughly one half of London’s population: at that time estimated at no more than 200,000.⁷⁵ According to Steve Rappaport, in order to be recognised as a citizen a person needed to participate fully in political, economic, and social life.⁷⁶ As women’s legal rights depended principally on their marital status, a married woman (*femme covert*), for example, could not engage independently in a craft or trade, whereas a widow (*femme sole*) could dispose of property, contract debts, make wills, etc.⁷⁷ Like Rappaport, David Cressy also points out that widows and women who were heads of households were the only ones to have a certain independence, since even an early modern English wife who was accorded her husband’s rank usually became a glorified servant or existed in her man’s shadow.⁷⁸ Since economic and legal freedom became prerequisites to obtain citizenship, women were seldom granted the right, as they were subordinate to their husbands or fathers according to law.

⁷³ Ian McLean, ‘The Notion of Woman in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology’, in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies. Oxford Readings in Feminism*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: OUP, 1999), pp. 127-155 (p. 127).

⁷⁴ Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Women’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 1. The author traces back the origin of this expression in the words of Saint Peter who, taking Saint Paul’s remarks to the Ephesians, urges husbands to ‘honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel [...]’. The phrase is recorded in Tyndale’s translation of the New Testament into English in 1526 and was given further prominence by the King James Bible.

⁷⁵ Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy, and Society in Past Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 3.

⁷⁶ Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 29, 36.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷⁸ David Cressy, ‘Describing the Social Order of Elizabethan and Stuart England’, *Literature and History*, 3 (March 1976), 29-44 (p. 34).

Feminist criticism argues that the ideology about women systematically published in narratives from the period both attempted to regulate their political, cultural and economic roles, as well as their sexuality.⁷⁹ Women were enjoined to be chaste, silent, and obedient, so much so that their legal rights depended primarily on the practice of those virtues in relation to their marital status. Their social position was defined, as Carol T. Neely explains, ‘by their place in the paradigm of marriage – maid/wife/widow [...]’⁸⁰, and obviously in any of these three states, the home remained the primary site of their lives and education. Not only did the household become their allotted space in early modern writings, but also the institution of marriage was frequently presented as another space, a kind of virtual containment of female disobedience.

The few aspects of discrimination against early modern women considered so far would be enough to foretell their prospect of an inauspicious life. One could keep on gathering evidence on their usually subordinate economic status in terms of acquisition of property and unpaid work, the strict regulation of female sexuality compared to that of men, and their exclusion from formal education; nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that there was a constant tension between early modern narratives and their social and political implications, since, as Phyllis Rackin points out, ‘the fact that male superiority was taken for granted does not mean that every woman was subordinate in every way to every man or that many women did not occupy positions of authority and power that would be considered exceptional even today.’⁸¹

⁷⁹ These are some of the points that Joan Kelly considers in order to determine women’s social and cultural role during the early modern period. See Joan Kelly, ‘Did Women Have a Renaissance?’, in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies. Oxford Readings in Feminism*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 21-47 (p. 22).

⁸⁰ Carol T. Neely, ‘Feminist Criticism and the Teaching of Shakespeare’, Association of Departments of English (ADE) *Bulletin 087* (Fall, 1987), 15-18 (p. 3) <<http://web2.ade.org/ade/bulletin/n087/087015.htm>> [accessed July 2010].

⁸¹ Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women*. Oxford Shakespeare Topics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 27.

It is one thing to be assigned a certain space, but quite another to actually occupy that space, and how this is perceived through personal everyday experience. In other words, women were neither always passive victims of male discourse or violators of it, nor did they always feel confined or imprisoned at home, a fact that is rather difficult to understand given the negative connotation associated with the household, not only after the movements towards women's liberation took place during the twentieth century, but also due to modern feminist and materialistic interpretations. As I shall analyse in the section devoted to early modern writers and their representation of the private, it is fundamental to first read what the texts say and only then read what has been said about them, because some interpretations have become quite biased and ideologised over time.

Lena Cowen Orlin warns us not be seduced by the thought that 'prescriptions were culturally operative in a way that they cannot have been in many women's daily lives. Even though we have told ourselves that such admonitions would not have been necessary had their strictures been generally observed, we have nonetheless persisted in depicting women as victims of unrelenting misogyny, patriarchy, and oppression.'⁸² We tend to forget that in early modern England, as Julia Briggs clearly explains, the word 'patriarchy' 'described a specific political theory then prevailing, that the family and the state were parallel structures, governed by father and monarch respectively'⁸³, rather than our modern association of the concept with social structures discriminately dominated by men. Perhaps one should make the effort to read the subtexts of women's everyday life, rather than to judge their status from the stereotyped recommendations some critics think were imposed on them by male authors. In theory, women could not be independent or transgress household boundaries, yet some of them were apprentices, craftspeople, traders, and many

⁸² Lena Cowen Orlin, 'A Case for Anecdotalism in Women's History: The Witness Who Spoke When the Cock Crowed', *English Literary Renaissance*, 32 (Winter, 2001), 52-77 (p. 74).

⁸³ Julia Briggs, *This Stage-Play World. Texts and Contexts, 1580-1625*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 47.

had opportunities to be active as, for example, in the rearing of children, in the production and distribution of goods and even working in their husband's shops without distinguishing between private and public jobs. As Stephen Orgel has observed,

To define Renaissance culture simply as a patriarchy, to limit one's view to the view the dominant culture took of itself; to assert that within it women were domestic creatures and a medium of exchange is to take Renaissance ideology at its word, and thereby to elide and suppress the large number of women who operated outside the family system, and the explicit social and legal structures that enabled them, in this patriarchy, to do so.⁸⁴

I align myself with the critic since it would certainly be a mistake not only to reduce sixteenth and seventeenth-century women's space to the private household, but also to believe that this domain was always the site of female confinement and conflict between the sexes when, in fact, as proposed at the beginning of this chapter, this microcosm was and will always be a world within another world, thus fundamental to the development of the public macrocosm.

b. Woman's Relationship to the Private and/or Domestic

A second problematic issue regarding woman is related to the widely accepted premise that space is gendered. As such, the private household is seen as a feminised space not only separate from the public arena, but also opposite to it. According to Joan Kelly, 'suffice it to say that [early modern writings on education and domestic life] sharply distinguish an inferior domestic realm of women from the superior public realm of men [...].'⁸⁵ While the former is associated with 'femininity, lower-class servitude, vulgar lore, or a degraded oral culture [...]'⁸⁶, the latter is equated to masculinity, male supremacy – generally in political decision-making and aristocratic cultural traditions. If the private domestic space is

⁸⁴ Stephen Orgel, 'Mankind Witches', in *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 106-126 (p. 125).

⁸⁵ Kelly, pp. 21-47 (p. 23).

⁸⁶ Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity. Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 5.

inferior, then woman's relationship to it is consistent with the belief in her weakness. In fact, during the early modern period, it was conventional to assume that the household, with its own set of material practices, was woman's place. It included 'segregated, sometimes secluded, places for primarily female activities like nursing, sewing, cooking, and caring for children and the sick [...]'⁸⁷, with its concomitant negative characterisation.

If space is seen as a form of material culture, then the private sphere will inevitably become the 'material expression of women's subordination, isolation, marginalization and lack of status.'⁸⁸ Notwithstanding that space and behaviour are related, the distinction between public and private domains should not culminate in a gendered dichotomy in which men and women do not meet and mingle. Although it is impossible to include here a full account of Elizabethan and Jacobean women's daily life within the household, it should be considered, in the words of Erica Longfellow, that 'the boundaries around the early modern household are as porous as those around modern and early modern notions of public and private, [thus, they reflect] the variety of life experiences shaped by household relationships.'⁸⁹ Even though it is quite a challenge to read against the grain of prescriptive literature of the period, early modern everyday life was probably not as polarised as household manuals advocated. According to Retha Warnicke, 'when women are referred to as private people, then the word "private" did not mean simply that they were confined to their households, although those areas were viewed as their specific domains, but that they could not personally conduct public affairs [,]'⁹⁰ or hold public office. Moreover, the critic insists, 'that their lives were private does not mean that women never entered the public

⁸⁷ Abate, pp. 1-17 (p. 2).

⁸⁸ Roberta Gilchrist, 'Symbolism and Seclusion', in *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 150-169 (p. 150).

⁸⁹ Longfellow, 313-334 (p. 318).

⁹⁰ Retha Warnicke, 'Private and Public: The Boundaries of Women's Lives in Early Modern England', in *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England. Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, ed. by Jean R. Brink, (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993), vol. 23, pp. 123-140 (p. 134).

arena or never pursued family business outside the home.’⁹¹ Due to this, yet mainly because of the public and communal nature of the early modern household, we cannot define it as the private space *per se* where women could not engage with the outside world; on the contrary, inside that space, as well as in liminal and illicit spaces, women could build an identity in relation to space and were able to develop a variety of skills that contributed to the fashioning of the public sphere.

c. Woman’s Body and its Relationship to the Private

During the early modern period the association between “woman” and “home” became a conventional widespread symbol, at least in prescriptive literature and household manuals. Even though from the twelfth century Saint Bernard had taken images from the *Song of Songs* that identified the Virgin with a bridal chamber, a door, or a hemmed-in garden, between 1500 and 1700 literary works abounded with new theories about the female body which gave rise to new rules of behaviour and the ‘radical promotion of chastity and modesty in all areas of daily life.’⁹² The relationship between woman and household, and more specifically, between woman’s body and a room was interpreted and reinterpreted again and again, thus attaching to it both positive and negative connotations. The home became the symbol of the chaste woman’s body, an ‘impermeable container [...], an *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed garden walled off from enemies [...],’⁹³ as Peter Stallybrass points out. Thus, a woman’s body became the site of the utmost privacy as well as intimacy. Therefore, as Giorgianna Ziegler notes, ‘[t]he obvious and implied extension is that

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 123-140 (p. 140).

⁹² Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women in the West: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. by Pauline Schmidt Pantel, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992), I, 64.

⁹³ Peter Stallybrass, ‘Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed’, in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 123-142 (p. 129).

allowing a man entry into the house is next to allowing him entry to one's self, and thus jeopardizing one's chastity.'⁹⁴

Partly based on the work of Elisabeth Grosz who takes Luce Irigaray's conception of feminine space and architecture, Crane examines the idea of a physical metaphor for the receptacle-like properties of the woman's womb and a room or enclosed garden. While Grosz rethinks the reciprocal relations between the physical interior and the corporeal exterior of a subject, Irigaray deals with the notion of 'inhabiting places as containers, or envelopes of identity'⁹⁵, which would be connected to the function of woman as 'mother/nurse/receptacle'⁹⁶ and also to Lefebvre's idea of social spaces which, in his view, are not passive containers or 'empty mediums.'⁹⁷ In Crane's perspective, architecture would be modelled on the assumption of

the nurturing enclosure of the female body, so that a homology between the womb and the dwelling place is operative in the subjection of women through their confinement in a private domestic sphere. This may explain why we so readily link interiority with indoor privacy, since there are deep-seated cultural reasons for our tendency to connect enclosure (within the mother's body, within a private space) with the shaping of the subject.⁹⁸

This somewhat physical metaphor for the receptacle-like properties of space implies the idea of woman as *hortus conclusus* to which I have referred before, since Crane explains that early modern gardens, derived from a medieval tradition of enclosed gardens, share concepts with interior spaces such as closets and chambers. In fact, as the critic describes, many large houses had 'privie gardens' close to the house, which often contained enclosed spaces such as bowers and covered walks that 'functioned as a kind of outdoor extension of the house, sometimes offering more opportunity for solitude and

⁹⁴ Georgianna Ziegler, 'My Lady's Chamber: Female Space, Female Chastity in Shakespeare', *Textual Practice*, 4.1 (1990), 73-90 (p. 77).

⁹⁵ Elisabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 121, as cited in Crane, p. 7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112, as cited in Crane, p. 7.

⁹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell, 1991), p. 87. Cfr. chapter 1.

⁹⁸ Crane, 4-22 (p. 7).

privacy than the interior.’⁹⁹ I will analyse this conception of the garden and its association to outdoor privacy in the chapter that deals with *Measure for Measure*.

Whether women opened the privacy of their home/garden, or men transgressed the feminine household boundaries, whenever this private space became shared there was an imminent danger because this space could lose its exclusive and enclosed nature. Elizabethan and Jacobean women were taught since childhood that losing their virginity outside marriage meant being deprived of honour, and especially of a meaningful and respected position in society.

Therefore, it seems fundamental not only to take into consideration the positive and negative connotations that early modern culture attached to the woman-home relationship, but also to deal with the notions of private and public from a contextual-historical perspective when analysing Shakespeare’s plays. Otherwise, one could get a partial interpretation influenced by the lens of post-modern thought, thus change the meaning these works had within a determined time and, certainly, within a specific dramatic period. In spite of the fact that addressing the relationships within the public/private divide involves dealing with vexed and entangled concepts as well as engaging in what Catharine Gray has called a ‘[c]ritical account of a multiple, dynamic, and historically specific private’¹⁰⁰, the task is worth embracing since these concepts were in use during Shakespeare’s lifetime – albeit not always matching our contemporary approach, yet shaping many of the cultural features of the age. The metaphorical creeping of these non-dramatic terms into literary discourse, particularly drama, reveals how the concepts of public and private with its many associated words – domestic, household, family – became pivotal not only in fashioning early modern ideological trends, but also becoming, as Gray points out, ‘powerful tools for feminist criticism and the de-politicization of women’s

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Catharine Gray, *Women Writers and Public Debate in Seventeenth-century Britain* (London: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2007), p. 5.

oppression under changing forms of patriarchy [...]’¹⁰¹ in post-modern societies. It is precisely because of this that one needs to be extremely careful when dealing with the texts in an endeavour to be as faithful as possible to what they say, thus avoiding anachronistic interpretation.

3. The Private as Individual, Intimate, Secret, Withdrawn

One of the difficulties when explaining the private is its critical ambiguity since, as Jeff Weintraub argues, the term comprises the individual, the family,¹⁰² or confidential relationships such as sex. Moreover, the private, that is, the familial or domestic space, is not only understood as the opposite of the public. The *OED* adds, as it has been summarised at the beginning of this section, that ‘private’ might also mean ‘not open to the public’¹⁰³, ‘kept or removed from public view or knowledge; secret [...]’¹⁰⁴, thus attaching a different connotation to the term, as it seems to imply both a certain voluntary separation from the outside world as well as an atmosphere of secrecy. This sense of the private is also associated with the concept of private activities and private places for which the entries in the *OED* read respectively: ‘relating to or connected with activities restricted to one person or a few people’¹⁰⁵ when those activities presuppose ‘a private affair or thing’¹⁰⁶ and in the case of places: ‘unfrequented, secluded; affording privacy.’¹⁰⁷ ‘Privacy’ in turn is defined as ‘the state or condition of being alone, undisturbed, or free from public attention, as a matter of choice or right; seclusion; freedom from interference or

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰² Jeff Weintraub, ‘Preface’, in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. xi-xvii (p. xv).

¹⁰³ *OED*, ‘Private’, I. 2.a.

¹⁰⁴ *OED*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ *OED*, II.

¹⁰⁶ *OED*, C.n.I.A.

¹⁰⁷ *OED*, II.9.

intrusion.¹⁰⁸ This idea of privacy referring to the individual gained prominence in Northern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whereas in England the concept of withdrawal attached to the private is not recorded in the language until the seventeenth century. However, as Giorgianna Ziegler suggests, ‘the related concept of privacy as “the state or condition of being withdrawn from the society of others” finds one of its first expressions in the writings of Shakespeare, although in its more common form ‘privy’ the term and concept date back to the twelfth century.’¹⁰⁹ Along the same line of thought, Longfellow claims that most of the definitions of privacy used in the seventeenth century refer to things, places, information, and even body parts that are accessible or visible only to a few people, thus suggesting that the early neutral opposition between private and public was gradually replaced by the different values attached to either private or public life depending on different circumstances.¹¹⁰ However, it was not until 1814 that the question of personal choice or the right to be alone and undisturbed became a vexed social issue.

If the isolation or separation provided by privacy implies what James Knowles calls ‘an inescapably public gesture of withdrawal’¹¹¹, individuals would need to set material, behavioural or psychological boundaries around a space in order to transform it into a private sphere. The first could be, for example, building a wall, shutting a door, drawing a curtain; the second might be created by a person’s actions or activities, in which case those become the dividing line between public and private domains. Some of these human actions could be as subtle as to lower the pitch or tone of voice in order not to be heard by others, to keep quiet, or to perform a task that keeps one isolated or apart from other

¹⁰⁸ *OED*, ‘Privacy’, n. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Ziegler, 73-90 (p. 73).

¹¹⁰ Longfellow, 313-334 (p. 315).

¹¹¹ McMullan, p. 32. The author quotes the early modern scholar James Knowles.

people, for instance, reading or writing¹¹². The psychological boundaries of privacy could be the product of imagination where it builds an illusory barrier against others or simply creates a personal inner world on which no one can impinge. No matter how a space shifts from public to private and then to intimate – as the latter seems to imply a deeper degree of privacy – in this search for privacy there is always, as Sasha Roberts states, ‘a controlling act – the ability to choose your own companions, or to be alone – enabled by material conditions: the creation of withdrawn, hidden, personal or secure spaces.’¹¹³ I would argue that this privacy could also be brought about by a controlling act of language when, for example, a person keeps silent, speaks in a cryptic way, purposely keeps information confidential, or does not tell the truth.

But, could early modern women easily identify these material and linguistic requirements? Was the feminine prescribed domestic privacy, if that was women’s space, the result of a ‘controlling act’ or the consequence of determined social circumstances? Was it an image created by early modern narratives, which, perhaps without realising, developed a conceptual privacy, rather than mirrored or imitated a ‘lived private space’ or a ‘practiced private place’ in Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s sense?¹¹⁴

In her study about women’s spaces in early Stuart England, Retha Warnicke points out that ‘[p]rivate and public matters were organized somewhat differently than now but with distinctions that were just as obvious and definitive’¹¹⁵, thus reinforcing the two-fold dimension of the public/private dichotomy: spheres of existence that are connected and opposed at the same time. Early modern people had a clear understanding of these terms in their everyday life since, for example, such activities as christenings and weddings took

¹¹² I will deal with the notion of privacy related to the activities of reading and writing in chapter IV, pp. 178-92.

¹¹³ Sasha Roberts, ‘Shakespeare “creeps into the womens closets about bedtime”’: Women Reading in a Room of Their Own’, in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices, Bodies, Spaces: 1580-1690*, ed. by Gordon McMullan (UK: Hampshire, Palgrave 2001), pp. 30-63 (p. 33).

¹¹⁴ Cfr. Chapter I

¹¹⁵ Warnicke, pp. 123-140 (p. 140).

place in the public setting of a church, whereas the rituals surrounding death usually began at home.¹¹⁶ In addition to this, as the critic argues, '[p]eople differentiated sharply between public business that was accomplished on behalf of the community, and private economic enterprise that was undertaken, often in the household, for family gain.'¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, this awareness of the private or public nature of social practices did not necessarily encourage the early moderns to live up to the rhetoric of separate spheres, nor did it make them always conscious of the implications of spatial movements from one sphere to the other.

In his analysis on the idea of public sphere, Conal Condren comments that 'the private could also connote what was hidden beyond public scrutiny, what was secret, and this is superficially familiar.'¹¹⁸ No doubt, this sense of the term made the act of withdrawal rather suspicious and sometimes it was also associated with forms of conspiracy. In Shakespeare, argues Condren, this usage is often related to 'dealings between two people removed from the main scene, in secret from other interested parties, the audience sometimes being privy to the deliberations [,]'¹¹⁹ for instance, when Don John wants to tell Don Pedro that Hero is disloyal in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the latter asks him whether he wants to speak 'In private?' (3.2.75)¹²⁰ so that Claudio cannot listen to the conversation. Sometimes this sense can be expressed in a stage direction within the text, as in the case of *King Lear* when Gloucester tries to take the king into the house to protect him from the storm, but he says he needs to ask Edgar 'one word in private'

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

¹¹⁸ Condren, 15–28 (p. 23).

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

¹²⁰ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. by Claire McEachern, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Cengage Learning, 2006).

(3.4.156)¹²¹. Lear's wish to approach Gloucester's son in this way implies, as R. A. Foakes comments, 'for Lear and Edgar to move away from the others.'¹²²

Condren also examines the inscrutability of the private when it connotes suspicion or dubiety as well as its connection to isolation and triviality when it marks the defining limit of office.¹²³ This last sense is very well conveyed by Touchstone's words in *As You Like It*, when he refers to the private as 'a very vile life' (3.2.16)¹²⁴ because he lacks company and has no access to the public life of the court where he should be working as a jester.

In sum, while the modern opposition of spheres often results in antagonism, polarity or antithesis, the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages seem to have conflated the public and the private in a framework of distinct yet analogically complementary spheres. Behind the apparent public/private contrast there was a clear interpenetration of spaces that gave rise to tensions embedded not only between kingdom and household, but also between religious-prescriptive teachings and the individual experience and interpretation of them.

B. THE PRIVATE AFTER SHAKESPEARE: MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL AND POLITICAL APPROACHES TO THE PRIVATE¹²⁵

My objective in this section is to show both how the idea of private space has evolved and how literary critics and scholars today quite often analyse the dramatist's work by applying notions that were developed a long time after Shakespeare lived and wrote his plays. Philosophy is one of the areas where the public/private distinction has played a key role in terms of becoming a conceptual framework that aims to explain reality. From materialistic

¹²¹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R. A. Foakes, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson, 1997).

¹²² *Ibid.*, n. 156, p. 283.

¹²³ Condren, p. 24.

¹²⁴ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. by Juliet Dusinberre, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006; repr. 2007).

¹²⁵ In the first version of the thesis, this section was much longer and included a more detailed analysis of each author with his/her theory.

to analytical approaches, philosophers have attempted to disentangle the complex interplay between the public and private domains. The public/private dyad does not only overlap with philosophical and political issues, but is also present in many different fields of discourse and areas of knowledge. The pendulum of philosophical thought has oscillated from Aristotle's opposition of spheres to the medieval non-antithetical separation, to finally reach the modern dialectical and post-modern antagonistic polarity of spaces.

The philosophical body of discourse needs to be acknowledged and appreciated, as it contributes with theoretical material on the private, but it must be scrutinised and discussed. Some of these works are purely theoretical, whereas others are more relevant to the early modern period, and as such they may shed light on the Shakespearean context. However, it is important to note that within this area of knowledge most approaches are heavily burdened with ideologies, mainly Marxist and Feminist. Thus, when looking at early modern literary works from these perspectives, one should always bear in mind that the connotations attached by some philosophers to the private space belong to the modern or post-modern periods and, as such, were certainly not in use, or at least not used in the same sense, during Shakespeare's lifetime. I will offer a very brief summary of some of the philosophical theories on the private that have fed literary criticism and have influenced our understanding of privacy in early modern drama.

Aristotle's *Politics*, has yielded very different responses within the philosophical arena.¹²⁶ His ideas on women and household were taken by authors of conduct literature such as Xenophon and Juan Luis Vives to justify woman's subordination to man, and many centuries later they were appropriated by critics who advocate for the polarity of

¹²⁶ Authors such as J. B. Elshtain have tried to vindicate the claims of the private sphere by studying the parallel development of public male and private female gender roles. From a feminist perspective, Elshtain takes the Aristotelian Greek division between women who are subsumed in the household and cannot participate in public decision-making, and men who become public as they play an active role in politics. See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman in Social and Political Thought* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981).

spheres and place women, thus female characters, within the private space which they see as marginal, enclosed and inferior.

Political and social theorists such as Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar have also examined the public/private dyad, seeking to elucidate the conceptual opposition and suggesting, instead, a ‘fruitful cross-fertilization and reasoned contestation.’¹²⁷ In other words, to examine how the senses these concepts acquired are the result of different cultural processes of revision, change, and addition. Starting from the notion that ‘public and private are used [...] to distinguish different *kinds* of human action – and beyond that, the different realms of social life, or the different physical and social spaces, in which they occur’¹²⁸, both scholars undertake a critical revision of the major uses of these concepts¹²⁹ and argue that one should avoid assuming that the public/private distinction is always equivalent to that of political/non-political, an idea that is extremely relevant to the question of women’s spaces in the early modern period and one which should be considered when interpreting the role of female characters in Shakespeare’s plays. On the one hand, these theorists point out that the nature of the ‘political’ is usually ambiguous, and on the other, they argue that conceptual mappings in different fields of discourse present problems because the public/private distinction is socio-historically variable.

Perhaps Hannah Arendt has been one of the most influential political thinkers and philosophers of the twentieth century who have dealt with issues of public and private life

¹²⁷ Weintraub, p. xii.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹²⁹ Even though Weintraub and Kumar’s research is very useful to understand the development and evolution of these concepts, these scholars do not apply their analysis to literature. They rather look at the private from different perspectives: the liberal-economic model, which considers the public/private divide in terms of the distinction between the state administration and the market economy; the republican-virtuous (and classical) approach, which defines the public as related to citizenship and the political community, distinguishing it from the market and the administrative state; the socio-historical and anthropological perspective of Philippe Ariès, and the feminist tendency that separates the public and the private in terms of their distinction between the family and the larger economic and political order.

in modern society. In *The Human Condition*¹³⁰, the author introduces the category of the ‘social’ as a realm alternative to both the private and the public by drawing examples from the Greek *polis*, as well as from Hegel’s social framework of family, civil society, and state. In her tripartite model of modern society – private, public, and social – she presents the latter as a derivative of the other two, yet this was not originally found in the Greek world.¹³¹ Unlike feminist critics, Arendt does not present these spheres as gendered spaces, but rather as modes of being that depend mainly on the locality where a person moves. In her view, the notion of ‘private’ could be equated to ‘the givens of life (one’s sex, one’s ethnicity, etc.)’¹³², whereas the public realm, whose rise is distinctive to modernity and directly related to citizenship, would be the space where the ‘individual’s personhood or personality [...] is established [...] through speech and deeds in the company of others’¹³³ or in a certain common world.

If we apply Arendt’s theory to the early modern period, a figure like Elizabeth I would fit in this framework. Women were off the public stage, yet the Queen’s authority contradicted conventional ideas of female subordination, for in Arendtian terms, her ‘persona’ represented the publicly created being. Elizabeth I acquired a dual status as a woman and a monarch, being able to go against preconceived ideas that the public realm was always the place for men. In her role of Queen, as Susan D. Amussen comments, ‘she had an unusual degree of control over her own life’¹³⁴; as a woman, she had to follow certain gendered patterns of conduct: ‘she was still constrained by many of the norms that

¹³⁰ Maurizio Passerin d’Entreves, ‘Hannah Arendt’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Fall, 2006), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2006/entries/arendt/> [accessed June 2009].

¹³¹ Margaret Betz Hull, ‘Hannah Arendt, The Arendtian Person: Hannah Arendt as Jew, Hannah Arendt as Woman’, in *The Hidden Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), pp. 123-170 (p. 128).

¹³² Betz Hull, p. 129.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹³⁴ Susan Dwyer Amussen, ‘Elizabeth I and Alice Balstone: Gender, Class, and the Exceptional Woman in Early Modern England’, in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. by Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 219-40 (p. 220).

affected other women in patriarchal society.’¹³⁵ In fact, as Cerasano and Wynne-Davies explain in the introduction to the collection of essays on the images of Queen Elizabeth during the early modern period, in the arena of the Court, ‘educated women had more freedom to create for themselves an identity that could be simultaneously private and public.’¹³⁶ Specifically, in the case of the Queen, this double role was reinforced by her cult of virginity, which, according to L. A. Montrose, allowed her to fashion herself ‘into a singular combination of Maiden, Matron, and Mother [that] transformed the normal domestic life-cycle of an Elizabethan female into what was at once a social paradox [...]’.¹³⁷ From an Arendtian perspective, Elizabeth could shape her political identity not only through her visual representations, but also through her public speeches. In Shakespearean drama, language fulfils a similar function: it creates fictional female identities, sometimes by means of legal or commercial vocabulary, as in the case of *The Merchant of Venice*.¹³⁸

From a socio-philosophical perspective and influenced to some extent by Hannah Arendt’s conception of modernity and citizenship¹³⁹, Jürgen Habermas published *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*¹⁴⁰ in which he analyses the development of a bourgeois public sphere during the

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 220. I will refer in more detail to Queen Elizabeth’s education and life when I deal with conduct literature in Chapter III, section B., pp. 127-76.

¹³⁶ S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, “‘From Myself My Other Self I Turned’: An Introduction”, in *Gloriana’s Face: Women, Private and Public in the English Renaissance*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1992), pp. 1-24 (p. 8).

¹³⁷ Louis Adrian Montrose, “‘Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture”, *Representations*, 2 (Spring, 1983), 61-94 (p. 80). The author explains that part of Elizabeth’s self-mastery was enhanced by an elaboration of her maidenhood into a cult of virginity.

¹³⁸ Because of space constraints, I cannot expand more on this topic here. I will comment on it when I analyse Shakespeare’s plays in the final chapters of the thesis.

¹³⁹ Passerin d’Entreves explains that according to Arendt, there are three features of the public sphere and of the sphere of politics in general that are central to citizenship. First, its artificial or constructed quality which consists of the fact that public life and political activities are man-made and constructed, rather than natural or given. Second, its spatial quality, which has to do with the fact that political activities are located in a public space where citizens are able to meet. Third, the distinction between public and private interests.

¹⁴⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Great Britain: Polity

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the key element to unravel the origin of the public/private dichotomy. In his attempt to give a historical overview of the philosophical problem he also goes back to Aristotelian Greece since, according to him, all modern divisions of public and private have their roots within this culture, where the *polis* was the site of discussion and collective action and the household that of domestic chores. In his perspective, the citizens' role in society was defined by 'their private [...] autonomy as masters of households on which their participation in public life depended.'¹⁴¹ However, Habermas omits a characteristic feature of the Greek world where the private and the public functioned as gendered spheres, and in so doing he leaves women aside from the discussion. Like Aristotle, he ignores women's exclusion from the public sphere and consequently their possible access to 'alternate publics, counter-publics, or subaltern publics'¹⁴², concepts that critics such as Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner adopt in their analysis of the public/private dyad at present¹⁴³ and one that may be linked back to the group of second generation feminist writers I have critiqued in the introductory chapter because, in my view, they sometimes analyse early modern texts ignoring the context in

Press, 1989). The book was originally published in 1962 as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*.

¹⁴¹ Habermas, p. 3.

¹⁴² McKeon, p. 48.

¹⁴³ See Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: Mass, and England: London, The MIT Press, 1992), pp.109-42, and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002). Another aspect of Habermas's theory that has been highly contested is that of the scope of his public sphere in terms of participation and openness to the general public. Nancy Fraser, modern feminist critical theorist, contends that his analysis of the public domain needs to undergo some critical interrogation and proposes an alternative conception of the public that claims for social equality. Her 'alternative publics' refer to parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, peoples of colour, etc. – can participate. Fraser's model tends to emphasise the contestatory function of subaltern publics, thus submitting to a dialectic ideology that rests force to her ideas as they become politically biased. Michael Warner's project, *Publics and Counterpublics*, derives from the work of Habermas, yet at the same time challenges the lack of inclusiveness of the Habermasian public. He is more concerned with the idea of creating publics; that is to say, new forms of social expression and association that are not only open to counterpublics, but also frame people's behaviour based on the reflexive circulation of discourse, be it a published book, a broadcast show, a delivered speech, and so forth.

which they were written, thus they misunderstand the meaning that some notions had at that particular historical period.¹⁴⁴

Going back in history, Habermas explains that before the Renaissance these spaces were still closely entwined so that ‘a public sphere in the sense of a separate realm distinguished from the private sphere cannot be shown to have existed in the feudal society of the High Middle Ages.’¹⁴⁵ According to the philosopher, a spatial and conceptual division of domains was the consequence of the rise of political liberalism and capitalism in Europe during the eighteenth century, much later than early modernity. He admits that the very concepts of public and private could have changed throughout time until they became opposites, yet he thinks the definite split resulted from the new economic structures that started regulating the market in Europe by the end of the 1700s. A more public system of exchange dominated household production, thus prompting the emergence of a bourgeois or civil society¹⁴⁶ – a key socio-economic factor probably inherited from Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*¹⁴⁷ – that in the Habermasian formulation is linked to the gradual shift towards the distinction between private and public spaces. It is precisely because Habermas understands civil society to be a system of social relations based on the association of people independently of the State and the family that he sees

¹⁴⁴ Cfr. ‘Introduction’, pp. 8-10.

¹⁴⁵ Habermas, p. 7. Most early modern scholars, namely Philippe Ariès, Georges Duby, Lena Cowen Orlin, Roger Chartier, Janette Dillon, and Natasha Korda agree on the medieval interdependence of domains, and extend it to include most of the early modern period, since they observe that in ordinary daily life the private realm was profoundly caught up in the requirements of the public arena and, therefore, these spheres were not completely disconnected. Korda, for example, comes across evidence of transition from household *oeconomics* to market economy represented in women’s changing relation to the household as regards property and suggests that the home became not only an area of consumption, but mainly a production site of consumer goods whose value was determined ‘outside the home, by the market and by the culture at large.’ (See Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ The German *Bürgerlicher Gessellschaft*, literally “bourgeois society”, is usually translated into English as “civil society”.

¹⁴⁷ By bourgeois society, we understand that phase of social development in which the Bourgeoisie, the Middle Class, the class of industrial and commercial Capitalists, is, socially and politically, the ruling class, which is now the case more or less in all the civilised countries of Europe and America. In Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, the concept denotes not only the realm of production and exchange of goods, but also the site where all other economic relationships occur. It was Hegel who showed that the growth of the civil society was the most characteristic feature of modern society in which the state was inseparable from the kinship system that determined the station and even the occupation of every person.

the public space as a place of socio-political discussion. He recognises that the explosion of the printing industry – newspapers, pamphlets and books – began to exert a powerful influence on political life separate from the traditional ruling system pursued by the king and the aristocracy. It was not simply the growth of publishing that created the public sphere, but the opportunity for individuals to meet and discuss national issues, reach consensus and shape public opinion. This ‘virtual collectivity’ – an idea borrowed from Hegel’s old-left notion of the collective – could be better defined as a social space of conversation and rational debate enhanced by public practices of reading, writing, and publishing.

In spite of Habermas’s contribution to the understanding of the public, some of his ideas are questionable. First, the relationship between material texts and discursive public manifestations is not always exact, since generally there are no textual records of these events. Furthermore, reading and writing can become public practices, yet they are usually private affairs, at least they were so for many people during the early modern period¹⁴⁸. Secondly, Habermas’s public space is not open to women at all; therefore, one might challenge his understanding of the public domain as many groups were excluded from it and participation was limited. Thirdly, he does not refer to the spatial dimension of the public sphere. Even though he mentions coffee houses, literary salons and political clubs as meeting places, he prefers to dwell on more abstract theories and on new forms of public expression.

According to Conal Condren, some early modern scholars have adopted the Habermasian model and projected post-modern notions onto the past. He notes that ‘[d]espite the value of much recent scholarship formally relying on some understanding of the Habermasian concept, the argument is that the application of it is discrepant with, and

¹⁴⁸ I will analyse the activities of reading and writing in relation to their public and private dimensions in chapter IV, which is dedicated to female writers.

has helped obscure, early-modern notions of public and private.’¹⁴⁹ In fact, many early modern scholars have anachronistically applied the Habermasian model to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama without generating adaptations that help to sustain its usefulness or, in Condren’s words, they have not made ‘a clear historiographical voice-change [...] that can signal the licit but limited employment of chronologically alien concepts either to explain or offer some heuristic point of illumination.’¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the critic argues that there’s no evidence to prove Habermas’s theoretical model of public sphere during the early modern period.

The criticism I set out in the Introduction¹⁵¹ against some second generation feminist scholars goes precisely in the line of Condren’s objections to Habermas’s application of his model to the sixteenth century, though mainly regarding the role of women in the public sphere. I believe that ignoring the cultural context when interpreting drama can lead to a misunderstanding of fundamental clues to understand the plays. For example, if critics approach the situation of women and of female characters from twenty-first century paradigms, they will obviously consider that subordination to patriarchal authority and repression of their freedom constituted the prevailing ideology. Despite the fact that the access to politics, property, and education was usually denied to most women or it was not offered on equal grounds than to men, viewing their condition through the lens of current trends in psychology, human rights or political and economic development would be a mistake because Elizabethans were not completely aware of them; they behaved according to their social, religious and cultural standards. I do not mean to say that early modern women did not experience discrimination in many areas of their existence, but I think it is not fair to extrapolate or attach ideological connotations to their

¹⁴⁹ Condren, p. 15.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 17. The critic makes reference to David Norbrook, ‘Women, the Republic of Letters and the Public Sphere in the Mid-seventeenth Century’, *Criticism*, 46.2 (2004), 223-40 (p. 223).

¹⁵¹ I want to make clear that despite this objection, I do acknowledge and appreciate the insightful work of Feminists in the study and analysis of early modern drama in many other aspects.

circumstances that are not applicable to that period of time. In Condren's words this means that 'theoretical models have their meanings defined by the enterprise in which they are located [,]'¹⁵² unless the model is adapted or evidence to prove it is found. Otherwise, it should not be anachronistically applied because it will result in a nuanced and incomplete picture of the early modern world.

Another attempt to trace back the emergence of the private/domestic sphere can be found in the work published by Michael McKeon in 2005 in which he analyses the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century emergence of domesticity as it occurred in different areas of society, such as family, politics, economy, print culture, and architecture, among others. In this process of differentiation, the critic discusses several issues that could be relevant for the study of the private in the early modern period. First, the long-term change from relationships of distinction to relationships of separation between the public and the private; then, the conceptual and material separation of both concepts; and finally, domesticity's coalescence with the private, an idea that the author links to the modern domestic novel, but one that also evokes the spaces of early modern women.

According to McKeon, understanding the public/private dyad is central to our view of the past and the modern division of knowledge. By conceiving the relationship between private and public modes of experience as a *distinction* that does not admit *separation*, and taking these two terms as a leading thread in the discussion, the author concludes that the modern separation of these spheres is 'an "explicitation" of what tacitly had always been there but now, in becoming explicit, also takes on a new life.'¹⁵³ He acknowledges the effort to engage the discursive and formal features of privacy and domesticity, as they are prone to shifts in attitudes and historical transitions. However, he recognises that 'the

¹⁵² Condren, p. 15.

¹⁵³ McKeon, pp. xix-xx.

public and the private have been fruitfully susceptible to representation through spatial metaphor [...]’¹⁵⁴, a fact that is pivotal to the endeavour of mapping the private space.

McKeon traces back the emergence of domestic space in the architectural history of the home in early modern England. According to him, the subdivision of spaces within the household created the necessary atmosphere for private occasions that were not possible during medieval times. Even though he does not reduce privacy to a material space and accepts that the search for it took a variety of forms, McKeon’s model of domesticity suggests the idea that the smaller a space, the more private it is, a notion that has been challenged by modern critics such as Crane and Orlin.¹⁵⁵

Despite the variability, ambiguity, and difficulty of the public/private distinction – a fact that needs to be recognised and confronted – all these modern authors insist that the richness and apparent indispensability of this grand dichotomy in different areas of knowledge should also be appreciated.¹⁵⁶ In other words, being aware of the complex ways in which these spheres are articulated in real life, can prevent one from forgetting a core issue: post-modern culture is dominated by different dualisms: body and soul, faith and reason, nature and nurture, private and public, to mention but a few. Scholars divide and separate the private from the public for the purpose of analysis, yet, phenomenologically speaking, these entities are intrinsically integrated realities; they constitute two sides of the same coin.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. xxi.

¹⁵⁵ I will discuss this issue in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

CHAPTER III:

**LOOKING FOR THE MATERIAL PRIVATE
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

Looking for the private in early modern England should not be limited to a conceptual research; rather, the acknowledgement of some material, cultural, and literary aspects, that might have contributed to enable different degrees of privacy, constitute valuable information on how Elizabethan and Jacobean people – among these, Shakespeare – experienced and understood this space. Evidently, it would be ideal to interview a group of Londoners who lived during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to listen to their everyday dealings with the private; however, today historians have other useful sources like remains of buildings, city and home plans, inventories of domestic goods and chattels, that need to be carefully interpreted to establish whether they could have had any impact on the birth and further fashioning of the private.

In this section, a rather more ‘material’ private will be approached from an architectural perspective; that is to say, by examining the changes that began to reshape the organisation and distribution of rooms within the household during the early modern period. If, as de Certeau argues, a place is transformed into a space as a result of people’s actions, movements, and experiences, then it becomes quite clear that a specific place can be modified, not only because its physical boundaries may be restructured, but also due to the activities performed within its walls. Human agency seems to be the key that opens new spaces, since individuals can modify them; however, material boundaries also play an important role in their transformation, as they might either enhance or hinder specific behaviours. Even though, as Frank E. Brown states, ‘space is not determinative of human activity, it is equally true that patterns of activity and behaviour are not entirely independent of their spatial locus [...]’¹; therefore, the analysis of changes in the spatial configuration of sixteenth-century homes might show both the social changes behind them

¹ Frank E. Brown, ‘Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space Organisation in Seventeenth-Century London’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 28.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 558-90 (p. 558).

and the ways in which adaptation of these buildings might have either facilitated or inhibited the experience of privacy.

A. ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORIANS' PERSPECTIVES: THE MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS OF PRIVACY

Architectural and social historians have undoubtedly played an important role in the analysis and understanding of the nature of the private. In fact, they have established a set of paradigms regarding the material and cultural requirements of privacy, thus not only considering the household as the private space *per se*, but also as women's place. According to many of them – Hoskins, Ariès, Girouard, and McKeon – the early modern desire for privacy motivated a series of architectural, social and economic transformations that had a deep impact on the history of private life in England. They argue that changes in the size, distribution and specialisation of domestic space created the 'ideal' conditions for privacy; therefore, they tend to assume that spatial subdivision into small and separate rooms enabled house dwellers to set themselves apart in order to attain privacy.

1. W. G. Hoskins and The Great Rebuilding of Early Modern England

According to W. G. Hoskins, the Great Rebuilding² was one of the most relevant architectural transformations that took place in England from 1570 to 1640 when longhouses in the countryside were remodelled. Even though evidence of this revolution in English housing, as he calls it, was more noticeable in rural areas than in cities, he argues that there were two aspects that show changes that had not taken place before. As he clearly explains, '[t]here was, first, the physical rebuilding or substantial modernisation of the medieval houses that had come down from the past; and there was, almost

² W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England 1570-1640', *Past and Present*, 4 (1953), 44-59 (pp. 44-45).

simultaneously, a remarkable increase in household furnishings and equipment.’³ In fact, he stresses the idea that this process was not a complete rebuilding, but a modernisation that was usually reflected in structural adaptations such as, for example, inserting a ceiling in the hall that produced the space for a living room and parlour on the ground floor and bedrooms above. As a result, he points out, houses ‘necessitated in turn the making of a staircase leading to the bedrooms, itself a major structural alteration. Further partitions divided the larger medieval rooms into smaller ones, and more windows and fireplaces were then required.’⁴ The development of these types of house with smaller and separate rooms, was made possible not only because of the addition of walls, but also by two contemporary commodities: coal for domestic heating (at least for the half of England that did not rely on burning wood⁵), and cheaper glass for windows. As a result, Hoskins argues, ‘new rooms could be warmed more easily, and there could be more and larger windows.’⁶ He assigns windows such a crucial role in the development of privacy that he even proposes a list of what he considers linked facts for such development of privacy: ‘More warmth; more light; more space and better ventilation; more privacy.’⁷ It might seem surprising to think that including more glass windows in a house could have enhanced privacy in such a direct way as the author suggests, yet, in a certain way, it might have done so.

Coming from the Old Norse word ‘vindauga’, from ‘vindr-wind’ and ‘auga-eye’, a ‘window’ – first recorded as a term in the thirteenth century – meant literally ‘wind eye’. Primitive windows were just holes or openings in roofs, walls, ships, or carriages, to admit light or air, or both, or to afford a view of what was outside or inside.⁸ Glazing was partial

³ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸ *OED*, window, n., 1. a.

in England until glass became common in windows of ordinary homes only by the early seventeenth century; nevertheless, this increasing use of glass became a symbol of change that rendered houses ‘curious to the eye like paperwork.’⁹ Even though the first glass windows were not as large and translucent as modern ones, the possibility of looking through them from both inside and outside enabled house dwellers to regulate their privacy up to a certain extent, as they could cover windows with animal hide, cloth or wood, if they did not want to be seen. They could also shut curtains or close shutters, thus exercising a free act of withdrawal from external viewers. Neighbours, on the other hand, could observe and pry into other people’s lives, thus sometimes triggering voyeurism, feeding their gossip, and often provoking disputes that finally transformed the intimate domestic dealings of the family into public issues. Regarding gossip, Bernard Capp argues that a ‘gossip network’ or circle of close friends became quite fundamental in the lives of early modern women, since they ‘turned constantly to their friends and neighbours for advice or assistance, making the home a social as well as domestic space, and would linger to exchange news whenever they met acquaintances in the street, shop, or market.’¹⁰ Evidently, the point here is not whether there is a direct relationship between glass windows and gossip – a behaviour that seems inherent to human beings – but to exemplify how an architectural change might have offered more or less opportunities for privacy.¹¹

By the mid fifteenth century, houses underwent a complex series of changes that have been described mainly as ornamentation and household modernisation in plan arrangement and distribution. Nevertheless, according to Hoskins, what could have contributed more specifically to the creation of private spaces was the reduction of the size

⁹ William Harrison, *An Historicall Description of the Iland of Britaine* (London, 1587), excerpt from the original text quoted in Lena Cowen Orlin, *Elizabethan Households: An Anthology* (Washington D.C: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1995), p. 7.

¹⁰ Bernard Capp, ‘Patriarchy and the World of Gossips’, in *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Social History, ed. by Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 26-68 (p. 52).

¹¹ Shylock’s anxiety with respect to his house’s windows in *The Merchant of Venice* is a good example of the relationship between architecture and different forms of privacy.

of some rooms as well as the idea of functionality and specialisation. Big fireplaces gave way to smaller ones; corridors and staircases allowed dwellers to enter into rooms without passing through others; the size of spaces was reduced and some of them acquired specialised functions. Examples of these individual rooms are the study, the bedchamber, the closet, and the kitchen where family, servants and animals came into contact. This last room developed specific associations not only with culinary activities, but also with gendered functions. Even though architectural design did not establish that a room should be used either by man or woman, plans suggested specific roles for specific rooms. While men were supposed to work in the study, married couples started making use of their right to a private bedchamber and women were advised to read pious books in their closets, so much so that '[s]oon the repetition of ordinary rituals proper to the everyday routine concentrated most activity in them and they took a life of their own.'¹² Hoskins argues that changes in domestic architecture increased the number of private spaces and, as a result, the forms of sociability started being gradually reshaped: 'from the anonymous social life of the street, castle court, square, or village to a more restricted sociability centred on the family or even the individual.'¹³

Some scholars, especially Colin Platt, have claimed that this English architectural transformation was not as widespread and consistent as Hoskins believed. He challenges his model by arguing that most of the author's examples concern individual localities where major rebuilding occurred both earlier and later than the narrow dating the historian proposes. Although Platt states that remodelling continued after 1640 and that there were many more regional and economic variations that are not properly described in Hoskins's research, it seems that he does not completely oppose Hoskins's fundamental thesis, as he

¹² Philippe Ariès, and Georges Duby, 'Introduction', in *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. by Roger Chartier, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), III, 1-14 (p. 6).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

himself states that during the early modern period there was a ‘growing popular demand for personal privacy unobtainable in houses of medieval plan.’¹⁴

2. Philippe Ariès’s History of Private Life: Household Physical Boundaries

One of the key texts to understand the historical development of the private and the domestic space is Philippe Ariès’s *A History of Private Life*. In spite of the fact that the author focuses on the French experience of private life in its progress to modernity and sometimes takes it as a paradigm for other societies – particularly the English – he is able to describe the material and social changes that, from his point of view, generated private instances during the early modern period. According to Ariès, during the Middle Ages people moved within a world that was neither public nor private. With no walls separating rooms and bedchambers shared by masters and servants, life could not have been more communal. Rooms within the medieval household were considered multi-purpose spaces, as was also true of Elizabethan homes, mainly at the beginning of the sixteenth century when public and private spaces were not easily distinguishable inside.

Like Hoskins, Ariès suggests a very strong relationship between household development and privacy by asserting that the history of housing not only shaped the history of private life, but also transformed England into the ‘birthplace of privacy.’¹⁵ According to him, the notion of English domestic architecture completely changed the scope of the public/private dichotomy since it incorporated more private spaces within the home. As a result, the division between the private and the public sphere, which used to be understood as the opposition of macro spaces such as city versus country, or court versus household, was extended to micro spaces within the home. An illustrative example of this phenomenon is outlined in Francis Bacon’s essay ‘Of Building’ where the author describes

¹⁴ Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England: Revolutions in Architectural Taste* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1, 138.

¹⁵ Ariès, p. 1.

the characteristics of a country house built during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, thus giving its private domestic use equal importance with its more public, social role. In his advice to noble people, he recommends: ‘you cannot haue a Perfect *Pallace*, except you haue two seueral Sides; A Side for the *Banquet* [...] And a Side for the Household: the One for Feasts and Triumphs, and the Other for Dwelling.’¹⁶ In a similar way to Roman villas, the homes of the English elite began to be divided into public and private quarters, clearly delimited according to their functions, so much so that even specific furniture made itself specific space, for instance, when ‘people began to reserve a special place for the marriage bed.’¹⁷ Other items of furniture were transformed into small rooms. That is the case of cabinets which referred both to a ‘small item of furniture with a lockable door or drawers and to a small, wood-paneled room.’¹⁸ In the seventeenth century, however, it became more common to call this room a ‘closet’, from the Latin, *clausum*, closed.¹⁹ In England, studies and closets served similar functions: reading, keeping accounts, and praying. People could store in them account books, papers, translations from ancient authors, collections of coins, medals, stones, miniature portraits, and very often, love letters and tokens so as to keep them secret and protected from the curious eyes of the rest of the family. Even though it cannot be assumed that possession of a specific item of furniture or access to a tinier space granted privacy to its owners, the closet became one of the rooms in the house that offered the opportunity of either being on one’s own or choosing one’s company, at least among the wealthy.

¹⁶ Francis Bacon, ‘Of Building’, in *The Essayes or Covnsels, Civill and Morall* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Hanna Barret, 1625), pp. 257-65 (pp. 259-60 or L12^r and L12^v). The text offers both page and folio numbers.

¹⁷ Ariès, p. 5.

¹⁸ Orest Ranum, ‘The Refuges of Intimacy’, in *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. by Roger Chartier, gen. edn. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), III, pp. 207-263 (p. 228).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Even though specific private and public spaces will be analysed in each of the plays selected for this research, at this stage it might be useful to provide evidence on closets that are represented in many of Shakespeare's plays as meeting places, private apartments, or private repositories for papers and other belongings.²⁰ It seems that the use of this new room had become quite widespread in early modern England. Gertrude and Hamlet, for example, see themselves alone for the first time in her closet and there he releases his anger and frustration for the sinful deed his mother has committed. Even though the stage directions in 4.4 do not specify that they are in the queen's closet, the meeting place has been announced before in 3.2.322-23 when Rosencrantz tells Hamlet that his mother wants to see him: 'She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go /to bed', and in 3.3.27 when Polonius reveals to Claudius his intention of hiding behind the arras: 'My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.'²¹

Shakespeare's monarchs and nobles usually have their own private apartments, as in the case of Queen Katherine in *Henry V*. When the king asks her whether she loves him or not, he imagines that she will think of him while in her closet and realise she does so: 'Come, I know thou lovest me, and at night, / when you come into your closet you'll question this/ gentlewoman about me [...]' (5.2.194-97).²² Lady Macbeth also has a cabinet from where she takes paper to write a letter to Macbeth that she then seals, thus further ensuring its private character. Her gentlewoman informs the doctor of her lady's condition: '[...] I have seen her [...] unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed, [...]' (5.1.3-6).²³ In *King Lear*, Gloucester tells Edmund that he has received a letter and has hidden it: 'I have received a

²⁰ C. T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911).

²¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 1982; repr. London: Thomson Learning, 2003).

²² William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Routledge, 1995; repr. London: Thomson Learning, 2002).

²³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by A. R. Braunnmuller, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; repr. 2003).

letter this night – 'tis dangerous to be spoken / – I have locked the letter in my closet.'(3.3.8-10)²⁴

Although the aforementioned examples portray fictional characters, they represent people who belonged to the nobility and as such could afford additional rooms in their homes. Despite the fact that aristocratic households constituted only a small percentage of the English population, subdivision of rooms within the home gradually began to permeate the whole of society. New trends in architecture endeavoured to accommodate new patterns of social life into the material disposition of the household, predominantly in England, though not exclusively. As Ariès points out, this tendency, probably with its particular features, could also be observed in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings whose domestic interiors often 'represented a new ideal, a new concept of how people ought to live.'²⁵ So it would seem that not only walls supported the emergence of private life, but also the changing models regarding family and household that permeated those walls and started painting them with the colours of privacy.

In addition to the shift in state and religious policies, Ariès attributes to the progress of literacy and print a determining role in the birth of privacy. He argues that during the early modern period there were, what he terms, 'measures of privacy'²⁶, such as private diaries, letters, confessions, and autobiographies that enable historians to examine the 'determination of some people to set themselves apart.'²⁷ In a broad sense – since these issues will be addressed in the section related to women's writings – it could be said firstly that printing opened up the possibility of reproducing many copies of the same text and, therefore, the chance of spreading ideas to a larger group of people at the same time. Secondly, Ariès points out that these 'measures' or writings were not inert objects, but

²⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R. A. Foakes, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997; repr. London: Thomson Learning, 2002).

²⁵ Ariès, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

vehicles that transcended their own cultural context, since they may be interpreted as an expression of the distinct ways in which their authors searched for and experienced privacy. As such, they provide valuable information for the analysis of private life within early modern and Shakespearean texts.

3. Michael McKeon's Subdivision of Spaces

Most social historians who have studied Elizabethan households in relation to the rise of privacy and domesticity have acknowledged that the subdivision of spaces within buildings, mainly houses, contributed to the birth of privacy. Michael McKeon charts the emergence of private domestic life as registered in, among other elements, architecture, family, and print culture. His chapter on the subdivision of spaces becomes relevant to this section since he gives more evidence of the changes that building style and design introduced into people's approach to the private.

One of the first points that McKeon deals with is the separation of workplace from household, which corresponds to the transition of the market economy of the period from domestic management to a more external production. Evidently, this transition from relations of distinction to those of separation between the public and the private spaces within the home took a long time. Nevertheless, as he argues, during the early modern period changes were encouraged by 'the successive rediscovery, within the private realm, of a capacity for further subdivision.'²⁸ This does not mean to claim for an immutability of medieval interiors in opposition to the wide and rapid variety of changes in the Renaissance household interior plan, since that would mean denying the many modifications that were displayed, for example, inside the medieval hall. However,

²⁸ Michael McKeon, 'Subdividing Inside Spaces', in *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 212-59 (p. 220).

throughout the early modern years of rebuilding, household modifications were definitely quicker, more noticeable and meaningful than in the Middle Ages.

Like Ariès, McKeon observes that ‘innovation in interior design and usage began at the highest level of the social hierarchy and filtered downwards.’²⁹ He explains how a noble’s withdrawal from public to semi-public spaces such as his personal chamber started around the fourteenth century as a movement towards more privacy. Later, in the seventeenth century, more household adaptations took place, as, for example, when the dining hall was transformed into the place where one first enters the house: the entrance hall. He also refers to the development of rooms such as the closet that he describes as a ‘small space that enclosed yet smaller ones, and its contents could be quite diverse.’³⁰ By the end of the Middle Ages this room had already acquired two gendered functions: it became a space for women’s private devotions and for men’s private study and business. Aristocratic Elizabethan women were expected to spend long hours reading the Bible and other pious books in this enclosed place, yet early modern biographies and diaries reveal that due to the secrecy obtained with lock and key, these ladies often read romantic poems or plays instead. They could also use their closet as a storage room for all sorts of commodities, and sometimes even invite someone in to share their reading, conversation, or secret love. Certainly, the closet represented a place of withdrawal, so much so that the acclaimed architectural historian, Mark Girouard, has argued that it ‘was essentially a private room; since servants were likely to be in constant attendance even in a chamber, it was perhaps the only room in which its occupant could be entirely on his own.’³¹ Whether this was always a real option or not, the possibility of shutting oneself up – alone or in the company of others – did exist for some early moderns. This moving inward, probably

²⁹ Ibid., p. 221.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

³¹ Mark Girouard, ‘The Medieval House’ and ‘The Elizabethan and Jacobean House’, in *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 29-118 (p. 56).

going through a succession of semi-public rooms before reaching the closet, might show paradoxical signs of a very public gesture or a search for personal privacy. Indeed, McKeon acknowledges that although this separation began as a withdrawal of the elite from the presence of servants, it became an architectural expression of ‘the impulse toward physical privacy [...] experienced as a universal human value rather than as proper to the socially elevated alone.’³² Certainly, privacy took a variety of forms along the social ladder; however, the fact that poor people lacked the means to, say, obtain complete privacy due to the reduced space they lived in, does not imply that they did not feel the natural need for it, at least for basic physical processes such as bodily excretion or the intimacy for sexual relations. That they could not achieve total privacy does not indicate that they did not desire it, perhaps even more anxiously than the middle or upper classes who did not have to face the material obstacles of living in such crowded conditions. Contrary to Marxist approaches that, based on dialectical opposition, would claim that the poor did not have access to privacy because of their social status, I would suggest that the problem is that there is less historical evidence about the behaviour of the lower classes regarding privacy. Their quest for it is less obvious than in the upper status group as it is not recorded in diaries or autobiographies, or manifested in the subdivision of spaces. However, they have the merit of being less socially stratified than the elite group, since the nobles isolated themselves not only for intellectual activities like reading and writing, but also because they wanted to segregate themselves from their servants. In the coming centuries, aristocratic groups would not be content with horizontal subdivisions of their homes; they would set up ‘a model of vertical stratification in which servants’ quarters and household production [would be] relegated to the top and the bottom of the house.’³³ From this, it becomes quite clear that the achievement of privacy is not only a question of

³² McKeon, p. 252.

³³ Ibid., p. 260.

subdivision of rooms; walls can separate people from each other, but they can neither instil the idea of privacy in their minds, nor prompt the impulse for personal withdrawal by simply being there. Other cultural and social issues may move someone to search for solitude and find a private space, even in such over-populated neighbourhoods as those of London during the 1600s.

4. Lena Cowen Orlin's Attempt to Locate Privacy in Tudor England

In her recent publication about privacy in Tudor London, Lena Cowen Orlin challenges most of the assumptions that social and architectural historians have supported for many years regarding the birth of privacy in early modern England. She convincingly claims that her argument differs – at least from that of Hoskins and Ariès – because her evidence differs. She asserts that in order to find new signs of privacy she has turned to material culture and institutional archives such as merchant-class portraiture, building and floor plans, household furnishings, personal goods, and documents from parish churches, ecclesiastical courts, charitable organisations, livery companies, and records offices. However, I do not think that her possible innovation lies in these sources, or in the subtle analysis of the role of peepholes in the fitting of interiors, but rather in the fact that she reinterprets and reassesses the same data, thus suggesting new insights into early modern privacy. She examines similar architectural elements to other social historians, but from a different perspective, since she asks herself not only about the spaces that early moderns could have theoretically considered more private because of their size or location within the household, but mainly about the way in which they lived and located their experience of privacy. Once again, de Certeau's and Lefebvre's influential theories on place and space become central to the discussion since both authors advocate human agency – personal experience and action – as one of the founding elements of the private space. In addition to

this, Orlin chooses a very interesting and specific experience since she takes the Barnham family³⁴ as a source, following especially Alice's daily routines, as her guide to answer these questions. Not being a noblewoman, but rather a sixteenth-century middle-class city wife, Alice's relationship with the private might be more representative, as the critic intends to show, of how most of the population could have experienced privacy during that period.

Against Hoskins's, Ariès's, and McKeon's notion of attaining more privacy mainly by the construction of specialised and smaller rooms in the early modern home, Orlin claims that it was the early modern increase of goods that created the need for more specialised spaces, rather than a need for privacy or any desire for withdrawal or seclusion. According to her, neither the notion of specialisation in the use of rooms, nor the shift from multifunctional halls to rooms designed for one purpose is necessarily concomitant with the attainment of privacy. From her perspective, building modifications and transformations responded to the increase of consumer goods that required more specialised spaces. A good example of this phenomenon is the closet. She argues that this space 'had its genesis in the accumulation of valuable goods rather than [in the] aspiration for personal privacy.'³⁵ In order to prove her argument, Orlin traces its origin back to the medieval practice of stowing valuables in chests that in time evolved into a variety of cupboards, grain boxes, book desks, and, in its most capacious variant, the closet. Because this room was specifically meant for storage, the author highlights that function, thus

³⁴ The Barnhams were a merchant-class family from early modern Chichester. Francis Barnham married Alice Bradbridge in 1546 or 1547. She was a committed Protestant and later became a London silkwoman. Francis was admitted to the Drapers' Company in 1550, and in 1570 he became the Sheriff of London. Lena Cowen Orlin takes this family as a case study for urban and middling-sort experiences of privacy in *Locating Privacy in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁵ Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 299.

concluding that ‘closets were less about keeping people preclusively *out* than about keeping goods safely *in*.’³⁶

Several issues are in question here. Firstly, Orlin does not seem to consider that Hoskins regards the increase of goods as a simultaneous process to the physical rebuilding of English houses. The fact that his research was focused on architectural developments rather than on the impact of the accumulation of household goods and furniture does not mean that he was oblivious to this factor. Secondly, although Orlin is right in observing that Ariès, Girouard, and McKeon give prominence to the role of the closet as a private room, she does not mention that all three acknowledge that it was also a storage place. One might argue that the association of rooms with specialised functions is not always equivalent to one function; therefore, it should not be a contradiction to think that on the one hand, the primary function of closets – for which they might have been designed – was to keep goods inside, while on the other, a second or parallel function could have been to seclude people from the rest of the family and servants. Why could the closet not have served both purposes at the same time?

In addition to the examination of the closet as a contested private sphere, Orlin explores domestic spaces such as halls, staircases, parlours, bedrooms, gardens, and galleries, so as to support the fundamental thesis of her book. Even though she admits that the sixteenth century witnessed considerable changes for the history of private life, she challenges the notion that privacy was something desirable in early modern England. Instead, she argues that ‘privacy inspired an uneasy mixture of desire and distrust [...]’³⁷ and that there was a somewhat communal resistance to it, explained in part by the crowded dwelling conditions of London frequently expressed in moral surveillance at all levels of the social strata. She points out that population growth in London was so dramatic that

³⁶ Ibid., p. 304.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

many Londoners ‘shared not only drains and cesspits but also gutters, chimney-stacks, passages, entryways, yards, wells, and, perhaps most of all for the history of privacy, walls.’³⁸ In spite of this overcrowding, Elizabethans seem to have followed certain conventions in order to attain a minimal vital degree of privacy. As Orlin observes, family members could signal their withdrawal from public when they retired to a corner for a private conversation or when they drew their bed curtains for intimate relations. Obviously, the quest for personal privacy in all the forms she mentions – ‘interiority, atomization, spatial control, intimacy, urban anonymity, secrecy, withholding, solitude’³⁹ – quite often led to tensions, especially amongst neighbours, as they could not assume that others would respect the sometimes insubstantial boundaries between one house and the other.

Circumstances such as population growth, close proximity, density of physical space, and shared basic facilities seemed to erect a thick wall that, instead of contributing to privacy, would delay any chance of attaining it. Although it is undeniable that, as Orlin suggests, these material barriers could have transformed the pursuit of privacy into a harder task for a considerable number of Londoners, it is equally valid to think that these people exercised their ingenuity to find, perhaps not the ideal, yet their own alternative experience of the private space in de Certeau’s sense. Both Orlin and Ariès discuss this point in their introductory chapters; however, while the former tends to emphasise the obstacles against privacy, the latter focuses on the means to overcome them. Nevertheless, Ariès acknowledges that even in times of dense population, ‘there were places in the community where a precarious intimacy flourished. These were recognized and to some extent protected: a corner by a window or in a hallway, a quiet spot beyond the orchard, a

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

forest clearing or hut.’⁴⁰ Probably, the places he refers to are those that offered the possibility of having sexual relations within a more guarded or undisturbed environment.

Orlin’s approach to the private rests on the assumption that there was communal resistance to it; therefore, she examines the porous boundaries of the private by assessing the role of peepholes in this kind of refusal to admit the privacy of others. She affirms that due to the old communal custom of shared knowledge and mutual surveillance, many thought that privacy was a menace to public well-being. From this perspective, anything that ‘threatened to deprive people of knowledge to which they thought they were entitled and about which they felt a sense of social responsibility [...]’⁴¹ became a source of great anxiety and dispute. Peepholes, she explains, offer evidence not only as an example of ‘failed construction techniques, poor materials, bad repair, or accidental effects, but also as instruments of resistance [...]’⁴² since these chinks or crannies allowed Londoners to defy any new boundary that could conceal matters or behaviours of public interest; therefore, in a certain sense, curiosity was authorised and mandated as a condition of social order.⁴³ In her study of domestic plays and spaces, Catherine Richardson observes the same early modern behaviour that Orlin describes when she explains how, in wealthy households, the meticulous surveillance of servants was directly encouraged and legitimised by early modern governors in order to guard citizens from the dangers of weak domestic rule.⁴⁴ However, to think that Elizabethans spent part of the day spying on each other through peepholes and that these became a symbol of hostility towards privacy is perhaps to take the argument too far. A degree of surveillance has always been present in every society and obviously it may become more intense depending on the proximity of neighbours. If

⁴⁰ Ariès, p. 1.

⁴¹ Orlin, p. 192.

⁴² Ibid., p. 192.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁴ Catherine Richardson, ‘Early Modern Plays and Domestic Spaces’, *Home Cultures*, 2.3 (November, 2005), 269-83 (p. 276).

there is any one thing that can be unmistakably associated with peepholes, I believe that to be natural human curiosity, not a formal resistance to privacy. Furthermore, if the point is whether neighbours, servants or family members could meddle in the private life of others because they could see or hear what they did without being noticed, then the slight opening of a door, a window, or a curtain would perform the same function as a peephole. Even a thin wall would allow words and noises to cross its porous boundaries. In fact, not only peepholes and windows allowed curious viewers to observe the private life of their neighbours, but also doors became quite problematic because they were frequently second-hand and often ill-fitting. Eyewitnesses to dishonest behaviour should be able to prove in court that they had been able to actually “see” the act of robbery, fornication, or any other crime, and thus respond to questions specifically related to building breaches such as: ‘Was the door or window open? Or did he or she see such acts through any hole or open place of the wall?’⁴⁵ To a certain extent, poor construction and poor materials legitimised the witnesses’ curiosity, as if household walls suddenly unveiled their mysterious nooks and crannies to allow strangers to look through them.

In spite of the fact that Orlin does not mention the work of David Cressy with respect to public and private spaces, his argument seems to be pertinent here. According to him, all life in early modern England had public, social, or communal dimensions. ‘Against the demands of family, community, and society’⁴⁶, he suggests, ‘the early modern world allowed no separate private sphere (in the modern sense), no place where public activity did not intrude. Even within the recesses of domestic routine, every action, every opinion, was susceptible to external interest, monitoring, or control. Walls had ears, and

⁴⁵ Orlin, p. 190.

⁴⁶ David Cressy, ‘Response: Private Lives, Public Performance, and Rites of Passage’, in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. by Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newmark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 187-97 (p. 187).

everybody's business was a matter of credit, reputation, or common fame.'⁴⁷ It seems that Orlin's point of view is less extreme in the sense that even though she recognises the spatial-material difficulties to secure privacy, she is able, at the same time, to locate people's experiences of the private. Notwithstanding that underlying Cressy's argument lies the idea that most human actions – no matter the historical period – might have a public connotation likely to catch the attention of others, it is equally undeniable that man is always capable of a certain degree of privacy. If the private is understood exclusively from the modern perspective of opposition to and separation from public life, or more specifically in the case of women, from Virginia Woolf's notion⁴⁸ that they should have money and a room of their own to achieve complete independence from men and absolute withdrawal to write; then, evidently, it is likely that most early modern women did not enjoy that privilege. Some of them – as well as men – were unable to set themselves apart; others simply did not want to do so for a wide variety of reasons.

Certainly, Orlin acknowledges that 'in the early modern household conditions for privacy were adverse, whether the issue was sexual intimacy, bodily functions, or personal interiority.'⁴⁹ Nevertheless, adversity should not be equated with impossibility. On the contrary, part of the argument she wants to make clear, presumably, is that the private is neither a neutral, aseptic space, nor is privacy a unique experience, since it admits different levels and degrees of intensity. The critic provides evidence that there were different forms of privacy in Renaissance England which she sometimes locates in specific rooms, yet mainly in everyday conversational exchanges. This evidence will become extremely useful when I analyse the representation of the private in the plays since, apart from looking at material spaces, I shall also be able to locate private situations enabled by language exchange. In fact, after Orlin tests privacy within almost every room in early modern

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 187.

⁴⁸ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. by Mark Hussey (USA: Harcourt, 2005), p. 4.

⁴⁹ Orlin, p. 226.

households, she concludes that there was a ‘domestic space that achieved an accidental capacity for enabling confidences and thus played a key role in the history of privacy.’⁵⁰ As she observes, the paradox is that this room was not, as W. G Hoskins and others assumed, a small one, but the largest and most architecturally innovative household space: the long gallery. This space – a luxury for most Elizabethans – was a public room often located at the top of grand mansions. It was usually at the back of the building so as to afford views of the gardens; yet tapestries hanging from its long walls also triggered visual interest. In addition to this, the gallery enjoyed certain independence, since there were no other rooms adjoining it. Its main connection with the rest of the house, Orlin emphasises, ‘was not a room but a staircase, which through its own vertical shaft also worked its way free of the horizontal map of interrelated household spaces.’⁵¹ Its purpose was to provide a walking space, especially in winter; therefore, it was kept more or less bare: with almost no furniture or objects that could stand in the way of those going for a stroll.⁵² With no furnishings to indicate or designate the space as private, with no intimate spaces created by walls, how could people experience privacy there?

At first glance, Orlin’s argument seems to contradict all previous hypotheses that associate the private with enclosed, small spaces. Nevertheless, on one hand, she also supports the notion that links privacy to specific rooms, and on the other, she challenges this common belief, as she advocates a larger room located in a different part of the house, thus questioning whether size and location really matter to attain privacy. The objective here is not to establish “the room” that best suits privacy; if it were so, other authors such as Frank E. Brown, for example, would argue that this private room was neither the closet, nor the gallery, but the parlour. After examining a vast number of inventories in search of spatial evidence, he concluded that the parlour was ‘a rather private space, somewhat set

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 226.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 236.

⁵² Ibid., p. 227.

apart from ordinary domestic life. It was perhaps at this time still principally a retiring room for members of the family.⁵³

Size and location do matter to achieve a minimum degree of privacy; moreover, these elements may provide the conditions for it, but they cannot be taken as absolutes; that is to say, they might have an impact on the ways people experience privacy, but at the end of the day people's relationships and the activities they perform in a room may have a more direct effect on the attainment of privacy. Regarding this issue, Orlin notices that '[w]here we tend to focus on privacies that are sexual (those of the bedchamber), bodily (those of the water closet or privy), or intellectual (those of the study), it is apparent that a great deal of early modern cultural anxiety coalesced also around the social privacy of confidential conversation.'⁵⁴ Not all privacies follow the same pattern, nor are they created with the same intention; there is a great variety of experiences, some expressed in physical separation, others even in the secrecy of a conversation.

We can find this kind of conversational privacy in many Shakespearean plays such as, for example, in *Romeo and Juliet*. Stage directions in the ball scene clearly describe the place as public: [Music plays, and the maskers, guests, and gentlewomen dance]; [The music plays again, and the guests dance] (1.5)⁵⁵; however, in the midst of music, noise and dance, Romeo approaches Juliet and after declaring his love, he kisses her. The ball is a public event *per se* and yet they are able to isolate themselves, thus creating their own private atmosphere. To an extent, this social gathering permits or depends on the possibility of semi-private exchanges within it. Privacy in this case is more related to the possibility of not being heard or seen rather than to the size, function, or location of the room. The couple's experience of privacy here is less a material condition than a

⁵³ F. E. Brown, p. 584.

⁵⁴ Orlin, p. 7.

⁵⁵ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

consequence of a decision to be set apart; it would appear to be located in their conversation.

In spite of the important effect that the restructuring of building design had in fashioning privacy, it would not be accurate to conclude that this transformation relied exclusively on concrete structures, or even to postulate that privacy would not be feasible without certain material requirements. The material nature of walls and the subsequent division of space into more intimate rooms was probably the starting point towards privacy, but it cannot be ignored that without the vital experience of individuals inside or outside those walls, spaces would become meaningless. Returning to de Certeau's ideas, we could state that people's experiences may break down the material boundaries of a place and reshape it as a new and different space. Architectural changes might have played a crucial role in the development of privacy in England, yet, as F. E. Brown indicates, 'the way in which spaces are used and the meaning assigned to different parts of the home are plainly not a simple function of plan arrangement; they stem from a complex amalgam of social and cultural influences.'⁵⁶ Among these, psychological attitudes regarding a person's sense of self and the discovery of inwardness – a concept that will be developed in the section dealing with early modern women writers – were certainly intertwined with the creation of the private sphere.

Privacy is not an intellectual or conceptual entity; it is experienced in real everyday life where private attitudes are spatialised. Even though privacy cannot be fully contained by walls, it exists in an actual space: to many Elizabethans, a commodity they could not afford, to some, a withdrawal they could control at will, and to others, 'a product of serendipity.'⁵⁷ In a world where almost every place and action was public due to the porous nature of the public and private spheres, early modern people had to look for

⁵⁶ F. E. Brown, p. 558.

⁵⁷ Orlin, p. 324.

private moments beyond the material boundaries of enclosed, isolated or protected spaces. This is part of Mary Thomas Crane's argument regarding what she considers outdoor 'illicit privacy'⁵⁸, a notion that contradicts the common belief that locates early modern privacy exclusively or more securely indoors.

5. The Paradox of Outdoor Privacy

For a long time, Hoskins's idea of the great rebuilding in England, with its consequent creation of smaller rooms that could supposedly afford privacy better was followed and reinforced by most social and architectural historians. Only a few years ago, critics such as Orlin and Crane have challenged his view, either by looking for privacy in larger rooms within the household or by arguing that early modern privacy was quite often attained outside the house.

According to Crane, 'early modern sources (including poems, plays, diaries, memoirs, and public records) suggest that privacy for illicit activities (such as sex, gossip, and political plotting) was most often found outdoors.'⁵⁹ As she explains, the crowded city living conditions prompted early moderns to look for privacy in outdoor spaces where servants could not pry into their masters' affairs or, in the case of poor households, where the rest of relatives and animals were not present or inside the same room. Moreover, Crane argues that outdoor spaces were associated to illicit activities such as adulterous sexual relations, 'excretory functions, treasonous plotting, and gossip [...] in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts of various kinds.'⁶⁰ To an extent, these activities are the expression of aspects of privacy linked to notions of illegality, prohibition, suspicion, or secrecy. In the case of bodily functions, Crane comments that despite the usual location of privies inside buildings, many people preferred to look for bathroom privacy outdoors,

⁵⁸ Mary Thomas Crane, 'Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9.1 (Spring, 2009), 4-22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

thus ‘their output [became] a matter of public awareness and dispute.’⁶¹ With respect to illicit activities, outdoor spaces such as forests and fields became the perfect stage to perform them, partly because these sites used to be more isolated or far from city and court, thus exempt from legal prescriptions. Examples of this outdoor privacy associated to more freedom can be found in many Shakespearean plays, especially those that include pastoral elements such as *Cymbeline*, *As You Like It*, and *The Winter’s Tale*, to mention but a few.⁶² However, as Crane states, privacy is not only attained in these large open outdoor spaces, but also in early modern gardens. According to her,

Gardens [...] offer enclosed spaces which seem to have been less “open” to the observation of servants and other household members than the inside of the house. Private gardens represent a space that blurs the distinction between concepts of inside and outside; indeed, gardens share terminology with new private interior spaces such as chambers and closets: “bowers” and “cabinets” could be found in both house and garden.⁶³

In Shakespeare’s days, knot gardens became very popular.⁶⁴ According to Alison Findlay, the physical ordering of space is central to these areas, where ‘[o]rnamental knots are a material tying together of nature and culture in the processes of pruning, shaping, training of plants. The knot garden is therefore also a “not” garden in social terms: a place where paternal law constraints natural instincts especially for female subjects.’⁶⁵ In fact, analogically speaking, the garden’s botanical nurturing was equivalent to woman’s development of modesty and virtue through the carefully supervised relation to nature, or,

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶² Cfr. chapter I, pp. 48-50 in this thesis. In these pages I introduce Crane’s perspective on the subject as well as provide few examples of Shakespeare’s green world and how the freedom the characters experience often results in illicit private activities.

⁶³ Crane, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁴ The first practical gardening manual printed in English was Thomas Hyll’s *A Most Brief and Pleasaunte treatise, teaching how to dresse, sowe, and set a garden* (1558). It was reprinted many times until in 1577 it appeared as *The Gardeners’ Labyrinth*. Other books with practical advice were published during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century: William Lawson’s *A New Orchard and Garden* and *The Country Housewife’s Garden* (printed together in 1618) and John Parkinson’s popular *Paradisus Terrestris, Paradisi in Sole; or, A Garden of Pleasant Flowers* (1629).

⁶⁵ Alison Findlay, ‘Gardens’, in *Playing Spaces in Early Women’s Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 66-109, (p. 71).

in Findlay's terms, it functioned as 'a conduct book imprinted on nature'⁶⁶ which women must learn to read. These geometrical constructions were a model of order and required careful maintenance of skillful gardeners who, among other tasks, had to clip the box hedges regularly and remove weeds. Even though the primary function of any garden was a utilitarian one – to produce food and medicines for the family, Roy Strong has demonstrated that, with Henry VIII's Hampton Court, gardens often became 'a symbol of the new monarchy's power and prestige.'⁶⁷ Queen Elizabeth loved to walk in gardens and it is known that while she was imprisoned during the reign of her sister Mary, she was given leave to walk in the Tower gardens for the sake of her health although she was monitored by Tower keepers for fear that someone could speak to her in private.⁶⁸ While she was ruling, pleasure gardens were well established and came to symbolize 'part of the cult of the Virgin Queen [which] found its expression in horticultural terms.'⁶⁹ As I have analysed in the section dedicated to woman's body and its relationship to the private⁷⁰, in a similar way in which the body of a chaste woman is associated to a receptacle or room due to the 'enclosure' of her womb, the garden recalls the purity and innocence of the *hortus conclusus* par excellence: Paradise. Therefore, the language of flowers that can be read in many portraits of Elizabeth, more specifically in the blooms she carries or the embroidery of her clothes,⁷¹ can be partly taken as a metaphor of her chastity. Moreover, in his survey of the arts in Britain, Strong argues that visual arts worked with signs and symbols that

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

⁶⁷ Roy Strong, 'The Renaissance Garden', in *The Renaissance Garden in England* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984; repr. 1998), pp. 9-22 (p. 10).

⁶⁸ Orlin, p. 232.

⁶⁹ Strong, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Cfr. Crane, Stallybrass, and Ziegler in 'Woman's Body and its Relationship to the Private', pp. 72-73 in this thesis.

⁷¹ In early modern literature, a representative example of the allegorical use of flowers is Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) where the author allegorically represents Queen Elizabeth in the display and decay of flowers. He also contrasts the garden of Adonis and the Bower of Bliss as sources of eternity and transitory pleasure respectively. In the following section I will analyse Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship*, another text dedicated to Elizabeth I, where the 'flower' does not only represent marriage, but also acquires an erotic connotation in relation to the Queen's virginity.

transformed them into ‘texts’ that the viewer needed to ‘read’ in order to understand the meaning beyond the image.⁷²

Going back to the popularity of gardens at the period and their role regarding privacy, Francis Bacon well describes their purpose. Apart from suggesting that gardens should be divided in three parts and that there should be one for each month of the year with its corresponding seasonal flowers and plants, he reinforces their divine origin and the effects they may have in the development of man’s spirit: ‘God Almighty first Planted a Garden. And indeed, it is the Purest of Humane pleasure. It is the Greatest Refreshment of the Spirits of Man; Without which Buildings and Pallaces are but Grosse Handy-works [...]’⁷³ In fact, influenced by the ideals of the Renaissance, but also, as Crane states in her article, because of the cold, smoky and smelly conditions of indoor spaces, Elizabethans probably found more pleasant to be outside of the house. As a consequence, they started building elaborate gardens designed for large estates, which usually contained arbors, grottoes, covered walks, and groves where people could isolate from others. Smaller gardens were also developed for more private activities, though not necessarily illicit. According to Strong, the medieval garden was considered as an earthly paradise and the setting for courtly dalliance, whereas with the classical revival ‘it became the location for solitary meditation and for philosophical discussion.’⁷⁴ This can be particularly said of walled gardens of large country houses which, as Findlay well observes, became ‘secularised versions of the monastic cloister [...]’⁷⁵, thus a site of contemplation and self-discovery, both stasis and journey [...].⁷⁶

⁷² Cfr. Roy Strong, *The Spirit of Britain: A Narrative History of the Arts* (London: Hutchison, 1999).

⁷³ Francis Bacon, ‘Of Gardens’, in *The Essayes or Covnsels, Civill and Morall* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Hanna Barret, 1625), pp. 266-79 (p. 266 or Mm1^v), *STC* (2nd ed.), 1148. The text offers both page and folio numbers.

⁷⁴ Strong, ‘Renaissance Garden’, p. 20.

⁷⁵ Findlay, p. 70.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

As we have analysed before in this section, Orlin argues that galleries were one of the most suitable spaces for private dealings, yet she reckons that ‘the best strategy for the pursuit of private conversation was to step into the garden, the area immediately beyond betraying internal walls.’⁷⁷ Gardens were not mere extensions of the house, but more open and porous in boundaries – especially those that were irregularly ornamented – and less structured, so that they could offer women more opportunities to develop their creativity. This fact may lead us to think, with Crane, that ‘the association of privacy with outdoor space suggests that subject formation in the period may have been more open-ended, flexible, and environmentally influenced than has previously been thought.’⁷⁸ I would like to argue, however, that in some Shakespearean plays there are references to illicit private activities that do not take place outdoors – in gardens and forests – but in the home’s most liminal spaces. Notwithstanding that, as Orlin comments, extramarital liaisons were frequently conducted outdoors because ‘in the home’s main chambers, privacy was scarce and serendipitous [,]’⁷⁹ there were cases when illicit conduct took place indoors, as the shepherd comments in *A Winter’s Tale* when he sees the baby, a result of: ‘some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work’ (3.3.72-73).⁸⁰ In contrast, the bed trick encounter between Mariana and Angelo in *Measure for Measure*⁸¹ takes place in the latter’s garden and the green worlds in plays such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *As You Like It* seem to ‘exist at least partly to afford privacy for courtship of all kinds.’⁸²

I think this apparent contradiction between indoor and outdoor experience of privacy precisely shows the porous and flexible nature of the private space both in early modern London and in Shakespeare’s plays. Having scrutinised a number of studies on the

⁷⁷ Orlin, pp. 232-33.

⁷⁸ Crane, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Orlin, p. 155.

⁸⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, ed. by John Pitcher, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 2010). The editor explains that ‘work’ is often associated with intercourse and that lovers sometimes chose stairs, trunks and spaces behind doors to have casual sex (note 72-73).

⁸¹ I will analyse illicit privacy in *Measure for Measure* in the chapter dedicated to the play.

⁸² Crane, p. 10.

construction and expression of privacy in its association with architectural issues, I can say that the human need for privacy is more flexible than building boundaries; that is to say, that despite the impact that size, location, or structure of a place may have in the attainment of privacy, it is not determined or totally dependent on those conditions. Early modern social practice shows that people could find privacy within the household, sometimes in liminal spaces, but also outdoor in open fields, forests, and more enclosed gardens whose bowers and cabinets shared similarities with household spaces. In de Certeau's theory, this will respond to the idea of practiced or experienced place while in Lefebvrian terms the garden may be a lived space that people transform according to their needs. In this sense, Shakespeare's privacy is quite flexible in its location and is often related to the behaviour of the characters, whether this is a thought (expressed in monologues or soliloquies) or an actual action.⁸³ However, no matter whether they experience privacy indoors or outdoors, the occurrence of it is linked to a space – real or virtual⁸⁴ – to exist. Furthermore, for most of them, as for the majority of Londoners *circa* 1600, their contact with privacy is temporary.

B. EARLY MODERN TEXTS: CONDUCT LITERATURE

1. Preliminary ideas

One of the goals of the previous section was to learn from architectural sources about the ways in which early moderns experienced privacy in de Certeau's sense of a 'practiced place'. Material remains of the private are not only found in houses, but also, though in a different degree, in the abundant conduct literature republished and reread during the

⁸³ Unfortunately, because of space constraints I cannot refer here to the relation that this may have with the flexibility and fluidity of the Shakespearean stage as understood by Vincent Stanley in his chapter: 'Fixed, Floating and Fluid Stages', in *The Theatrical Space*, ed. by James Redmond, *Themes in Drama* 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). This is a topic I would like to develop further in the future.

⁸⁴ I use the term 'virtual' here to refer to private spaces that are not defined by the material nature of walls, doors, windows, stairs, or thresholds, but by situations such as a conversation, religious or artistic contemplation, to mention some examples.

period, which ranged from homilies, prayers and sermons, through educational and behavioural tracts to satires and defences.⁸⁵ The fact that books are considered here as material objects does not mean that they are inert or neutral; on the contrary, early modern writings became the vehicles for ideas that transcended their own cultural context. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the written word is extremely powerful since ‘[t]he remnants of past life – what is left of buildings, tools, the contents of graves – are weather-beaten by the storms of time that have swept over them, whereas a written tradition, once deciphered and read, is to such an extent pure mind that it speaks to us as if in the present.’⁸⁶ This is precisely why examining a selection of conduct books that became popular in this period might contribute to the identification of the key concepts presented by their authors with respect to women’s role in society, especially within the private. However, as Gadamer explains, ‘a hermeneutics that regarded understanding as reconstructing the original would be no more than handing on a dead meaning.’⁸⁷ In fact, these works have been passed to us through an ever-changing fabric of interpretations that have conferred different meanings on them, thus it would be impossible to have access to the original intentions of these authors or to the exact context in which their books were received.

Modern critics have described these writings as prescriptive and have particularly associated them with a variety of ideologies, be they Marxist, Freudian, feminist, or post-colonial, to name but a few. Although these interpretations may be more or less valid, they generally do not approach the texts from their socio-historical and religious context but rather from pre-conceived ideas of the topics dealt with by early modern authors. As a consequence, conduct literature has been linked to so many doctrines that Kate Aughterson

⁸⁵ Kate Aughterson, ‘Conduct’, in *Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook. Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. by Kate Aughterson (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 67-102 (p. 3).

⁸⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and rev. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd edn (London, New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 156.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

concludes that it has become in itself among ‘the most overtly ideological in this period [as] it exhorts women, whether aristocratic or bourgeois, to behave according to certain gendered preconceptions of feminine or masculine behaviour, and asks them to internalise that knowledge in terms of both internal and external compliance.’⁸⁸ This is only one of the problems when trying to establish the impact of these texts on early modern women’s lives, since it becomes quite difficult to determine the extent to which they could have acknowledged or ignored these prescriptions. As it has been suggested in the first chapter, while some women might have taken these recommendations as strict commands, others might have paid no attention to them at all, either because of their social position (more or less powerful), their marital status (single, married, widow), or their level of education (whether they could read or not). Evidently, in the sixteenth century, a large number of English men and women did not know how to read and write; therefore, even though prescriptions were also transmitted orally from pulpits and platforms, the positive or negative reception they might have had probably differed among the different social and cultural strata. With respect to the context in which the texts were received, it may be partially reconstructed because, as I have already explained, it is unlikely that I shall be able to reproduce the original dynamic between the authors’ intentions and the degree of acceptance and further adherence or commitment to the conduct they proposed. In spite of this, these texts constitute a good source for research into the emergence of modern notions of subjectivity and gender that may be later used for the analysis of the selected Shakespearean plays. Certainly, by examining these authors’ perspectives on women’s space, I will also be able to observe whether there is contradiction, continuity, or repetition of ideas among these publications, evidence that may indicate, at least partially, the beliefs and social practices regarding woman’s function in marriage and household.

⁸⁸ Aughterson, p. 68.

In the first part of this section I will introduce the authors and their respective works in an attempt to put forward the themes they deal with and their social context before analysing what critics have said about them. I think that the possibility of examining how feminine agency was perceived, expressed, and sometimes judged in these conduct manuals, as well as female writings will allow me to understand the role of female characters within the private sphere in a more comprehensive way, thus fulfil one of the aims of the thesis regarding its multi-faceted approach. In other words, by bringing to the fore examples that do not come directly from drama, but from literary texts, such as prescriptive manuals written by male authors and a diary written by an Elizabethan lady, I hope to be able to map more completely, or at least from different perspectives, the geography of privacy in early modern England and locate Shakespeare's place within this sphere. In other words, I would like to argue that these works might illustrate the social customs, intellectual assumptions, and literary conventions regarding women's behaviour within the household and serve somewhat as a cultural background to compare and contrast with Shakespeare's female characters' situation.

2. The Nature and Impact of Conduct Literature in the Configuration of the Private

Even though it is not easy to determine exactly why during the second half of the sixteenth century domestic life became a popular topic in England, evidence shows that the household and the role of women within this space were examined and discussed in early modern household manuals, conduct books, treatises, and sermons. Due to the religious and political connotation given to the home – represented in the family/commonwealth relationship and in the Christian idea of domestic church –, the private space of the household became, paradoxically, the site of public scrutiny during this period. The widespread humanist ideals that had been long incorporated into early modern culture

probably added a somewhat spiritual aura to the home, as it was the material haven for the ideal marriage. In addition to these phenomena, the transition from household management to market economy resulted in changes both in women's acquisition of property and in their relation to the household, which produced a certain anxiety regarding woman's agency. For these and other reasons, these texts had a booming market in early modern England.

What exactly is the nature of conduct literature? Did it have any impact on the construction of early modern privacy? In general terms, conduct literature was intended to guide people in their moral and social life. According to Aughterson, these narratives were addressed ultimately to women, although given the literacy rates in the period it is likely that men outnumbered them in its readership.⁸⁹ Exhortational in their approach, they claimed chastity, obedience, humility, and silence as ideal feminine virtues. They also dealt with specific duties women should perform at home, depending on their marital status. Some of them even set out how women were expected to dress and behave.⁹⁰

If domestic manuals had any relevance in early modern life, it was partly because they were fuelled with the humanist ideals that were in vogue during the period. Indeed, it can be stated that conduct literature and Humanism were linked, since the latter emphasised the association between education and social conduct that these publications also fostered. In broad terms, Humanism is a philosophical and critical system of values that considers human experience as the criterion for man's knowledge of himself, of God, and of nature. Taking Kristeller and Randall's 1948 study on Humanism as a reference, Andy Mousley points out that the emphasis placed on values changed through different historical periods, thus during the Italian Renaissance 'the term "Humanism" denoted

⁸⁹ Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 57. The author explains that English population became increasingly literate between 1500 and 1700, and men as a class attained greater literacy than women

⁹⁰ Aughterson, pp. 67-68.

primarily a specific intellectual program and only incidentally suggested the more general set of values which have in recent times come to be called “humanistic”.⁹¹ Conscious that Humanism is not a singular phenomenon, the critic also presents Isabel Rivers’ analysis on the topic in an attempt to explain the different ways in which this theory was understood during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mainstream Humanism is defined as ‘a view of life which displaces God and puts man at the centre [...]’⁹², yet this general description may vary according to the different ways in which belief in human nature is articulated; furthermore, the idea that man is the centre of society should not be misunderstood as a rejection of God; on the contrary, a large number of early moderns – whether Protestant, Catholic, or Puritan – were devout Christians and probably found in domestic manuals a religious sense to incorporate into their everyday duties, and certainly into their married life. The point is that Renaissance Humanism has sometimes been misunderstood since it has been assimilated into a modern Humanism that fits better in a somewhat secular culture where God is set apart; yet, this is not the case with English early modern Humanism, at least in its initial development. Rivers distinguishes very clearly between mainstream Humanism and Renaissance Humanism emphasising that a humanist writer from the latter period was specifically ‘a classical scholar with two complementary aims: to recover the moral values of classical life, and to imitate the language and style of the classics as a means to an end.’⁹³ Thus, it is likely that these objectives underpinned conduct literature in a more or less overt fashion, since these authors were immersed in a humanist culture. In fact, as some early modern critics argue, authors of conduct literature usually cited emblematic humanist writers who enjoyed a considerable reputation, such as

⁹¹ Andy Mousley, *Re-Humanising Shakespeare: Literary Humanism, Wisdom and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 19. The author cites Paul O. Kristeller and John Herman Randall Jr, ‘General Introduction’, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. by Ernst Cassirer, Paul O. Kristeller, and John Herman Randall Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 1-22 (pp. 2-3).

⁹² Mousley, p. 21. The author takes this definition from Isabel Rivers’ *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry: A Student’s Guide* (England: Routledge, 1979; repr. 1994), p. 132.

⁹³ Rivers, p. 132, as cited in Mousley, p. 21.

Erasmus. Valerie Wayne, for example, argues that the large group of continental and English texts published in early modern England adapted and transformed *Conjugium*, one of Erasmus's colloquies on marriage. This type of adaptation, according to her, could explain the possible links between these writings since 'the interrelationship among these texts provides still more evidence for continuity among humanist, Protestant, and puritan approaches to marriage.'⁹⁴ Nevertheless, to have elements in common and to restate humanist ideals on marriage neither implies taking Erasmian pedagogy as an absolute ideology that was repeated throughout, nor classifying it as a discourse of power. Nevertheless, it is interesting to take into account Margo Todd's observation that allusions to Erasmus and the ancients 'are frequently found among the admittedly more numerous citations of the puritans' ultimate authority: Scripture.'⁹⁵ Puritan and humanist writings exhorted the faithful to read the Holy Bible daily at first hand or in the many religious publications of the period, among which certainly *The Book of Common Prayer*⁹⁶ occupied a prominent place. First published in 1549, and then reissued under Elizabeth I's reign in 1559, it dedicated a whole chapter to marriage, recalling St Paul's teachings regarding the duties of husbands and wives. Literate and Christian Elizabethans were probably familiar with these maxims, not only because they used this book to pray, but also because the saint's words were mentioned in almost every writing on wedlock. In this sense, it may be stated that there was continuity and similitude in the type of references – religious and/or humanistic – that these authors included in their conduct books between the years 1580 to 1625.

⁹⁴ Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*, ed. by Valerie Wayne (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 3.

⁹⁵ Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 4, 97, 103. The scholar examines a good number of publications of the period tracing examples of their resort to words by Erasmus, the ancients, and classical authors. She also comments that these authors combined these ideas with biblical doctrine.

⁹⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer* (1559), in <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/> [accessed on August 2011].

Scholars such as Frances E. Dolan think that Shakespeare might have staged the advice given in conduct books in plays like *The Taming of The Shrew*⁹⁷; nevertheless, even though pedagogical writings and colloquies were available in English translations before Elizabeth I came to the throne⁹⁸, there is no evidence on whether the playwright read the actual manuals or not. Erasmus's *Conjugium*, for example, first appeared in the 1523 Latin edition of the *Colloquies* published by Johann Froben in Basel and it became well known by literate people, both in its Latin version and then in its English translation of 1606.⁹⁹ Therefore, it is likely that some Elizabethan dramatists and Shakespeare himself came across these texts and knew their contents. If the role of women in the household was the topic, then playwrights might have been aware of the theories and discussions. With respect to the Classics, by the time Shakespeare and his contemporaries were writing it was common practice to refer to them, since their ideas permeated the early modern view of the world. Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, like Shakespeare and Jonson, were familiar with Latin and Greek classical literary tradition possibly because most of its representative authors – Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, Homer, and Hesiod – were part of the grammar school curriculum; therefore, they had read and translated passages from them, and then naturally quoted their words.¹⁰⁰

In the previous chapters I have endeavoured to analyse the private from etymological, historical, architectural, social, and philosophical approaches, so as to get a

⁹⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Frances E. Dolan (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996).

⁹⁸ Barbara Correll, 'Malleable Material, Models of Power: Woman in Erasmus's "Marriage Group" and Civility in Boys', *ELH*, 57.2 (Summer, 1990), 241-62 (pp. 241-42).

⁹⁹ Henry de Vocht, *The Earliest English Translations of Erasmus's Colloquia* (Louvain, 1928), p. xxix, as cited in Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 29. See also pp. 23, 30-31. Erasmus Desiderius, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, trans. by Carig R. Thompson, (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1997). Erasmus added the apology called "The Usefulness of the Colloquies", p. 1096. As early as 1522 he was defending the purposes, methods, and utility of his *Colloquies* against assaults led by the Carmelite Nicolaas Baechem (Egmondanus) of Louvain. Other opponents were in the Faculty of Theology in Paris. They wanted to censure the book because they thought it could corrupt youthful morals.

¹⁰⁰ T. W. Baldwin's¹⁰⁰ monumental work on Shakespeare's acquaintance with the Classics has no parallel with a research on the dramatists' knowledge of writers of conduct literature. See T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).

more comprehensive idea of it, rather than consider it merely as the opposite of the public sphere. Bringing conduct literature into the discussion at this stage is part of the same review since this subgenre contributed to the understanding of the private/public dyad precisely because most household manuals and treatises usually defined marriage and male/female relationships in spatial terms. In fact, as Catherine Richardson observes, the texts imagine the household in two different senses: as a physical space and as a series of interpersonal relationships.¹⁰¹ This theoretical division will become central to the analysis of the texts since it corresponds, in a certain sense, to de Certeau's notion of place and space. The household is a place that is transformed into a space by marriage ties and family interactions. Renaissance Humanism promoted this same interpersonal dynamic that considered marriage to be a state of intellectual and spiritual companionship where there should be rational and spiritual equality of the sexes. In this way, humanists exalted marriage to a spiritual level and in so doing they elevated the role of women within the household, since they were assigned responsibility for their children's religious education.¹⁰²

According to Retha M. Warnicke, 'early modern writers gave both spatial and functional definitions to the concepts of public and private. In the spatial sense, the private quarters of the household were contrasted to communal structures and areas [...].'¹⁰³ Nevertheless, household and community were probably not seen as opposite spheres as they were entwined in everyday life; in fact, the early modern home was communal in nature. These narratives were somewhat ambiguous since, on the one hand the authors insisted on the spatial polarity between public and private domains, thus preventing

¹⁰¹ Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 29. The author cites Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 16

¹⁰² Todd, pp. 96, 98, 105.

¹⁰³ Retha M. Warnicke, 'Eulogies for Women: Public Testimony of Their Godly Example and Leadership', in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. by Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 168-86 (p. 168).

women's access to the public arena; yet, on the other, they advocated with the same strong conviction for the analogical relationship between the public world of the kingdom or state and the private realm of the household. Contrary to the polarity of spaces that many post-modern theories defend, the private space of the English household was usually defined in analogical rather than opposing terms. It was William Gouge himself, one of the most popular authors of household manuals, who coined one of the most cited definitions of the early modern household: 'A family is [...] a little Commonwealth [...], a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned [...].'¹⁰⁴ Notwithstanding that Gouge immediately mentions the problematic hierarchy of power within the household, in posing the question of privacy in a selection of early modern conduct writings, I want to depart from the marriage of Marxist and Feminist interpretations of power and subordination, and suggest that although early modern man was the authority at home, the subordination of women was not always the synonym of inferiority, subjugation or repression, but referred rather to complementary functions as well as material and spiritual dependence. It should not be forgotten that the institution of marriage in the sixteenth century was primarily a religious contract with divine principles based on God's authority. Apart from matrimony, any other relationship was subject to this divine supremacy in ways and circumstances that differed along the social ladder and that transformed the quality of relationships between husband and wife. As Mendelson and Crawford observe, '[w]omen's experiences were so various, influenced by so many different factors, that generalization is impossible. Some women found in marriage their greatest happiness; others, the most abject misery.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*, 3rd edn (London, 1634), as cited in Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 17.

¹⁰⁵ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 147.

3. Space in Early Modern Household Manuals

a. Xenophon's *Oeconomics* or *Treatise of Household* translated

The Greek historian Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, translated into English by Gentian Hervet under the title of *Xenophons treatise of householde*¹⁰⁶, was printed in at least six editions from 1532 to 1573, a number that shows the book's popularity and significance; in fact, T. W. Baldwin indicates that 'Xenophon was one of the most desirable authors in prose to be translated.'¹⁰⁷ His original text dates back from around 362 BC, although the exact date of its composition is not certain. Cicero's Latin translation became popular during the Renaissance, perhaps because it provided householders with very practical advice about the division of duties and domestic chores, both elements of extreme importance for the smooth administration of the household.

Using the form of a dialogue between Socrates and Critobulus, Xenophon introduces the science of *Oeconomics* – the management of the household and its possessions – presenting household labour in terms of a spatial division of husband 'outdoors' and wife 'indoors'. When he states that 'For commonlye goodes and substance do come in to the house by the labour and payne of the man, but the woman is she moste parte, that kepeth and bestoweth it, where need is'¹⁰⁸, he assigns husband and wife two different roles – those of 'getter' and 'keeper' – in a schematic distinction of familial economy in which the author develops the spatial distribution of tasks:

For it is mete for men to have houses. Wherefore it is convenient that they whiche wyll have somewhat to brynge into their houses have men with them to do those workes that muste be done *abrode in the feldes*. For tyllynge of the grounde, sowynge of the corne, settinge of trees, and kepyng of beastis at

¹⁰⁶ Xenophon, *Xenophons treatise of householde*, translated into English by Gentian Hervet (Imprinted at London: In Fletestrete, by Thomas Berthelet printer to the kynges most noble grac, an. M.D.xxxij. [1532]), Facsimile copy belonging to the Bodleian Library [*EEBO: Early English Books Online* [<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/authors/authorbrowse.pl#mark>, accessed May 2010], and *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of the English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640*. Hereinafter cited as *STC* [*STC* (2nd ed.), 26069]. The book was reedited the same year of its publication in 1532, then in 1537, 1544, 1550, 1557, 1573, and 1727.

¹⁰⁷ T. W. Baldwin, II, p. 649.

¹⁰⁸ Xenophon, sig. Biii^r.

grasse and pasture, be all done *abrode*. But agayne it is nedeful, whom those frutes be conveyed in to the house to overse and sane them and to do all suche thynges as muste be done *at home* [...] Breadde muste be baked and the meate sodde and dressed *within the house*. Also spynnyng, cardynge and weavyng muste be done *within the house*. And where that bothe those thynges, that muste be done *abrode*, and those that be done *within the house* do require care and diligence: me thynkethe that god hathe caused nature to shewe playnlye, that a woman is borne to take hede of all suche thinges, as muste be done *at home*. For he hath made man of bodye, harte and stomacke stronge and myghtye to suffre and endure hete and colde, to iourneye, and go a warfare (my italics).¹⁰⁹

Xenophon's division of duties seems very clear at first sight. One could even make a list of duties and assign them either to husband or wife, thus concluding that the author limits himself to establishing an arbitrary gendered separation of spaces: indoors and outdoors; however, he also gives a biological argument to support the division of tasks in the last two lines of the cited passage. This explanation, I think, has little to do with biased or discriminatory considerations about women's capacities, but reflects facts. By nature, men are fit for hard physical work due to their corporeal features, evidence that does not imply women cannot suffer and endure heat and cold, journey, or warfare, as Xenophon points out, but they will probably have more difficulty in doing so. In the Greek historian's world, as well as in early modern England, arduous physical jobs or occupations like tilling the land or planting trees were generally undertaken outdoors by men for practical reasons that, in this case, have nothing to do with repressive attitudes towards woman or, more specifically, with any male abuse of power. In addition to this, although most female occupations were performed indoors, records in inventories, account books, wives' letters to their husbands, wood carvings, and ballad woodcuts show that '[a]mong both middling and plebeian classes, women were involved in a full range of outdoor tasks [...]'¹¹⁰ as, for example, sheep-shearing and milking. Middle class women could take their products to

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., sigs. Civ^v- Cv^r.

¹¹⁰ Mendelson and Crawford, p. 306, Fig. 39: Rural work: sheep shearing and milking, 'Diveirs devises and sortes of pictures', Folger MS V. a.311, fo.51^v, 'June', The Folger Shakespeare Library.

market in baskets and could sometimes even afford to travel on horseback.¹¹¹ If there is an issue regarding women's work in early modern England this is not directly related to Xenophon's proposal, but rather to the question of their limited choice of profession and access to training, as well as to the smaller reward they received for their work when compared to men of the same social rank. However, can it be said that this discrimination corresponds exclusively to the early modern period while women continue to be rewarded less than men for exactly the same quality and amount of work?

Another question that might be raised when analysing Xenophon's distribution of labour concerns the notions of keeper and getter. Did early modern people give more importance to the feminine or to the masculine role in household management? It should be borne in mind, that sixteenth-century England was predominantly agrarian and that this implies a mutual dependency between husband and wife for the production of food and goods, at least for the lower classes. Both men and women, states Xenophon, should preserve their fortune and improve it. As a consequence, neither does the getter/keeper binary always correspond to an active/passive role, nor does it stand for incompatible spatial notions of public sphere versus private domain. In other words, as Natasha Korda clearly explains, the word 'keeper' could signify 'either activity or passivity, labor or leisure, production or consumption, possession or mere custody.'¹¹² Nevertheless, as will be further discussed, post-modern criticism has appropriated these terms as signs of the ambiguity and contradictions concerning the role of women in Elizabethan and Jacobean society.

Xenophon also refers to the overlapping question of household hierarchy by using Socrates' replies to Critobulus's queries. He declares he is ignorant on the topic and

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 308, Fig. 40: Contemporary drawing: Woman on horseback with panniers going to market, Folger MS Art vo. C. 91, no. 7D, The Folger Shakespeare Library.

¹¹² Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 32.

describes the methods that Ischomachus – an Athenian noble – used to educate his wife, giving examples that may well illustrate his notion of authority. When Critobulus analyses the role of a married woman, he describes it within a relationship of companionship: ‘But me thynkethe that a wife, beinge a good companion and a good felowe to her husbände in a house, is very necessary and within a little as moche worthe as the husbände.’¹¹³ Evidently, if the last sentence is taken without considering the previous statements, it might be seen as pure prejudice since it seems that the wife is not exactly at the same level as the husband. However, anyone who has read the second affirmation regarding the necessity of the wife to complement the husband’s work, will admit that this reflection matches the Greek, as well as much of the early modern mindset regarding household economy, especially at the beginning of the sixteenth century when Xenophon’s work was circulating in its English translation.

The hermeneutical history of *Oeconomicus* well coincides with Gadamer’s notion of interpretation over interpretation that I described at the beginning of this section because not only literary critics, but also social historians and political philosophers have constructed and reconstructed its meaning in search of ‘the sense’ of the text. After Michel Foucault classified it as a classical expression of the ancient Greek ideology of power¹¹⁴, the text has been associated to a misogynist attitude towards women, a label that is hard to eradicate. Feminist critics like Lorna Hutson have questioned Xenophon’s model regarding the extent to which it represented an ideal version of conjugal relations that was ardently striven for, but too perfect to be real. She argues that ‘[t]he symmetry of the formulation of conjugal interdependence is too symmetrical to be anything other than a fiction [...]’¹¹⁵ since after all, the husband could freely move indoors and outdoors, thus being able to

¹¹³ Xenophon, sig. Biii^r.

¹¹⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘Ischomachus’ Household’, in *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 3 vols (USA: Vintage, 1990), II, pp. 152-65.

¹¹⁵ Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in the Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 21.

negotiate in both spheres. This assertion could be valid, firstly if one believed that women could never move outside their homes to pursue any public dealing, and secondly if one understood the outdoor sphere to be the public, political arena where authority was exercised, thus as if it were the only locus of negotiation and agency. Nevertheless, the early modern public space was also that of the neighbourhood and the marketplace and, in this sense, women did have access to it. It would be all too naïve not to realise that this female public participation was rather limited; however, as some critics maintain, there were a number of occasions when women were not cloistered indoors. Especially when the husband was not present ‘women treated their dwellings as fluid and open expanses, from which they surveyed the passing scene and emerged at will. They also freely resorted to each other’s houses, making use of neighbours’ dwellings much like a series of female spaces.’¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the household offered them ‘a secure yet flexible base of operations for their forays into the outside world.’¹¹⁷ These outdoor walks or business errands were possible to women living in the country or to those of lower class in particular, since they needed to contribute to the household economy and in so doing they had to interact with men in the streets, the marketplace, the fairs, and the fields.¹¹⁸

Hutson’s analysis also presupposes and assumes the widespread negative connotation attached by post-modern criticism to the indoor domestic space of the household: a contested space, like that depicted in domestic tragedies of the period, or a somewhat dark prison where women could not develop the variety of skills that were as relevant and necessary for the welfare of society as those performed by men. It must be admitted that Elizabethan women had to bear the weight of heavy restrictions against their gender and that few were able to overcome these stereotypes, but even if that group was rather small, it opens up the possibility of discussion and counter-argument, of comparison

¹¹⁶ Mendelson and Crawford, p. 206.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 205.

¹¹⁸ This fact is clearly seen in *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, which I will analyse later.

and contrast, of showing more aspects of reality and not a partial dimension of it, of giving the licence to ask, as A. D. Nuttall does: ‘Is this true?’ or ‘Is this likely?’¹¹⁹ If the critic suggests that in his new mimesis ‘the emphasis on realistic art is on *possible* people [...]’¹²⁰, then I want to look for those *possible* women in early modern texts and in Shakespeare’s plays. Furthermore, I venture to say that Xenophon’s approach is more focused on economic issues: the increase, custody and distribution of household possessions, rather than on family relationships or negotiations of power and authority between husband and wife. The author’s proposal might not aim at imposing a gendered division that subjugates women to men in every dimension of everyday life, but at advising a functional organisation of tasks within marriage that shows the importance of spatial factors in successful domestic management.

b. Juan Luis Vives’s *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*

In addition to Xenophon’s treatise, other early modern exhortations on marriage were printed and reprinted a considerable number of times during the English Renaissance. Once again, one might conjecture the reasons for this popularity, yet, as Gadamer suggests, it is not possible to reproduce the context in which they were received. Quite often the number of editions of a book depends on printing policies such as size, type of binding, quality and cost of paper, to mention but a few variables. Beauchamp and others observe that ‘early Tudor books like the *Instruction* were generally printed in editions of between one hundred and five hundred copies [...]’¹²¹, but this practice changed and, in the mid-to late sixteenth century, editions often comprised as many as 1,250 or even 1,500 copies.

¹¹⁹ A. D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (USA: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 182.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹²¹ *Juan Luis Vives, The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, ed. by Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, and Margaret Mikesell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. lxxxii.

The *Instruction* may have been printed in editions that large;¹²² moreover, it was regularly reprinted during the sixteenth century.¹²³ The first translation of the book from Latin into English by Richard Hyrde – *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* – was printed by Thomas Berthelet *circa* 1529¹²⁴ and subsequently published in quarto until 1567. Indeed, by 1600 the text had appeared in more than forty editions – in English, Dutch, French¹²⁵, German, Italian, and Spanish, as well as the original Latin, with variations reflecting not only the political and religious changes in English culture, but also the parallel evolution of the text from a humanist treatise to a Puritan instruction book.¹²⁶ By 1585 – eighteen years after the last quarto had been published – the first octavo was printed followed by another in 1592, both with several textual variations. Because of this, and in accordance with the reading approach – proposed at the beginning of this section – of attempting to analyse the texts from their own socio-historical and religious context, I have looked at two editions of the *Instruction*: the first Tudor English translation of 1529 (edited by Beauchamp and

¹²² Beauchamp and others, p. xcii. The authors obtained data on print runs from: Ronald B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students*, pp. 130-33, and H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1558 to 1603*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr.1989), II, pp. 297-99; for number of reprint editions, they consulted Peter W. M. Blayney, ‘The Publication of Playbooks’, in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 412-13.

¹²³ *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae* (Antwerp: Michel Hillen, 1524) was the first printed Latin text. The book was then translated into English and printed in four quartos between 1529 (2) and 1531. The fourth quarto was published in 1541 when not only Catherine of Aragon and Juan Luis Vives had died, but also Thomas More and Ann Boleyn had been executed. The following quartos were issued in 1547, 1557, and *circa* 1567. Later, in 1585, Robert Waldegrave printed the first octavo edition that was followed by the 1592 octavo issue printed by John Danter. See Beauchamp and others, pp. xxxvix-xlix, and lxxvii-xciii. Beauchamp and others’ 2002 version is based on the first quarto printed *circa* 1529. The other version I consulted is the 1585 octavo edition: *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (At London: printed by Robert Walde-graue, dwelling without Temple-barre, neare vnto Sommerset-house, 1585), *STC* (2nd ed.), 24862. Although passages are quoted from Beauchamp and others’ edition, I have included references from the 1585 octavo indicating whether the text and spelling change.

¹²⁴ Juan Luis Vives, *A very frutefull and pleasant boke called the Instruction of a Christen Woman, made first in Laten, and dedicated unto the quenes good grace, by the right famous clerke mayster Lewes Vives, and turned out of Laten into Englysshe by Rycharde Hyrd* printed by Thomas Berthelet, *circa* 1529, *STC* (2nd ed.), 24856.

¹²⁵ See Pollie Bromilow, ‘An Emerging Female Readership of Print in Sixteenth-Century France? Pierre de Changy’s Translation of *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* by Juan Luis Vives’, *French Studies*, 67.2 (2013), 155-169. The author explains how the French translation is a very interesting example of the role of translation in broadening the readership of an established humanist conduct book to include women who, according to the translator Pierre de Changy, often lacked the knowledge of Latin to read the work in its original language.

¹²⁶ Beauchamp and others, p. xv.

others), and the 1585 octavo in facsimile copy. The reasons for this choice lie precisely in the fact that not only do interpretations vary according to the cultural context, but also texts since they are sometimes altered either by the author or by the editor, not necessarily due to textual amendments, but mostly because of cultural shifts.

Even though the reason to bring Vives's treatise to the discussion here has to do with the contribution of his perspective to the problematic question of female space in early modern England, it might be especially relevant to its interpretation to take a few textual examples into account. First, Vives revised the chapter on virginity and introduced several variations in the later editions.¹²⁷ He also omitted the second book's original introduction to the institution of marriage after this revision.¹²⁸ Hence, neither the posthumous octavo published in 1585, nor that issued at the end of the century, in 1592, bear complete resemblance to the first English translation of 1529. It is not known whether these modifications respond to changes in Vives's own views, or to a kind of unavoidable adaptation to the new Protestant regime carried out by editors and printers after his death; nevertheless, as Beauchamp and others point out, '[from] one point of view, changes in the *Instruction* as it evolved from a humanist treatise to a Puritan instruction book comprised a deterioration of the text – a progressive and regrettable loss of Vives's and Hyrde's original intentions. From another perspective, the various versions of the English *Instruction* can be described as examples of inevitable changes in texts when the material forms in which they are circulated also alter.'¹²⁹

The success of the *Instruction* in the print market might stem from two main situations: first, the work was published when a major marriage controversy had begun in England due to Henry VIII's conflict with Catherine of Aragon, to whom Vives dedicated

¹²⁷ Charles Fantazzi, 'Vives and the *emarginati*', in *A Companion to Juan Luis Vives*, ed. by Charles Fantazzi, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), pp. 65-112 (p. 77).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹²⁹ Beauchamp and others, pp. xcii, xxxciii.

this work, thinking also of the education of her daughter, the Princess Mary. Consequently, as Beauchamp and others comment, the interest in problematic aspects of marriage increased, thus more books, sermons, and prescriptive manuals than ever were written on the subject during this period. Secondly, Vives's educational treatise – unlike its medieval predecessors – enjoyed a larger readership as it was directed to middle-class readers who could afford to buy it for about a shilling.¹³⁰

Notwithstanding that the English translation was published roughly thirty-five years before Shakespeare was born, Baldwin states that Vives was one of the well-known educational theorists of the time.¹³¹ Thus it is likely that Shakespeare knew this work in any of its English editions or even in the original Latin version. Although the *Instruction* is not part of Geoffrey Bullough's canonical list of sources,¹³² Shakespeare might have consulted it to write *Henry VIII*, and it is not unthinkable to speculate that Vives's work may be implicit in the construction of Catherine as a character in the history play.¹³³ Nonetheless, the question is whether Vives's advice on the education of women represents his own beliefs, echoes the ideas of the period, or aims at expounding an ideology about marriage and woman's space. Furthermore, the analysis of texts such as the *Instruction*, may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of female characters in Shakespeare's plays, as well as to realising whether his female characters adjusted to the paradigms presented by early modern authors – like Vives – who were not dramatists.

¹³⁰ This sum was the usual price of books at that time and it was directly related to the cost of paper. See Beauchamp and others, pp. xli, xlii, xcii. See also Tessa Watt, 'Introduction', in *Cheap Print and Popular Piety: 1550-1640*. Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, repr. 1996), pp. 1-10.

¹³¹ Baldwin, II, p. 26.

¹³² *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare: Later English History Plays*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, 6 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), IV.

¹³³ Studies that deal with Catherine of Aragon as image of the perfect wife often compare the fictional character in Shakespeare and Calderon's plays. See, for example, John Loftis, 'Henry VIII and Calderon's *La Cisma de Ingalaterra*', *Comparative Literature*, 34.3 (Summer, 1982), 208-22; Ali Shehzad Zaidi, 'Self-Contradiction in *Henry VIII* and *La cisma de Ingalaterra*', *Studies in Philology*, 103 (Summer, 2006), 329-44.

I will focus on three main topics that are related to the private space and are present in every English edition: women's virtues, marriage as companionship, and women's role in the household. These three themes are repeated in almost every household manual, thus indicating certain continuity of topics, while also admitting contradictions both in perspective and in emphasis among the different authors. Vives was a married man from a Judeo-Christian background, whose family had converted to Catholicism. When writing for Queen Catherine, he had to show his Catholic faith although he also incorporated his ancestors' traditions. In fact, experts such as Charles Fantazzi, claim that some elements, especially Vives's idea that women should live in a semi-cloistered condition, are 'more reminiscent of Jewish rather than of Christian tradition.'¹³⁴

In the three books of this treatise, Vives goes through all the stages of a woman's life from childhood to widowhood, and concludes that in order to become the perfect Christian woman – maiden, wife, or widow – she needs to practise two essential virtues: chastity and obedience. In a certain sense, these virtues constitute the framework of female space, for in order to safeguard chastity the author advises women to obey their husbands and avoid transgressing household boundaries: 'I praie thee, understand thine owne goodnesse maide, thy price can not be esteemed, if thou ioyne a chast mind unto thy chast body, if thou shut up both body and minde, and seale them with those seales that none can open, but he that hath the keye of David, that is thy spouse: [...].'¹³⁵ The *Instruction's* aim was to serve as a model for the education of Christian women; yet, Vives had specific women in mind: Queen Catherine and her daughter, Princess Mary. In the sixth to eighth chapters of the first book, he insists on the value of virginity for single woman: 'Nowe wyl

¹³⁴ Fantazzi, p. 90.

¹³⁵ Vives's 1529 Quarto in Beauchamp and others' edition. (Hereinafter: Vives's 1529 Quarto). Book I, Chapter VI: 'Of virginitie', p. 28 [sig. F2^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. D5^v: same text, but different spelling. The passage also makes reference to the key and door metaphor from the Scriptures in Isaiah 22:22, and St John's Book of Revelation 3:7 where Jesus Christ holds the key of King David: What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

I talke al togeder with the mayde her selfe: whiche hath within her a treasure without comparison, that is the pureness bothe of body and mynde.¹³⁶ He then describes the punishment that some women have received as a result of having lost this virtue: ‘For I knowe that many fathers have cut the throtes of their daughters, bretherne of theyr systers, and kynnesmen of theyr kynnes women.’¹³⁷ Vives then explains that wicked men should also be reprimanded if they do not behave honestly, but women’s offences should ‘be rekened fouler, and they be more timorus of nature.’¹³⁸ He does address the question of men’s adultery stating that they should not deceive their wives: ‘the husbandes ought nat to gyve them selfe unto over moche pleasure, nor to delyte in any a companye but theyr wyves [...]’¹³⁹, but instead of making a moral judgement that imputes to them the same responsibility as women, the author digresses from this key point and justifies himself by saying that: ‘[...] our purpose is nat here to teache the husbandes.’¹⁴⁰ Finally, he gives very practical advice to ensure the preservation of chastity, as for example: drinking water instead of wine, fasting, avoiding luxurious attire, and having regular hours of sleep.

In the second book, Vives develops the topic of obedience and establishes a clear hierarchy of authority between husband and wife. She must be in charge of household servants: ‘Therefore let the wife gyve her servauntes worke to do [...]’¹⁴¹, but when it comes to deciding other issues, she is to obey her husband: ‘But let her ordre all thyng after her husbandes wyll and commaundement: or at least in suche wise as she thynketh that her husbände wyl be content [...]’¹⁴² It is interesting to note that although man’s

¹³⁶ Vives’s 1529 Quarto, bk I, chap. VI, p. 28 [sig. F2^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. D4^r: same text, but different spelling.

¹³⁷ Ibid., bk I, chap. VII: ‘Of the keypyng of virginite and Chastite’, p. 32 [sigs. G2^v, G3^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. E1^v: same text, but different spelling.

¹³⁸ Ibid., bk. I, chap. VII, p. 33 [sig. G3^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. E3^r: same text, but different spelling.

¹³⁹ Ibid., bk. II, chap. VI: ‘Howe she shulde lyve between her husbände and her selfe privately’, p. 119 [sig. E4^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. S6^r: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., bk. II, chap. VI, p. 119 [sig. E4^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. S6^r: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., bk. II, chap. X: ‘What the Wyfe ought to do at home’, p. 136 [sig. I3^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. X4^v: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁴² Ibid., bk. II, chap. X, p. 136 [i3^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. X4^r: same text, but different spelling.

authority is preferred to that of woman, the last comment is subtly ambiguous since Vives seems to insinuate or advise how to obey without obeying, thus appealing directly to woman's wit so that she makes her husband think he gives the orders when, in everyday life, the wife decides about a variety of matters in such 'wise'¹⁴³ or manner – as the Old English term expresses – that he will not notice and will be pleased. Nevertheless, in another passage Vives is categorical regarding wives' position within household hierarchy and makes use of Scripture (Gen.3) to support his argument: 'And thou maist heare our Lord saye to the Woman: Thou shalt be in the rule of thy husband, and he shall haue the mastrie on thee.'¹⁴⁴ He emphasises this idea by giving examples of famous historical female characters who were fortunate in marriage because they obeyed their husbands' will as if it were equivalent to divine law: 'Nor he is nat only wyse, but also the very wysedome hit selfe: nat the wysdome of Socrates, or Plato, or Aristotel, but of god almyghty [...].'¹⁴⁵ By comparing the wisdom of husbands to that of the great ancient philosophers and concluding that male virtue is higher, I think Vives acknowledges the medieval and Renaissance Christian belief in the chain of being or *scala naturae*¹⁴⁶ in which planes of existence are ordered according to hierarchical positions, God being in the highest place, then the angels, kings and nobles, common men, animals, plants, and minerals. This model became the basis to explain the divine right of kings received directly from God and was also analogically applied to the whole social order where the king occupied the top position. In the family – a little kingdom or commonwealth, in Gouge's terms – the father is considered the head of the household, followed by his wife, and below her, their children. In spite of the fact that this hierarchical structure might seem arbitrary,

¹⁴³ 'Wise', n. arch. II. *OED*: 'Old English wise manner, fashion [...] was used in various kinds of adverbial expressions meaning 'in such-and-such a manner, way, or respect'. It was variously written.

¹⁴⁴ 1585 octavo, sig. R7^r: text from Scripture.

¹⁴⁵ Vives's 1529 Quarto, bk. I, chap. VI, p. 30 [sig. G1^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. D7^r.

¹⁴⁶ C. S. Lewis, 'Selected Materials: The Seminal Period', in *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 45-75; E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (USA: Vintage Books, 1959).

discriminatory and biased against women's capabilities, one should take into account that it was common belief during the Elizabethan period. Therefore, although readers of the *Instruction* could have dissented from the idea of male authority and female obedience presented in the text, they were probably familiar with the notion, thus it neither surprised them, nor did it prompt all of them to subversion. It is a known fact, that in April 1523, Vives 'presented a manuscript copy of *De institutione feminae Christianae* to Queen Catherine, although it did not appear until the following year.'¹⁴⁷ Perhaps he was looking for the Queen's consent before publishing the book. She was a learned woman who did not only know enough Latin to read and understand the text, but was also a devout and practising Catholic for whom these prescriptions might have seemed natural. She could have added or deleted passages from the document if she had disagreed with the image of a Christian woman as described by the author, and perhaps she did so before Vives published the first version.¹⁴⁸

Vives's exposition tends to be quite contradictory since, on the one hand, he elevates man's authority over woman, yet, on the other, he insists on the companionate nature of marriage that certainly implies equal status for man and wife. In the second book of the *Instruction*, the humanist thinker emphasises this companionate aspect by taking once again Aristotle's ideas who 'exhorteth wyse men unto maryage, nat onely to the intent to have children, but also bicause of company. For that is the principal and greatest unite that can be.'¹⁴⁹ According to Fantazzi, Vives's view of marriage is 'in sharp contrast with the teachings of the Church fathers, who consistently cite procreation alone as the

¹⁴⁷ Enrique González González, Salvador Albiña, Víctor Gutiérrez and others, *Vives, Edicions Princeps* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 1992), no.21, cited by Enrique González González, 'Juan Luis Vives. Works and Days', in *A Companion to Juan Luis Vives*, ed. by Charles Fantazzi (Leiden and Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), pp. 15-64 (p. 55).

¹⁴⁸ I am aware that some of these arguments might be conjectural; however, they could also be totally true and valid.

¹⁴⁹ Vives's 1529 Quarto, bk. II, chap. II: 'What a woman ought to haue in mynde when shee marryeth', p. 86 [sig. T4*]; 1585 octavo, sig. N5^v: same text, but different spelling.

primary goal of marriage.’¹⁵⁰ I would say that it also shows the debate concerning marriage among Humanists, Catholics, Puritans, and Protestants during the period. An illustrative example of this controversy is expressed in the definition of marriage given in the second chapter of the second book. When Vives explains what a woman ought to have in mind when she gets married in the 1529 quarto, he describes marriage as a sacrament, whereas in the 1585 octavo wedlock is described (by Vives or by one of the editors) as an ordinance: ‘[...] and so shee ought to prepare her selfe, that so holy and ordinaunce, first understood, she may afterwarde fulfill it.’¹⁵¹ Although there are religious ordinances that can refer to sacraments, the term is generally associated with a law, decree, or edict. In fact, Puritans generally used it to define marriage, yet as a synonym of a civil ceremony. Moreover, even if the concept had the sense of a religious rite, it undoubtedly lacked the force and intrinsic nature of the Christian notion of a sacrament.

Despite the Spanish humanist’s ambiguity regarding equality between man and woman in marriage, he admits that wives can become learned, thus making quite an unusual and progressive concession for that time. Nevertheless, in the fourth chapter of the first book, when asked about what a woman should learn, Vives limits the scope of her learning to a few areas: ‘I have tolde you, The study of wysedome: the whiche dothe enstruct their manners, and enfurme theyr lyvyng, and teacheth them the waye of good and holy lyfe. As for eloquence I have no great care, nor a woman nedeth it nat: but she nedeth goodnes and wysedome.’¹⁵² Given the social and religious English context, such a remark was not condemnatory against female eloquence, but rather indicated that this skill was not useful for early modern women since they were seldom engaged in affairs that required speaking in public. Vives is even more categorical regarding this topic when he quotes St

¹⁵⁰ Fantazzi, p. 80.

¹⁵¹ 1585 octavo, bk. II, chap II, sig. N6^v. Same text, but different spelling. There is a change of word to define marriage: Hyrde uses the word ‘sacrament’ to define marriage in the 1529 Quarto: sigs. T2^v, U1^v, and U2^r.

¹⁵² Vives’s 1529 Quarto, bk. I, chap. IV: ‘Of the learning of maids’, pp. 22-23 [sigs. E1^v, E2^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. C5^r: same text, but different spelling.

Paul's advice to his disciple Timothy: 'But I gyve no licence to a woman to be a teacher, nor to have authorite of the man but to be in silence.'¹⁵³ Although St Paul forbids the official exercise of the profession, yet social historians have demonstrated that women performed the role of teachers at home, instructing their daughters and servants in a variety of practical skills and intellectual abilities. The apparently harsh command of keeping quiet he adds after his initial advice could correspond to the ideas about female eloquence that circulated during the period. As Patricia Parker points out, public speaking was linked to the humanist training of young men in the art of rhetoric to enable them to argue persuasively in public. Hence, '[i]t was the public nature of rhetoric – taking women outside their proper “province” or place – which disqualified them, in a long tradition dating from as ancient an authority as Aristotle's strictures that women were to be not only silent but identified with the property of the home and with the private sphere, with a private rather than a common place.'¹⁵⁴ Besides, rhetoric was considered a dangerous weapon since female public speech was sometimes associated with scolding wives, but more specifically with 'public women' or whores. It cannot be fully ascertained whether these beliefs represented the early modern dominant ideology or were the result of repeated reinterpretations of the texts over decades. However, if Vives agreed with this vision and his aim was to promote chastity as the core virtue for an educated woman, his advice to be silent is definitely consistent with his final goal.

He also encourages wives to be versed in literature, yet once again he contradicts himself by enumerating a long list of 'ungracious bokes'¹⁵⁵ that they should not read

¹⁵³ Vives's 1529 Quarto, bk. I, chap. IV, p. 23 [sig. E2^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. C6^v: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁵⁴ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 104.

¹⁵⁵ Vives's 1529 Quarto, bk. I, chap. V: 'What bokes to be redde, and what nat', p. 25 [sig. E4^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. C8^v. Some of the books he mentions are: *Amadis de Gaula*, *Florisando*, *Tristan*, *Celestina*, *Lancelot du Lac*, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and *Decameron*.

because, according to him, they ‘sette all upon fylthe and vitiousnes [...]’¹⁵⁶ On the one hand, with this kind of assertion Vives jeopardises woman’s agency, but, on the other, he advocates her right to learning. Nevertheless, as his notion of female education focuses on the achievement of chastity and the acquisition of domestic skills, he does not go beyond household boundaries that will always look like insurmountable obstacles for women’s freedom through post-modern eyes, when in everyday life many Elizabethan and Jacobean women did not necessarily see the home as a cloister or a space devoid of possibilities for self-fashioning.

According to Fantazzi, Vives argues for women’s full equality to men based on their intellectual capacity. In doing so, ‘he refutes the inveterate prejudice against learned woman, sprung from the conviction that the acquisition of knowledge by a woman increased her natural wickedness, as if men of evil disposition were not just as prone as women to misuse their intelligence.’¹⁵⁷ Probably influenced by Erasmus and Thomas More’s friendship and ideas¹⁵⁸, the author holds that provided that women receive the proper education and training, they can become as learned as men. It is indeed in one of Erasmus’ letters that we find a direct mirror of everyday life and learning in More’s household, which might have been taken as a model for the perfect godly home not only by Vives, but by many other household writers who imitated Erasmus. In 1519, the Spanish humanist had recorded More’s domestic life:

You might say of him that he presides over a Second Academy like that of Plato, only that instead of geometry and figures you meet there the domestic virtues. All the members of his household find occupation. [...] In More’s household you would realise that Plato’s academy was revived, except that in the Academy the discussions concerned geometry and the power of numbers, whereas the house at Chelsea is a veritable school of Christian religion. [...]

¹⁵⁶ Vives’s 1529 Quarto, bk. I, chap. V, p. 25 [sig. E4^v]; 1585 octavo, sig. D1^r: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁵⁷ Fantazzi, p. 74.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 69. As early as 1520 Vives enjoyed Thomas More’s friendship. We know that More educated his daughters, especially Margaret, in the full rigour of a university curriculum.

In it is none, man or women, but readeth or studieth the liberal arts. Yet it is their chief care of piety.¹⁵⁹

Queen Catherine was, like More's daughters, part of this group of most learned woman. She had read the classics, Christian poets, major Western fathers, classical philosophers, Latin historians, and was even familiar with the rudiments of civil and canon law.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, it is quite paradoxical that if she were Vives's model, he advises princess Mary in the Preface to follow her mother's 'vertue and wysdome'¹⁶¹ – referring to both chastity and learning – yet throughout the rest of the book he restricts woman's education to a few intellectual activities.

When the Spanish humanist starts discussing woman's role within the household, he seems to follow the trends of the sixteenth century, thus reiterating what other authors had already said. In the preface to the *Instruction* he repeats the Xenophonian formula of getter and keeper and reinforces the idea by quoting Aristotle, who many years before had also repeated Xenophon's formula: 'Aristotle sayth, that in house keypinge, the mannes duetie is to get, and the womans to kepe [...].'¹⁶² Nevertheless, while Xenophon mostly describes domestic hierarchy according to the duties of husband and wife, Vives concentrates on the roles of wife and daughter, thus insisting upon wives' marital chastity and single woman's virginity as the ideals for female conduct. In addition to this, he argues that his aim regarding women is different from that of the ancient philosophers, for 'they appeare rather to exhort and counsaile them vnto some kinde of liuing, then to instruct and teach them. [...] But I will let passe all such exhortations, [...] and I will compile rules of

¹⁵⁹ P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906-58), p. xxv.

¹⁶⁰ Beauchamp and others, p. xxiv.

¹⁶¹ Vives's 1529 Quarto, bk. I, 'The preface', p. 11 [sig. B4^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. A7^v: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, bk. II, chap. X, p. 135 [sig. i2v]; 1585 octavo, sig. X2^v: same text, but different spelling.

liuing.’¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Vives also assigns woman the household as her space and describes a series of duties that she must fulfil at home, starting with the care and love of her husband to whom she should always be kind. A wise woman, advises the author, ‘shulde have in mynde myry tales, and histories [...] wherewith she may refreshe her husbände, and make hym mery, whan he is wery.’¹⁶⁴ She should also look after the servants, educate the children, prepare medicines and ointments, and perform such a long list of duties that the chapter where the author recommends her not to go outside the household is almost unnecessary, since it is quite obvious that the fulfilment of so many domestic chores would not leave much spare time for other occupations or pastimes. According to Vives, women should not go away from home except on very special occasions and following precise rules: ‘Nat withstanding ther be some that must nedes be a brode, for theyr lyvyng, as those that by and sell: Whiche, if it were possible, I wolde nat that women shulde be put to those businesses: and if it muste nedes be so, let olde women do them, or maryed women that be paste myddle age.’¹⁶⁵ Although Vives is the voice in this text, one does not know whether this view about the outside world as a dangerous place for women – an open space they should avoid – reflects his own convictions, or whether he rather echoes one of the many divergent hypotheses regarding the household that circulated in the sixteenth century. In fact, literary critics such as Frances E. Dolan, Catherine Richardson (in some respects), and Laura Gowing, would argue that the household was much more threatening for women than the outside public sphere. Both Dolan and Richardson present the home as a contested space. While the first states that in

¹⁶³ Vives’s 1529 Quarto, ‘The preface’, p. 8 [sigs. B1^r, B1^v]; 1585 octavo, sigs. A2^r, A2^v: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. II, chap. VI: ‘Howe she shulde lyve between her husbände and her selfe privately’, p. 117 [sig. E2^r]; 1585 octavo, sig. S4^r: same text, but different spelling.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, bk. II, chap. IX: ‘Of Walkyng abrode’, p. 131 [sig. H2^v]; 1585 octavo, sigs. U5^r, U5^v: same text, but different spelling.

early modern England ‘the home could function as a locus of conflict,’¹⁶⁶ the latter reinforces the idea that ‘the ideological connection between women’s behaviour and communal spaces was unrelentingly negative [...]’;¹⁶⁷ as a consequence, female honour and reputation operated ‘on a firm physical boundary between house and community.’¹⁶⁸ In the case of domestic tragedies, this material barrier turns against men since female characters are the ones who tend to become more violent as they frequently defy their husbands’ authority by murdering them. Hence, the belief that household boundaries – the material limits *per se* – would protect women from the allegedly threatening public sphere, is certainly debatable.

Gowing also examines dangerous households, but with respect to gender relations. She focuses on violent verbal disputes that resulted from adultery or any other inappropriate female moral behaviour. She gives an account of how early moderns understood adultery by women as an action that damaged every sphere of marital relationships producing physical, mental, and material disturbances.¹⁶⁹ According to the critic, ‘the effects of adultery are seen to strike at the root of the marital household: the shared purse, the preparation of food by women for men, and the space of the bedroom.’¹⁷⁰ In other words, the moral implications of infidelity have a spatial consequence since, she adds, ‘[a]dulterous women engage their husbands in conflict in the house, taking control over communal rooms, locking doors, and breaking into trunks [...]’.¹⁷¹ These examples make the association between space and behaviour that I have been trying to establish, more explicit; that is to say, they show how human actions and relationships may configure space in similar ways to those suggested by de Certeau and Lefebvre. In this sense, even

¹⁶⁶ Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representation of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Richardson, *Domestic Life*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁹ Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*. Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996; repr.1998), p. 194.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁷¹ Gowing, p. 194.

though space is considered primarily as a physical or geographical area, it could also be regarded as an abstract or virtual reality built by people's experiences. This does not refer to a subjective view of reality: the idea that things exist only when they are thought of, rather than because they have their own independent ontological existence; it deals, more precisely, with notions or concepts that can perform the function of a space. Marriage could become a virtual space that symbolically contains male and female relationships. Husband and wife move within certain limits or boundaries that are not constituted by walls, but by love, vows of fidelity, and mutual obligation as well as convention.

Seeming contradictions about the household are noticeable not only within Vives's text, but also among the different early modern discussion-discourses on the topic. There are evident similarities and echoes between the content of this discourse and those that were printed before and after, as if the creation of the private sphere had been a communal discursive endeavour. While Vives's text is indebted to the medieval educational treatises in form and content, works such as Edmund Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship*¹⁷² printed in 1568, and John Dod and Robert Cleaver's *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government*¹⁷³, first published in 1598, adopt ideas and verbatim from the *Instruction*.

c. Edmund Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship*

To deal with the works of Edmund Tilney implies considering the high position he enjoyed in early modern society, since his social status probably had an impact on the popularity of his writings. First of all, Tilney was a distant cousin of Queen Elizabeth I to whom he dedicated *The Flower of Friendship* (hereafter referred to as *The Flower*): 'To the Noble

¹⁷² Edmund Tilney, *A brief and pleasant discourse of duties in Marriage, called the Flower of Friendship* (Imprinted at London by Henrie Denham, dwelling in Pater noster Rowe, at the Signe of the Starre. Anno 1568. Cum privilegio), *STC* (2nd ed.), 24076.3. Although all quotations from the book will be taken from the *EEBO* 1568 edition (Facsimile copy belonging to the British Library), the reference to Wayne's edition of the same text will be also indicated for the modern reader.

¹⁷³ John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Gouernment: For the Ordering of Private Families, according to the direction of Gods word*. Gathered by R.C. At London. Printed by Felix Kingston, for Thomas Man. 1598 [*EEBO*: Early English Books Online], *STC* (2nd ed.), 5383.

and most Vertuous Princesse Elizabeth, by the grace of God, of Englande, Fraunce, and Ireland, [...]’¹⁷⁴ When he refers here to Queen Elizabeth’s virtues, he might have been alluding to all her qualities, but the one he admired most in her – as he shows constantly in the text – is chastity. The Queen had rejected a good number of suitors and remained single, thus she became known as the Virgin Queen. Whether her refusals were the result of her conviction that she could serve the nation better as an unmarried monarch, or the fear of losing her power and sovereignty, she exercised her right to refuse marriage.

Tilney expresses his esteem towards Elizabeth not only in the three pages of the “Epistle Dedicatorie”, but throughout the whole text by making reference to her in the character of Isabella.¹⁷⁵ His personal interest in the sovereign is as evident as that of Vives towards Catherine of Aragon. He was also a married man and professed his queen’s religion, only this time the reigning monarch was a Protestant. In addition to his family relationship to Elizabeth I, Tilney was appointed Master of the Revels at the English court for over 30 years from 1577 to 1578 until his death in 1610. His work entailed censoring every play that was written during the period, so he wielded considerable power among early modern dramatists: he could ‘examine, alter, and allow or suppress every play written for public performance in England.’¹⁷⁶ Undoubtedly Shakespeare’s plays – also those he co-authored or revised –, as well as those by his contemporary dramatists, fell into Tilney’s hands. A clear example of this censorship, albeit more focused on political and religious issues rather than on women’s role in the private space, is *Sir Thomas More*. As John Jowett has recently reaffirmed, Tilney was not opposed to the publication of the play, but he was against the insurrection scenes, thus he deleted scene 1 and suggested that the

¹⁷⁴ Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship*, hereafter referred to as *The Flower*, ‘The Epistle Dedicatorie’, sig. A2^r (The first signature to appear in the text is A2; therefore we have followed that number system along A signatures. From signature B onwards, the editor used Roman numerals); Wayne, p. 99, ll. 1-5.

¹⁷⁵ For the many meanings of the ‘Flower’ and its association to Queen Elizabeth see: Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage* ed. by Valerie Wayne (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 45, 49, 66-7, and 73. The term functions in figurative ways in the title, and sometimes evokes erotic senses throughout the text.

¹⁷⁶ Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 10.

playwright completely revised it.¹⁷⁷ From the perspective of Tilney's influence on Shakespeare and his contemporary playwrights it is difficult to determine whether they could have read *The Flower* since there is not enough evidence to confirm it. One cannot assert that the text was available in the 1590s and after, yet one can speculate that it became a very topical book since it was printed in seven editions between 1568 and 1587, three of them within the first year of publication.¹⁷⁸ Compared to the *Instruction* in terms of the peculiarities of each edition, Tilney's text presents an interesting difference, as Valerie Wayne explains: 'the revised *STC*'s ordering of the seven editions, indicates that each is a paginary reprint of the immediately preceding edition, and reveals an increasing deterioration more often than correction among them.'¹⁷⁹ Probably, the stability of *The Flower*'s content mirrors the English political and religious situation under Elizabeth's rule. The Church of England had been already well-established, the government was strong and organised, and the arts flourished in all their forms, especially drama; therefore, we can infer that the author neither had to adapt the text to make it sound politically correct, nor did it need to be translated. Besides, unlike Vives, Tilney was an Englishman writing in England; he was, indeed, a very powerful authority, and he professed the religion of most of the English people; moreover, writing about marriage at that time was rather different than in the previous decades. The debate on marriage during Elizabeth's reign – specifically regarding her single state – produced some anxiety at court, yet did not generate the same controversy as her father's repeated marriage-and-divorce situation.

¹⁷⁷ William Shakespeare, Anthony Munday and others, *Sir Thomas More*, ed. by John Jowett, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), pp. 26-7 and pp. 125-26.

¹⁷⁸ Valerie Wayne, 'The Sexual Politics of Textual Transmission', in *Textual Formations and Reformations*, ed. by Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998), p. 180. See also Wayne, *The Flower*, pp. 5, 95, where the author explains that until the second volume of the revised *Short-Title Catalogue* appeared in 1976, only three editions of *The Flower* were thought to exist. However, The Stationers' Register records that Henry Denham printed the first six editions between July 22, 1567, and July 22, 1568. Denham and Abel Jeffs printed the 1587 edition in octavo.

¹⁷⁹ Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 95.

Tilney's book is organised in the form of a dialogue involving several male and female characters, some of which represent prominent historical figures in the sixteenth century, such as Vives and Tilney himself (as a first-person narrator), Erasmus – a fictional character whose name recalls humanist ideas, as well as *Maister Pedro*, named after the Spanish humanist Pedro di Luxan.¹⁸⁰ In addition to other male characters, there is a group of women whose main representatives are: Lady Julia, derived from Erasmus's good woman, 'Eulalia', and the young Isabella, Tilney's counterpart to Queen Elizabeth. Within the general debate about marriage, the first half of the book deals with the husband's specific virtues and responsibilities and the second part is dedicated to the wife's parallel virtues and obligations. Before introducing the ideology of companionate marriage, Tilney gives an account of the 'rites of dyvers Nations, [including the Romans, the Babilonians, the Venetians, the French, and even the Scots] in celebrating this misterie, whereof as some will make you to laugh, so other some are to be noted.'¹⁸¹ While describing the customs of other nations, Tilney expands the scope of the discussion to foreign countries and backgrounds and connects the narrative with a wider social context. However, these opening examples are no more than mere illustrative cases that do not fit with his claim on equality and friendship in marriage. Moreover, he only refers back to these and to other more atypical cases to suggest that they are exceptions not worth following.

As part of a cluster of early modern debates on marriage and household management, *The Flower* also reproduces, in the character Isabella, some of the compelling public and private dilemmas at the time the book was written and read.¹⁸² In spite of the fact that the author deals with almost the same topics as his predecessors, he gives a different emphasis to some of them and introduces new ones, such as the

¹⁸⁰ Wayne identifies Pedro di Luxan's *Coloquios Matrimoniales* as Tilney's direct source for *The Flower*. This text appeared in at least eleven editions from 1550 to 1589, p. 33.

¹⁸¹ Tilney, *The Flower*, sig. A8^r; Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 106, ll. 213-15.

¹⁸² Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 4.

importance of love in marriage. Lady Julia defines it as the sauce of wedlock, in a heartfelt speech: ‘For as to season unsaverie meates, pleasant sawces be prepared: so to gyve a good release to the foode of marriage, it must bee tempered with true loue. For loue giueth to harde things an easinesse, to tedious thinges a pleasantnesse, a beginning with facilitye, and ending in felicitie.’¹⁸³ Considering that early modern marriages were usually the result of a match between equals in wealth or social rank, it is quite innovative for the period for her to highlight the role of love as the basis for happiness and success in marriage. Nevertheless, a few lines earlier love has been presented as a feeling that might ‘blindeth the eyes, and so bewitcheth the senses [...] so we are perswaded that all the vices of the beloued are rare, and excellent vertues [...]’.¹⁸⁴ Whether positive or negative, perfect love is always related to female chastity in early modern conduct literature. This virtue is at the core of Tilney’s narrative, as Lady Julia clearly expresses: ‘And after such hir choyse, let hir indeuor to increase a perfection of love, and aboue all imbrace chastitie.’¹⁸⁵ Chastity acquires even more importance in the case of married women since it should guarantee legitimate heirs. As Alison Findlay explains, when the adjective ‘chaste’ is applied to women, it ‘carries huge significance, signifying not only the sexual purity which guarantees male ownership, identity and inheritance lines, but also carrying meanings of moral purity, innocence, virtue, and worth.’¹⁸⁶ Therefore, since chastity is not circumscribed to corporeal purity, living as a chaste woman covers every stage of her life: girl, maiden, wife, and widow, as Vives had already analysed in his *Instruction*. In fact, early modern writings on the topic such as the ones under discussion seem to indicate that the notion of this virtue goes beyond woman’s body, thus it may often depend more on reputation. From this perspective, what curious neighbours see and what they say – usually

¹⁸³ Tilney, sigs. Diii^v, Div^r; Wayne, p. 129, ll. 1001-06.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., sig. Dii^v; Wayne, p. 128, ll. 954-57.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., sig. Diii^r; Wayne, p. 128, ll. 968-69.

¹⁸⁶ Alison Findlay, *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary*. Continuum Shakespeare Dictionary Series (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 72.

in the form of gossip – could become stronger evidence of the presence or absence of chastity than people’s actual behaviour regarding sexual matters. Due to this somewhat collective conscience, many sixteen-century English husbands required their wives to stay at home to protect them from the risks of the outside world and to have control over them. The open public arena provided too many occasions to be seen and to become the object of gossip. Once a rumour started circulating, it could become a sharp dagger that could destroy someone’s reputation in a few minutes. In this line, Tilney warns Lady Julia of the importance of keeping a good name: ‘For a good name is the flower of estimation, and the pearle of credit, which is so delicate a thing in a woman, that she must not onely be good, but likewise must apeere so.’¹⁸⁷ Given its moral relevance, the author gives specific advice on how to safeguard woman’s reputation: ‘The chiefest way for a woman to preserue and maintaine this good fame, is to be resident in hir owne house.’¹⁸⁸ Just as Xenophon and Vives had expressed their counsel in spatial coordinates, so does Tilney. Once again, the household interior is equated to a sheltered and protected environment whereas the outside seems threatening and unsafe. This fact may partially explain why early modern privacy was usually associated to indoor spaces, in contrast to Crane’s notion of outdoor privacy that I have analysed in previous sections. To an extent, these authors inherited the belief that only inside the household, in what they considered a protected environment, women should perform their duties as good wives.

Compared to the conduct texts I have previously examined, Tilney’s is especially direct and suggestive regarding chastity, as can be realised from the passages already brought to discussion. He does not only deal with it from a spatial perspective, but also considers its erotic connotation. Wayne argues that despite the relevance Tilney gives to this virtue in the attainment of marital friendship, he finally reduces the consummation of

¹⁸⁷ Tilney, sig. Eii^v; Wayne, pp. 135-36, ll. 1229-32.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., sig. Eii^v; Wayne, p. 136, ll. 1235-36.

wedlock to duty rather than to pleasure. I think this is quite predictable if one realises that the author could not speak openly about sexual matters since these topics were precisely those he had to censure. In addition to this, having dedicated his book to Queen Elizabeth – a virgin monarch – it would have been rather improper to insist on these issues.

The ‘flower’ constitutes a core symbol within the treatise. It is associated to the queen, but might also refer to the seed-bearing part of a plant, used in a figurative way in the text. Certainly, it could also point to other meanings, especially in the introductory lines of the first section: ‘What time that Flora, hadde clothed the earth and braunchesse, of the newe springing trees, with leaues of liuelye greene, and [...] had garnished the pleasaunt fields a newe, with flagrant flowers [...]’¹⁸⁹ Findlay, indeed, observes that ‘flower’ in its different forms ‘was used metaphorically to refer to a woman’s virginity and, more widely, her sexuality.’¹⁹⁰ Wayne adds that although the term could refer by synecdoche to an entire woman, especially a virgin, it could also allude specifically to the ‘genital site of women’s sexuality.’¹⁹¹ In addition, the fact that these flowers are ‘flagrant’ instead of ‘fragrant’, indicates that they are linked to sexual delight in marriage. Nevertheless, as Wayne argues, there are a series of conjectures regarding the meaning of ‘flagrant’. The word appears four times in different sections, and in three of them it is applied to the text itself, but the sense in which it is used is arguable. In principle, the term comes from the Latin *flagrare*, ‘to burn’, whose synonyms – applied to flowers and herbs – mean, on the one hand, ‘ardent, burning, intensely eager or earnest’; and on the other, ‘resplendent, and glorious’.¹⁹² These last two adjectives may well correspond to the qualities assigned to Gloriana – one of the names Queen Elizabeth was given by the

¹⁸⁹ Tilney, sig. A4^r; Wayne, p.101, ll. 48-52.

¹⁹⁰ Findlay, *Women*, p.142.

¹⁹¹ Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 67. For more meanings attached to the term ‘flower’, see pp. 66-7, and n. 48, p.146. See also: Findlay, *Women*, pp. 142-45.

¹⁹² Wayne, ‘Note on the text’, *The Flower*, pp. 95-6.

sixteenth-century English poet, Edmund Spenser.¹⁹³ Wayne also points out not only the possible confusion between the Latin verbs *flagrare* and *fragrare*¹⁹⁴, but also observes that most later editions have changed the term to ‘fragrant’, at least in the first three occurrences, thus making a different reading of the text.

Another topic that Tilney discusses is the question of hierarchy within the household, concluding that man’s authority is above that of woman. Nevertheless, this is one of the topics that reveals most contradictions in his ideas about marriage, since he claims for a companionate and equal relationship in order to ensure friendship and love in marriage, but then declares – through Lady Julia’s voice – that because God commanded it: ‘for reason it is that we obey our Husbandes.’¹⁹⁵ The contradiction between ideal equality and unequal practice is made very clear by young Isabella’s challenging question. Speaking on behalf of women, she asks Lady Julia, her mother, why gender differences result in the inferiority of wives: ‘I know not, [...] what we are bounde to do, but as meete is it, that the husbände obey the wife, as the wife the husband, or at least that there bee no superioritye between them, as the auncient philosophers have defended. For women have soules as wel as men, thay have wit as wel as men, and more apte for procreation of children than men. What reason is it then, that they should be bound, whome nature hath made free?’¹⁹⁶ With these words she does not only defy marital hierarchy, but also questions the source of inequality. If women have the same rational and spiritual faculties as men, where does inequality lie? Part of the answer is given by the mother, when her daughter mentions the example of the Numidian and Lydian societies ‘where the women

¹⁹³ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596). In this allegorical celebration of the queen’s virtues, the character representing Queen Elizabeth I – the Faerie Queene – is called Gloriana. This name became very popular when addressing the monarch. Although there is no evidence that the Queen read Spenser’s poem, she granted him a life pension for this work.

¹⁹⁴ *OED*, fragrant, a.: from the Latin verb *fragare*: ‘to smell sweetly’, ‘Emitting a sweet or pleasant odour, sweet-smelling’.

¹⁹⁵ Tilney, sig. Dviii^r; Wayne, p. 133, ll. 1128-29.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. Dviii^r; Wayne, p. 133, ll. 1131-38.

commaunded within doores, and the men without'¹⁹⁷, thus having a just law 'where the commaunding was equall.'¹⁹⁸ To this evidence, the prudent lady replies, providing a spatial division of authority: 'For if the woman keepe alwaies hir house [...]. For as long as she is within, though he commaund hir without, this lawe byndeth hir not to obey.'¹⁹⁹ However, Erasmus makes clear that male authority does not depend on spatial issues, but should always be absolute: 'For in deede both diuine, and humaine lawes, in our religion giueth the man absolute auctoritie, ouer the woman in all places.'²⁰⁰ Apart from echoing Xenophon's indoor/outdoor spatial distribution of roles with its corresponding different degree of authority, he definitely endows man with plenipotentiary sovereignty. With her defiant questions and ideas, Isabella reproduces some of the ambiguities regarding marriage that were compelling public and private dilemmas at the time *The Flower* was written and read.

Tilney's ideology of companionate marriage is built on the notion of equality in age, wealth, and virtue, among other aspects. Maister Pedro clearly explains that 'equalitie is principally to be considered in thys matrimoniall amitie [...]. For equalnesse herein, maketh friendlynesse.'²⁰¹ Nevertheless, after he gives examples of famous historical male figures who married their inferiors, Lady Julia argues: 'But I understande not this kinde of equalitie, wherein you seeme to allow the greatest inequalitye that can be.'²⁰² She is evidently not only referring to the disparity in age, physical attributes, and fortune, but also to inequality in the exercise of authority. Wayne suggests that behind this unequal equality, as I call it, there are Aristotelian ideas present in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where the Greek

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., sig. Dviii^v; Wayne, p. 134, ll. 1162-63.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., sig. Dviii^v; Wayne, p. 134, ll. 1164-65.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., sig. Ei^r; Wayne, p. 134, ll. 1169-72.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., sig. Ei^r; Wayne, p. 134, ll. 1175-77.

²⁰¹ Ibid., sig. Bii^v; Wayne, p. 108, ll. 286-87, 288-89.

²⁰² Ibid., sig. Biii^t; Wayne, p. 109, ll. 321-23.

philosopher argues that marriage is an unequal friendship that could be equalised by the proportional fulfilment of duty.²⁰³

In terms of equality, Elizabeth I was undoubtedly an exception to the recommendations of all these treatises, because not only was she a woman, but she was single and despite that, she became the supreme authority of the nation. To an extent, she contradicted most early modern theories about women's space in society since she fulfilled most of her duties outside the private household. Certainly, finding an equal match for the Queen was a difficult endeavour that ended up in her remaining unmarried. Every English citizen was under her authority, a prerogative that, in her case, was not attained exclusively by birthright or rank, but was earned by her merits, especially with respect to her capacities and intellectual skills. If Catherine of Aragon was a learned woman, Elizabeth was outstanding in her knowledge, as Findlay records: 'Elizabeth I received a strong humanist education under the direction of Roger Ascham with knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, Italian and a little Spanish. She undertook translations, wrote in verse and prose, enjoyed dancing, needlework, and played the lute and spinet.'²⁰⁴ Clearly, her learning and title placed her constantly in an unequal position in relation both to men and to other women. One should acknowledge that *The Flower* is similar to other household texts in its claim for the obedience and spatial role of women within the domestic sphere, yet Tilney assigns a somewhat subversive function to Isabella, who argues against most of the male advice given throughout the text. Notwithstanding that at the end of the book – when the author states that Isabella has asked him to write down this discourse – it seems that she has approved everything that she had argued against, this female voice at least questions some of the assumptions regarding women's space that many early modern authors reiterated in their texts.

²⁰³ Wayne, *The Flower*, p. 16. The author traces back the notion of marriage as a kind of friendship to Aristotle's books eight and nine of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.I.1163b33-34 and 8.10.1160b32-35.

²⁰⁴ Findlay, *Women*, p. 124.

Household advice was also expanded in brief sermons with phrasing derived from key humanist texts, as well as from passages running along the lines of Scriptures.²⁰⁵ This interaction between religious and instructive household discourses offers a very interesting set of correlations between political, social, linguistic and moral issues, which in turn shows that the problematic configuration of the private/public relationship touched many aspects of early modern life. The application of household patriarchal relations to religion became very powerful in the construction of an ideal social and familial order; nevertheless, the model propagated by early modern narratives was not always applicable since, as Gowing states, both family and household relations were infinitely more complex than their literary ideals.²⁰⁶

d. Dod and Cleaver's *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government*

When John Dod and Robert Cleaver, the Puritan clergymen, preached on marital conduct and first published *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government* in 1598, they dealt with the question of female obedience from 'the crux of religion'²⁰⁷ since they approached the duty of a wife not only in relation to her husband and master, but analogically to God. As married Puritan ministers, these authors emphasised the integrity of doctrine and went a step further in their radical religious view regarding the roles of men and women in society. Based on the words of the Bible, they extolled obedience to the husband and order in the family as the essence of Puritan belief. Disobedience became a form of subversion against the Creator and as such was charged with burdensome moral implications. Part of this religious conformity between God and husband rested on the previous analogical dependence of the private and public spaces that described the household 'as it were a little

²⁰⁵ Gowing, p. 25. One of the texts the author mentions, as the source of many other narratives, is Heinrich Bullinger's *Christian State of Matrimony*, translated by Miles Coverdale in 1541. Bullinger also took many ideas from Xenophon's *Oeconomics*.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

²⁰⁷ The expression is used by Laura Gowing, *Domestic*, p. 25.

common wealth, by the good gouernment whereof, Gods glorie may be aduanced [...].²⁰⁸

As I have already analysed, the early modern household was thought of as a microcosm of the kingdom, the householder being the sovereign within that realm. While the home was considered a ‘domestical kingdom’ where the ideal government was patriarchal, in the political kingdom the monarchic mandate was thought to be the most effective. The analogy between household and state was not only available to all those interested in authority and the enforcement of order in early modern England, but was also transmitted through a variety of what became proverbial sayings. For example, ‘A man’s house is his castle’²⁰⁹ represents the organic conception and structure of society, as well as the consensus regarding this analogy to those who wrote manuals for householders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even though this was a legal maxim, it operated somewhat as a religious precept, thus showing how civic laws and moral codes employed similar notions to support their ideals. Perhaps, one of the most interesting issues of briefly analysing Dod and Cleaver’s work is to realise that behind their attempt to establish hierarchies within the Christian household, there is a clear religious dimension associated with spaces; that is to say, that the activities performed within the private and the public spheres could have spiritual resonances. In fact, when describing the early modern household, Margo Todd takes Robert Hill’s idea of ‘spiritualization of the household’, a phenomenon that resulted in the exaltation of the ‘family as the fundamental spiritual unit of society [,] the exaltation of marriage over virginity, the requirement for parents to occupy a religiously didactic and disciplinary role, and a slight tendency towards sexual egalitarianism in light of the spiritual role of women within the household.’²¹⁰ Although

²⁰⁸ Dod and Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme*, sig. A7^r.

²⁰⁹ M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 1950), M473 from 1581, p. 432, and R.W. Dent, *Shakespeare’s Proverbial Language: An Index* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 168. The legal precept used by the jurist Edward Coke dates back to the fifteenth century.

²¹⁰ Todd, p. 96.

Todd acknowledges the development of this doctrine during the period, she argues that it would be a mistake to attribute it exclusively to Puritans and Protestants because '[n]ot only is puritan domestic conduct theory indistinguishable from that of the protestant mainstream, but the spiritualized household of Protestant England proves to be flowing in precisely the same direction as Catholic humanist thought about the family in the sixteenth century.'²¹¹

Part of the popularity of *A Godlie Forme* lay precisely in its religious nature. According to H. S. Bennett, 'Religion was the grand animating force that caused many books to be written [...]'²¹²; therefore, homilies, sermons, and devotional works were published to meet popular demand.²¹³ An edition of homilies, commonly known as *The Book of Homilies*, was produced during Elizabeth I's reign. The first book was issued in 1547, but the Queen decided to supplement this edition with a second volume in 1563. Although she did not write "An Homily on the State of Matrimony" and she was hardly the model of the perfect wife depicted in the homily, she commanded that this and the rest of the sermons included in the book should be read in every parish church. According to Barbara Hodgdon, Kate's speech in the final act of *The Taming of the Shrew* echoes this sermon²¹⁴ and shows a 'double subjectivity: on the one hand, she ventriloquizes the culture's prerogatives; on the other, she formulates an exegesis of those prerogatives.'²¹⁵ Evidently, this is only one example of the impact that this type of religious discourse could

²¹¹ Ibid., pp. 98-99.

²¹² H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1603-1640*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), III, p. 13.

²¹³ An edition of homilies called *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches* (commonly known as *The Book of Homilies*), was produced in 1563 during Elizabeth I's reign. It was one of the most important instruments in the establishment of the Protestant church in England. The first Book (1547) provided 12 sermons on a variety of themes that were to be read in every parish church in the country (See *Renaissance Literature: An Anthology*, ed. by Michael Payne and John Hunter (UK: Blackwell, 2003), p. 156 and pp. 175-80).

²¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by Barbara Hodgdon, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 5.2.142-85.

²¹⁵ Barbara Hodgdon, 'Introduction', William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by Barbara Hodgdon, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), pp. 1-132 (p. 120).

have had on the lives of early modern Londoners. Suffice it to say that they were at least familiar with the notion of Christian marriage and the duties and obligations associated with it. In addition, the household/state analogy – from its initial appearance in Aristotle’s *Politics* to its representation in early modern treatises – became one of the topics that received further attention during the sixteenth century. Home, commonwealth, and church became analogous sites where husband and wife, king and queen, Christ and His spouse – the Church – performed similar roles in terms of governing and educating their people in the Christian faith. As Todd explains, the role of parents, especially that of wives, was significantly increased, thus elevating the position of women in society.²¹⁶ This fact becomes quite relevant for this research since if, by analogy, the family is a microcosm of state and church, then the role women perform within the household has clear public consequences; in other words, important dimensions of the public space, such as education, are fashioned from and within the private domestic household. Dod and Cleaver consider the wife as a ‘fellowe-helper’²¹⁷ for the provision of goods, but mainly for the religious instruction of children, a task that ‘the holy Ghost layeth vpon parents [,]’²¹⁸ so that they do it wisely. Thus, wisdom, is the key virtue that should become the source of household government since: ‘Where no wisdome is vsed in gouerning families, there al goeth to wrack [...]. And where carnall pollicie ruleth, and not the wisdome which is from aboue, there all that is done tendeth to the ease, pleasure, and profit of this life [...]’²¹⁹

Like other household manuals, there is evidence of the popularity of *A Godlie Forme* in terms of editions²²⁰, yet it cannot be demonstrated ‘how members of real

²¹⁶ Todd, p. 102.

²¹⁷ Dod and Cleaver, sig. D5^v.

²¹⁸ Ibid., sig. C7^v.

²¹⁹ Ibid., sigs. A7^v, A7^r.

²²⁰ *STC* records 9 editions under the authorship of Cleaver: 1598 (one printed by Thomas Creede; another, by Felix Kingston), 1600, 1603, 1610, 1612, 1614, 1621, and 1630.

households interpreted such ideology, and to what particular uses they put it [...].'²²¹ What early modern household authors prescribed and restated is one thing, and how people followed their advice in everyday life is quite another. Nevertheless, the theoretical elements these works provide illuminate the discussions that were underpinning the private within the early modern context. Privacy was not only an unstable category, especially for women, but also an experience or situation that was not always regarded as possible or positive. For that reason, authors were coming to grips with this new reality and, in their effort to describe it, they took marriage as an imaginary or virtual boundary that could contain their notion of domestic privacy within the physical margins of the household.

Marriage was the primary means of social mobility during the early modern period. In the case of women, it was a step towards maturity, as they considered themselves ready to run a household, bring up children and oversee servants. This sacrament or ordinance transformed every aspect of their lives: in body, in soul, and in economic and social status. Writers of household manuals were aware of these facts and tried to describe the relationship between husband and wife within the duties of matrimony, yet because some of them – like Vives and Tilney – chose a princess or a queen as their model, they lost some force in the transmission of their message, since these women were exceptions to the rule in terms of equality. Besides their nobility, they were directly involved in the government of England: not only was Catherine of Aragon Henry VIII's wife and queen from 1509 to 1533, but then she became a divorcée, a situation that constituted another exception; Mary I reigned from 1553 to 1558, and Elizabeth I from 1559 to 1603. Their public roles raised at least two problems: the question of feminine power and that of its alleged incompatibility with marriage understood as equal friendship and companionship. While Vives presented Catherine of Aragon as the model of perfect wife, mother and tutor,

²²¹ Gowing, p. 27.

thus exhorting her daughter Mary to follow her example, Tilney crowned Elizabeth as the ideal of virginity. Both the former's marriage and the latter's decision to remain single had visible political, religious and social consequences that were expressed in early modern narratives. Tudor citizens witnessed their queens' lives and were familiar with the debates on marital authority. However, their female sovereigns did not adjust to the main ideologies since they were not subjected to the Xenophonian spatial division of conjugal roles. Moreover, in spite of being women, they participated in most political decisions and their everyday life was openly public, as their household was not restricted to their domestic dwellings, but was extended to the whole kingdom. These women's spatial experience contradicted the theories presented in household manuals. In fact, as Wayne, points out, 'Dod and Cleaver defy tradition by their willingness to grant superiority to a wife of high birth'²²² when they state that: 'But yet when it hapneth, that a man marrieth a woman of so high a birth, he ought (not forgetting that he is her husband) more to honour and esteeme of her, then of his equall, or of one of meaner parentage: and not only to account her his companion in love, and in his life, (but in divers actions of publike apparance) hold her his superior.'²²³ Although the authors make clear that the husband is the head of the household, elsewhere they declare that their governance is shared, thus authority would depend on their different responsibilities rather than on a question of natural law.

Even though the reiteration of ideas and concepts in early modern household manuals might have given continuity to the theory of gendered privacy and spatial conjugal roles, the textual process was not exempt from contradictions. On the one hand most of the authors of these works based their ideas on previous or contemporary recognised humanist, political, religious or secular authorities, thus joining the ideological

²²² Wayne, n. 152 to ll. 295-99, pp. 148-49.

²²³ Dod and Cleaver, sigs. K2^v, K3^f.

mainstream; on the other, they did not merely copy their predecessors. Sometimes they challenged the dominant conventions by introducing emergent views or new interpretations of the same texts. What is evident is that classical philosophy and humanist doctrine were not outmoded when Dod and Cleaver wrote their influential text on marriage. Not only did they repeat Xenophon's indoor/outdoor scheme, but they appropriated passages and verbatim from Vives two decades after *The Instruction*,²²⁴ and imported whole passages from Tilney's *The Flower*, as Wayne has demonstrated in her study about Tilney.²²⁵ Patterns of familiarity and borrowing were likely to occur among texts from different areas of knowledge that expressed ideas about marriage in similar terms through different types of discourse each with its own peculiarities and specific connotations. However, much more frequent was the transfer of words, expressions and tropes within the same field of discourse, as in the case of household treatises.

Domestic manuals dealt with ideals and defined the household from a moral perspective. While Xenophon centres on the gendered division of labour, Vives emphasises the centrality of chastity in marriage. Tilney also gives prominence to this virtue, but focuses on virginity, as his model is a virgin queen. However, his text is the most secular of all since he does not consider the spiritual implications of wedlock. He also presents emergent and contradictory views on marriage when Isabella, the young maid, 'exposes the claims for women's spiritual and rational equality with requirements that wives be subordinate in marriage.'²²⁶ Finally, Dod and Cleaver confront their readers with God's divine law, so much so that not following their household advice would mean going

²²⁴ Margaret Mikesell, 'The Formative Power of Marriage in Stuart Tragedy', *Modern Language Studies*, 12.1 (Winter, 1982), 36-44 (p. 40). The author does not mention the process of borrowing from Xenophon; it is my observation.

²²⁵ Wayne, p. 36. Notes to ll. 442-44, p. 156; 726-740, pp. 161-62; 1316-20, pp. 170-71. The author explains that most passages taken from Tilney are those referring to the possession of the wife's will, to the duties of husbands and wives, and to the image of the wife as a looking glass for her husband.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

against God's will and that would certainly add a heavy moral weight to the behaviour of husbands and wives.

If one had to summarise what these authors – from their different religious approaches: pagan, Catholic, Protestant, and Puritan –, consider the ideal household, the exemplary marriage, and the perfect wife, one would say first that the household should be godly, like a domestic church, a little commonwealth where the husband is the main authority and labour is spatially divided – outdoor/indoor – between husband and wife. Their notion of marriage – a sacrament, mystery, or ordinance – is based on equal friendship and companionship, which should become pre-eminent among the ends of marriage. Women must be chaste, obedient, and wise in terms of their household management, of their learning, and in their relationship with their husbands. Even though these household treatises refer to the topic of women's silence, thus advising them to avoid speaking to strangers and to keep quiet when husbands speak, none of them emphasises this behaviour as compared to the insistence on chastity, obedience, and wisdom.

It cannot be said that these publications correspond exclusively to one type of narrative or discourse. All of them show a combination of elements that could allow them to be simultaneously classified as idealistic, aspirational, prescriptive, and in some cases, ideological. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, one cannot tell whether all the ideas contained in these texts showed the authors' own convictions, or were the expression of the beliefs and ideas of the period. This would be difficult to determine, given that not only were these writers influenced by their own religion and by humanist principles, but they very often had to adapt their ideas to the social and political contexts in which their works were published and read. Nevertheless, what one might venture to ascertain is that authors of conduct literature wanted to produce a defined household behaviour or code of conduct with its own conditions and rules. Therefore, to an extent, household books

contributed to define and demarcate the private, both by leading to notions of domestic indoor space and public outdoor sphere, as well as by determining private and public activities that could be performed or not by men and women. Notwithstanding that there is constant debate around many of the ideas suggested by these narratives with respect to the private/public relationship, these books provided guidelines that, in turn, constituted practices that helped define 'places' as 'spaces'. By giving advice to husband and wife on how to behave in their married life, they established accepted norms of conduct within different spaces.

CHAPTER IV:

**WOMEN'S VOICES:
THE INNER SIDE OF PRIVACY**

A. READING AND WRITING: PRIVACY AND THE EXPRESSION OF THE SELF

As it has been discussed in the previous section, household manuals were part of the English early modern culture and contributed to the configuration of the private; nevertheless, these non-dramatic texts usually show one perspective of privacy that is circumscribed, on the one hand, to the nature of these publications, and, on the other, to a masculine approach. Therefore, it would be useful to examine the work of some of Shakespeare's contemporary female writers and endeavour to form an idea of their experiences of privacy through their own voice, or direct account of it. What did these women read and write while Shakespeare was writing plays? Where did they do so? Can anything be learnt about the private space from their works? Undoubtedly, dealing with women's written legacies¹ and with their dramatic works would involve addressing so many theoretical variables that I will only focus on those that might help understand and contextualise possible manifestations of privacy, both in their works and in the Shakespearean plays I have chosen to study.

Scholars such as Margaret Ezell, Lisa Jardine, Anthony Grafton, Cecile M. Jagodzinski, Roger Chartier, Ramona Wray, Danielle Clarke, Victoria Burke, Jonathan Gibson, Heidi Brayman Hackel, Catharine Gray, Mary Morrissey, Gillian Wright, and Sasha Roberts², among others, have thoroughly analysed early-modern women's reading

¹ I think it is important to distinguish between women's dramatic works and the variety of other pieces of writing they produced, like accounts, recipe books, mother's legacies for the instruction of children, didactic extracts, letters, autobiographies, diaries, and religious writings (meditations, prayers, sermon notes, etc.), since all these writings are not only different in format and purpose, but also might express the notion of privacy from different perspectives.

² Margaret J.M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy', *Past and Present*, 0.129 (1990), 30-78; Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (USA: The University Press of Virginia, 1999); Roger Chartier, Afterword: 'Reading, Writing and Literature in the Early Modern Age, trans. by Bénédicte Morrell and Graham Holderness, *Critical Survey*, 12.2 (2000), 128-142; Ramona Wray, 'Discovering the Reading of Renaissance Englishwomen: Deployments of Autobiography', *Critical Survey*, 12.2 (2000), 33-48; Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Harlow, England: Longman, Pearson, 2001); *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson, Selected Papers from

and writing in their potential connection to the private space, but not to imply a passive attitude of either reader or writer; on the contrary, private boundaries were open to active occupations and pastimes. For that very reason, when I consider reading and writing, I uphold the notion of ‘activity’ as defined by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton in their seminal article on the history of reading. Even though their study focuses on a circle of elite Elizabethan figures and hence could seem narrow in scope, it reveals a great deal of the context in which reading took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jardine and Grafton declare that they will take the notion of ‘activity’ in its strong sense: ‘not just the energy that must be acknowledged as accompanying the intervention of the scholar/reader with his text, nor the cerebral effort involved in making the text the reader’s own, but reading as intended to *give rise to something else*.’³ This expected outcome would not result exclusively in the accumulation of information, but in a variety of goal-oriented readings that would create a new relationship between reader and text.⁴ I would like to go a step beyond this argument and say that not only reading, but also writing can bring about *something else*. This *something* could be a direct experience of privacy – when reading or writing – or the representation of that privacy in the texts.

One of the problems when dealing with early modern female readers and writers is that locating evidence regarding their reading habits is often difficult due to the fact that women did not usually write marginalia in their books, nor did they have personal library inventories; consequently, the material evidence to support the possible connection

the Trinity/Trent Colloquium (England and USA: Ashgate, 2004); Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Catharine Gray, *Women Writers and Public Debate in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, ‘Piety and Sociability in Early Woman’s Letters’, *Women’s Writing*, 13.1 (2006), 44-59; *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Sasha Roberts, ‘Engendering the Female Reader: Women’s Recreational Reading of Shakespeare in Early Modern England’, in *Reading Women*, ed. by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

³ Jardine and Grafton, p. 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

between reading, writing, and privacy is generally scant. Jacqueline Pearson explains this lack of visible signs when she states that partly due to the worries surrounding women's reading at that time, this activity was rigorously policed in an attempt to contain it; therefore, most women did not record their reading, especially when it was recreational, in order to hide the traces of their fictional tastes, given that they were advised against the reading of some genres. Nevertheless, Pearson argues that 'this was not because women were not reading fiction, plays and love poems [...]'⁵, but mainly because very few of them took the trouble to write down notes, commentaries, or amendments to texts, such as underlining or deleting a word, adding punctuation marks, etc.

In his research on the use of books as a source for a better understanding of the cultural context where they circulated, William Sherman explains that Elizabethans were taught at school to mark their books and that 'such annotations [were], then, first and foremost an aid to the memory [...]'.⁶ These readers' notes or marginalia⁷ have the potential to teach us about 'book use'⁸ during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a notion that Sherman adopts from Carla Mazzio and Bradin Cormack⁹ to argue that 'reading is just part of the process that makes for fruitful interaction with books.'¹⁰

Some of the problematic issues that Sherman points out in the study of readers' notes in early modern England have to do not only with the few copies of texts that have survived, but with the fact that 'in the course of the books' long and varied lives, many

⁵ Jacqueline Pearson, 'Women reading, reading women', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 80-99 (p. 83).

⁶ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20. The author explains that the concept of 'marginalia' was not used as a term in early modern England until the nineteenth century. Instead, concepts such as scholias, notes and glosses were chosen.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁹ See Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazzio, 'Use, Misuse and the Making of Book Theory: 1500-1700', in *Book Use, Book Theory: 1500-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 1-40 (p. 1). These authors themselves draw on Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* that includes a striking emblem that distinguishes between using books and merely reading them. The motto, '*Usus libri, non lectio prudentes facit*' ('Using a book, not reading it, makes us wise') is printed there.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

later readers (and the binders and sellers who served them) felt no compunction whatsoever about modifying or altogether affacing the marks of earlier readers.’¹¹ As a consequence, it becomes difficult to establish ownership and to examine the habits of individual readers. Another obstacle to overcome is that, particularly in the case of female readers, notes are not always found in the books they interacted with, thus there is less evidence that they used or read them. Still, Sherman argues that there are some traces that indicate women’s use of ‘printed books in their households not simply for guides to proper devotion or conduct but to store and circulate individual and collective records – in other words, in just the same way that they used manuscript compilations.’¹²

I think that the absence of the habit of jotting down ideas while reading might be one of the main reasons – perhaps a more pragmatic elucidation than the ideological apprehension surrounding the act of reading – that explains the lack of marginalia by women. Early modern readers, like those from any historical period, were not aware of the impact that their annotations would have for the history of reading and writing and they left no noticeable trace of their activity. Whether this female tendency not to make notes was freely adopted, or was assumed precisely because of the restrictions associated with reading choices, is difficult to determine.

Based on evidence collected by Gary Taylor from different sources, Pearson reproduces compelling examples of women reading – even plays by Shakespeare – during the seventeenth century in England, such as ‘[a] young Gentle Ladie [who] read his works in about 1635’¹³, and another, called Ann Merricke, who in a letter to a friend written in 1639, complained against her reading options saying that she had to content herself, ‘with

¹¹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹² Ibid., p. 59. See particularly ‘Reading the Matriarchive’, pp. 53-70.

¹³ ‘The legend and defence of y^e Noble knight and Martyr Sir Jhon Oldcastel’, ed. by Richard James, Bodleian Library, MS James 34, as cited by Gary Taylor, in *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: Hogarth Press, 1990), p. 91; Pearson, p. 83.

the studie of Shackspeare, and the historie of woemen.’¹⁴ While the dates of these records follow Shakespeare’s death, they suggest some of the socio-historical aspects of the reading habits of early modern women that could illuminate the analysis of Shakespeare’s plays when one searches for dramatic representations of women reading or writing, so as to decide whether these instances are linked to the private space or not.

Despite the lack of physical evidence of female reading, authors such as Sasha Roberts – likewise Jardine and Grafton – argue that the act of reading is fundamentally an active process, thus ‘we should not assume from the infrequency of marginalia by women that women necessarily read less intensively than men.’¹⁵ Written records in books help to understand the act of reading, yet they should not be the only proof of it, just as book ownership does not always indicate whether people read more or not. In this sense, Ramona Wray has pointed out that ‘records of book ownership cannot always be tied to the reading act’¹⁶; therefore, it might be inferred that only some book owners read their volumes while others might have simply considered them valuable collectables to decorate their shelves.

Reading during the English early modern period took different forms – more or less active: silent reading, reading aloud, aural reading¹⁷, companionate reading, and so forth. These practices, as Roberts explains, ‘were also shaped by the *habitus* or environment of reading, ranging from the comfort of the private closet to communal household chambers, from indoors to outdoors, from community spaces (such as the Church or tavern) to institutional settings (such as the Inns of Court), from the grammar school to the

¹⁴ *Allusion-Book*, I, p. 443, as cited in Taylor, p. 92; Pearson, p. 83.

¹⁵ Sasha Roberts, ‘Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems’, in *Reading in Early Modern England, Critical Survey*, 12. 2 (Summer, 2000), 1-16 (p. 3).

¹⁶ Ramona Wray, ‘Discovering the Reading of Renaissance Englishwomen: Deployments of Autobiography’, in *Reading in Early Modern England, Critical Survey*, 12.2 (Summer, 2000), 33-48 (p. 33).

¹⁷ Roberts defines aural reading as ‘listening and responding to a text being read aloud, not necessarily a passive experience as is sometimes assumed.’ (See ‘Reading’, n. 17, p. 14).

uncomfortable environment of the University Library.’¹⁸ One could say that these different reading modes were linked to different spaces and thus to different levels of privacy or the absence of it. Obviously, in some of these cases, the company or closeness of others might have affected the nature of a specific reading activity in a similar way – though not exactly in the same degree – to the proximity of neighbours who might have restricted the chances of private moments in a crowded city. Is one in a position to infer that a comparable phenomenon occurred regarding the act of writing? Can it be stated that depending on the kind of genre women chose to write they could also opt for different localities, more or less private? The answer to these questions poses the crucial issue of the relationship between reading and writing. According to Roger Chartier, until very recently the history of reading and writing was clearly divided, thus both these activities constituted different objects for study.¹⁹ Furthermore, as Pearson points out, these processes were taught separately, thus writing instruction was only undertaken after the person acquired reasonably fluent reading skills.²⁰ Present scholarship widely recognises that there is a link between both processes, particularly observed in the writing of manuscripts and their publication. In other words, some educated people could read because manuscripts of all genres circulated in written form or were eventually printed. There was a dialogic relationship between the written and the read word, a somewhat vital connection between these two acts where, despite their intrinsic independence, one needed the other. According to Clarke, ‘each activity is contingent upon the other: a text is copied (a reading process), assimilated or altered, and then imitated (a writing process).’²¹ Nevertheless, even if one acknowledges that both processes are active and related, I would say that reading and writing behaviours and

¹⁸ Roberts, n. 17, p. 14. I’m not sure why the author considers the University Library environment as an uncomfortable place to read. Perhaps it has to do with the uncomfortable wooden chairs used sometimes in the first libraries built in England, or the lack of heating and/or appropriate light.

¹⁹ Chartier, p. 130.

²⁰ Pearson, pp. 80-81.

²¹ Clarke, *The Politics*, p. 11.

modes might not always coincide; that is to say, a woman reader and a woman writer will not behave in exactly the same way, unless one is referring only to one aspect of these activities—that is, when they are performed by a woman on her own and preferably in a more isolated, quiet place, a situation that was probably unusual during the early modern period. In other cases, when reading is practised by a group of people or in a public place, the situation may be quite different from that of someone who is writing, since the latter action is usually performed in solitude.

However, it must be remembered that very few women could read and write during this period, especially at lower levels of society.²² Making use of David Cressy's study on literacy in Tudor and Stuart England, Clarke affirms that very few girls learned to write, and those who learned to read usually focused on religious topics and household advice.²³ Then, why have scholars like Cecile M. Jagodzinski considered the woman reader as the private person par excellence? According to the author,

[...] women, constrained by limited education and generally deprived of public status and personal autonomy by parents, husband, and custom, make especially apt models for all early modern readers. The private person par excellence, the woman reader exemplifies the possibilities for the realization of the private self in the seemingly powerless, supposedly sexually and textually vulnerable newly literate reader.²⁴

Jagodzinski's argument is quite persuasive if one associates the act of reading with the solitude attained within the boundaries of the private, and when this sphere is considered a somewhat deprived space; nevertheless, the same critic explains that in some cases, this association between reading and privacy has to do mainly with religious matters. She states that due to the transition from reading as a communal activity –

²² Jacqueline Pearson observes that although class was the crucial determinant regarding literacy, regional differences were also marked. In addition, between 1500 and 1700 rates of female literacy seem to have been lower than male in all classes. See Pearson's 'Women reading, reading women', pp. 80-81.

²³ Clarke, p. 20. The author makes reference to David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 118-41.

²⁴ Jagodzinski, p. 18.

especially regarding the Bible – to a more individual practice, this activity is associated with more private or closeted spaces. However, it cannot be assumed that the spaces where Elizabethan and Jacobean readers read were exclusively linked to ‘individual withdrawal [,] but with sex, surveillance, and secret non-public transactions between men.’²⁵ Even though private spaces were intellectual and spiritual spaces in origin, one cannot take for granted that women always preferred them when they wanted to read and/or write. In fact, when Alison Findlay refers to the venues – places of literary composition and imagined performance – where women chose to write, she makes clear that these were sites of lived spatial practice: home, garden, court, sorority,²⁶ and not necessarily the reduced space of the closet. Furthermore, taking the Lefebvrian notion of lived space and de Certeau’s idea of space as practised place that I analysed in the first chapter, Findlay comments on Marta Straznicky’s argument that the decision of women to write drama²⁷ sometimes became a strategy to engage with the public sphere, so much so that the closet could be taken both as ‘a closed and a subversively open space; anything produced there (written, spoken or acted) is beyond the censorship of the Revels and therefore uncontainable.’²⁸ Notwithstanding that architecturally and culturally speaking, the early modern closet was usually a private place because of its size, location, and function within the household, the practices of its occupants might have transformed not only its spatial nature, but also the private or public scope of what was written or read there.

Another possible reason to classify the early modern woman reader as the epitome of the private person is directly related to the complex issue of private devotion within the context of Protestant reformation in England. Because the question of interior religious

²⁵ Jagodzinski, p. 15.

²⁶ Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women’s Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 5.

²⁷ See Marta Straznicky, ‘Introduction’, in *Privacy, Playreading, and Women’s Closet Drama, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-6. Even though the author refers specifically to closet drama, her ideas very well fit our discussion on the places and spaces women chose to read and write, and their relationship to the private.

²⁸ Findlay, p. 9.

belief and its outward expression in either public or private devotions became extremely intricate during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I will refer mainly to aspects that might shed light on the analysis of privacy rather than going into the contentious debate between Catholic and Protestant demonstrations of faith. The point I want to discuss here is not whether Protestantism encouraged private devotion whereas Catholicism motivated the faithful to proclaim their beliefs in public ceremonies. Such opposing binaries would reveal a reductionist view of the problem that has been argued against by a number of scholars as, for example, Ramie Targoff, who challenges one of the ‘governing premises of our understanding of early modern religious culture: that the private sphere fostered by the Protestant Reformation represented a powerful alternative to the superficial and depersonalized practices of the medieval Catholic Church.’²⁹ The idea of private devotion was not the property or invention of Protestantism; on the contrary, both churches encouraged an inward focus on devotion in different ways, though with the same purpose: to protect the sincere worship of God from what were considered external hypocritical religious acts. There is enough historical evidence to prove that from the origins of Christianity, the Catholic Church supported and insisted on the importance of individual, private worship due to its fundamental role in attaining a personal relationship with the Creator. Nonetheless, with the advent of Protestantism this notion of private devotion was emphasised as part of the believer’s personal responsibility to keep his faith, and it was quite often expressed in each individual’s own reading and interpretation of the Scriptures. However, the ‘performance of prayer’³⁰, as Targoff calls the external display of faith, should not be opposite or contradictory to other testimonies of belief, like the Latin Mass for Catholics, or the standardised Protestant devotional practice of the *Book of Common*

²⁹ Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 5.

³⁰ Ramie Targoff, ‘The Performance of Prayer: Sincerity and Theatricality in Early Modern England’, *Representations*, 60 (California: University of California Press, 1997), 49-69.

Prayer, ‘a public activity in which all English subjects were required to participate weekly.’³¹ It is vitally important to question the opposition of outward and inward manifestations of faith since they constitute different aspects – public and private – of the same belief. They also express the need to shape personal faith through public forms within the community. The key question should be directed to whether there was a correspondence between outward behaviour and inward thoughts, or as Targoff cogently formulates, whether or not these ‘polemics over the efficacy of performative behavior influenced Renaissance constructions of the self.’³²

Evidently, the image of the solitary woman that many scholars have presented, especially at the beginning of early modern women’s studies, is associated with the performance of private devotions, but these interpretations seem to be on the wane. According to Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, ‘[s]cholars have constructed the stereotypically melancholy and withdrawn “godly woman” because their account of women’s religious activities has been based primarily on genres associated with the more introspective side of religion: meditations and diary writing.’³³ Nevertheless, as the critics observe, the writing of early modern women was not reduced to those genres, nor was their personal piety always enclosed within the boundaries of the private.

For years, the idea of relating religious practices to private reading and writing was commonplace. Even though I will make reference to this complex association between privacy and religion in this section, I believe it is vitally important to question the complexities of the private/public, individual/communal, internal/external practice of religion, so as to lay some basic foundations for further discussion. Recent research has shown that there were exceptions to this apparently given association between privacy and

³¹ Targoff, *Common Prayer*, p. 4.

³² Targoff, ‘Performance of Prayer’, p. 50.

³³ Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, ‘Piety and Sociability in Early Woman’s Letters’, *Women’s Writing*, 13.1 (March 2006), 44-59 (p. 44).

religious devotion – expressed in reading the Scriptures or religious tracts, praying or meditating on the Word of God, and writing devotional poetry or commentaries on the Bible. Morrissey and Wright challenge the assumption that women always used piety as a source of solace; on the contrary, they argue that despite the fact that most personal religious devotions were practised in private, piety was not circumscribed to that sphere, not only because people could manifest their beliefs in public ceremonies, but also because what women read, prayed, and wrote in solitude could go beyond private boundaries. The scholars hold that letters provide valuable testimony of sociable piety, since it was often through them that women created networks of spiritual support within or around their families. The authors claim that ‘manuscript letters of the period testify to the role of women as givers and receivers of spiritual advice and encouragement, informed commentators on religious ideas, and agents in religious politics.’³⁴

Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson’s equally insightful analysis on a variety of female manuscripts, shows that women of the upper classes wrote letters not only to discuss religious and domestic issues, but also to express their political opinions³⁵; thus, sixteenth-century female epistolary writing may have had a public impact regardless of the fact that letters were usually written in solitude and addressed to singular persons. More selective is James Daybell’s study on petition letters, which he believes could represent women’s voice, as women exerted their influence through these missives. Daybell’s arguments are quite convincing when he explains that precisely in these letters of petition – suitors’ letters, or letters of request for favour made to monarchs, government officials, regional magnates and political intermediaries³⁶ – one finds explicit evidence of woman’s exercise of a public role. This form of correspondence, Daybell adds, ‘accounts for well

³⁴ Morrissey and Wright, p. 44.

³⁵ Burke and Gibson, p. 1.

³⁶ James Daybell, ‘Scripting a Female Voice: Women’s Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition’, *Women’s Writing*, 13.1 (March 2006), 3-22 (p. 3).

over 1000 English women's letters written in the period 1540-1603 by more than 350 women [,]³⁷ perhaps the 'most ubiquitous manuscript genre'³⁸, or form of women's writing in early modern England, as claimed by Burke and Gibson.

To the figures above, one could add a good number of more domestic letters written by women belonging to the middle class whose literacy skills did not reach the standards of noble women, but enabled them to write letters in which they reported on their work, sent invitations and greetings to family and friends, or informed them about particular issues in their lives. Epistolary writing, as Chartier points out, was 'closely linked to labour and to everyday existence, without any reader-oriented purpose beyond the needs of the writer, and of those closely linked to him or her.'³⁹ Due to this quotidian aspect of letters, I tend to think that they might have constituted a somewhat universal genre along the literate social ladder. Shakespeare, as well as some of his contemporaries, used letters of all kinds as plot devices or as props, and in so doing represented a widespread social practice onstage. Falstaff, for example, sends love letters to Mistress Ford and Mistress Page in *Merry Wives*; Hamlet writes passionate letters to Ophelia and reports about the pirates' ambush to Horatio in a letter; Jessica, Shylock's daughter in *The Merchant of Venice*, gives Lancelot a letter to Lorenzo before they elope. Written missives are also incorporated in plays by other dramatists such as Jonson in *Every Man out of his Humour* when Fungoso sends a letter to Sordido, his father, in order to ask him for money so as to copy Master Fastidious Brisk's ostentatious clothes, and Laxton's letter to Mistress Gallipot in Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, which she uses to design a plan so that her husband will not suspect their secret affair. Evidently, these few examples illustrate partial aspects of the complex and diverse questions regarding women as readers and writers, yet they open up new paths for discussion since most letters were written in private; however,

³⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁸ Burke and Gibson, p. 1.

³⁹ Chartier, p. 132.

their scope quite often went beyond privacy. According to Alan Stewart, only in two occasions Shakespearean characters actually write letters onstage: Titus Andronicus (4.3.105) and Richard III (5.3.41) when he draws his military plans. Both characters are on the edge of losing control, so much so that Stewart argues that ‘all those that call for pen and ink are emotionally disturbed’⁴⁰ Precisely, these implements, in addition to paper, become ‘the raw materials of letter-writing in the early modern world [whose] effective use took time, skill, and labour.’⁴¹ Regarding this, the author gives the example of *Richard III* as one of the few direct glimpses we may have of the real labour of writing in Shakespeare’s plays. When the scrivener enters carrying the indictment against Hastings, he comments that he has spent eleven hours to write it. However, why does Shakespeare choose not to put letter-writing directly on stage? The obvious answer would be that it has to do with technical obstacles. In the case of writing-tables, using them onstage could become quite a challenge for an actor. In *Hamlet*, the protagonist mentions his tables as a metaphor for his memory and should supposedly write onstage (1.5.107-8); in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the stage direction – ‘[He draws out his table-book]’ (5.1.15)⁴² – indicates Nathaniel that he should represent the act of writing. Even if only paper and ink were used, the complexities of staging it on an empty stage cannot be denied. Shakespeare generally keeps this activity off the stage in contrast to some of his contemporary playwrights who allude to writing tables in stage directions or present characters who use them.⁴³ Although I

⁴⁰ Alan Stewart, ‘The Materiality of Shakespeare’s Letters’, in *Shakespeare’s Letters*, ed. by (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 39-74 (p. 39).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴² William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in *Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

⁴³ Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery, and Heather Wolfe, ‘Hamlet’s Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55.4 (Winter, 2004), 379-419 (p. 380). The authors provide a long list of plays in which writing-tables are alluded in stage directions or appear directly onstage. I found interesting to reproduce it here. John Marston, *Antonios Reuenge* (London, 1602), sig. B2r; William Percy, *The Cuck-Queanes and Cuckolds Errants*, ed. William Nicol (London: Shakespeare Press, 1824), 12; Richard Brome, *The Sparagvs Garden: A Comedie* (London, 1640), sig. I3v; Sir William Killigrew, *Pandora: A Comedy* (London, 1664), sig. E4v; Richard Estcourt, *The Fair Example: or the Modish Citizens. A Comedy* (London, 1706), sig. H3r. Robert Greene, *The Scottish Historie of Iames, slaine at Flodden* (London, 1598), sig. C2v; Anonymous, *Everie Woman in her Humor* (London, 1609), sig. B1r;

am not in a position to state that he avoids the performance of letter-writing onstage because he wants to maintain its private nature, the possibility is, at least, suggestive.

Another issue at stake, particularly when dealing with writing, is that, according to Danielle Clarke, one should be cautious when referring to early modern women writers as an established group since they constituted a minority and, as such, we cannot conclude that there was a kind of ‘commonality on the sole basis of sex.’⁴⁴ In other words, the notion of privacy that might be represented in texts written by women is not necessarily the voice of a group, but that of individual experiences, as Clarke holds. The works penned by female hands were few and most of them were never published⁴⁵, or only reached print many years after they were written, thus it is unlikely that these writers could have claimed a common identity. Nevertheless, she observes that printed publications at that time were not the only indicator of public circulation of texts; on the contrary, for many writers ‘manuscript circulation was the primary form of publication, enabling texts to be exchanged between networks and coteries of readers, often organised around kinship networks.’⁴⁶ Despite the fact that most areas of manuscript circulation – Inns of court, universities, the court, coffee houses, taverns, and country houses – were usually the preserve of men, some women had access to these circles and could play a significant role in the fashioning of culture. Part of this phenomenon is well described in Victoria Burke’s study on women’s participation in manuscript circulation, where she provides evidence

Ben Jonson, *Euery Man Ovt of His Hymovr*, in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1616), sig. K6r; William Hawkins, *Apollo Shroving* (London, 1627), sig. C3r; Richard Brome, *The City Wit, or, The VVoman wears the Breeches: A Comedy* (London, 1653), sig. D3r; Philip Massinger, *Three New Playes; viz. Bashful Lover, The Guardian, Very VVoman* (London, 1655), sig. I7v; Edward Ravenscroft, *The Citizen Turn’d Gentleman: A Comedy* (London, 1672), sig. B3v.

⁴⁴ Clarke, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Maureen Bell, ‘A Dictionary of Women in the London Book Trade, 1540-1730’ (MLS dissertation, Longborough University of Technology, 1983), and ‘Woman Writing and Women Written’, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1557-1695*, ed. by John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with the assistance of Maureen Bell, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), IV, 431-451. Even though the publications by women writers exploded in this period, they never reached more than 1.6 percent of the total of seventeenth-century printed books, even at their highest point.

⁴⁶ Clarke, p. 9.

about some women who were able to add their own verses in the notebooks of university students, probably from Oxford⁴⁷, thus enjoying some readership within this intellectual domain that, for years, was thought to be alien to female literary agency.

In addition to the aforementioned debatable points, Burke and Gibson also challenge the assumption that ‘all early modern women were subversive because they wrote [...]’⁴⁸, as if writing were the only opportunity to transcend the private space and exercise a certain public power. Certainly, the possibility of resisting official authority depended not only on the topic chosen by women writers, but also on the genre of their writings. Actually, as the critics comment, women were positively encouraged to read and write texts that confirmed their status as housewives and mothers. Devotional poetry, as well as transcriptions and translations of Latin poetry, legal documents, philosophical treatises, medical manuals, plays, meditations and prayers, were part of the literary achievement of women first hand.⁴⁹ These works were definitely not the result of a passive copy, since they implied a hermeneutical process on the part of women and gave them the opportunity to address a variety of public affairs related to law, education, religion, and politics; however, because they were not the primary authors of these texts, their transcriptions and translations constituted, in my view, exercises of erudition rather than of subversion. Undoubtedly, these writings had fewer public implications than an authorial commentary on a religious passage or psalm, a petition letter, or a play, to mention but a few examples; nevertheless, even in the case of these genres, writing did not always work outside or against authority. Catharine Gray has contributed to this discussion by

⁴⁷ Burke refers specifically to the Elizabeth Clarke manuscript (X.d.177), a commonplace book of jests and poems, from *circa* 1595. She also examines two other manuscripts, from Elizabeth Wellden and Anne Cornwallis. See Victoria E. Burke, ‘Reading Friends: Women’s Participation in ‘Masculine’ Literary Culture’, in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson, Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium (England and USA: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 75-90 (pp. 77-80).

⁴⁸ Burke and Gibson, p. 1.

⁴⁹ For examples of women’s manuscripts, see Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, *Reading Early Modern Women. An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

explaining that although early modern women's roles were heavily marginalised from the official public 'institutions of state power and social advancement'⁵⁰, one cannot conclude that they were not able to relate to the public sphere in other ways, perhaps more indirect than participation in government institutions such as State and Church. Evidently, as she argues, women could not become judges, lawyers, or members of Parliament; however, they could adopt public *personae* within manuscript and print culture⁵¹. She points out that in order to understand the complex relationship between women and the public arena, one needs to 'de-domesticate women's writing, resituating it in the public context it engages, without therefore divorcing it from the politicized private spheres in which it is nurtured.'⁵² In other words, to become aware that what women read and wrote in private was linked to the public arena in ways and modes that were not as perceptible as decision-making, property ownership, or authority over wife and family. From my perspective, what Gray suggests is to recast the domestic so as not to understand it as a deprived space, but one where aspects of the public realm could be nurtured, shaped, and fashioned. To 'de-domesticate' female works of literature could metaphorically mean to accept that their scope was wider than the household; that is to say, that in women's complex negotiation of private and public life, some of their works and ideas went beyond the boundaries of the home.

B. INWARDNESS: THE INNER SIDE OF PRIVACY

From what I have already discussed regarding the possible relationship between women, privacy, and the activities of reading and writing, I can infer that women's writing constitutes an example of practised place (de Certeau), which produces spaces (Lefebvre)

⁵⁰ Gray, p. 7.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵² Ibid., p. 13.

where the blurring of boundaries between communal and private, domestic and public begins to dissolve.

According to the *OED*, the meanings of ‘inwardness’ that are associated with privacy have to do with the ‘[d]epth or intensity of feeling or thought; subjectivity’⁵³, or the preoccupation with what is ‘inward or concerns man’s inner nature, as opposed to occupation with externalities; spirituality.’⁵⁴ However, while the earliest use of the first meaning occurred in 1836, the second is recorded in 1859, so Shakespeare clearly could not have used either of them. A third occurrence can be found in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* when Benedick advises Leonato: ‘[...] let the friar advise you, / And though you know my inwardness and love [...]’(4.1.244-5)⁵⁵; though obsolete now, it refers to the ‘fact of being intimately acquainted; intimacy, familiarity; close friendship.’⁵⁶ When used as an adjective, one could say that the meanings of ‘inward’ are closer to the inner side of privacy. When it makes reference to a situation or condition, it means: ‘Situated within; that is the inner or inmost part; that is in or on the inside; belonging to or connected with the inside (esp. of the body)’⁵⁷; nevertheless, it is also ‘applied to the mind, thoughts, and mental faculties, as located within the body; hence to mental or spiritual conditions and actions, as distinguished from bodily or external phenomena, and so mental or spiritual.’⁵⁸ Shakespeare also uses the term with another sense in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* when Armado is convincing Holofernes to organise entertainments for the king and says: ‘For what is inward between us, let it pass. I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy’ (5.1.91-3).⁵⁹ In

⁵³ *OED*, ‘inwardness’, *sb.* 5.a.

⁵⁴ *OED*, 5.b.

⁵⁵ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. by Claire McEachern, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Cengage Learning, 2006).

⁵⁶ *OED*, † 4. *obs.*

⁵⁷ *OED*, ‘inward’, *A. adj.* I.1.

⁵⁸ *OED*, A.I.2.

⁵⁹ William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

these lines, ‘inward’ refers to ‘secret, not disclosed; private’⁶⁰, but this use, like that in *Much Ado*, is also obsolete.

The definitions mentioned above show not only that there are many different associations between privacy and interiority, but also that there is more than one kind of interiority. In an attempt to trace back the social history of the concept of privacy, Ronald Huebert makes reference to Stephen Gosson’s advice to use introspection as a way to avoid the moral perils of plays, thus implying that this attitude would function as a protection against the temptations that might induce immoral conduct in playgoers. In *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, the antitheatricalist author recommends members of the audience to enter into themselves and ‘whensoever you heare that playe againe, or any man els in private conference commend Playes, consider not, so much what is spoken to colour them, as what may be spoken to confounde them.’⁶¹ Evidently, this moralistic argument suggests that watching a play could corrupt imagination, thus interiority. This may also be one of the possible explanations for the Elizabethans’ rejection or distrust of privacy. If interiority – imagination, memory, idle thoughts, sexual desires – is awakened when in private, then this privacy may become the breeding ground for sin. As Huebert explains with respect to this connotation of privacy, the concept is not shown as ‘an unmixed blessing in Shakespeare; too much of it is cause for concern. But the sense of an inner private space, of an interiority often filled with doubt or conflict to be sure, but an interiority nonetheless, is deeply embedded in the language of his plays.’⁶² Apart from the examples in the plays I have already mentioned, Huebert considers that the notion of interiority is very clearly shown in *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Henry V*. I will take the example he gives from the first of these plays because I think it is more

⁶⁰ *OED*, A.I.† 4.

⁶¹ Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (London, 1582), as cited in Ronald Huebert, ‘Privacy: The Early Social History of a Word’, *The Sewanee Review*, 105.1 (Winter, 1997), 21-38 (pp. 33-34).

⁶² Huebert, p. 35.

illustrative of what I have been analysing in this chapter. In my Introduction to this thesis I explained that after Malvolio receives Olivia's mistakenly seductive letter, he wants to be alone and expresses this wish when he says that he wants to enjoy his "private" (3.4.79)⁶³. According to the critic, this is not just a request to be left alone, but 'Malvolio's "private" here also expresses his inner self, his state of mind. Having just had greatness thrust upon him, he wants to savor this delicious new sweetness for as long as it will last. When the strong preference for withdrawal into the self becomes obsessive, it can be a danger signal, perhaps a symptom of melancholy.'⁶⁴ Therefore, privacy as interiority is dangerous not only because it can corrupt a person's imagination, as Gosson claimed, but also because it can lead people to melancholy. The perils associated with the inward side of privacy may be morally bad or very unpleasant. When Touchstone is asked about his life away from the court in *As You Like It*, he replies: 'In respect that is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life.' (3.2.15-6).⁶⁵ Certainly, Touchstone is a court jester who is used to performing in public, thus the very idea of a solitary life is synonymous with deprivation for him. As Juliet Dusinberre comments in the notes to the Arden edition of the play, "solitary" here refers to contemplative life, similar to that described by Petrarch in his *Vita Solitaria*, which I have discussed in the first chapter⁶⁶. According to the editor, the term "private" in these lines is linked to the idea of lacking company and, as she explains, 'it is loaded with political implications, for Essex's Accession Day pageant in 1595 embodied the choices of public and private activity, and he was constantly advised on this uneasy balance [...].'⁶⁷

⁶³ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; repr. 2001). See also the Introduction to this thesis where I analyse the use of the term.

⁶⁴ Huebert, p. 34.

⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. by Juliet Dusinberre, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006; repr. 2007).

⁶⁶ Cfr. Chapter I.

⁶⁷ Dusinberre, n. 15 and 16, p. 236.

There is still another relevant issue related to privacy understood as inwardness and it has to do with the actual development of individuality and the display of interiority during the early modern period. In her study on privacy and print, Jagodzinski argues that '[i]t is a commonplace (though a much-disputed one) that the Renaissance was characterized by the emergence of the individual and the awakening of a new subjectivity and a consciousness of the self as a person separate from the community.'⁶⁸ In her perspective, reading led to a certain autonomy and awareness of the difference between one's private and public roles; thus, she argues that by exploring the processes of printing, publishing, and reading, one can observe 'an awakening sense of the private self.'⁶⁹ Even though many early modern scholars agree on the connection between reading and the development of a certain inner nature, they have questioned the existence of personal inwardness. Essential to the understanding of this inner sense of privacy is Katharine E. Maus's work on the performance of inwardness in the English early modern theatre. In the introduction to her book, the critic briefly summarises different views on this issue, starting with Francis Barker's objection to the idea of accepting a sense of inwardness, taking Hamlet as a case, because, he points out, that attitude would be anachronistic and premature for the sixteenth century⁷⁰. Regarding dates, Jean Howard also proposes a later moment – the eighteenth century – for, what she calls, the 'interiority and self-presence of the individual.'⁷¹ Nevertheless, crucial for this discussion, I think, is Catherine Belsey's claim that one should not approach 'Renaissance plays in search of the "imaginary interiority"' of the characters, [...] that in her view is the imposition of the modern reader

⁶⁸ Jagodzinski, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷⁰ Francis Baker, *The Tremulous Private Body* (New York: Methuen, 1984), pp. 31, 58, as cited in Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 2.

⁷¹ Jean Howard, 'The New Historicism of Renaissance Studies', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986), 13-43 (p. 15).

rather than a feature of the Renaissance text.⁷² Notwithstanding the difficulties of representing the inner side of privacy because of its invisibility, I think that literature can show both physical and spiritual actions and within the latter, the workings of the mind, the soul, and the heart. Human interiority is not imaginary; on the contrary, it is inherent to mankind. The fact that we cannot “see” it onstage does not mean that it does not exist at all. The challenge Shakespeare and his contemporaries had to face was to find ways in which this interiority could be performed without losing its privacy. Although at this point I will not look for specific examples on how this interiority is manifested in the plays, soliloquies could be considered as attempts to do so, since characters can express their innermost feelings through them. In addition, I do not think that the emergence of the individual is an invention of the Renaissance, but that the cultural and religious conditions of the time facilitated the display of the self; that is to say, that there was a higher degree of awareness of individuality, probably linked directly or indirectly to the availability of more private spaces.

In addition to these authors, Maus mentions another group of critics, formed mainly by Jonathan Goldberg, Patricia Fumerton, Kay Stockholder, Ann Jones and Peter Sallibrass, who admit that the rhetoric of inwardness was greatly developed in the early modern period, yet affirm that this notion of the private sphere was usually understood only ‘through its similarities and dissimilarities to the public world.’⁷³ On the one hand, it is clear that privacy was defined in contrast to the public space, but, on the other, Maus argues that the distinction between inward disposition and outward appearance was a familiar topic during the Renaissance.⁷⁴ More than the existence of such categories, the critic questions the way in which boundaries between one and the other are drawn and how

⁷² Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p.48, as cited in Maus, p. 2.

⁷³ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Sallibrass, ‘The Politics of Astrophil and Stella,’ *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24.1 (Winter, 1984), 53-68 (p. 54).

⁷⁴ Maus, pp. 3,19.

this may affect behaviour in everyday life and onstage. According to her, dealing with inwardness onstage would be a two-fold problem because either interiority is undisplayable, or if it is displayed, it ceases to exist.⁷⁵ However, if interiority is never expressed, how will one become aware that it does exist? Evidently, there is an inner space of thoughts and feelings that will always be kept secret if it is not shown; nevertheless, in my view, making inwardness visible does not mean that it will lose its private nature forever, but only temporarily, and not completely. Even though revealing that interiority implies making it public or visible, I would say it is a momentary or transitory public state that makes other people note or become aware that there is, in fact, an interiority that is being shared. Furthermore, even if an actor is delivering a monologue or a soliloquy onstage and the audience can grasp his innermost feelings; or when the reader of a play discovers the hidden personal interiority of that character in the text, inwardness is not lost; it only becomes visible for a while and then recovers its initial condition once the feeling or thought has been communicated. Moreover, the seeming contradiction of making ‘public’ what should be private or interior responds, I think, to the temporary nature of privacy.

In a recently published volume on early modern theatricality, Richard Preiss develops the idea that Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* inaugurated some new concepts that do not have to do exclusively with the play’s sensationalism, but also with the feeling that characters keep secrets from us. Even if the argument were debatable, the scholar brings to the fore the complex issue of staging interiority for audiences that were unfamiliar with it, only to confirm that ‘[p]sychological interiority is by definition unrepresentable as such, and every attempt to represent it both misses and destroys it.’⁷⁶ Then he goes on to explain

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

⁷⁶ Richard Preiss, ‘Interiority’, in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. by Henry Turner, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 47-70.

that theatre, at the level of characters, is limited to show external actions and words, so much so, that speaking, thinking, and moving must be expressed by the character with his body for us to know about it. In his perspective and always taking Kyd's tragedy into account, Preiss very insightfully describes the construction of interiority in what he considers a new early modern theatricality:

from the moment a character enters until the moment he or she exits, the character is always communicating, always revealing, always converting a state of being into empirical signs. [...] Warping our perception of theatrical space, expanding, contracting, and folding it, the play generates an 'interiority effect' that is gradually transferred to its characters; interiority begins not as a psychic property but as a spatial one, as a property of the playing space itself – as the literal sensation of feeling both inside and outside something at once. For the playhouse already was an 'inside'; indeed, delineating the 'inside' without at the same time disclosing it seems to have been the primary signification of the playhouse.⁷⁷

Preiss' words prompt useful thoughts for the analysis of privacy as interiority or inwardness, as he posits a number of ideas regarding the theatrical space. Even though he acknowledges the public nature of playhouses, thus of the early modern stage, at the same time, he revises the possible division between an inner/private and outer/public space within a theatre, often signalled by the actions that happen off-stage, or by the use of Elizabethan theatres' doors. These did not only indicate entrances or exits, but created an opposition between the inside and the outside. In other words, it seems that the topology or performativity of the stage space is key to the creation of the 'interiority effect' or illusion of inwardness. Following this line of the discussion, I would argue that the 'empty space' that Peter Brook equates to the early modern stage is precisely, and in his own words, what offers dramatists 'one of its greatest freedoms.'⁷⁸ Therefore, what may seem a space restriction becomes an opportunity to express with words what cannot be seen.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

⁷⁸ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 86.

Expanding on Preiss' notion of theatrical perception, more specifically on the idea of expanding, contracting, and folding theatrical space, I would like to suggest that Brook has also contributed with his description of the theatre as 'a very special place. It is like a magnifying glass, and also like a reducing lens [...]'⁷⁹, a notion that has been developed further by Stanley Vincent Longman in his thought-provoking chapter about theatrical space. The scholar states that the Elizabethan stage is, at the same time, a confined and a fixed space, as well as a fluid one because within its physical limits, it expands and contracts depending on the focus given to different actions. The fictional world is all there, encapsulated by the stage, but this does not prevent this same fictional world from extending beyond the confines of the stage. The fluid stage, argues Longman, 'deliberately shatters them [space limitations], so that the time and place of the action are in constant flux. We are now here, now there. The fluid stage is essentially a *platea*, a generalized acting area. The principle behind the *platea* is the collaboration of the audience in ascribing an imaginary place to the acting area.'⁸⁰ It is as if the theatrical exerted a kind of mediation between the space of the stage and the space that is represented, which results in an imagined or virtual space. According to Longman, 'the charm of the fluid stage derives from its playing upon our imagination. The stage, the actors, the properties do not disguise themselves, but simultaneously, they conjure up in our imagination a whole other world as we watch [,]'⁸¹ so that theatrical space impinges on the audience's collective consciousness and creates a sense of interiority.

Most authors agree that privacy can take various forms and comprise different phenomena. What follows in the next pages is a brief exploration of the direct experience of privacy of two early modern women writers and the ways in which they represent it

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

⁸⁰ Stanley Vincent Longman, 'Fixed, floating and fluid stages', in *Themes in Drama 9: The Theatrical Space*, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 151-160 (p. 157).

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 157.

through two literary genres: a diary and a tragedy. My aim is to find out which, if any, forms of privacy they address.

In order to illustrate the points already analysed regarding privacy, and especially the sense of interiority, I have chosen works by two early modern women writers: *The Tragedie of Mariam* (1613)⁸² by Elizabeth Cary (1585-1639) and *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby* (1599-1605) by Lady Margaret Hoby née Dakins (1571-1633).⁸³ The reasons to choose these authors were manifold, but fundamentally had to do with dates, literary genre, and reference to the private in their works. I would have also liked to select them according to their social status, ideally to give one example from a woman belonging to the gentry, and another preferably coming from an ordinary family, in order to show a more representative group; however, most working-class women at that time were illiterate and left almost no written trace of their experiences.

With respect to dates, I intend to offer examples from Shakespeare's female contemporaries not only in terms of their life-span – birth and death as close as possible to Shakespeare's – but also regarding the year of the publication of their work. In addition, as the thesis analyses some of Shakespeare's plays in search of the private space, I looked for drama written by women; nevertheless, in the period between 1564 and 1616,

⁸² Lady Elizabeth Cary, *The tragedie of Mariam, the faire queene of Iewry. Written by that learned, vertuous, and truly noble ladie, E.C.* (London: printed by Thomas Creede, for Richard Hawkins, and are to be solde at his shoppe in Chancery Lane, neere vnto Sargeants Inne, 1613), *STC* (2nd ed.), 4613.

⁸³ I could have included Mary (Sidney) Herbert whose life-span more closely matches Shakespeare's, but her publication, *The Tragedie of Antoine* (1599), is a translation from Robert Garnier's play and not her original work. Another possible female writer from the period is Mary Wroth (1587-1652), who did not only write poetry, but also drama; however, her pastoral comedy – *Love's Victory* – was written c.1620. Critics have established different dates regarding *Love's Victory's* period of composition, probably because of the existence of two holograph manuscripts, a complete version at Penshurst Place and an incomplete version at the Huntington Library, California. Some of the scholars who refer to c.1619-20 as a probable date are: *Mary Wroth's Love's Victory. The Penshurst Manuscript*, ed. by Michael Brennan (London: The Roxburghe Club, 1988), pp. xiii, 20; *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne Davies (Oxford: Routledge, 1997), p. 92; *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, ed. by Margaret P. Hannay (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 212-13; Naomi J. Miller, *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (USA: The University of Kentucky Press, 1996), p. 8. Alison Findlay speaks of 1615-18 in *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 83. It was not published until 1988: *Mary Wroth's Love's Victory*, ed. by Michael Brennan, *The Penshurst Manuscript* (London: The Roxburghe Club, 1988). See also *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700*, ed. by Paul Salzman, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. xix.

corresponding to Shakespeare's life, not only did very few women write plays, but hardly any of their work was published or performed publicly. When writing, women preferred genres and modes such as translations, letters, autobiographies, lyric and narrative poetry, prophecy and religious polemic, prose fiction, and some public and private drama.⁸⁴ Legacies⁸⁵ and diaries were also popular among learned women since through them, and in a simple language, they could transmit the practices of everyday life within the domestic environment. A diary is perhaps the most private piece of writing since its author does not usually write it thinking of publication. It is a subjective account of personal experiences as felt or seen by the author and, as a genre, it may become a viable gateway to express sorrows, worries, family conflicts, memories, the suffering of impossible love, and so forth. Because this genre is likely to voice the author's inwardness – a dimension of privacy –, I included Lady Margaret Hoby's diary in this section.

C. AUTOBIOGRAPHY: THE DIARY OF LADY MARGARET HOBY

Lady Margaret Hoby was an Elizabethan Yorkshirewoman who lived and worked on her own estate near the North Sea where she owned much of the land surrounding Hackness, not far from Scarborough. She was born at Linton, Yorkshire, on 10 February 1570 or 1571. When she was 19 years old, she married Walter Devereux, but he died two years later and she married again to Thomas Sidney. In 1595 Thomas also died and on 9 August a year later she married Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby in London. The day of her marriage, she started her diary, which concerns the period from 1599 to 1604/5. In 1633,

⁸⁴*The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). These genres and modes are those included by the editor in this collection of early modern women's writings.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Iocelin, *The mothers Legacie, to her vnborne Childe* (London: Printed by Iohn Hauiland, for William Barret, 1624), *STC* (2nd ed.), 14624.5. Iocelin's text became what could be called a 'bestseller'. It saw eight editions between 1616 and 1674, and was the most reprinted woman's text of the seventeenth century. See *Women's Writing in Stuart England. The Mother's Legacies of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Joscelin, and Elizabeth Richardson*, ed. by Sylvia Browne (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999), p. vi.

Lady Hoby died, but her husband outlived her until his death in 1640.⁸⁶ Studying her diary becomes an illuminating task in the sense that it is a record of a woman's life written on a daily basis and as such it shows the practices of everyday life.

As a literary genre, the diary is mainly an autobiographical work, a type of self-expressive literature that dates from the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, an autobiography and a diary are clearly different, since the former is usually retrospective of the author's life, while the latter is written as life proceeds. According to Alain Girard, 'a diary is not an autobiography, it does not pretend to be a study of life, it merely gives what the author wants to tell of life, and the development of his thoughts.'⁸⁷ Even though, as the French critic explains, one of the main motivations to write a diary is to put intimate feelings and thoughts on paper, this is only one of the many reasons early modern diarists had for keeping a journal. In the introduction to their edition of *Writing Lives*, Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker explore possible reasons that motivated people to write biographies and other forms of life writing, thus concluding that 'early modern lives are more concerned with community, with spirituality, but most of all with the life as exemplar. Indeed, exemplarity is at the heart of early modern lives and early modern life writing.'⁸⁸ These exemplary people – scholars, saints, and civil authorities – became ethical and spiritual examples worthy of imitation.

Other reasons to write a diary might have been: an inner impulse to record and preserve experience or a need to leave advice to children (similar to legacies), or a means

⁸⁶ *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, ed. by Joanna Moody (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998), pp. lv-lvii, and xv. The source text of this edition is the British Library MS Egerton 2614: *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*.

⁸⁷ Alain Girard, 'Introduction', *Le journal intime* (Presses universitaires de France, 1963), pp. vi-xxiii. The author also adds in the first chapter that a diary is not a chronicle. See also: Elaine McKay, 'The Diary Network in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England', *Erasmian Journal* (Monash University, Melbourne, Australia), 2nd edn (November 2001) <<http://arts.monash.edu.au/publications/eras/edition-2/mckay.php>> [accessed May 2012].

⁸⁸ Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, 'Introducing Lives', in *Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1-26 (p. 4).

of exercising in the spiritual duty of self-examination and self-revelation, as promoted by Puritans.⁸⁹ In fact, in her article on diary networks in early modern England, Elaine McKay makes reference to the work of some scholars such as William Haller who, already in the 1950s, linked journal writing to religion. According to him, this practice became ‘the Puritan substitute for the confessional [...]’⁹⁰ as ministers encouraged the faithful to follow the example of godly men who had written diaries and recommended keeping an account of sins to show the struggle they led to become good Christians.

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century British diaries range from purely religious journals to political and war records, travel chronicles, or account-book diaries.⁹¹ Despite the fact that most diarists did not write about their personal life with the aim of publishing it, very often they selected the information they recorded as if they were aware that their manuscripts would be read after their death. As Linda Pollock has thoroughly studied, due to this deliberate or involuntary exposure to the public gaze, a diarist may ‘suppress anything he thinks society will condemn or which reveals himself in a less than favourable light.’⁹² Therefore, although diaries offer a more direct account of events than narrative fiction and drama, there is also an author’s mediation between his/her actual experience (of privacy) and what he/she decides to tell about it.

The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby is a domestic journal that clearly corresponds to the genre’s nature as it narrates the ordinary events of her life such as: visiting the granary, dying wool, working in the kitchen, sewing, embroidering, gardening, attending childbirth, and even fishing. Lady Margaret also ‘kept the accounts, paid the servants, sorted and weighted corn, saw to matters out in the fields and woods, and was altogether busy

⁸⁹ Linda A. Pollock, ‘Issues concerning evidence’, in *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983), pp. 68-95 (p. 70).

⁹⁰ William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 96.

⁹¹ Pollock, p. 72.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

ensuring adequate provision was made for all the household.⁹³ In fact, as Joanna Moody, the editor of this diary, observes, Lady Hoby's private life seems to be in conflict with 'the demands of household and of a wider world.'⁹⁴ In fact, the domestic chores that she fulfils as the lady of the house do not only nurture the home within, but also the community, due to the public dimension they acquire. There is one incident registered in the diary that well illustrates this point and is related to the 'buesenes' she mentions several times and which almost certainly refers to the lawsuit against the abuse offered by Mr Ewere and his hunting company – a formal complaint that was heard before the Council of the North on 26 September 1600.⁹⁵ On October 3, 1600, she writes: 'I walke and wrought, talkinge with Mr Hoby of our buesenes, [...]'⁹⁶; then, on the 7th, she mentions her journey to London where the case will be heard by the Privy Council of the Star Chamber. While in London, the lawsuit is mentioned once more on the 21st: 'after I had had talked a whill wth Mr Hoby of our beusnes [...]'⁹⁷ Finally, on February 17, 1602, she comments: 'Mr Hoby Came from London hauinge ended all his busenes there, I praise god [...]'⁹⁸

Even though it is most likely that Mr Hoby was in charge of presenting formal complaints to the different councils and probably had to be present at every hearing, the diary's entries show that Lady Hoby was not only involved in giving advice to her husband, but was well-informed on all matters related to the lawsuit. In a certain way, her active participation kept her in a constant state of tension from which she could be relieved only after the case was finally settled in their favour. Nevertheless, she not only narrates her quasi-public affairs and household duties, but primarily reveals her religious practices

⁹³ Moody, p. xxxv.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. xxxi.

⁹⁵ The episode refers to the unexpected visit of young members of two local families to the Hoby's household. Apart from having headed far out of the wooded areas around Hackness with their hunting party so as to impose themselves on their neighbours, they showed a very unruly behaviour when they stayed at the Hoby's home (See Moody, p. xlvi).

⁹⁶ Lady Margaret Hoby, *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, The :3: day, October, 1600. Dates are spelled as in the original text. Moody, p. 115.

⁹⁷ Hoby, The :21: day, October, 1600; Moody, p. 119.

⁹⁸ Ibid., The 17 day, February, 1602; Moody, p. 177

and, in so doing, shows the everyday life of a pious early modern noblewoman who seems to experience privacy when she prays rather than at other times. Almost in every entry of her diary, she refers to her private devotions. On a Friday in 1599, for example, she writes: ‘After I was redie I betooke my selfe to priuat praier [...]’⁹⁹; then, on Wednesday, she says she woke up at 6:00 o’clock to pray privately.¹⁰⁰ On a day in 1600, she not only mentions her prayers, but also her ‘priuate examenation’¹⁰¹, which was a common practice among Puritans and early modern Catholics. Sometimes Lady Hoby mentions the space where she chooses to pray, as in the case of a Thursday in 1599 when she tells that she has prayed with Mr Rhodes¹⁰², and then ‘priuatly in my Closett: after medetation, I went to supper: after, I had reed of the bible, after to lector, and then to bed.’¹⁰³ The information in this entry is interesting as it reveals both the space she prefers for her personal reading and the choice of book, which, in almost all cases, is the Bible. Although I have referred to the closet as a private/public space in another chapter¹⁰⁴, Moody makes an insightful distinction between the lady’s bedroom and her closet, explaining that the latter ‘was a separate and more private room than the chamber in which Lady Hoby rested, slept and even entertained visitors. The custom of receiving in the bedroom long continued in England, but the closet was almost sacrosanct to the lady of the household.’¹⁰⁵ Early modern scholars have explored the functions of the closet and have realised that on many occasions women were not alone there; however, the critic’s comment calls attention to the possibilities this room could sometimes offer brief moments of intimacy. Another entry, dated 26th January 1600, shows how Lady Hoby used the closet not only for reading and

⁹⁹ Ibid., Friday 10, August, 1599; Moody, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Wensday 15, August, 1599; Moody, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., The lordes day :8: June, 1600; Moody, p. 89.

¹⁰² Richard Rhodes was Lady Hoby’s personal chaplain. He was also her partner in reading and conversation. See Sharon Cadman Seelig, ‘Margaret Hoby: the stewardship of time’, in *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature. Reading Women’s Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 15-33 (pp. 27-28).

¹⁰³ Hoby, Thursday 13, September, 1599; Moody, p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter III.

¹⁰⁵ Moody, n. 44, p. 17.

praying, but also for personal pastimes: ‘after dinner I dressed vp my Clositte and read and, to refreshe my selfe being dull, I plaid and sunge to the Alpherion: [...]’¹⁰⁶

With respect to reading, the diary provides valuable information on Lady Hoby’s habits and choices. She usually mentions the Bible or testament, which she reads almost every day. She also makes reference to other religious books such as Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, sermons by popular preachers, especially Thomas Cartwright¹⁰⁷. This godly reading was part of the practice of religion for both Protestants and Catholics and it was frequently done in private. The closet was chosen as a prayer venue and the devotions performed there were distinct from more public forms of family prayer. In a certain sense, this place could acquire the dimensions of a devotional space as if it were transformed into a private chapel. Other entries in the diary reveal that Lady Hoby’s reading of the Scriptures was quite active because it is accompanied by a good deal of writing. In the entry for August 10, 1599, for example, she says: ‘[I] went to praier and to writ som notes in my testament.’¹⁰⁸ Later, on the 12th, she comments: ‘I wrett notes into my bible.’¹⁰⁹ In neither case does she refer to the notes she probably made in her diary, but only to the marginalia she writes in the texts. On the one hand, her behaviour matches Jardine and Grafton’s notion of reading as an interactive occupation; on the other, she seems to be one of the few women who left visible traces of her reading in the margins of books.

The entry for 11 June 1600, is worth bringing to the discussion here. Lady Hoby reports that after walking, she ‘reed a litle of humanitie, and then went to priuat examenation and praier: after, to supper, then to the lecture, and so to bed.’¹¹⁰ This record

¹⁰⁶ Hoby, The 6: day of the week the 26:, Ianuarie, 1600. The alpherion or orpharion is a flat-backed, stringed instrument of the Bandora family, of similar scalloped shape but smaller and tuned like the lute. It became very popular and Queen Elizabeth was skilled at the instrument (See Moody, n. 113, pp. 55-56).

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603), scholar and popular Puritan preacher. References to his works appear on Tewsday 28, 1599, p. 12. Then, in 1600, on The Lordes day 20: and in The first day of the weeke :28:.. See Moody, pp. 54, 56.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Friday 10, August, 1599; Moody, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., The Lordes day 12, August, 1599; Moody, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., The 11: day, June, 1600; Moody, p. 89.

allows us to conjecture that, apart from religious texts, she might have read other kinds of books, for she makes a distinction between ‘human’ and ‘divine’ books. Regarding this issue, Ramona Wray points out that ‘the works she mentions as consuming are almost all religious, excepting the odd reference to books of herbal remedies.’¹¹¹ I do not think this is enough evidence to state that Lady Hoby did not read other kind of books. She was a learned woman who probably knew Latin or could read translations of the Classics. I believe that Wray’s comment highlights the fact that early modern female autobiographers very seldom mention recreational reading due to the worries associated with it, as women were supposed to read only pious texts. It is likely that she might have felt guilty about other readings and decided not to record them. The ‘lecture’ Lady Hoby refers to in this same entry, corresponds to one of the many forms reading took during the early modern period.¹¹² In one of the first notes to the diary, the editor states that this kind of reading applies to ‘the formal reading aloud of a given passage, probably from the Scriptures or a sermon [...]’¹¹³, usually done in the company of other literate members of the household; therefore, some of Lady Hoby’s reading practices were also public in the sense that she was neither in silence, nor alone, and certainly not in her closet. Another example of this more public reading practice can be found in the entry for August 13, 1599: ‘after I returned home, I prayed privately, read a chapter of the bible, and wrought till dinner time [...]’¹¹⁴ Moody provides two synonyms to the term ‘wrought’: sewed or embroidered, and comments that ‘Lady Hoby is engaged in needlework of some kind or another most afternoons. Usually, though not always, she is in the company of her women and listening to a reading.’¹¹⁵ Apart from pointing out that I will discuss the meaning of sewing by female characters in the section dedicated to Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*, following Roger

¹¹¹ Wray, p. 33.

¹¹² Cfr. Sasha Roberts in this same section.

¹¹³ Moody, n. 3, p. 3. Lady Hoby usually spells ‘lector’ instead of ‘lecture’.

¹¹⁴ Hoby, Munday 13, August, 1599; Moody, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Moody, n. 7, p. 4.

Chartier's ideas, I believe that in this description we find hints of the relationship between the construction of identity and books as material objects, because reading enables Lady Hoby to enjoy some moments of privacy (when she takes personal notes, or reads her own Testament as part of her private devotions); on other occasions it is a communal activity she shares with other women and servants. Furthermore, Chartier holds that her 'exploration of inwardness, and the very self-controlled expression of emotions, are based on reading that takes place within the house, or with other women in the community, or above all with the chaplain.'¹¹⁶ It is as if the act of reading were at the same time a private and a public endeavour, or likewise a private sphere, it had porous boundaries.

Critics such as Moody, argue that apart from private prayer and religious reading, the diary offers very little evidence about Lady Hoby's inwardness. She states that the author narrates the routines that she follows every day, thus it can be classified as a diary of action. As such, it shows very little intimate self-revelation apart from issues related to illness (tiredness, melancholy) and her religious devotions.¹¹⁷ There is no record of emotions or personal feelings, but deep concern with spiritual observance and the use of time. Nevertheless, the critic considers that '[t]hroughout the insistent religious preoccupations of the work her sense of self is paramount. Brief and repetitive may be these entries, but they nevertheless enable Margaret, Lady Hoby, confidently to assert the significance of her self and her inner world [...]'.¹¹⁸ Her writing is usually personal and, as Helen Wilcox argues, she has an 'inwardness of focus.'¹¹⁹ This lady clearly distinguishes between her private and public activities, so much so, that she balances her outings around

¹¹⁶ Chartier, pp. 128-29.

¹¹⁷ Moody, p. li.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. lii.

¹¹⁹ Helen Wilcox, 'Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen', in *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (USA, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1992), pp. 47-62 (p. 49).

the local Yorkshire villages with moments of solitude in her closet. Precisely taking these outings into consideration, I would like to make a point regarding Lady Hoby's privacy.

According to Moody's analysis, '[t]he godly order of the household emanated from its Puritan zeal and pious routine, and it is hard to tell how much was simply accepted labour or pleasurable activity. There is mention of relaxation when she walked by the river and in the meadows, when she went fishing, or played bowls [...].¹²⁰ In addition to these leisure activities, Lady Hoby sang, played the orpharion¹²¹, went for rides in her coach, went boating at the seaside, and had long walks almost daily, following the Elizabethan belief that walking was beneficial for one's health. Aren't all these leisure activities an example of early modern *otium* understood as recreation? In my analysis of Petrarchan *otium* as a possible form of privacy in previous sections, I pointed out that this notion had different connotations, so that it could be a synonym of leisure time for intellectual and religious contemplation, but also for idleness. Here, I would like to associate it to the concept of recreation. In her article on the function of recreation in early modern England, Elaine McKay questions the extent to which recreation can mean more than simply play and pleasure and explores whether it can perform functions that benefit the individual. She takes definitions by different scholars such as Peter Burke¹²² and Glending Olson¹²³ to conclude that, 'leisure is the time set aside to indulge a need for recreation; "recreation" is what we choose to do with that time [,]'¹²⁴ so that the latter is possible thanks to the former. Evidently, these terms are not always interchangeable; furthermore, McKay provides evidence from 144 diaries and journals – ranging from a total of 372 written by men and women across England during the period between 1500 and 1700 – in which the

¹²⁰ Moody, p. xxxvi.

¹²¹ Lute-like instrument.

¹²² Peter Burke, 'The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, 146 (1995), 136-50.

¹²³ Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982).

¹²⁴ Elaine McKay, "'For refreshment and preserving health': the definition and function of recreation in early modern England", *Historical Research*, 81.211 (February 2008), 52-74 (p. 55).

word 'leisure' is rarely used by their authors in contrast to the frequent mention of 'recreation'.¹²⁵ While the absence of the term could mean the nonexistence of the notion, as Burke argues, I tend to think that this conduct simply manifested itself in a different way or that certain activities were not thought of as leisure. If, as I have explained in the first chapter, part of Petrarch's leisure is characterised by simple habits, proximity to nature, writing, and friendship, then not only the very act of writing a diary or praying could be an example of *otium*, but also other activities that Lady Hoby performs in the time she does not spend in household tasks. Some of them, like writing or playing an instrument, may have been solitary or in the company of others, but most of her recreation was experienced outdoors. Although she does not go out to look for illicit privacy – in Crane's sense – the outside (garden, meadows, river, trips to York and London) functions as an extension of the household whose boundaries become porous.

Even though the diary reveals visible juxtaposition and opposition of private and public planes, the text is also full of examples of the blurring of these public/private and social/personal distinctions. This life-journal mirrors the everyday dealings of an Elizabethan lady, thus showing the paradoxical nature of the public/private dyad: the simultaneous inseparability and distinctiveness of these spaces. Writing a diary implies sharing one's inwardness and making one's self accessible; however, this does not mean that interiority or personal identity will cease to exist; on the contrary, it implies that the private and the public may co-exist in female self-representation.

D. CLOSET DRAMA: THE TRAGEDY OF MARIAM BY ELIZABETH CARY

Elizabeth Cary (1585-1639) was born in Oxfordshire, the only child of Elizabeth

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 56-57. Parliamentary diaries were excluded, as they are diaries that were kept solely as professional, public or spiritual accounts.

Symondes and Lawrence Tanfield. She married Sir Henry Cary, Viscount Falkland, and, as Heather Wolfe reports, she converted to Roman Catholicism on 14 November 1626, after having read not only the Scriptures, but also a long list of religious works in different languages, including Latin and Hebrew.¹²⁶ She became the first female playwright to be published in England with *The Tragedie of Mariam, the faire Queene of Jewry* (1613). While Harbage's *Annals* record that the play was written between 1602 and 1605, Weller and Ferguson claim that it was written between 1602 – the year Cary got married – and 1609. Diane Purkiss admits that 'if an early date of c.1603-4 is correct, *Mariam* is a continuation of [her] schoolroom exercises [...].'¹²⁷ Nevertheless, all editors of the text accept that the play was entered into the Stationer's Register on 17 December 1612, and published a year later with the author identified as E. C. The manuscript was printed by Thomas Creede in 1613,¹²⁸ but it might have circulated before, as Lady Falkland's tutor, Sir John Davies, mentions it in a dedicatory letter from 1612.¹²⁹

It is widely accepted that one of the main sources Cary used for her tragedy is the Jewish historian Josephus's account of the marriage of Herod the Great to Mariam, a noble Jewish woman. In his *Antiquities of the Jews* (c.A.D.93)¹³⁰, the author narrates Herod's

¹²⁶ Elizabeth Cary, *Lady Falkland, Life and Letters*, ed. by Heather Wolfe, Renaissance Texts from Manuscript no. 4, ed. by Jeremy Maule and Marie Axton (Cambridge: RTM Publications, 2001), pp. 1-2; Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedie of Mariam*, in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 48-75. Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedie of Mariam*, in *Three Tragedies by Renaissance Women*, ed. by Diane Purkiss (London: Penguin Books, 1998), Notes, pp. 179-180.

¹²⁷ *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, ed. by Alfred Harbage, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 90-91; Purkiss, p. 179.

¹²⁸ Cary, Elizabeth, Lady, *The Tragedie of Mariam, the faire queene of Jewry* (London: printed by Thomas Creede, for Richard Hawkins, and are to be solde at his shoppe in Chancery Lane, neere vnto Sargeants Inne, 1613), *STC* (2nd ed.), 4613. Written sometime between 1603 and 1611 and probably before the birth of Cary's first child in 1608, the play coincides with the spiritual crisis Cary experienced. See *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry: with The Lady Falkland: Her Life, by One of Her Daughters*, ed. by Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (CA: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 5, 7.

¹²⁹ John Davies, *The Muses Sacrifice* (1612), as cited in Weller and Ferguson, p. 6. He refers to his "pupill's plays specifically a drama set in Palestine (*Mariam*) and another play set 'in Syracuse', now lost."

¹³⁰ According to Diane Purkiss, Cary probably read Thomas Lodge's 1602 translation of *The History of the Jewish People*. She may have also read Josephus's *Antiquities* in the original Greek text, or in other translations that were available in Latin, French, Italian and German. Other playwrights used this story for their plays, such as the Italian Ludovico Dolce's tragedy, *Marianna* (1565), and the French dramatist Alexandre Hardy's *Mariamne* (c.1600).

murder of his wife Mariam on suspicion of adultery after he has returned from a visit to Caesar. Cary's version, set in 35 B.C., introduces some variations that do not appear in the source text, such as, for example, the name of Graphina or the presentation of Salome as a wanton woman.

Most scholars agree that *Mariam* is a closet drama. In particular, Marta Straznicky explains that this type of plays were 'explicitly written for reading, rather than public performance'¹³¹, and that the manuscript circulated within family circles before its publication. In an attempt to explain the difficulties of constructing performance histories due to the lack of evidence, Findlay comments Straznicky's idea that 'private dramatic production does not necessarily oppose performance, since play reading and courtly or academic stages are all venues belonging to an elite, private culture.'¹³² She reinforces this argument by explaining that these plays could have been performed, since they were not opposed to theatricality *per se*. By 1600, few noble households still had their own acting companies; therefore, their option was to attend private playhouses or to produce their own family performances. In the specific case of *Mariam*, its internal stage directions suggest that it could have been privately performed although there is no formal evidence to prove it. Because of this, Straznicky points out that closet drama was usually not a commercial enterprise, but rather a more private endeavour, not primarily intended for the public ear. To an extent, it suited female pens¹³³ because aristocratic women could write and read their plays within the domestic space. Nevertheless, closet plays became quite concerned with politics and sometimes used private household settings to voice their criticism, thus eventually engaging with the public arena. Moreover, authors such as Stephanie Hodgson-Wright argue that very often the generic categorisation of *Mariam* as closet drama has

¹³¹ Straznicky, p. 48.

¹³² Findlay, p. 9.

¹³³ Findlay mentions upper-class men, such as Samuel Daniel as a male author of closet drama. Fulke Greville also wrote closet drama as a form of cultural engagement and exposition of political views.

meant that the performance dimension has been ignored or even dismissed. Part of this mistake is that critics sometimes conflate ‘the public stage with all other arenas of dramatic production [...]’¹³⁴ and do not realise that ‘the public theatre was not the only playing space in Renaissance England.’¹³⁵ The play’s theatrical elements, the resolution of the plot that is left open-ended, and ‘the dramatic energy of *Mariam*, [make] the play seem more consonant with the popular stage than most “closet dramas” are.’¹³⁶

Despite the fact that there are many interesting issues to analyse from the perspective of early modern women and the drama of this period, I shall focus on the question of *Mariam*’s voice and its possible association with a sense of subjectivity, thus with certain inner privacy. In other words, I shall briefly examine how her speech may be taken in relation to her private and public roles. In so doing, I shall also discuss spatial politics in Cary’s world, especially, the relationship between home and state.

According to Catherine Belsey, ‘to be a subject is to be able to speak, to give meaning’¹³⁷; nevertheless, as she also explains, the range of meanings someone can give is determined outside the subject. When analysing these external factors that might change one’s concept of subjectivity, Maus contributes to the analysis by pointing out that the meanings of this term have changed over different periods and that it is important to bear in mind that early moderns might have experienced subjectivity in ways that could be unknown nowadays. In this sense, it can be stated that one of the meanings the concept assumed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had to do with the close relationship between oral or written language – which should be the expression of one’s subjectivity – and female sexual activity. According to Peter Stallybrass, the signs of the

¹³⁴ Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, ed. by Stephanie Hodgson-Wright (Canada: Broadview, 2000), p. 29

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹³⁶ Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, p. 10.

¹³⁷ Belsey, p. x.

ideal wife during the English Renaissance were equated to ‘the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house.’¹³⁸

If we think of the early modern manuals that we have already analysed, it becomes clear that Xenophon’s division of space indoors/outdoors, for wife and husband respectively, did not only have an impact on other prescriptive writings, but permeated Elizabethan culture. In opposition to the kind of woman who spent her time mostly at home, the harlot or prostitute was usually described by her ‘linguistic “fullness” and her frequenting of public space.’¹³⁹ Nonetheless, only a few verses from the play are enough to realise that despite Mariam’s wordiness, she is not a whore, but the victim of a secret intrigue. Therefore, why does the Chorus reject her discourse so directly? If language is fundamental to attain subjectivity, does she become an individual who can finally utter an ‘I’ and position herself within the spaces she inhabits? Mariam expresses herself throughout the whole tragedy, but is she able to validate her message? Do all female voices in the play carry equal weight? Aren’t Mariam’s speeches a failure if she dies at the end of the play?

The very first lines of the play spoken by Mariam: ‘How oft have I with publike voice runne on? / To censure *Romes* last *Hero* for deceit’ (1.1.1-2)¹⁴⁰, set the scene for one of the main conflicts that Cary develops. Throughout the tragedy, Mariam tests the limits of the public female voice and the power of her speech in a way that is highly transgressive for the cultural standards of the early modern period. She does not only express how she feels, which is very unusual for a sixteenth-century female character, but she also chooses long speeches with the features of soliloquies – although these are often replies to the

¹³⁸ Peter Stallybrass, ‘Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed’, in *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 123-42 (p. 127).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127. See also Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies. Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987).

¹⁴⁰ Unless otherwise stated, references from the play are taken from Diane Purkiss’ edition.

questions or accusations of other characters – as her main discursive form. This device reinforces the subjectivity of her words because, to a certain extent, she shares her innermost thoughts with, what I will call, an ‘imagined audience’. However, it seems that the audience within the play, that is to say, the rest of the characters, do not agree with this self-expression and harshly condemn Mariam’s behaviour. Is this disapproval the result of the content of her speech? Are her words not true? What does she actually express?

In the third act, Sohemus tells Mariam that Herod is alive and is coming back and she confesses that in spite of her resentment towards her husband, she has never betrayed him and is chaste:

MARIAM

[...]

Oh what a shelter is mine innocence,
To shield me from the pangs of inward griefe:
Gainst all mishaps it is my faire defence,
And to my sorrows yeelds a large reliefe.

[...]

I would not that my spirit were impure.
Let my distressed state unpittied bee,
Mine innocence is hope enough for mee.

(3.3.54-57; 61-63)

Mariam tells the truth. She is innocent and although Sohemus acknowledges this, his view is contradictory, since after accepting she is blameless, he immediately rejects her revelation:

SOHEMUS Poore guiltles Queene. Oh that my wish might place

A little temper now about thy heart:

Unbridled speech is *Mariams* worst disgrace,
And will indanger her without desart.

(3.3.64-67)

It becomes evident that the problem with Mariam’s speech is neither its content nor her language, but the fact that she speaks more than is expected for a woman who is supposed to be silent and obedient. There is a clear cultural issue here regarding loquacious speeches and their semantic association with sexual promiscuity. Mariam’s words are criticised

because of social concerns that equate feminine discourse with looseness. The Chorus clearly shows this perspective when it states that a woman,

usurpes upon anothers right,
That seekes to be by publike language grac't:
And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,
Her mind if not peculiar is not chast.
For in a wife it is no worse to finde,
A common body, then a common minde.
(3.3.122-127)

Here the Chorus, like in Greek tragedy, represents the voice of the community or even of Cary's own contradictory views. Mariam's unrestrained speech is taken both as a menace to her own chastity and as an abuse of power against the king. At the same time, she challenges and breaks conduct standards. Mariam defies the established rules not only because of her outspokenness, but also because her tongue becomes a dangerous instrument that reveals truths that otherwise would remain unknown. Besides, the figure of Herod makes her transgression even worse in the sense that she does not defy the authority of any man, but that of a king whose name evokes a bloody past. English Medieval liturgical drama usually portrayed Herod¹⁴¹ as a cruel and fearsome murderer of innocent children; in Cary's tragedy, Mariam is added to the list of his innocent victims. According to Hodgson-Wright, 'Herod's return is crucial in unleashing destructive female forces'¹⁴²; moreover, his liminal presence unfolds the plot until Mariam's fatal ending. As Findlay clearly explains, regardless that '[i]n the play's Jerusalem, Herod doesn't have a direct blood claim to the throne (it depends on his marriage to Mariam, and the murders of her grandfather and brother) [...]'¹⁴³, he exerts a powerful influence on female characters, as king, husband and lover. Due to his absence, women are able to speak with a public voice, especially Mariam, whose illusion of widowhood allows her to be in control of state

¹⁴¹ Herod was one of the main characters in the mystery plays that were based on biblical stories, such as the York, Chester and Coventry plays.

¹⁴² Hodgson-Wright, p. 25.

¹⁴³ Findlay, *Playing*, p. 32.

matters and claim a space of her own, even if it is only for a while. It is interesting to note that Lady Hoby also reports about her husband's absence from Hackness, but both her household and her reaction to this situation is diametrically opposed. First, her experience of becoming a widow had given her a proper voice as lady of the household; secondly, there is no evidence that her marriage to Sir Hoby was forced, so her union was a space that contained her rather than a contested site, and last, as a Puritan noble lady, her household became the place where she developed her skills and through writing, praying, and other activities explored her subjectivity. Mariam's role in the tragedy is different in many aspects, starting from the fact that the complex political struggle is at stake between Rome's central government and that of Jerusalem. Besides, Mariam's marriage is problematic and, as Findlay argues, 'state and household are contested spaces.'¹⁴⁴ Unlike Lady Hoby, Mariam is confined in her own household and then in prison, so she reacts against these restraints with 'public voice', thus deliberately reinforcing the metaphorical relationship between household and state – an early modern trope where the home, in Dod's and Cleaver's terms, is described as a little commonwealth whose authority is Herod. After she confronts him in act 4, scene 3, the king's verdict is proclaimed and her real confinement begins:

HEROD But beare her but to prison not to death:
[...]
Well let her go, but yet she shall not die,
I cannot thinke she meant to poison me:
But certaine tis she liv'd too wantonly,
And therefore shall she never more be free.
(4.4.94, 97-100).

However, not only Mariam is imprisoned in this play; the sons of Babus have been sentenced to death for their opposition to the tyrant, but are released and go back to the city. In analogous ways, Jerusalem is also a prison, a confined city, and some of the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

characters, like Salome, desire a home outside Judea and defy patriarchal order. Homeland is not the ideal state, as some of the characters – mainly Constabarus – think Jerusalem was in the past. According to Findlay, '[i]nversion of gender conventions within the household, where women assume authority to proclaim their wills in lengthy soliloquies, make their own laws, and divorce themselves from their lords and masters, leads to global chaos.'¹⁴⁵

There are other female voices within the play that make the structure of its plot more complex because they contradict what Mariam denounces in words and what she shows with her behaviour. Graphina, for example, supposedly conforms to the Renaissance's idea of a silent, chaste woman. She is a slave and as such an inferior, so her chances to voice her thoughts are almost non-existent; however, her voiceless role is quite ambiguous. When Phaeroras speaks about his love, he asks: 'Why speaks thou not faire creature? move thy tongue, / For Silence is a signe of discontent [...]'(2.2.41-42). With these words he demonstrates that, on the one hand, women are expected to be silent, but, on the other, silence seems as dangerous as wordiness. Graphina's silence is conventionally taken as an expression of uneasiness and annoyance, despite her explanation that she prefers not to speak because she is frightened 'that I should say too little when I speake [...]' (2.1.50), but later she decides to break her silence only to show Phaeroras that despite her request to preserve her purity, her social status leaves her no choice of power over her body. Compared to the lines assigned to some of Shakespeare's silent female characters, Graphina delivers a longer speech which manifests deep and hidden thoughts. Her silence has nothing to do with Volumnia's silence in *Coriolanus*, or with Lavinia's forced muteness in *Titus Andronicus*, which are much more powerful in terms of the effect they produce in the development of the plot and dramatic conflicts. These characters speak much less than Graphina and very rarely confess how they feel. In

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

Othello, for instance, the situation the play enacts is almost the same. Desdemona is also falsely accused of adultery as a result of Iago's plot, but she neither faces her accusers in such a direct way, nor does she utter speeches as long as Mariam's.¹⁴⁶

According to Nandra Perry, 'allowing for privately expressed, unexpressed, and inexpressible truths certainly can be subversive [...]. However, [...] silence and discretion play another role in the text as well.'¹⁴⁷ Silence is not merely a female strategy or a playwright's dramatic device; it is a distinct space of resistance that in a certain sense becomes an insurmountable private feminine domain, which not even patriarchal authority can penetrate. Because the language in the play tends to be a vehicle of truth, some characters prefer not to speak and hide the truths they know. Others, like Mariam, run the risk of telling the truth regardless of its fatal consequences. However, language also becomes the means to tell lies, as in the case of Salome, who is able to convince Herod that Mariam has not been honest with him. In doing so, she transforms herself into Mariam's rival voice.

Salome is a persuasive and fickle woman who plots against the protagonist, thus convincing Herod that the latter has committed adultery. She speaks almost as much as Mariam, and she is known for her wantonness. Her recurring adultery is mentioned several times throughout the play and she even admits it publicly when she declares: 'Since shame was written on my tainted brow' (1.4.23). Constaburus, her own husband, robs her of the effect her words have had regarding her fame, so much so that he compares her and other similar women with men: 'Are Hebrew women now transform'd to men? / Why do you not as well our battles fight, / And weare our armour?' (1.6.47-49). But she seems to be

¹⁴⁶ Because of its similar plot, it has been thought that there is a relation between Cary's tragedy and Shakespeare's *Othello*. However, uncertainty about *Mariam's* date of composition makes this association difficult to determine. Similarities can also be found with Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* regarding the topic of woman's voice. Cary uses the conventional polarisation of characters that was quite common in tragedies from the period.

¹⁴⁷ Nandra Perry, 'The Sound of Silence: Elizabeth Cary and the Christian Hero', *English Literary Renaissance*, 38.1(Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 106-41 (p.115).

insatiable and sticks to her plan until the end of the play, regardless of the tragic consequences her lies will have.

Why does the liar Salome survive whereas the truthful Mariam dies? I think this is one of the core issues in the play: the problem of truth and how it is entwined with public and private affairs. Mariam is executed because it was not politically correct to tell the truth; Salome is saved thanks to her lies. Notwithstanding the falsehood of her speeches, her rhetoric is persuasive and male characters are convinced by her. This internal contradiction in the play clearly shows what Findlay calls ‘the devastating effects of separating domestic and public space and identity [...]’¹⁴⁸ According to the critic, the play has a political dimension within a domestic context; that is to say, the household is equated to the state’s commonwealth. Taking advantage of Herod’s absence, Mariam uses the home as her stage to speak with a public voice, since, as Findlay also argues, ‘the illusion of widowhood places her in a temporary position of control over herself and her surroundings, with a power like that wielded by many aristocratic women in their husbands’ prolonged absences from home.’¹⁴⁹ I would suggest that *Mariam* is both a tragedy that represents the struggle of women to find a voice of their own and become individual and independent subjects, as well as a political play in which the private and the public spheres are intertwined and one mirrors the other. When the Nuncio reports Mariam’s execution, the tone of the narration and the cruel details of her death give the impression that her efforts to attain freedom and make truth prevail have been worthless. However, the allusions to Christ, Mariam’s association to the Phoenix (5.1.24) – a symbol of resurrection –, the image of Mariam’s butler who has hanged himself on a tree after betraying her (5.1.105-110), thus paralleling Judas Iscariot’s suicide, and the Nuncio’s final allusion to Christ’s resurrection – ‘[b]y three daies hence if wishes could revive’

¹⁴⁸ Findlay, p. 31.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

(5.1.77) – indicate that her death was heroic and transcended this world. Herod finally recognises his guilt when he says: ‘I am the Villaine that have done the deed, / [...] My word though not my sword made *Mariam* bleed’ (5.1.187, 189). Before this declaration, he acknowledges that *Mariam*’s words were true and valuable: ‘each word she sed / Shall be the food whereon my heart is fed.’ (5.1.71-72). Herod speaks in a particular language-related mode, in the sense that he refers to the effect of words on his soul as well as the power that his words had on *Mariam*’s fate, simply because they were uttered by an authority and not necessarily because they were true. Her very words devastate him personally and undermine his political authority. *Mariam* was silenced by her death, but her words will resonate in his ears as if she had come to life again.

Mariam is a constant display of inwardness. Readers and ‘imagined audiences’ share her most intimate thoughts, feelings and suspicions expressed in different soliloquies. The tragedy explores not only the influence of physical space in the process of writing drama, but also the construction of spaces within the same play; that is to say, the fact, for example, that everything occurs in a domestic sphere, either understood as home or homeland. Both *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby* and *The Tragedy of Mariam* show that inwardness – the inner side of privacy – is quite often hidden behind the words that characters utter or inhabits within their silences in ways that are mysterious. Notwithstanding the different genres Hoby and Cary chose, both had different experiences of privacy in their their search for a voice of their own.

**UNMASKING A SPACE:
PRIVACY IN SHAKESPEARE**

CHAPTER V:

“I PRITHEE, NOBLE FRIEND, HOME TO THY HOUSE’:

CORIOLANUS AWAY FROM HOME.”

It is likely that throughout our lives we have heard the common saying – ‘there’s no place like home’¹ – which tradition has transmitted to us. If we agree with this statement, then ‘home’ should become the synonym of a comfortable and peaceful place. However, in *Coriolanus* the focus on ‘home’ as both microcosm and national macrocosm contradicts and complicates this notion, not only because the boundaries of domestic and public spheres – home and homeland – are porous, but also because the protagonist’s own identity is blurred.

This chapter will mainly examine the ways in which the text stages the word ‘home’ in some of its associated meanings and how the different characters’ relationship with it has an impact on their dramatic development and fate, as well as on the plot as a whole. In so doing, I will deal with some of the critical strains that have kept scholars revisiting this Roman play for years. According to Stanley Cavell, ‘the play lends itself equally, or anyway naturally, to psychological and to political readings: both perspectives are [...] interested in who produces food and in how food is distributed and paid for. From a psychological perspective [...] the play directs us to an interest in the development of Coriolanus’s character.’² Other critics, such as Annabel Patterson, read the play as one that ‘eschews absolutism, demonstrates the value of giving voice to all citizens, and [...] advocates an English republic [,]’³ where the hero may attain a bounded self. Recent theoretical work, particularly that of James Kuzner, challenges Patterson’s view of the play as a prorerpublican or protoliberal document, while at the same time, questions her idea of Coriolanus’s pursuit of selfhood. According to him, the protagonist is just the opposite: ‘a

¹ Jennifer Speake, *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 243. This proverb is of ancient origin, occurring in the Greek poet Hesiod’s in *Works and Days* (eighth century B.C.).

² Stanley Cavell, “‘Who does the wolf love?’: *Coriolanus* and the Interpretations of Politics’, in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. By Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 245-72 (pp. 246-7).

³ Annabel Patterson, “‘Speak, speak!’: The Popular Voice and the Jacobean Stage’, in *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 120-53., as cited in James Kuzner ‘Unbuilding the City: *Coriolanus* and the Birth of Republican Rome’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58.2 (2007) 174-99 (pp. 174-75).

figure who represents practices of self-undoing that could clear a path out of the state of exception, however tortuous that path might prove.’⁴ Furthermore, Kuzner insists, ‘Coriolanus desires undoing, not autonomy, and [...] the political import of the characters rests in our seeing just that.’⁵ Like Patterson, Robert Ormsby also approaches the play from a political perspective, yet he focuses more on cultural issues, such as the early modern anxiety raised by antitheatricalists’ belief on the dangerous effects that performance might have over the audience and the apprehension regarding the role that the body plays in mimetic processes. In his view, ‘Coriolanus foregrounds these issues in the hero’s relationships to the Roman and Volscian people, which unfold in a series of markedly performative encounters.’⁶ Ormsby’s research on the relationship between theatre and society opens up interesting and crucial notions that may well serve for the analysis of Coriolanus as a public being. To an extent, John Kerrigan also engages with the idea of the play’s theatricality, but in terms of its topicality, for, as he explains, ‘if Coriolanus is Shakespeare’s most profoundly Roman play, it is calculated to engage a London audience because a “Ciceronian” model of civility and commonwealth was perceived to be under threat.’⁷ Nevertheless, despite Kerrigan’s acknowledgement of the play’s dramatisation of the Midland Rising of 1607 and other contextual issues, he claims for the centrality of *fides* in contrast to uncertainty as a hermeneutical key to understand Coriolanus’s failure.

It is evident that *Coriolanus* admits these and many other readings, which I will attempt to introduce while dealing with the uses of ‘home’ in the text; however, following Umberto Eco’s notion of literary interpretation, I must say that the play does not admit any

⁴ James Kuzner ‘Unbuilding the City: *Coriolanus* and the Birth of Republican Rome’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58.2 (2007) 174-99 (p. 175).

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.179-80.

⁶ Robert Ormsby, ‘Coriolanus, Antitheatricalism, and Audience Response’, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 26.1 (2008), 43-62 (p. 43).

⁷ John Kerrigan, ‘Coriolanus Fidiussed’, *Essays in Criticism*, 62.4 (2012), 319-53 (pp.325-26).

reading. When the philosopher delivered the Tanner Lectures at Cambridge University in 1990, he argued against the practice of overinterpretation in contemporary literary theory. In his rebuttal to objections raised mainly by Richard Rorty, Eco vindicated his position: ‘I accept the statement that a text can have many senses. I refuse the statement that a text can have every sense.’⁸ Therefore, with this premise in mind, I will look at Coriolanus’s and at the female characters’ relationship to the home – as notion and space – taking illustrative examples from the different senses the text gives to the term.

As I stated in the first lines of this section and as I also explained in the second chapter of the thesis⁹, during the early modern period ‘home’ was not always conceived as the ideal locale. This was mainly, as Mary Thomas Crane¹⁰ argues, due to London’s overcrowding and architectural planning which transformed Elizabethan homes quite often into cold and smelly dwellings. Because I have already discussed some of the complexities associated to this notion, I will only add elements that may shed light into the analysis of this play.¹¹

Among the many meanings the *OED* records for the terms ‘home’ and ‘domestic’, I have selected two for each word because I think they are relevant to the discussion of *Coriolanus*. While ‘home’ is defined as a ‘dwelling-place, house, abode; the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests [...]’¹², and also as ‘[o]ne’s own country, one’s native land’¹³; ‘domestic’ refers to something that belongs

⁸ Peter Bondanella, ‘Interpretation, Overinterpretation, Paranoid Interpretation, and *Foucault’s Pendulum*’, in *Umberto Eco and the Open Text: Semiotics, Fiction, Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 126-53 (p. 130). For Eco’s theory see: *Umberto Eco, Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. by Stefan Collini, with the contribution of Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler and Christine Brooke-Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.141.

⁹ Cfr. Chapter II, ‘The Private as Familial or Domestic’, pp. 62-67.

¹⁰ Mary Thomas Crane, ‘Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9.1 (Spring, 2009), 4-22.

¹¹ Cfr. Chapter II, pp. 66-68.

¹² ‘Home’, n. *OED*, A. 2.

¹³ *OED*, 6.

to the home or household; ‘pertaining to one’s place of residence or family affairs [...]’¹⁴, as well as ‘[o]f or pertaining to one’s own country or nation; not foreign, internal, inland, “home”’.¹⁵ In turn, when ‘household’ was used as an adjective, it meant that something belonged to the house or family and as such, it was considered domestic; that is to say, it included both ‘literal households and the people, objects, and activities associated with the place where one lives. [...] Domestic cover[ed] both home and homeland.’¹⁶ If we compare all these definitions, it becomes evident that both terms have elements in common, but it cannot be stated that they are completely equivalent.

According to Marilyn Frye, ‘privacy and domesticity comprise overlapping spaces and habits [...]’¹⁷; yet, adds Corinne S. Abate, ‘the two terms are related but not interchangeable.’¹⁸ In other words, privacy is a wider notion that comprises activities and situations that often go beyond the domestic sphere when it is linked to family and household, and, as it has been noted, the domestic space may refer either to the home or to one’s homeland. In this sense, domestic affairs can be ‘private’ because they belong to internal/national matters. Parallel to this semantic crux is the metaphorical sense given to these terms in early modern England whose origin I have analysed in the section dedicated to conduct literature.¹⁹ Mazzola and Abate clearly explain that home and family were microcosmic versions of the state and the church where patriarchal law was often more intense, so much so that ‘the domestic world [was] often the arm of the patriarchal state even when it was presided over by women, as was the case in many aristocratic households

¹⁴ ‘Domestic’, A. *adj.* *OED*, 2.a.

¹⁵ *OED*, 3.a.

¹⁶ Ann C. Christensen, ‘The Return of the Domestic in *Coriolanus*’, *SEL*, 37 (1997), 295-308 (p. 296). See also *OED*, ‘household’, II. *attrib.* and *Comb.*, 6. *attrib.* passing into *adj.*, a. ‘Of or belonging to a household, domestic’.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne S. Abate, ‘Introduction’: ‘indistinguished space’, in *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England*, ed. by Corinne S. Abate (England and USA: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 1-17 (p. 3). The authors quote Marilyn Frye’s ‘To Be and Be Seen. The Politics of Reality’, in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1983), pp. 152-74.

¹⁸ Mazzola and Abate, p. 3.

¹⁹ Cfr. Dod and Cleaver, pp. 159-167 in this thesis.

where patriarchs were abroad or at court.²⁰ The preferred political constitution in the period was monarchical, and this constitution found an analogy in the philosophy of domestic patriarchalism. For a monarchic government to reinforce the authority of the domestic patriarch was thus self-reinforcing; for that government to characterize patriarchy as natural was to naturalise itself. Therefore, the domestic was not apart from the public sphere, but at the centre of social order.

In her work about the cultural history of the home, Lena Cowen Orlin gives an account of the developing conception of the private in early modern England. By analysing Renaissance manuals, political treatises, and sermons, she endeavours to specify the scope of the private and considers the house in three of its associations:

first as the primary social and economic unit of early modern culture; second, as a construction, delimiting a world-in-little and accommodating its occupants' most basic physical needs for shelter and sustenance as well as their psychological needs for beauty and perdurability; and finally as an ideological construct receptive to the superimposition of political models and moral regulations.²¹

Taking into account the key concepts Cowen Orlin establishes – social unit, world-in-little, and ideological construct – I will attempt to reveal the existence of private spaces in *Coriolanus* using as pointers the characters that inhabit these domains: their roles, relationships, and movements; the activities they perform; and the elements or objects – either material or symbolic – that surround them within different spaces.

Written in 1609, *Coriolanus*²² deals with the history of Republican Rome and the life, weakness and death of one of its citizens, Caius Martius, later called Coriolanus. In building the protagonist's character, Shakespeare touches on the public/private tension in an intricate and complex play that is full of contrasts not only at the level of spaces, but

²⁰ Mazzola and Abate, p. 3.

²¹ Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 9.

²² Unless otherwise stated all the quotations from the play are taken from William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by R. B. Parker, The Oxford Shakespeare, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

also with respect to the hero's relationship to the domestic world. In a tragedy where the word 'home' has a persistent verbal presence, the protagonist avoids going home, as his companions constantly advise him. Why does he deny his domestic affiliations? Is it because there is something at home that he does not want to face? Or is it something in his personality that transforms his home into an uncomfortable place?

The action starts in Rome where anonymous crowds of male citizens rebel against what they consider an unfair measure by the patricians. The rebellious crowds, who complain about hunger and ask for cheaper corn, introduce a two-fold matter: the lack of food that is affecting domestic ordinary basic needs; and the public issue of the state's responsibilities, because this governing body is expected to provide food for its citizens. In this first violent scene, corn becomes a commodity that is circulated in the public arena to be consumed later in the private domain. A similar situation occurs in *The Book of Sir Thomas More* where food appears in the public space and then is eaten privately. In the opening scene when Williamson brings the 'dooues' from Cheapside, Caveler questions whether pigeons are '[...] meate for a coorse Carpenter [...].'(sc.1, 23)²³ This event becomes the starting point of the discussion about food until Doll orders him to give the pigeons back to her husband. After that Lincoln reads the bill and they decide to participate in the May revolt, a public demonstration against immigrants living in London who appear to be eating English food. In the sixth scene, we also find food presented as a commodity being sold in the public market as Lincoln shouts:

LINCOLN Peace, hear me! He that will not see a red
herring at a Harry groat, butter at eleven pence a
pound, meal at nine shillings a bushell and a beef at four
[...]
Our Country is a great eating country; *argo* they
eat more in our country than they do in their own.
(sc.6, 1-3, 7-8, Add. II, C, D).

²³ William Shakespeare, Anthony Munday and others, *Sir Thomas More*, ed. by John Jowett, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen Drama, 2011).

Once again, food is not only a private need, but something that involves the public authorities since its production and quantity affect the whole country. In *Coriolanus*, after shouting and discussing, the Roman multitude lays the blame on Coriolanus for their hunger. Menenius Agrippa, an elderly patrician, comes and tries to solve the situation with the astuteness of a good rhetorician; however, Coriolanus intervenes, but instead of helping to calm them down, he only arouses more anger in them,

[...] They say there's grain enough!
Would the nobility lay aside their ruth
And let me use my sword, I'd make a quarry
With thousands of these quartered slaves as high
As I could pitch my lance.

(1.1.193-97)

The 'dynamics of food surplus and food shortage', as I have called this situation, is omnipresent in *Coriolanus*, mainly in the images of food and eating, the contrasting conditions of the different groups of characters – starvers and eaters, and the metaphorical allusions to nursing, cannibalism and other conducts related to feeding. The play revolves around famine and its ill effects: while plebeians hover on the brink of starvation, patricians keep granaries full and have abundant food. The bodies of the citizens and their families are not being fed, so is the Roman body politic whose social organisation no longer sustains it. Coriolanus goes through a similar process because he is metaphorically starving. When he meets some of the citizens in the second act and they express their wish to make him consul, he replies: 'Most sweet voices. / Better it is to die, better to starve, / Than crave the hire which first we do deserve (3.2.108-10). It seems that he lives off almost completely of status and fame, so that when voices are not favourable he starves and loses physical strength despite the fact that young Martius was supposedly very well fed and should be fit. Already in the first act Volumnia refers to her son's nursing by comparing the lactating breasts of Hecuba (1.3.43-46) with Hector's bleeding forehead, as

if to suck her milk, Martius needed to shed blood.²⁴ Cavell helps us inquire about the nature of the mother's milk: what does the son learn at his mother's breast? What was he fed with?²⁵ Although Volumnia claims that Martius sucked valiantness from her, she reveals the truth, perhaps unconsciously, when she rejects Menenius' invitation to sup with him and she replies: 'Anger's my meat: I sup upon myself / And so shall starve with feeding.' (4.2.53-54). Anger could not possibly have nourished the child's soul, but started killing his self. If he was not fed with human milk, the rest of his life he will starve of humanity.²⁶

In Aufidius's banquet, however, food is abundant; there is wine, as the first servingman shouts (4.5.1) and, according to Coriolanus, 'The feast smells well [...]' (4.5.5). Later, when the third servingman asks him about his dwelling and the guest replies that he lives 'I'th' city of kites and crows [...]' (4.5.42), the relation to images of prey is made evident. According to Gail Kern Paster, 'it is appropriate [...] that warriors become the devourers of other men, with war the social occasion for aristocratic feasting.'²⁷ The contrast between those who starve in the streets and the well-fed nobility is made evident in this scene and allows me to associate the economy of food in this play with the importance of this good in Lady Margaret Hoby's diary. From state surveys, it is known that the Hoby's household included, among other rooms, 'two kitchens, a buttery, pantry, brewhouse, bekehouse, and various outbuildings'²⁸ and that Lady Hoby herself worked in the kitchens: 'She cooked gingerbread and sweetmeats, distilled *aqua vitae*, preserved

²⁴ See Parker, 'Introduction', pp. 50-51.

²⁵ Cavell, p. 147.

²⁶ Although this comment is mine, for psychoanalytical readings of the play and particularly of this topic, see: Janet Adelman, "'Anger's My Meat": Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*', in *Shakespeare Pattern of Excelling Nature*, ed. by David Bevington and Jay L. Halio (London: Associated University Presses, 1979), pp. 108-22.

²⁷ Gail Kern Paster, 'To Starve with Feeding: The City in *Coriolanus*', *Shakespeare Studies*, 11 (1978), 123-44 (p. 137).

²⁸ *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, ed. by Joanna Moody (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998), p. xxxiv.

damsons and quinces [...].²⁹ Food in the life of this lady is central; feeding servants and animals, preserving food and being hospitable is part of her everyday life. On the contrary, female characters in *Coriolanus* are not involved in this kind of household activity and their food, especially Volumnia's milk, did not nurture her son at all. While in Hoby's diary there is evidence that the production and distribution of food is, at the same time, a private and a public/communal endeavour, in Shakespeare's tragedy, the flow of food is part of the public policies of state and is definitely not effective because it feeds properly only a few.

In terms of the performance of privacy, Aufidius's feast is quite interesting to discuss. Coriolanus smuggles himself in as if trying to hide his real identity, so much so, that some of the serving men want to get him out of the house until Aufidius asks his name and recognises him. The place is crowded with men and there is a festive mood; however, we know that Coriolanus's days are numbered and that in a few hours he will be executed. Compared to the tense atmosphere at Coriolanus's home, Aufidius's banquet is a moment of celebration among friends/soldiers in war who are not on duty and where Coriolanus is not only a guest but also a partner. Aufidius's greeting of Coriolanus, first before recognising him, 'Whence com'st thou? [...] Speak, man. What's thy name?' (4.5.53-54), and later when he realises his identity: 'O Martius, Martius! / Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart / A root of ancient envy [...]' (4.5.102-4) shows that Aufidius accepts Coriolanus in a way that perhaps makes him feel more 'at home' with the community of soldiers and transforms this space into a kind of alter domesticity which is entirely male. Yet, the complexity of the scene is deeper because according to John Kerrigan, by feeling welcomed the protagonist trusts the Volscian whose fidelity, evoked by his name, is in doubt, as he 'is on the look-out for advantage, and [...] betrays the

²⁹ Ibid., p. xxxiv.

trusting Coriolanus.³⁰ In fact, as the critic comments, ‘the value that he places on *fides* becomes Coriolanus’s weakness³¹ and also reveals his contradictory personality.

It is clear that one of the objectives Coriolanus has is to fight Aufidius and to attain this goal he leaves his country, his home and his family aside. Nevertheless, he lives in constant uncertainty and is unable to find security in war. He likes war because it allows him to become undifferentiated, or in Kuzner’s words, ‘he becomes exposed to the outside-of-self, mixed with the blood of others’³², either Romans or Volscians. When Menenius remarks that he has lost more blood than he has, he reinforces Cominius’s view that he is unrecognizable ‘from face to foot’ (2.2.107). Therefore, as I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter and following Kuzner’s analysis, ‘[t]ime and again, Coriolanus seeks such self-undoing’³³ and in this process loses his identity, thus any trace of inwardness. The permeable boundaries of his self are made visible in his language.

Even though Coriolanus shares his role as a representative of the state of Rome with Menenius, their rhetoric is different. While the former talks in pejorative and violent language, the latter uses condescending vocabulary. In the case of Coriolanus, as Maurice Charney comments, ‘[t]here is no subtlety in this man, no use of language as an exploration of consciousness. He says what he thinks and feels and that is the end of it, for words are simply a means to express his bluff honesty.’³⁴ In addition, the author comments, ‘Coriolanus’s normal speaking voice is often harsh and vituperative.’³⁵ He is neither an orator, nor a rhetorician; on the contrary, he disdains flattery and eloquence of speech. This characteristic in his personality contradicts the idea of Roman-Elizabethan eloquent public figures. To an extent, although Coriolanus’s role in the play is that of a

³⁰ Kerrigan, p. 321.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

³² Kuzner, p. 189.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³⁴ Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare’s Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 34.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

public man, he ignores some of the politician's techniques, thus becoming alienated from this sphere. Referring to the hero's political development, Stanley Cavell argues that 'Coriolanus wishes to speak, to use words, to communicate, without exchanging words; without, let us say, reasoning (with others); to speak without conversing, without partaking in conversation. Here is the conversation for which he is unfit; call it civil speech.'³⁶

In his study of speech-act theory and literary criticism, Stanley Fish points out various characteristics that shed light on the hero's personality or in what the critic calls 'illocutionary behaviour.'³⁷ As he clearly explains, Coriolanus has difficulty with requests, but literally cannot accept praise. When in the midst of a battle Martius is bleeding and Lartius wants to prevent him from a second fight, he sharply declines the offer by saying: 'Sir, praise me not; / My work hath yet not warm'd me' (1.5.17-18). Later, when Cominius tries to commend his courage in battle, he immediately rejects his words, associating praise almost with pain: 'Pray now, no more. My mother, / Who has a charter to extol her blood, / When she does praise me, grieves me (1.9.13-15).'³⁸ Commenting on these passages, Fish argues that Coriolanus does not want to admit the other's right to evaluate his conduct because he believes that merits can only be 'bestowed by himself on himself. That is what grieves him, the ignominy [...] of submitting himself to the judgment of anyone.'³⁹ In other words, he desires total independence.

Language in the play is mainly concerned with politics, thus with the public sphere, but the complication is that although Coriolanus is a member of that civic setting, he does not command the rhetoric of civility; on the contrary, his words express antipathy towards his own civic community. In her insightful article on civility in *Coriolanius*, Cathy Shrank

³⁶ Stanley Cavell, 'Coriolanus and Interpretations of Politics': ('Who does the wolf love?'), in *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 143-177 (pp. 165-6).

³⁷ Stanley Fish, 'How to Do Things with Austin and Searle: Speech-Act Theory and Literary Criticism', in *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 197-245 (p. 207).

³⁸ I have used here Philip Brockbank Arden edition (2006) because of the lineation issue.

³⁹ Fish, p. 209.

follows Thomas Wilson, the early modern rhetorician, who argues that language is not only a sign for civility, but the reason for it.⁴⁰ Taking the meaning of ‘civil’ in its primary sense of ‘men dwelling together in a community’⁴¹ and also as ‘not barbarous’⁴², the critic develops the relation between politics and language in the play and explores how the latter enables social cohesion. However, the equation between voice and authority or verbal capacity and political agency gets quite complicated throughout the play. The political participation of the Roman citizens depends on their ability to be heard, yet the patricians do not give way to their petitions just because of their words; there is also violence involved in the process. In the case of Martius/Coriolanus the problem is not that he lacks eloquence; at times, as Shrank observes, he ‘can hardly be restrained from speech. Through Acts 2 and 3, during the confrontations with the tribunes, Menenius and other senators continually attempt to curb their protégé’s loquacity.’⁴³ For example, before Coriolanus decides to give his reasons for not providing free corn to the people, Menenius interrupts him by saying: ‘Well, well, no more of that’ (3.1.118). Then, after his speech on the people’s disobedience and his refusal to reward them for their services, his elderly friend warns him again: ‘Come, enough’ (3.1.142), but he starts another long speech saying: ‘No, take more’ (3.1.144). At the end of it, Brutus comments: ‘He’s said enough’ (3.1.162) and Sicinius supports him with a harsh judgment: ‘He’s spoken like a traitor, and shall answer / As traitors do’ (3.1.163-64). The problem is that Coriolanus neither knows the rules of civility, nor does he attempt to provide an answer. Furthermore, his reaction when being requested or when he should request is not appropriate. As Fish suggests, ‘it is not simply that he cannot bear to request something of his avowed enemies and social

⁴⁰ Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetorique* (London, 1553), sigs. A3r-A[4]r, as cited by Cathy Shrank, ‘Civility and the City in Coriolanus’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54.4 (2004), 406-23 (p. 410).

⁴¹ *OED*, sv *civil*, a., A. I., 8.

⁴² *OED*, 1.

⁴³ Shrank, p. 419.

sources of the play. He may have introduced this change as a strategy to move Coriolanus to go back to his homeland; however, the protagonist does not give up his pride. Once again, the editors coincide in the interpretation of this passage when Philip Brockbank and Lee Bliss respectively comment that the rhyming scheme of Coriolanus's words 'stylizes the sentiment and detaches it from the dialogue [,]'⁴⁷ and, together with the absence of personal pronouns, 'lend the statement a generalized, gnomic quality.'⁴⁸ Throughout the whole scene mother and wife keep kneeling and rising as if performing a ritual, yet this pleading attitude does not change Coriolanus's refusal to go home.

Commenting on the meaning of kneeling in Shakespeare's plays, Ann Pasternak Slater provides hints to understand why Coriolanus rightly refers to this episode as 'this unnatural scene' (5.3.185). According to the critic, '[t]he traditional chain of dependence is continually affirmed by ritual kneelings, [...]. Spirits kneel to their gods; men kneel in prayer and on oath. King kneels to his country; men to their king. [...] Wife kneels to her husband, and, [...] the child kneels to its parents, and is blessed by them.'⁴⁹ The act of kneeling corresponds usually to a public act, unless it is the preamble for private prayer. Usually the behaviour of the same family members would not demand this sign of respect, or if it did during the Renaissance it would probably mean, as Pasternak rightly indicates, that wife and children should incline their head in front of the lord of the house. Again, there is a good parallel to this situation in *Sir Thomas More*, where he talks about kneeling as unnatural (sc.6, 125-127, Add. II). The scene becomes unnatural because hierarchical order is broken – a mother kneeling to her son reverses the expected protocol and shows

⁴⁷ William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series (London: Methuen, 1976; repr. 2006), note 129-30, p. 293.

⁴⁸ William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Lee Bliss, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 257.

⁴⁹ Ann Pasternak Slater, *Shakespeare the Director* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, and NJ.: Barnes and Noble, 1982), p. 64.

that there is a confusion of planes. Volumnia follows public ceremonial conduct in the wrong moment and place.

The pressure exerted both by his family and by the state is heavy upon Coriolanus. On the one hand, he feels compelled to exercise his public role as military leader and, on the other, he knows that he cannot escape from his private duties as son, husband and father. These two spheres seem to clash throughout the whole play, not only because he avoids going home, as if that meant giving up political action, but mainly because he perceives state and home as mutually exclusive spaces; they become incompatible and contrary forces for him. Coriolanus's personal fear is echoed in his political apprehension that disorder will threaten the stability and fundamental laws of the state. Indeed, when he refers to the crowds of plebeians as 'The multitudinous tongue [...]' (3.1.158), apart from making use of the Elizabethan commonplace of the Hydra monster, the 'many-headedness of that expression'⁵⁰ – which represents the masses – conveys what he considers a menace that prevents '[...] and bereaves the state / Of that integrity which should become't, [...]' (3.1.160-1). Underlying his actions there is always a feeling, a conviction, that 'domestic commitments at best distract men from more worthy relationships and activities and at the worst destroy them altogether, [and this] leads Marcius to endorse a false separation of the spheres.'⁵¹ Neither is he part of the public state of Rome or a Volscian citizen, nor does he dwell at home; he is isolated and alien from every space but from his own self. Coriolanus does not listen to his family or to his companions' advice. In the midst of the mutiny against him, Menenius foresees the danger and asks him to leave the place and look for protection: 'I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house./ Leave us to cure this cause.' (3.1.233-4). Menenius has the accumulated experience of years of service in the public arena and realises that Coriolanus is not fitted for the task because of his lack of

⁵⁰ This expression is used by A. P. Rossiter in *Angel with Horns and Other Shakespeare Lectures*, ed. by Graham Storey (UK: Longmans, 1961), p. 241.

⁵¹ Christensen, 295-305 (p. 297).

communicative skills, and mainly because of his pride. On the other hand, Coriolanus himself advises the crowds to go home at the beginning of the play – ‘Go get you home, you fragments.’ (1.1.220), and recognizes in this locus a refuge where one can escape and forget about conflicts – in this case, the violent riots –, but he refuses to go back to his own household.

His isolation is not only topographic or spatial: he repudiates the domestic domain. This incapacity to establish a relationship with a private place does not respond only to an attitude; there is something of it given in his name. After the Romans have conquered Corioles, Cominius praises his braveness by giving him a garland and a new name:

For what he did before Corioles, call him,
With all th’applause and clamour of the host,
Martius Caius Coriolanus!
Bear th’addition nobly ever!

(1.10.62-6)

Immediately after this scene Coriolanus decides to wash his face so that the others can see in this apparent cleanliness whether he blushes or not. Water becomes an element of rebirth, a symbol of Coriolanus’s ritualistic baptism, his becoming a new man. It seems that he is trying to purify himself – to be true to himself – in order to deserve a different name because, as Cominius has told him, it will add something to his stature. However, does the name actually add anything to Coriolanus’s life? It certainly grants him the public recognition of having defeated the enemy, but this is just a temporary honour. According to Janet Adelman, ‘[i]nitially, the play seems to grant Coriolanus the status he desires: renamed by his self-birth at Corioli, he apparently escapes the condition of his natural birth, [...]’⁵² But in reality it is merely an apparent escape since, whether he likes it or not, he is and will always be a Roman. His family bonds do not magically fade away because of the change of name since, like the original one – Caius Martius –, any name relates its

⁵² Janet Adelman, ‘Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*’, in *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 130-164 (p. 162).

bearer to specific social relationships. Lawrence Danson brilliantly analyses the hero's name, thus concluding that instead of gaining something with it, he loses his real identity.

but that name remains to show that in being thus true to "himself", he is being false to another self who is a son, a husband, a father, a Roman. The name remains, but not its meaning; the relationships of honour and of enmity that it implied are being overturned [...]. The name that once defined him as closely as a name can do, has now become a measure of the distance its bearer has travelled from himself, from his own identity.⁵³

In other words, Cominius's advice to 'bear th'addition nobly' (1.10.66) is a heavy task, for the name does not bring any positive 'addition' with it; on the contrary, it widens Coriolanus's separation from Rome and from his family; that is to say, the gap between him and others, as well as the sense of not belonging anywhere. In the last act of the play Aufidius will make clear that the only identification that Coriolanus's name can carry with it is that of treason:

AUFIDIUS. Ay, traitor, Martius.
CORIOLANUS. Martius?
AUFIDIUS. Ay, Martius, Caius Martius. Dost thou think
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name
'Coriolanus', in Corioles?
[...] (5.6.88-92)

Coriolanus is a public figure. He is aiming at the consulship of Rome and devotes his life to state affairs. As such, people surround him all the time, yet being with other people does not make any difference to him. Even though the public arena is his stage, he remains invulnerable to the presence of others. In a study about Shakespeare and solitude, Janette Dillon explains Coriolanus's situation in a very clear way by pointing out that from the first scene of the play he stands strikingly alone, yet 'his solitude is not simply incidentally anti-social, but pointedly so, and hence always presented in a social context.

⁵³ Lawrence Danson, 'Coriolanus', in *Coriolanus: Critical Essays*, ed. by David Wheeler (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1995), pp. 123-142 (pp. 131-32).

Coriolanus is rarely alone on stage.⁵⁴ His loneliness, then, is not a question of physical isolation or the solitude Petrarch longed for contemplation; it responds more to a psychological alienation, a constant struggle to demonstrate that he is able to do things without anyone's help. There are abundant examples in the play which show his alienation, as in the first act when the Roman army is in the midst of the battle against the Volscians and Lartius is looking for Coriolanus, the first soldier comments, 'He is himself alone / To answer all the city.' (1.5.24); or when he narrates the fight at Corioles to Aufidius: 'Within these three hours, Tullus, / Alone I fought in your Corioles' walls, / And made what work I pleased.' (1.10.7-8). His behaviour reveals evident signs of pride – excessive self-sufficiency – because we know that he does not fight the battles single-handedly, but aided by other soldiers who also risk their lives; however, he believes he is the one who finally deserves every honour. Behind Coriolanus's conduct lies a deep contradiction because he projects himself as an autonomous being, yet he looks for others to oppose, to show aggression to, or to rail against. Furthermore, he tries to be supported within the public domain and looks for his male companions in order to find his own identity. Menenius fulfils the role of father to him and tries to give him advice, but most of the times Coriolanus does not listen to his words.

Part of Coriolanus's alienation is due to pride, as the text itself accuses him and as many critics have held.⁵⁵ Whether sin or flaw, I would say this is not the only reason that leads him to isolate himself from society and home. There is something inherent in him that is highlighted by his name, yet goes beyond that formality to adhere to his nature. The protagonist's flaw lies in a deep misunderstanding of his role within the private and the

⁵⁴ Janette Dillon, *Shakespeare and the Solitary Man* (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1981), p. 147.

⁵⁵ Already by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, there are strong assertions to this argument. Whilst in the 1870s Edward Dowden stated that 'The subject of Coriolanus is the ruin of a noble life through the sin of pride' (Edward Dowden (1875)', in *Shakespeare Coriolanus: A Casebook*, ed. by B. A. Brockman (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1977), p. 33). Many years later in 1950, Willard Farnham wrote: 'The tragic flaw of Coriolanus is pride [...], as cited in Brockman, p. 93.

public spheres. He seems unable to reconcile these planes of existence. For him, they represent worlds apart, and by denying one, he denies the other, until he becomes alien to both of them. The spaces he should inhabit – domestic, aristocratic, national – never intermingle in his life, thus they become separate and conflicting entities. To a certain extent, this is what M. W. MacCallum calls ‘the disasters of Coriolanus’, since, as he argues, the hero misplaces the order of his interests and postpones the family to the state, blinded by pride and selfishness:

He loves Rome indeed, fights for her, grieves for her shames, and glories in her triumphs; but he loves the nobility more, and would by whole massacre secure their supremacy. [...] Of course, in a way, family and class must all come before the whole community. Men, that is, are bound to be more interested in those of their own circle and their own set than in their fellow citizens with whom they have less relation. [...] But nevertheless, when the call comes, it is the wider community that has the more imperative claim.⁵⁶

If Coriolanus avoids going home or, at least, is unable to stay there for more than a few minutes, it may be due to Coriolanus’s detachment, as we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, or he may escape from that place because it does not represent a tranquil atmosphere. In Christensen’s opinion, Coriolanus definitely challenges the expectation of ‘home’ as a safe space. In fact, in the third scene of the first act we witness the tension that reigns within the household: Volumnia imagines the violence of the battlefield, then Virgilia describes how she saw her son pulling a butterfly to pieces, and finally Valeria asks them to go and help a woman who is about to give birth, but Virgilia refuses to go outdoors: ‘I’ll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars’ (1.3.77). While Virgilia does not want to go outside in her position of head of the household in her husband’s absence, Coriolanus resists coming inside. For him, as Christensen argues,

there is a reversal whereby “home” is seen as both non-compelling and threatening while “not-home”, here enemy territory, demands the hero’s involvement and lends him succor. While the domestic is denigrated for laxity,

⁵⁶ M. W. Mac Callum, ‘The Disasters of Coriolanus and their Causes’, in *Shakespeare’s Roman Plays and their Background* (London and Melbourne: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 605-6.

wartime activities are part of the “stirring world” (4.5.222-23). So Marcius comes to “hate” his “birthplace” (4.4.23-4), in all its connotations of Rome, Volumnia, family life – in short, the domestic – and instead embraces the Volscian towns of Corioli and Antium, his enemy’s hearth.⁵⁷

In other words, in his struggle to avoid being bounded, Coriolanus mirrors the estate of exception that Rome is going through. According to Kuzner, he ‘escapes to the battlefield as a way out of bodily and social identity’⁵⁸ or as an expression of unworking social boundaries; however, I do not think that this reaction is a sign of his becoming a gay outlaw as the critic holds. With a domineering mother and an absent father, it is no surprise that Coriolanus develops an evident conflict with his personal identity. In a world where courage must be exhibited in public and loyal soldiers and traitors coexist, Coriolanus lives in constant departure. His acquaintance with Aufidius and his male friends ends up in frustration, as Aufidius does not fulfil his promise. Notwithstanding that identity cannot be forged outside home and homeland, failure to develop it does not necessarily imply that the character must look for alternate publics or subaltern spaces.

In this tragedy, ‘home’ is ‘a locus so little represented, but so verbally omnipresent, [that] in fact exerts immense ‘shaping power’ in the play; it functions rhetorically and dramatically to compete for Marcius’s [...] identification.’⁵⁹ The paradox is that most of the play is set in the public sphere. It is as if the absence of private spaces were a dramatic device to underline their relevance. To an extent, the protagonist’s rejection of the domestic in its double sense – little commonwealth and state – mirrors this spatial structure. Whenever the Roman characters are not inside public buildings, or on the streets of the city, they are fighting in the open fields. The first two scenes of the tragedy are set in the Capitol where Shakespeare places the Senate, though in reality it was located in the Forum. These places seem to be overlooking the marketplace, known to be a turbulent area

⁵⁷ Christensen, p. 296.

⁵⁸ Kuzner, p. 194.

⁵⁹ Christensen, p. 298.

where the plebeians used to gather. Surprisingly, there are no specific descriptions of these public spaces; most of the physical features we know about the public arena can be interpreted mainly from the characters' conversations. It is through their words that we are able to imagine and 'see' the city which, as Robert Miola observes, 'is sharply defined by outlying battlefields, rival towns, and its own vividly realized topography – its walls, gates, Capitol, Tiber, Tarpeian rock, forum, private houses, and streets.'⁶⁰ The play is scattered throughout with these topographical references that help create a realistic atmosphere. When Martius, Lartius and the others are in the battlefield, and the Volscians start attacking, the first senator shouts:

[...] We'll break our walls
Rather than they shall pound us up. Our gates,
Which yet seem shut, we have but pinned with rushes;
They'll open of themselves.
(1.4.15-18)

From his words we learn that Rome is a walled city, whose gates act both as a natural defence against the enemy, and as a free passage that allows the entrance or exit of its inhabitants. The walls of the city could be equated to the boundaries of the household where women control entrances and exits. Coriolanus, however, does not want to be subject to that 'authority'.

In comparison to the many public settings found in *Coriolanus*, the play includes few domestic/household scenes and our hero looks somewhat uncomfortable and uneasy in them. In act one, scene three, we are introduced to the first household space. This is set in Rome in Coriolanus's own home where we meet Volumnia, his mother, and Virgilia, his wife, sitting on stools and sewing. The violent and noisy Roman streets give way to a conversation among women who are anxious because of Coriolanus's return. While in the public arena everything focuses on war and social conflict, in the private sphere, the action

⁶⁰ Robert S. Miola, 'Coriolanus Rome and the Self', in *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 164-205 (p. 164).

is centred on a domestic activity: sewing; moreover, instead of staves, lances, and other sharp-pointed weapons, the ladies use needles. Referring to needlework, Orlin highlights the number of sewing scenes⁶¹ represented in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, showing that this activity – a badge of virtue – played a significant role in the fashioning of the ideal female occupation and that its theatrical representation was highly conventionalised during the early modern period. Sewing scenes, she comments, ‘are often strategically employed in the interest of heightened dramatic contrast, to establish a woman’s impregnable purity just before it is assailed or before she encounters some other form of jeopardy.’⁶² In the case of *Coriolanus*, the announcement of the hero’s approach, as well as Valeria’s intrusion upon the sewing session, endangers the women’s reputation. In fact, when the gentlewoman tells the ladies that Valeria has come to visit them, Virgilia seems to foresee the possible risk since she asks her mother-in-law: ‘Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself’ (1.3.22). Nevertheless, Volumnia convinces her to stay by telling her that she can hear Coriolanus’s drum very near. Supported by Volumnia, Valeria ironically challenges the woman’s activity and mocks the housewife role, tempting Virgilia to go out: ‘Come, lay aside your stitchery. I must have you play the idle housewife with me this afternoon’ (1.3.72-73). The wife’s reply is obviously negative and expresses her desire to stay at home and, to an extent, remain invisible: ‘I’ll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars’ (1.3.77). The scene does not only depict a domestic activity, but also ‘[...] suggests an iconographic representation of “woman” in the three stages of her life: maid, wife, widow.’⁶³ The facts seem to reveal that both Valeria as a single woman and Volumnia as a widow are able to circulate more freely, whereas Virgilia’s married status

⁶¹ Lena Cowen Orlin, ‘Three Ways to be Invisible in the Renaissance: Sex, Reputation, and Stitchery’, in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 183-203. The author refers to at least twenty-one plays that contain sewing scenes including eight of Shakespeare’s works. Among other authors she mentions Chapman, Dekker, Greene, and Heywood. For more references, see the Appendix in the same cited work, pp. 200-201.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

encloses her inside the home. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the barrier between the private sphere of the home and that of the public arena is not due only to her married state, but mainly to her self-confinement. Volumnia reinforces this idea when she warns Valeria not to insist: 'Let her alone, lady. As she is now, she will but disease our better mirth' (1.3.107-8). With this statement she expresses that there is something wrong with her and that she may harm the family with her attitude.

In the same way as Coriolanus's personality and name alienate him from family and state, Virgilia's situation, though less emphatic and more restricted to her gender, transforms her into her husband's counterpart. She is afraid of crossing the boundaries of privacy since she feels that her role is to remain at home waiting for her hero. She makes it clear that it is not safe for a married woman to go away from home, since 'Tis not to save labour, nor that I want love' (1.3.84). Crossing the threshold would mean risking her chastity and she seems determined not to do so. She has appropriated her role as good wife so well that she can portray her primary commitment to household industry as symbolised in Penelope's ornamental labour. Needlework, in her case, is a metaphor for triviality, the repetition of everyday actions or rituals and the experience of 'practiced places' in de Certeau's sense, whereas for Volumnia this is not only a practical chore; her needles can also become 'the tools of aggressive or resistant women.'⁶⁴

It is also possible to associate Virgilia's attitude to *otium* as a form of privacy, a notion I have discussed when dealing with its development in the writings of Petrarch. Clearly, women in *Coriolanus* are excluded from politics, despite the domineering personality of the protagonist's mother. In the case of Virgilia, Shakespeare shows feminine idleness as the locus of domestic life, an activity that rather than being passive shows, I think, the value of waiting as a service to the state because, in so doing, she builds

⁶⁴ Wall, p. 65.

domestic bonding and a subtle counterresponse to the hypermasculine political world of Rome and Corioles. Critics such as Julia Bondanella and Catherine Connors discuss *otium* in literature in relation to elite male characters for whom leisure is equivalent to either time free from work (*labor*), from business dealings (*negotium*), from the performance of duties (*officia*), or from political, administrative, or military service so as to achieve religious or literary contemplation and rest.⁶⁵ I will argue that in this Roman play, there are also forms of female and non-elite leisure.

Virgilia has often been interpreted as the epitome of the silent woman, a conduct we cannot deny considering her role within the play; nevertheless, I think that her position indoors as protector of the domestic sphere is not only a form of *otium*, but also of rejection against masculine involvement in violent warfare. Though similar to Cleopatra's dislike towards Antony's duties of state, Virgilia's seeming inactivity is more coherent to her place indoors and vital to the maintenance of the household. The fact that 'no less than seven times in about forty lines does she refuse to accompany Volumnia and Valeria out of doors [...]'⁶⁶, as Miola observes, is an illustrative example of her refusal to see her husband's bloody wounds in contrast to Volumnia's relishing of them. The anatomy of Virgilia's leisure is waiting and this, by no means, should always be a synonym of passivity or the idleness of misusing or wasting time, but a sign of forbearance in Coriolanus's absence.

As I suggested before, another side of *otium* can be traced in *Coriolanus*, which may be correlated to its feminine demonstration because of the notion of inferiority in Roman society. If a Roman patrician's leisure should be recognised by a productive outcome, which in the language of war means martial and political activity, in the patrician

⁶⁵ Catherine Connors, 'Imperial Space and Time: The Literature of Leisure', in *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective*, ed. by Oliver Taplin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 492-518 (p. 493).

⁶⁶ Miola, p. 172.

perspective plebeians' misuse of time leads them to laziness and incompetence for civic participation. However, the paradox is that in the initial discussion among citizens (1.1.1-45) and later when debating with Menenius (1.1.90-159), they show they know how to argue. Coriolanus disdains them and thinks that because of their laziness, corn cannot be a reward, as 'They ne'er did service for't' (3.1.124). Moreover, in his view, because of their cowardice, they 'did not deserve corn gratis' (3.1.128).

Sewing is not the only element linked to domestic space. We can trace a number of material artifacts chosen to represent it. The stage directions are very specific in the construction of the private environment because they mention not only the characters and their activity, but also the furniture, thus attaching to it an element of domesticity: [Enter Volumnia and Virgilia, mother and wife to Martius. They set them down on two low stools and sew], (1.3.0). While Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson state that stools are not an item of furniture cited very often in stage directions, and that in the case of this play, stools are associated with work,⁶⁷ Cowen Orlin argues that 'female characters sit to sew. Stage directions so often refer to stools and chairs that the visual formula was undoubtedly followed in other sewing scenes that go undescribed.'⁶⁸ The first study is referring specifically to Shakespeare's works, of which seven include these frozen tableaux in which women are seated with their heads bent. In such a case, it may be correct to say that the proportion is small with respect to the complete works. Moreover, there are other objects and actions that are repeated much more in stage directions, such as entries and exits, sounds of trumpets and alarms, chests and chairs, to mention but a few.

The other conclusion to which stage directions can lead is that Shakespeare does not limit himself to a language-based construction of space; that is to say, he builds these places in the audience's mind by combining direct speech references with more

⁶⁷ Alan C. Dessen, and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 217.

⁶⁸ Orlin, 'Three Ways', p. 194.

performance-oriented indications. Such is the case of stage directions which, despite their brevity, may specify the place where the characters are, or describe some of its architectural features as well. I have already mentioned some examples on how the city – a public sphere – is described by the characters, ‘[...] Enter two Senators, with others, on the walls of Corioles’ (1.4); ‘Enter the army of the Volsces [from the gates]’ (1.4., not everything in F). Nevertheless, stage directions in Shakespeare are limited, for, ‘Elizabethan staging was symbolic rather than realistic. Audiences had to work at visualizing the spectacles the words described.’⁶⁹ Most of them simply enumerate the characters that will appear in the scene: [Enter Coriolanus, Volumnia, Virgilia, Menenius, Cominius, with the young nobility of Rome], (4.1.0); some suggest a specific costume: [Enter Coriolanus in a gown of humility [and a hat], with Menenius], (2.3.2); others describe the action to be performed, sometimes emphasising a particular gesture or intensity of feeling: [Here they fight, and certain Volsces come in the aid of Aufidius. Martius fights till they be driven in breathless, [...] (1.10.0); yet quite often stage directions only coordinate the entrance or exit of characters. Added to this problem is the authorial question. It may seem that this theatrical device is not a good tool, or at least not one that Shakespeare used deliberately to depict public or private spaces onstage. We are also aware that not every stage direction in Shakespeare’s works was actually written by him – a good number of them were probably written by the different theatre company managers, or by the actors themselves – and, from the possible authorial directions, some might have been ignored in practice. Nevertheless, *Coriolanus* breaks the rule, because the stage directions in the *First Folio* of 1623, with its textual vices and virtues, have been reliably assigned to Shakespeare’s own hand. ‘Among the virtues’, remarks J. Dover Wilson, ‘must be reckoned first of all the full and elaborate stage-directions, almost as full

⁶⁹ Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare’s Theatres*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics, ed. by Peter Holland and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 1.

as those in *The Tempest*, and perhaps necessitated, as we suggested the latter might have been, by the author's absence in Stratford at the time the play was being rehearsed. [...] These stage directions are not the additions of an editor. They are obviously directions actually written for performance.⁷⁰

Scenery in Shakespeare's time was minimal. As Gurr points out, the venues offered very few resources, sometimes just an open space with a back curtain and a side door. The stage 'was simply a space for walking over, whether it was meant to depict an indoor scene or one out of doors.'⁷¹ Playwrights had little material or technical resources to work with onstage. Therefore, the construction of space and the way in which it was conveyed was somewhat complex. The Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists shared some literary and stage conventions that audiences could work out, but even these were subject to exceptions. In addition to this, *Coriolanus* was the first of Shakespeare's plays written for the Blackfriars theatre – an indoor private theatre – and this certainly brought about more physical and spatial restrictions and distinctions. Therefore, it is not safe to rely exclusively on stage directions to define when a specific space is being built in the text and onstage. In the case of *Coriolanus*, they contribute to the construction of privacy, but this is not a general rule that can be applied without analysing first all the variables in the rest of Shakespeare's works.

In the course of *Coriolanus* the plot develops around public macro spaces – Rome, Corioles, the Volscian territories – as well as public micro spaces – the Senate, the Capitol, the streets, and the market-place. One could say that the difference between these spaces is not their public nature but their size, scope and political prominence. The first ones are cities or lands, whereas the latter are institutions and buildings. While the topography of these public spaces is signalled mostly, as we have discussed, by references given by the

⁷⁰ William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*. A Facsimile of the First Folio Text with an Introduction by J. Dover Wilson (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1954?), p. i.

⁷¹ Gurr and Ichikawa, p. 62.

same characters as well as by some stage directions, the construction of the private space is usually marked by the activities performed by its inhabitants as well as by the furniture used in it. The opposition between the private world and that of the public city is depicted here by means of these devices, yet also through a gendered division of space. This works at different levels, since while in the first two scenes men are the dominant figures, in the household lines of the first act, women produce the dialogue. From the very beginning Volumnia appears as a domineering and linguistically aggressive woman. Her words are direct and strong. While she speaks, Virgilia keeps quiet, thus showing not only that her mother-in-law has the authority within that space, but also that she possesses the assertive and suggestive public eloquence that her son lacks. Critics like Jannet Adelman, Gail Kern Paster and others have stated that Coriolanus's weakness and alienation is due to her mother's suffocating character. I would say that is true in part, but again it is not the only explanation. The problem is perhaps once more Coriolanus's misunderstanding of domestic space. If he is unable to remain at home, it is not exclusively because his mother is constantly forcing him to look for honour and keep to noble standards, but also because Coriolanus misjudges his home as a place that can help him attain his goal. On the contrary, he looks at it as an alienating site where trivial jobs are carried out. In fact, as Wendy Wall explains, during the early modern period most people thought that the home was particularly 'associated with femininity, lower-class servitude, vulgar lore, or a degraded oral culture, and, as such, it constituted a site of shame particularly for elite men.'⁷² So for Coriolanus, going home means losing control and, even worse, being subdued by women and immersed in banal activities. From this perspective, one could easily confirm the idea that going home in his case is not necessarily related to rest or comfort. It means giving up public recognition and being caught up in the dangerous trap

⁷² Wall, p. 6.

of womanly affairs. In fact, as Catherine Alexander observes, ‘only the embassy of the women can shatter his convictions, force him into a new way of seeing’⁷³ which he evidently does not want to accept. In a sense, he does not want to be caught in Penelope’s web, which Virgilia seems to be weaving. It is the triviality, the everydayness, the state that most frightens him. Coriolanus never thinks that his role as a public figure can be forged within the private domain and in the end he is trapped by what I would call the ‘state web’ or by his own public office. Moreover, to an extent Coriolanus twists the notion of home as an all female site because, as I have already discussed with respect to Aufidius’s banquet, the guest feels more ‘at home’ there. When in the first act Aufidius vows to attack and kill Martius, he swears hate and eternal war even ‘against the hospitable canon’ (1.11.26), even under the guard at his brother’s ‘home’ (1.11.25), that is, treading on obligations made holy by such places as temples, the home, the Capitol and the sites of communal rites, he does not foresee that he will offer hospitality to him at his own home in the fourth act. After this celebration, Coriolanus meets his family outside the walls of Rome. Here Coriolanus weeps and recognizes his weakness when he says before his wife: ‘[...] I melt, and am not / Of stronger earth than others’ (5.3.29). One might think that this is the moment when Coriolanus finally recognises his common humanity, the strength of love and family ties; however, when Virgilia kisses him, he shows that the private world has not won over the public one. He still does not find sweetness in those household ties; they mean something different for him, a dependence he does not want to face: ‘O, a kiss/ Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge! (5.3.44). What should be sweet becomes bitter for Coriolanus, since instead of relating that kiss to love, he immediately thinks about the treacherous kiss of enemies in battle and foresees that some conspirators are coming to kill him. In the hero’s mind accepting that kiss would be betraying Rome since, as Alexander

⁷³ Catherine M. S. Alexander, *Shakespeare and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 84.

explains, ‘never, it seems, has it occurred to him that the two motives, the public and the private, might under certain circumstances conflict, or that the one might require adjustments and concessions from the other.’⁷⁴ Notwithstanding that by the end of Volumnia’s persuasive speech, when Coriolanus starts weeping, ‘[...] O my mother, mother, O! / You have won a happy victory to Rome; [...]’ (5.3.186), she apparently wins over her son’s determination to stay in Volscian lands, this does not look like a real capitulation. Therefore, he seems to belong neither to his home because he is unable to stay there, nor to his homeland – Rome – because he is rejected by its citizens and authorities. Even though his mother welcomes him ‘home’ to Rome as nation in the second act, as Menenius keeps confirming through questions – ‘Ha, Martius coming home?’ (2.1.99) – in the final scene of the play Coriolanus calls Corioles his ‘home’ (5.6.77). Definitely, the hero’s domestic affiliations are weak. He neither belongs to the city of Rome, nor to his own household. Instead of conflating the domestic in his life, he keeps living upon the polarity of spheres, as if home and homeland were two separate and incompatible worlds. Coriolanus deconstructs reality because he intends to separate two worlds that need each other. By denying home, he destroys his identity as son, husband, and father; consequently, his national and public affiliations. His body, whose wounds he only wanted to show ‘in private’ (2.3.73), is ironically borne in a public funeral march by Aufidius himself and three soldiers, presumably his own conspirators.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Alexander, p. 75.

⁷⁵ Parker, ‘Introduction’, p. 115.

CHAPTER VI:
NO HOUSEHOLD IN VIENNA: WOMEN'S SPATIAL
MOBILITY IN *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*.

When John Stow wrote the *Survey of London*¹ in 1598, he did not only describe the archaeology of the city, but the significance of its places, its people, and the events that shaped its social structure. Moreover, as Steven Mullaney explains, the *Survey* is a reading of London that enables us to ‘move from place to place in a careful and ruminative perambulation, inquiring at each site after the significance of the place: the images it holds, the events it has witnessed, the changes it has felt and had impressed upon it.’² This is precisely the peripatetic walk that I would like to start through the streets of Shakespeare’s Vienna, with the aim of achieving a two-fold objective: to follow the movements of the female characters and to look through the windows of the public, private, marginal and secluded spaces these women visit or dwell in.

This chapter will analyse *Measure for Measure* from a spatial perspective; that is to say, it will examine the spaces that Isabella, Mariana, Juliet, Mistress Overdone, and the other female characters inhabit, as well as the motivating force that leads them to choose either seclusion or licentiousness in a defiant attitude towards patriarchal authority in Vienna: a public and contested space where the Duke has seen ‘corruption boil and bubble [...]’ (5.1.315)³. I will argue that although this spatial mobility becomes possible for a variety of reasons, such as Shakespeare’s courtship narrative – the process of wooing, wedding, and marriage, as well as the attempts to reverse the wrongdoings related to the lovers’ misfortunes –, the key elements that determine feminine space in this play are: the social double standard of sexual reputation, including the temporary substitution of some of the characters’ identity, and the notion of chastity, a virtue that functions both as a contained space and, at the same time, as the means to attain power. In fact, as Barbara J.

¹ All quotations from Stow are taken from the two-volume *Survey of London*, ed. by C. L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909) used by Steven Mullaney in *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1995).

² Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 15.

³ Unless otherwise stated, all references to the play are from William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. by J. W. Lever, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 1965, repr. 2003). Later in this section we will refer to the textual revisions and adaptations.

Baines claims, '[i]n Vienna, as in Shakespeare's England, women are defined and placed on the basis of their chastity. [...] According to her chastity or lack thereof, a woman takes her place in the nunnery, the jail, the moated grange, or the brothel [...].'⁴ These are precisely the places that I will look at in this city, a macro space that is, at the same time, public and domestic: urban capital and the Duke's home. I will also argue that Vienna provides the setting and context for experiences of illicit privacy since, as Mary Thomas Crane states, in early modern England, and I would say that particularly in this play, quite often 'privacy is a function of isolation and solitude, when actions take place far away from other prying eyes.'⁵

In many ways, *Measure for Measure* constitutes an exception to the widely-accepted early modern social convention that placed woman within the protected boundaries of the household where she was both mistress and servant and, as Nicole Castan claims, her occupation was essentially domestic: '[t]he household was her stage [...].'⁶ However, the female characters' homes in the play cannot be equated to the idea of home as domestic household that I have analysed both in the second chapter, as well as in my reading of *Coriolanus*.⁷ The term 'home' is a broad notion that may have a variety of meanings, whereas, according to the *OED*, 'house' is more related to specific buildings or places; thus a house can refer to 'a building for human habitation'⁸, and it can be used for multiple occupations other than serving as ordinary dwelling, such as in the case of workhouses (almshouse, brewhouse), a 'building for the entertainment of travelers or of

⁴ Barbara J. Baines, 'Assaying the Power of Chastity in *Measure for Measure*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 30.2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1990), 283-301 (p. 287).

⁵ Mary Thomas Crane, 'Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9.1 (Spring, 2009), 4-22 (pp. 7-8).

⁶ Nicole Castan, 'The Public and the Private', in *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, with Roger Chartier, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 5 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), III, 403-445 (p. 407).

⁷ See pp. 64-70 and chapter V.

⁸ *OED*, I.1.A.

the public [...]’⁹, a religious house or convent, a theatre or playhouse, among many other possibilities. Most of the occurrences of the terms ‘house’ (12 times) and ‘home’ (7 times) in the text¹⁰ are more linked to functional questions: related to the purpose for which that building is used or as a topographical reference the characters mention; in addition, there is almost never a description of domestic activities or objects. Escalus, for example, uses ‘house’ to indicate direction when he says: ‘To my house. Fare you well [...]’ (2.1.272); then, a line later, he exchanges the word for ‘home’ to invite Justice: ‘I pray you home to dinner with me’ (2.1.275). It is interesting to note the subtle semantic shift I think Shakespeare introduces in these lines because although both terms are used in these lines to refer to the same place, I would say that, in de Certeau’s sense, the place mentioned in the first speech is transformed into a household space with Escalus being the master of it who will receive a guest. In the third act, when the Duke meets Lucio and Pompey outside the prison, he is informed that the clown will go to jail for stealing and Lucio starts teasing him and says: ‘you will turn good husband now, Pompey; you will / keep the house’ (3.2.68-69). Evidently, here the house is the prison and keeping it analogically means performing the role of a housewife.

‘House’ is also represented, as I have already explained, like a building for specific purposes. When Escalus, Pompey, Angelo and Elbow are discussing Mistress Overdone’s reputation, Elbow defends Pompey’s relationship with her by claiming that ‘the house is a respected house [...]’ (2.1.155-56). Before this episode, Elbow refers to this place as a ‘hot-house’ (2.1.65), an ‘ill house’ (2.1.65), a ‘bawd’s house’ (2.1.75), and a ‘naughty house’ (2.1.76). Associations with the brothel are evident; even the ‘stewed prunes’ (2.1.89)¹¹ Pompey mentions – a dish that could have evoked a domestic and homely environment –

⁹ Ibid., 2.c.

¹⁰ *Open Shakespeare Concordance*, <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/> [accessed on July 2014].

¹¹ Stewed prunes were a popular dish in brothels. It was thought to protect against disease. This may be explained for their prophylactic and laxative properties.

functions as a sexual pun, since this food was a well-known favourite in brothels and was identified, as he humorously points out, with the people who frequented these places and, specifically, with prostitutes.

The meaning of 'home', like in *Coriolanus*, though not exactly with the same frequency and predominance in the play, is also expanded to homeland and it is conjured up by the disguised Duke as he devises his scheme to conquer Isabella by exalting the real Duke and suggesting that he will come to resolve her brother's situation very soon. He decides to send letters to Angelo so that he will realize that he is '[...] near at home' (4.3.94). Then he tells her that 'The Duke comes home tomorrow [...]' (4.3.127), and that she should stop shedding tears because the Duke will recover the power that is in Angelo's hands. In both cases, the Duke's home, within the Viennese court, represents the public state of Vienna. Like the court, most of the places that are examined in *Measure* are either public domains within the walls of the city – a site near the city gate, for example – or marginal spaces outside the city boundaries, which can be of three types. First, those in which characters are confined against their will: the prison and the 'moated grange', then the ones where they choose to isolate themselves because of a religious motivation or social pressure – the nunnery and the friar's cell, and thirdly, those that are visited regularly by some male characters, giving licence to their conscience – the offstage space of Vienna's brothels. There are also semi-private areas like the ante-room to the Court, and a courtroom. These places have a somewhat dual nature, being private and public at the same time, since their material setting – their walls and closed doors – facilitate more private conversations or the secrecy of illicit plots. At the same time, these locales are open to courtiers and city authorities who carry out public transactions and who come from different households. A fourth and different space that I will also analyse in terms of privacy is Angelo's garden.

The first obstacle to overcome in our spatial itinerary is the textual problem. If we aim at understanding the city's topography, first and foremost we need to read the spatial hints provided in the text. Even though the textual question might not be directly related to the argument of this paper, it seems advisable to clarify it briefly since it may have a bearing on the general analysis. Notwithstanding the scant stage directions indicating the setting of each scene, their inclusion or exclusion in the different editions has partly determined my choice of edition. It is widely acknowledged that *Measure for Measure* was written and performed in 1603-4 and that it first appeared in the First Folio of 1623.¹² This text probably came from a manuscript that was prepared for a performance staged some years after Shakespeare's death and revised by Ralph Crane, a professional copyist. The division into acts was probably added either by him or around 1609 when the King's Men performed the play at the Blackfriars and had to follow the act-interval convention. John Jowett argues that in addition to these alterations, there is enough evidence to state that the text was subject to theatrical adaptation in 1621 by Thomas Middleton.¹³ According to the critic, some of the facts that support this idea are: the introduction of the song, which probably originated in Fletcher's *Rollo, Duke of Normandy* (1617-20), the substitution of Shakespearean oaths, the addition of a long passage at the beginning of 1.2, Juliet's accentuated presence in two scenes, the mention of Mistress Overdone in 4.3, and the topicality of the Austro-Hungarian conflict, among other examples. Most of these changes

¹² See Introduction to J.W.Lever's edition, William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 1965, repr. 2003) in which he cites E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Survey of Facts and Problems* (1930), II.331, p. xxxi; William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. by Brian Gibbons, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, repr. 2004), pp. 1 and 193; William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), p. 843; John H. Astington, 'The Globe, the Court and *Measure for Measure*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 52 (1999): Shakespeare and The Globe, ed. by Stanley Wells (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133-142 (p. 133); John Jowett, 'The Audacity of *Measure for Measure* in 1621', in *The Ben Jonson Journal*, 8 (2001), 229-247 (p. 229).

¹³ For discussions on the play's adaptation see: Gary Taylor and John Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped, 1606-1623* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and an article by one of these authors: John Jowett, 'The Audacity of *Measure for Measure* in 1621', in *The Ben Jonson Journal* 8 (2001), 229-47 (p. 229).

do not affect the purpose of this analysis; however, the last three can bring a different outcome to my conclusions, since they involve female characters and provide more information on the political situation in the city. I will use J. W. Lever's Arden edition for the general discussion; in the case of Juliet's and Mistress Overdone's roles, I shall follow the adapted version edited in the *Oxford Complete Works*¹⁴ only if there are differences in their speech and in the number of times they appear onstage, or if they are mentioned in the stage directions.

Even though many editors have located the opening of this comedy in the Duke's palace or council chamber, the Arden edition indicates that the scene takes place [Within Vienna.]¹⁵. The *First Folio* also mentions the city and provides an extra textual place name – 'the scene Vienna' – yet this occurs at the end of the text, just before 'The names of all the Actors.' This specification of place or 'localization'¹⁶, as Leah Marcus argues, is quite paradoxical since '[i]n Shakespeare, place is often left mysterious, or at least undefined, until well into the play.'¹⁷ The topical passages about the Austro-Hungarian conflict to which the play makes reference in all its editions, set the scene in Vienna, as Jowett points out, 'yet the more distinctly the urban space is identified as Vienna [...], the more distinctly it is London also.'¹⁸ Vienna is constantly evoked and mentioned by the characters; however, as the critic emphasises, the eclectic references about the city produce the effect of locating the play in both cities.¹⁹ According to Anne Barton, in order to avoid contemporary London as the setting of comedies, Shakespeare usually chooses 'foreign (or

¹⁴ *The Oxford Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

¹⁵ Lever, p. 3.

¹⁶ Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare. Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 161. She defines the term 'localization' as 'The degree to which and the means by which a given play sets itself apart from its contemporary London audience through an evocation of place which is clearly alien, somewhere else, with its own idiosyncratic geographic and cultural features.'

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁸ Jowett, 'Audacity', p. 236.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

entirely fictional) cities, while deliberately evoking, at least in some of them, a place closer to home.²⁰ Vienna is one more example, together with Padua, Messina, Verona, Athens, Venice and Rome, in the list of foreign locations selected by the playwright. In *Measure* the urban space is a kind of omnipresent backdrop with a dark marginal side and corrupt habits, which put the characters' morality to the test. This Austro-English city seems to be a male domain where women cannot participate in public decision-making or give their opinion about political affairs. Only male characters provide information about its topography, its government and its authorities. At the very beginning of the play the Duke refers to 'Our city's institutions [...]' (I.1.10) and how they should be obeyed and respected. When Pompey declares that he will live like a 'bawd', Escalus immediately warns him, 'But the law will not allow it, Pompey; nor it shall / Not be allowed in Vienna' (II.1.225-6). The city of Vienna seems to be controlled by a strict and implacable law that scrutinises the characters' actions, or punishes them when they go against its hypocritical decrees. We are also informed about the city's suburbs, as Pompey alludes, 'All houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked down [...]' (I.2.88). In fact, certain areas outside London, notably Clerkenwell, were teeming with brothels whose maintenance was tolerated by the authorities. In his study about the place of the stage, Steven Mullaney revisits Stow's *Survey* and clearly explains the spatial and moral implications of the urban suburbs located mostly within the Liberties of London: ungoverned areas outside the purview of the local authorities where 'citizens retired to pursue pastimes and pleasures that had no proper place in the community.'²¹ Moreover, the author insists,

Entering a Liberty, whatever its location, meant crossing over into an ambiguous territory that was at once internal and external to the city, neither contained by the civic authority nor fully removed from it. They were the

²⁰ Anne Barton, 'The London Scene: City and Court', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 115-128 (p. 116).

²¹ John Stow *Survey of London*, ed. by C. L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), as cited in Mullaney, p. 22.

suburbs of the urban world, forming an underworld officially recognized as lawless; they stood in a certain sense outside the law, and so could serve as privileged or exempt arenas where the anxieties and insecurities of life in a rigidly organized hierarchical society could be given relatively free reign.²²

In fact, Vienna is the mirror of criminal activities of different sorts. We witness robbery and impersonation of others, but mainly conducts against the morality of sexual relations. In his research on crime in early modern England, James A. Sharpe explains the scope of this phenomenon that ‘includes not only those acts which most human beings would regard as intrinsically wicked but those whose motivation can vary enormously (theft and murder, for example); it also comprehends behaviour which can be newly classified as criminal by a specific society and can therefore be created by legislators [...]’.²³ In the Viennese city, the regulation of sexual morality seems to be the essence of legislation and Angelo the embodiment of its application, as Escalus reveals when he praises him, thus emphasising the importance of having the right authorities in the city: ‘If any in Vienna be of worth / To undergo such ample grace, and honour, / It is Lord Angelo’ (1.1.22-24). Later, the Duke warns him about his responsibility: ‘Mortality and mercy in Vienna live in thy tongue, and heart’ (1.1.44-45).

The first female character to appear on stage in 1.2 is Mistress Overdone and she moves within ambivalent suburban zones. ‘Madam Mitigation’ (1.2.41), as she is called, is immediately identified with the business of the brothel, since Lucio, Pompey and the gentlemen start joking and making reference to the venereal diseases that they can contract in her house. Neither in the *Folio*, nor in the adapted edition is there a stage direction indicating location of place; yet at the opening of this scene Rowe suggests [The Street], and the Arden version reads: [The Same. A Public Place]; that is to say, Vienna. In spite of the public nature of Mistress Overdone’s house, the news she brings about Claudio’s arrest

²² Ibid., pp. 21-22.

²³ James E. Sharpe, ‘Definitions, Methods, and Objectives’, in *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*, Themes in British Social History, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1-28 (p. 5).

produces an interesting combination of domestic and public issues. She clearly does not live in a proper home according to early modern standards; on the contrary, she is constantly moving in and out of the brothel through the open streets of the city. Nevertheless, she provides men with news: a trivial commodity that allows her to transgress spatial boundaries and capture men's attention, thus provoking public opinion. Therefore, even though her dwelling space is not a proper household, but rather a marginal space, she acquires a voice, one that men listen to as a source of information. When later in the same scene Pompey announces that Claudio, the Provost and Juliet are coming on their way to the prison, Mistress Overdone hurriedly disappears from the brothel. On the one hand, the presence of the Provost might have frightened her since this man represents the law which supposedly is against her trade, but on the other, the two women seem to belong to different strata of society and the origin of their illicit sexuality vary a great deal. While Mistress Overdone devotes herself to the business, the pregnant Juliet has succumbed because of the weakness of young lovers; therefore, they cannot be together onstage. To an extent, these women do not have a stable space in society. When Pompey claims that the houses in the suburbs will be demolished, Mistress Overdone questions the destiny of those that are in the city – 'And what shall become of those in the city?' (1.2.90) – as if making him aware that she has nowhere else to live.

Juliet's space is unknown. In the 1621 adapted edition her entrance is announced by a brief stage direction [A noise within] that persuades Mistress Overdone to withdraw. Pompey observes the approaching group and mentions 'Madame Juliet' (1.2.107) as part of it; nevertheless, the scene continues with a dialogue between men – Claudio, Lucio, and the Provost – and we neither hear Juliet's voice, nor can we be certain that she is present, except that at the end of the conversation the stage directions indicate that she leaves through another door with Claudio and the Provost. Later, when she is in the prison in 2.3

she speaks very few lines that give us a vague idea of her personality and her position in Vienna. The Duke-as-friar goes to visit the prisoners in order to judge their crimes. While there, he interrogates Juliet who confesses her sin and repents. To the question as to whether the act was mutually committed, she responds with a straightforward ‘Mutually’ (2.3.29), without justifying the deed. It is in this moment that the Duke reveals his views on women’s chastity: ‘Then was your sin of heavier kind than his’ (2.3.30). His opinion shows the common belief of that period that an unchaste woman was morally worse than a sinful man. According to Kathleen McLuskie, Mistress Overdone and Juliet take a sexualized role imposed by men’s perspectives since these women are only seen as men see them [...].²⁴ This prejudice about purity is also shown when Mistress Overdone is being taken to prison by the officers in 3.1. Even though she accuses Lucio of having had a child with Mistress Kate Keepdown outside marriage – a situation similar to that of the guilty young couple – none of the men present onstage seem to give much importance to his transgression. According to Carol T. Neely, ‘chastity became the primary duty required of women throughout life in the forms of virginity, marital fidelity, widows’ abstinence. Not only did the wife have to remain faithful but, unlike the husband, she had to prove her faithfulness by exhibiting the peculiarly Renaissance virtue of shamefastness and by avoiding all appearances of immodesty and wantonness.’²⁵ Whenever a woman lost her chastity as a result of a premarital or an extramarital relation, she was segregated and excluded from society by living either on the outskirts of the city or in prison. To a certain extent, in Vienna the allocation of female spaces is administered by men, thus having a

²⁴ For more ideas on the male perspective of women in the play see: Kathleen McLuskie, ‘The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*’, in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 88-108.

²⁵ Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare’s Plays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 14.

place of their own becomes rather difficult for these marginalised women as they are usually confined to the peripheries of the city.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, sexual behaviour, the reputation of characters in relation to it and, more specifically, the practice of chastity, is fundamental in the negotiation of female space. According to Victoria Hayne, ‘Tudor-Stuart culture had, in its ecclesiastical courts, an elaborate system for regulating sexual behavior and resolving conflicts arising from breaches of sexual norms and, indeed, from the fluidity of its betrothal practices [...]’²⁶ and this can be clearly seen in the play. Mistress Overdone’s and Juliet’s spatial movements away from the household into marginal places imply a complex process of social justice and of their construction of ‘self-in-relation-to-space’. Neely argues that marriage is ‘the social context that centrally defines the female characters in Shakespeare’s plays [and] with few exceptions their conflicts, crises, and character development occur in connection with wooing, wedding, and marriage [...]’.²⁷ Critics such as Hayne and Catherine Bates reinforce these ideas. While the former points out that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century social practice, becoming married was a long transitional process during which ‘the couple’s status was fluid and ambiguous [...]’²⁸ the latter argues that whatever form it takes, Shakespeare’s courtship narrative always moves the characters from one state of being to another that is clearly differentiated. Courtship, as she explains, ‘could be defined simply as the period of wooing and winning [...]’. But it could also extend to that critical period between a betrothal and its formal solemnization in marriage [...]; or even more critical, between the latter and its physical consummation in intercourse [...].²⁹ This prolonged situation created a somewhat double standard because

²⁶ Victoria Hayne, ‘Performing Social Practice: The Example of *Measure for Measure*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44.1 (Spring, 1993), 1-29 (p. 9).

²⁷ Neely, p. 2.

²⁸ Hayne, p. 4.

²⁹ Catherine Bates, ‘Love and Courtship’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 106.

couples were neither single, nor officially married. The indefinable and risky status of betrothal produced legal and moral problems because, despite the widespread practice of sex before marriage, the church considered this behaviour a sin. Claudio and Juliet, for example, were betrothed and they had promised to marry, but as they began their sexual relationship before marriage with pregnancy as a consequence, they are tried by the Viennese justice. As Baines clearly explains, enforcing chastity is, in fact, one of the main goals of patriarchal authority in the city, to the point that ‘the Duke’s deputy justifies his strict enforcement of the law that prioritizes chastity over human life by equating the incontinence that results in bastardy with murder.’³⁰

Juliet’s social role and position in Vienna is similar to that of Mariana in some respects. Even though her situation does not involve any substitution of identity, both women are segregated and excluded from social life. Mariana’s past is reported by the Duke, who tells the audience that she was left unmarried by Angelo, apparently when she lost her dowry. The fourth act is set in her ‘home’, a ‘moated grange’ (4.1) probably ‘an outlying farm-house belonging to a religious establishment’³¹ or simply a country house. The opening song in the first scene expresses Mariana’s unrequited love for her broken nuptials and her current situation of loneliness and idleness, since she tells the Duke-as-friar that she has been doing nothing but waiting: ‘I have sat here all day’ (4.1.20). However, unlike Isabella, she has not chosen the permanent enclosure of a nunnery, but a temporary retreat outside the city walls as befitted her condition of single woman. According to Natasha Korda, ‘Mariana epitomizes the single woman’s lack of social space or identity. Residing – in what has become perhaps the most memorable of all liminal, literary spaces – at the “moated grange.”’³²

³⁰ Baines, p. 285.

³¹ Notes to the Arden edition, ‘grange’, *OED*, 2.b.

³² Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies. Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 186.

When Mariana substitutes Isabella, the place chosen for the bed trick is Angelo's garden. By entering into that space with another identity, she does not only contribute to the preservation of Isabella's chastity, but also transforms her betrothal vows into binding marriage vows after the physical consummation of the relationship. The nun-to-be mentions that the garden is '[...] circummur'd with brick, / Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd [...]' (4.1.28-29), and has two different entrances – 'a planced gate' (4.1.30) and a 'little door' (4.1.32) – that are opened with two different keys. As we have discussed in other sections of the thesis, Crane considers gardens as extensions of the household that allowed privacy for illicit activities outdoors. However, the situation is rather contradictory or, at least, paradoxical. If the garden as *hortus conclusus* is associated with woman's chastity, then Shakespeare would be subverting this conventional belief because it is precisely within this space that female characters lose their virginity. It may also mean that the boundaries of woman's body are more porous than those established by early modern moral codes and that women sometimes are in control – in fact, Isabella has the two keys – for entrances and exits.

Mariana, like Juliet, is moved to the margins of a society in which single women do not have a place. She lives in that isolated area because she has neither an identity, nor a place of her own in the city. Moreover, when she leaves that sphere, she is treated as a 'punk' or prostitute and she does not recover her honour until the Duke forces Angelo to marry her before he is executed. She lacks all traits of social identity, a fact that is seen at the end of the play when she comes veiled for her interrogation. When the Duke asks her to unveil her face, she refuses saying, 'I will not show my face / Until my husband bid me' (5.1.171-2). Although she speaks only a few lines, she makes clear that she is '[...] neither maid, widow, nor wife!' (5.1.178-9). Mariana's struggle to regain her place in Vienna is prompted by the Duke's plan to substitute her for Isabella in Angelo's bed. Even though

we do not hear her reply to the Duke's idea, Mariana takes the risk of acting as another person and triggers a series of exchanges among characters. As Alexander Leggatt describes, 'This substitution is part of a pattern of substitutions, virtually a chain reaction, that runs through the play. [...] Not only does Mariana substitute for Isabella, but Angelo substitutes for the Duke; then Isabella asks Angelo to put himself in Claudio's place, and he does.'³³ However, her substitution is neither successful in terms of winning back Angelo's love – if he ever really loved her –, nor in granting her a space within the boundaries of the city. Angelo behaves as a mock-husband, thus he beds her as if she were someone else. Mariana's substitution fails because she gives her body before her marriage is formally declared; that is to say, she opens the gates of her walled garden and loses her intimacy. Moreover, as Leggatt concludes, '[i]n testing and revealing the character of the substitute, each episode also reveals that the substitution cannot be exact; one person simply does not equal another. Angelo is not the Duke, Mariana is not Isabella, nor is Isabella Mariana.'³⁴ To an extent, substitutions also show the double standard of Viennese morality that Bernard Capp so clearly describes. In his thorough research based mainly in the London Bridewell records, the scholar distinguishes between male and female sexual reputation and realises that women were not always the victims of sexual crimes, but sometimes manipulated these situations to their own ends. Even though, as Capp comments, 'there is no doubt that the double standard was deeply embedded in the culture of the age and that it placed women at a massive disadvantage [,]'³⁵ in the case of pregnancy, for example, women tried to push men into marriage.

Contrary to Mariana's attitude, Isabella, the Viennese heroine, does not choose substitution to make her space respected. In fact, the only moment in which she substitutes

³³ Alexander Leggatt, 'Substitution in *Measure for Measure*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39.3 (Autumn, 1988), 342-359 (p. 342).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349

³⁵ Bernard Capp, 'The Double Standard Revisited: Plebeian Women and Male Sexual Reputation in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 162 (1999), 70-100 (p. 74).

someone is when she accuses Angelo instead of Mariana in 4.6, probably because she feels responsible for Mariana's misfortune, not because she is willing to give up her virginity. When we first encounter her in 1.4, the stage directions indicate that she is in a nunnery of the order of the Poor Clares.³⁶ She is in the midst of taking her vows as a bride of Christ, but when Lucio comes to inform her about her brother's misfortune, she is forced away from the convent before her vows are complete. The nunnery is an enclosed space, as the nuns need to unlock the doors to go out. Isabella and the other nun comment that once they have accepted the vows they should not speak to any man (1.4.8-10). Back in Vienna Isabella faces the Duke's and Angelo's proposals which threaten her chastity. Isabella's spatial mobility in the city can be considered atypical: in addition to being a woman, she will become a nun; therefore, the convent walls should protect her. It seems that this nun-to-be has determined her identity before the play starts and does not need any safe-conduct to move through the streets of Vienna; she is a mediator of space in the city. While the Duke, a male authority, needs to disguise himself to visit the city's different spaces, Isabella moves freely from the nunnery to the ante-room, the court, the prison, the grange, and the city gate. It seems that her invisible, though powerful disguise, is virginity. On the contrary, though pretending to be a friar, the Duke's disguise does not include celibacy.

Isabella's decision to enter the convent is never explained. Feminist critics³⁷ believe that the young heroine's decision was not free. They consider the vow of chastity to be an involuntary Puritan repression that prevents women from exercising their sexual capacities; thus it is unacceptable to them that she has opted for virginity. They argue that when Isabella asks for '[...] a more strict restraint' (4.1.4), she reveals her anxiety and fear

³⁶ Probably the Convent of Saint Clare, an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, was near Aldgate in Shakespeare's times. The religious order was founded by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1212. Following Isabel of France's rule the nuns were asked to live a demanding life of poverty, charity and devotion (See Arden notes, p. 22).

³⁷ Some examples of feminist readings of Isabella's role are: Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983); *Measure for Measure*, ed. by Nigel Wood (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995).

about sexuality. Nonetheless, and without intending to take sides regarding such a decision, it is important to understand the context of chastity during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Furthermore, the case of Isabella is associated to a religious vocation that gives sense to her enclosure, since, according to J. W. Lever, in early modern England ‘[c]hastity was essentially a condition of the spirit; to see it in merely physical terms was to reduce the concept to a mere pagan scruple.’³⁸

When Angelo reveals his plan, Isabella strongly refuses to do it by saying, ‘Sir, believe this: / I had rather give my body than my soul [...]’ (2.4.55-6), thus raising questions both about the Viennese moral codes and women’s sexuality. If the Viennese law cries out ‘death for death [...], and Measure still for Measure’ (5.1.407, 409), Isabella is clearly fitting her decision into that moral code. In *Measure*, as Juliet Dusinberre argues, ‘Isabella’s dilemma arises in part from her readiness to accept the judgment of society that without virginity a woman is nothing worth.’³⁹ She is not choosing between a virtue and a life, but between two lives: hers and her brother’s, thus she expresses the play’s interaction between different and opposing moral codes. Her determination to safeguard her virginity is so strong that when, in the third act, she visits the prison to scold her brother for asking her to sacrifice her virtue, the heroine demonstrates that, in a certain sense, she is able to construct masculinity out of her honour. She becomes quite violent when Claudio pleads for his life and puts an end to the conversation with a clear and heavy sentence: ‘Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?’ (3.1.137). She refuses to change her role as a single woman; moreover, she suffers broken nuptials since she cannot take her religious vows. We hear no verbal response from her to the Duke’s proposals of marriage, so at the end of *Measure* we are still in doubt as to whether she will remain single, return to the convent, or marry him; her conduct becomes ambiguous. If, in Baines’s perspective, ‘[c]hastity is the

³⁸ Lever, p. lxxviii.

³⁹ Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, 3rd edn (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 1975; repr.1979), p. 53.

definitive virtue precisely because it is a site and mode of secular power'⁴⁰, then, emphasises the critic, 'Isabella's "choice" articulates a complex, culturally determined imperative.'⁴¹ The heroine is not only refusing to untie her knot of chastity, but she may be exercising her power over the Duke who will not be able to possess her.

With Isabella, we approach the prison, a central space in the configuration of the city. She goes there more than once as if she had free entrance to that secluded and alien space, so different in nature from the nunnery. These two spheres show the contrasting world of Vienna, a city where conflict between crime, punishment and justice is always latent. The prison seems to be the site of judgment since the characters are there either to serve their sentence or to be executed. The number of times it is mentioned in the play reflects the centrality to the plot and the extent of crime in the city. In fact, this Austro-English city might have been gauged from the significant number of prisons in London of which the Clink⁴² was near Shakespeare's theatre. In Elizabethan times, people were arrested for many different reasons, such as vagrancy, theft, and debt, to mention but a few crimes. Constables like Elbow were responsible for making arrests and sending the guilty to the appropriate prison. Most of the female prisoners in the Clink consisted of prostitutes who spent some periods there with intervals during which they returned to their work. According to Paul Griffiths, prostitution became a particular pattern of social behaviour in London, so much so, that 'metropolitan prostitution could operate with some sophistication and considerable variety [...]. There were some bawdy houses with a number of "lodgers"

⁴⁰ Baines, p. 284.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 284.

⁴² The Clink prison in Southwark was the popular name for the prison attached to Winchester House, a palace that was the home of the Bishops of Winchester from the 12th century until 1626. It is said that many of the prisoners were women that worked in the brothels. It owns its name for the clinch irons that were used to pin prisoners to the wall or floor. In his pamphlet *The Praise and Vertue of a Jayle and Jaylers*, John Taylor lists the eighteen prisons of London: the Tower, the Gatehouse, Fleet, Newgate, Ludgate, Poultry Counter, Wood Street Counter, Bridewell, White Lion, the King's Bench, Marshalsea, Southwark Counter, Clink, St. Katherine's, East Smithfield, New Prison, Lord Wentworth's, and Finsbury (See Taylor, John, *The Praise and Vertue of a Jayle and Jaylers. All the Workes of Iohn Taylor The Water Poet* (London, 1630), STC 23725, Sigs., 2M1^v-2M2^r).

and other situations in which rooms were rented to women who worked alone.⁴³ We know that Mistress Overdone owns a brothel of the first type and that she suffered a major offensive against bawdy houses because they were all closed and pulled down.⁴⁴ Isabella's presence in that space is therefore quite paradoxical, as was Mariam's time in prison once Herod condemned her. In both plays, the absent patriarch returns to enforce the law and recover authority; nevertheless, while Isabella visits the prison, Mariam is secluded within its walls to end up executed. This space can be interpreted as a visual representation of inner containment or of the limits imposed on women. In the same way as the prison walls prevent the free entrance and exit of individuals, chastity protects Isabella from becoming marginalised.

All the female characters in the play represent the opposite of a housewife, not only because they do not fulfil that role, but also because their space is not the household. Isabella, the novice, is supposed to live in the convent; Mistress Overdone is a widow whose home is a brothel; Juliet is an unwed mother who does not seem to have a dwelling place; and Mariana is an outcast who inhabits a moated grange. In this city, almost everyone, except Escalus, lives outside the domestic household, thus, as Gail Kern Paster comments, 'the essential monism of Vienna manifests itself in the unusual and almost complete absence of family and the ordinary domestic life [...].'⁴⁵ This absence of family life might be related to the experience of broken nuptials, since for most of the female characters attaining the goal of marriage is a hard task. The home should not be seen merely as an empty container, or a functional space, but, as Lena Cowen Orlin suggests, 'a

⁴³ Paul Griffiths, 'The Structure of Prostitution in Elizabethan London', *Continuity and Change*, 8.1 (1993), 39-63 (p. 44).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43. The major offensive against the capital's bawdy houses was in the winter of 1576-7. It may have been launched by some notable godly figures on the bench. Shakespeare might be evoking this event.

⁴⁵ Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), p. 207.

material agent in the construction of personal identity.’⁴⁶ The character-for-character substitutions in the play do not grant female characters a space of their own because in the process of wooing, wedding, and marriage they lose the exclusiveness of their intimacy. Even the situation of the chaste Isabella is uncertain. Because of the play’s open ending, we do not know whether she will be finally empowered with a private space and a public voice. Her spatial mobility is the result of a temporary attainment of power, which does not grant a definite place for her in Vienna.

Instead of playing with the two-fold sense of domestic as home and homeland shown in *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare approaches privacy from a different angle in this play. Even though the private in *Measure* is also enmeshed in a complex social context in which individual and state are in constant conflict, in this play the notion is built within liminal and marginal spaces, such as the prison, the convent, the moated grange and the brothel where there are no traces of domestic activities understood as household chores, like, for example, those that Lady Margaret Hoby describes in her diary or that are advised in conduct manuals. Privacy is associated with illicit activities, secrecy, seclusion and withdrawal, and female characters suggest that their fashioning of self-in-relation-to-space is mostly achieved within the private sphere of their own chastity.

⁴⁶ Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 192.

CHAPTER VII:
FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC: SHAKESPEARE'S
"SPATIAL GAMES" IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

Every space has its own dynamics. Dramatists work with the interaction of spaces and convey ideas through words put into action. Because space is associated to social, cultural, and environmental factors, the use of it in a play may have a profound effect on the characters' relationships, as well as on the development of the plot. It follows, thus, that actions within a space do not only transform it in a Lefebvrian 'lived space'¹ or in de Certeau's 'practiced place'², but may sometimes create tensions in the construction of identity. In his insightful analysis of the poetics of space, Gaston Bachelard, the French philosopher, highlights these phenomena by asserting that '[s]pace calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at work. It mows and ploughs.'³ In fact, dramatic action metaphorically expands or contracts spaces and plays 'with the dialectics of within and without, which leads to a dialectics of open and closed'⁴, thus creating a fictional world where the movement of individuals connects one place to the other.

This chapter will address feminine space from the perspective of movement; that is to say, from the ways in which Shakespeare, as a theatre director, moves female characters from the private to the public sphere, thus endowing them with a temporary voice. I will argue that the playwright achieves this in *The Merchant of Venice* by means of, what I have called, 'spatial games': the movement of characters – especially women – from one represented space to the other, usually from private household to public court, piazza or street, in a similar way as actors move onstage, by means of entrances and exits with their respective exchanges of language and action. This movement is not only physical; that is to say, a change of place, but most of the times corresponds to a process of assuming a different role.

¹ Cfr. p. 36 of the thesis.

² Cfr. p. 32 of the thesis.

³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, with a new foreword by John R. Stilgoe, trans. by María Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.

The following lines will attempt to test this theory by looking closely at the movements of three women – Portia, Nerissa and Jessica –, as well as the way in which this process enables them to gain control over men. It will also be relevant to analyse the motives that make these female characters abandon the protected and safe household boundaries, even at the risk of breaking family ties, or losing their reputation or position in society. Why do they move? What are they looking for? Do they freely decide this or are they pressed by circumstances?

Written between 1596 and 1597⁵, *The Merchant of Venice* begins with Antonio, Salerio and Solanio in mid-conversation, who comment both about their business and about Antonio’s melancholic mood while they look at the harbour. They seem to be in an open and windy space overlooking the sea where they see a profusion of ‘dangerous rocks’ within the ‘roaring waters’. As Jack D’Amico points out, they are probably in the piazza of San Mark’s, Venice, ‘an enclosed arena and a port opening on the *bacino*, where ships would arrive from distant places’⁶ This geographical speculation may be relevant to the question of space considering that the piazza was a place of encounter and exchange within Renaissance cities, and as such, a public place where male characters meet in this play. These three men, together with Bassanio, Lorenzo and Gratiano, who join Antonio later, are prestigious merchants in Venice as we can tell by their language. When Antonio refers to his trade and to his mood, he speaks in mercantile terms:

Believe me, no. I thank my *fortune* for it,
My *ventures* are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole *state*
Upon the *fortune* of this present year:
Therefore my *merchandise* makes me not sad.
(1.1.41-5, italics mine)

⁵ *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁶ Jack D’Amico, *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage* (USA: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 37.

Then, they comment on the news that Portia, a fair young lady from Belmont, is looking for a husband.

The second scene in the comedy immediately shifts to Belmont, which Bassanio has previously described as a place where ‘the four winds blow in from every coast/ [...] and her sunny locks /Hang on her temples like a golden fleece, /Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos’ strand, [...]’ (1.1.167-70)⁷ Early texts almost never specified locations and consequently they were no longer inserted in later editions; in fact, neither the Arden nor the Cambridge editions, or the Roberts’ Quarto (1600), or the Hayes’ Quarto (1600) specify that the action takes place in Belmont in the stage directions; however, because Portia is the owner of the house, one may imagine that they are in her palace. We find her talking to Nerissa, who advises her lady about her possible suitors using commercial language and similar notions than those previously uttered by the three men:

..., if your *miseries* were in the
same *abundance* as your good *fortunes* are; and yet for aught I see,
they are as sick that *surfeit* with too much as they that *starve* with *nothing*.
(1.2.3-6, italics mine)

From reading these two passages, it can be stated that there is no difference in language style, but in language form: while in Belmont women interact in prose, in Venice men express themselves in verse. It seems that this mercantile language becomes the link between these two worlds, since even though the male characters are dealing with their business and the female ones are talking about Portia’s marriage opportunities, they use very similar concepts. This phenomenon might correspond to the developing capitalism in early modern England and to the economic determinants of marriage in Elizabethan society. Indeed, Lawrence Stone explains, ‘marriage was not an intimate association based on personal choice. Among the upper and middling ranks it was primarily a means of tying together two kinship groups, of obtaining collective economic advantages and securing

⁷ All references to the play are taken from: *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by M. M. Mahood, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

useful political alliances.’⁸ Thus, it would be no surprise, then, that some of the characters in Renaissance comedy speak in these terms, since language was heavily coloured by economic issues such as the property implications of marriage. According to Walter S. H. Lim, ‘[i]n *The Merchant*, Venice is invoked not only as a kind of “exotic” locale upon which to stage the play’s romantic interests but also as a site facilitating Shakespeare’s meditation on cultural developments shaping the economic life of the English nation.’⁹ Indeed, critics such as Katharine E. Maus, have recently argued against the materialist strain of literary criticism that equates characters with possessions, and has claimed that Shakespeare’s poetics of property takes some liberties in order to question ‘one’s responsibility for one’s debts and the nature of children’s obligation to parents and vice versa [...]’¹⁰, among other issues. In *The Merchant*, for instance, the suitors are noblemen, but Bassanio is in debt; thus, points out Maus, ‘Bassanio’s motives for wooing Portia seem bluntly pecuniary: she is “a lady richly left”, and he hopes to repay his debts to Antonio from her inheritance.’¹¹

Clearly, commercial language is not a marker of either the private or the public nature of a space, but rather a link between spheres and, probably an example of a social and historical feature of the lives of merchants and gentlemen, with specific reference to the commodification of marriage. Matches of convenience resulted not only in successful business opportunities, but also in the emergence of ambivalent attitudes regarding love and marriage. It cannot be denied that some early modern brides and grooms could have got married because they genuinely fell in love; however, one needs to admit that probably a great percentage of couples did it for economic benefits. It is hard to judge the innermost

⁸ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 5.

⁹ Walter S. H. Lim, ‘Surety and Spiritual Commercialism in *The Merchant of Venice*’, *SEL* 1500-1900, 50.2 (Spring, 2010), 355-382 (p. 356).

¹⁰ Katharine Eisaman Maus, ‘Heirs and Affines in *The Merchant of Venice*’, in *Being and Having in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 59-74 (p. 59).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

feelings of the characters in the comedy; nevertheless, there seems to be a certain material motivation or interest from the men's point of view, since it is these women who contribute more to the common wealth of the new unions. We know, as we have commented, that Bassanio's fortune has been depleted as he shame-facedly confesses to one of his friends, thus showing that he needs money to solve his problems:

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine state
By something showing a more swelling port
Than my faint means would grant continuance.
Nor do I now make moan to be abridged
From such a noble rate, but my chief care
Is to come fairly off from the great debts
Wherein my time, something too prodigal,
Hath left me gaged.

(1.1.121-29)

Later on, Antonio is more specific and reveals that Portia's invitation to his friend provides a good opportunity to attain his desires:

[...]; therefore go forth,
Try what my credit can in Venice do,
That shall be racked even the uttermost
To furnish thee to Belmont to fair Portia.
Go presently enquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust or for my sake.

(1.2.178-84)

We are also informed that suitors from everywhere come to Belmont hoping to choose the right casket so as to earn Portia's love – a feeling that is questionable if we think that they do not even know her, except for the rumours circulating in Venice. What other motivation can they have than that of possessing her fortune? Even though it would be unfair to state that this is the only reason that moves them to leave their remote foreign lands, it is probably the strongest.

The second argument about language form as a device that might separate or distinguish spaces may also seem weak, since prose or verse is not always the speech of

female or male characters respectively. Therefore, at first sight it would not be consistent to state that language form or style – whether the characters speak in verse or in prose – constitutes an indicator of spaces. It would be also too bold to argue that verse is always associated to the public sphere whereas prose is linked to the private domain. Most of the characters express themselves in both ways depending more on the situation and the people they are addressing rather than on their position within a determined space. However, if we pay closer attention to other scenes in the comedy where these same characters converse, we will realise that the second scene in the first act is the only time when Portia and Nerissa speak in prose; from then on, they speak in verse.

In his study on Shakespeare's use of prose, Brian Vickers refers to the playwright's deliberate intent of alternating between prose and verse for dramatic and aesthetic effect, sometimes even transgressing the Elizabethan conventions that determined the occasions for prose as 'the vehicle of an inferior class, such as servants and clowns [...]'¹² Moreover, as he argues, the prose-speakers are usually formed by a group which is based on 'the sense of the 'otherness' of prose, conveying information about particular characters who are below the dignity and norm of verse, for a variety of reasons [...]'¹³ Portia and Nerissa speak in prose at home, but in verse at court. The language of the household becomes a deviation from blank verse through which Shakespeare might be conveying the idea of difference, separation, or alienation. If one considers that during the Renaissance women were considered as inferior beings, the 'otherness of prose'¹⁴ becomes intrinsically related not only to the otherness of being a woman, but also to that of being a foreigner, an outsider, or a minority. However, there are more complexities behind the language used by female characters in *The Merchant*. Portia's position as owner of the house, regardless of

¹² Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London and New York: Methuen, 1968, repr. 1979), p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

her subjection to her dead father's will, places her in a different situation than the rest of female characters. Likewise Lady Hoby, Mariam, and the Roman ladies, Volumnia and Virgilia, she is in command of the household and is able to exercise her authority in a similar way to a widow in Elizabethan England. Despite factors such as social status, age, and economic position, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford agree that widows had a potential for religious and economic freedom and that for wealthier women, this was a stage which 'allowed the exercise of independence impossible in any other female condition: widowhood was a time of maximum female autonomy.'¹⁵ To an extent, the above-mentioned female characters are virtual widows because either their father or husband is away from the household, or, in the case of Mistress Overdone in *Measure*, she does not have a proper husband, but is granted economic independence by the men frequenting her brothel.

In relation to language, Shylock may be paired with the female characters. Although, in part, he is a prose-speaker because he is an alien character, his Jewishness separates him from society as he becomes marginalised and isolated. His prose, nevertheless, is more aggressive than that of the women. In the case of Bassanio and the other merchants, they speak in prose several times as, for example, when he meets Shylock in act 1, scene 2, and also when Solanio and Salerio speak to the Jew, and later to Tubal and the serving man in the first scene of the third act. Bearing these examples in mind, we can state that language form does not usually indicate the space or locale where a speech is being delivered; rather, it seems to be a conventional sign of more or less formality among speakers. Therefore, we might need to find out whether language in this play is linked to space in a different and significant way that could help answer an underlying question present this chapter and which is perhaps prior to the question of spatial movement and its

¹⁵ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, 'Widowhood', in *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), pp. 174-184 (p. 180).

causes or motivations. If characters move and that movement is not only physical – we cannot forget that space and scenery in the theatres where Shakespeare’s plays were performed were limited – how can we tell whether the characters are interacting in a private or in a public space? How do they move from one sphere to the other?

Evidently, modes of privacy and of public life can be evoked in many different ways. Playwrights can represent them by means of stage directions, or sometimes by the type of furniture described or actually set onstage, and by the activities performed by the characters, to mention only a few possibilities. If we consider the text in *The Merchant of Venice*, we can argue that in this comedy there are no specific stage directions through which the reader can recognise that a determined scene is taking place in a specific locale. In fact, there are not even act or scene divisions in the Quartos and only the *Folio* of 1623 separates the play into acts. The only ‘divisions’ or indicators that there is a change of *ubi* or of grouping of characters, are the many entries and exits of characters throughout the whole play, yet these do not specify the space they are visiting, but rather their movement into the stage and out of it. Apart from that very general information, there are some geographical descriptions, some references to the weather and to the merchants’ trade that provide hints to establish, at least, whether the setting is Venice or Belmont. Solanio, for example, mentions the ‘Rialto’ in acts one and three – a bridge where the Venetian merchants meet for their commercial exchanges. In addition, Salarino comments later on the geography of the place:

... that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrecked on the Narrow Seas;
the Goodwins I think they call the place - a very dangerous flat, and fatal,
where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, [...].”

(3.1.2-5)

It is unlikely that these topographical references could contribute to our distinction of spaces in terms of their private or public nature. Taking this as a premise, it seems relevant to go a step further and attempt to answer the second question. Every movement

in the comedy takes place within the frame of these two worlds or macro spaces: Venice and Belmont. There is a constant shift between them, as well as between private and public areas. Within this context, the private domain is usually identified with the household and with more enclosed spaces, whereas the public is linked both to state affairs such as commerce, law and justice, and to communal and open spaces like the court and the city with its squares and streets. The action begins in the open port of Venice – a male-dominated realm, then moves to Portia’s household, and from there, to Shylock’s house. Shortly after we are back in Belmont in the casket room to return to a city street in front of the Jew’s house and so forth. This movement of settings conforms to the idea of ‘spatial games’ since in *The Merchant of Venice* the public space, as D’Amico argues, ‘takes shape between the port and the mart, with Shylock’s house and the courtroom of the ducal palace serving as the two Venetian interiors the play visits, one most private, or alien, and the other aristocratic and public.’¹⁶ Indeed, it seems that Shylock’s house is neither a public, nor a private space, but a marginal and alien one to which we will go back when we follow his daughter’s movements.

If we pay close attention to the places where the characters meet, we could classify some of them as private and others as public provided that we take for granted some topographic features such as the openness of a street or a piazza, the confinement of Shylock’s house, or the communal aspect of the court; nevertheless, we might reach a wrong conclusion, since although these characteristics can contribute and sometimes define the type of space the characters occupy, they are not unequivocal. Neither in the text, nor on the stage is it always possible to detect a movement from one sphere to the other. In both cases, a change of *ubi* or the sense of a specific location is usually virtual or imagined; thus, one of the key elements in the identification of spaces and movements in

¹⁶ D’Amico, p. 37.

and out of them may be found in the semiotics of language. In other words, we could state that the content or meaning of the characters' speech is more relevant than its form. In fact, in Shakespeare's plays most of the descriptions required to form a mental vision of place are given through language. Andrew Gurr explains this phenomenon by pointing out that the Elizabethan audience had to work at visualising the places the words described. Playgoers were trained to listen; the 'chief requirement of a play was 'eloquent speech', not dramatic action or scenic extravagance.'¹⁷ This does not mean that there is no action; on the contrary, action is conveyed through words and it is this eloquence of expression, this language in action, which creates movement. In other words, we are speaking quite often of linguistic or imagined movements rather than of the actual physical displacement of characters onstage.

The act of speaking gives characters an active role in the plot. The more speeches a character delivers or the more lines he is given in a play, the more powerful he seems to become. And to a certain extent this is true, since in early modern England the use of rhetoric and the achievement of eloquence become parallel to the attainment of power. According to J. B. Elshtain, historical fact shows that in most of epochs, and even before the Renaissance, eloquence or the voice of men was associated to the public arena whereas silence was the characteristic feature of the feminine private locus. She argues that 'man's public speech took place in the public realm par excellence, the polis. His private, albeit social, speech was carried on within the household. [...] Speech too had its public and private moments. Women and slaves were confined to private realms of discourse.'¹⁸ In a sense, women were silenced, or they were constantly struggling to find a voice and speak through others; hence their discourse was definitely excluded from political speech. Even

¹⁷ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 88.

¹⁸ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman in Social and Political Thought* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), p. 14.

though this is debatable in terms of the power of silence in drama, it is valid in broad terms. It definitively brings another issue to the fore: the possible relationship between language, space and gender.

Historical and literary traditions provide evidence that rhetoric or eloquent speech was not considered a proper activity for women before, during, and for at least a century after Shakespeare's time. According to Patricia Parker, 'it was the public nature of rhetoric – taking women outside their proper "province" or place – which disqualified them, in a long tradition dating from as ancient an authority as Aristotle's strictures that women were to be not only silent but identified with the property of the home and with the private sphere, with a private rather than a common place.'¹⁹ Does Shakespeare then equate eloquence with the public male arena and silence with the private women's territory? The answer is two-fold, since, on the one hand, there is a certain gendering of space in *The Merchant*, as women inhabit the household in Belmont whereas men appear in the court, in the market and in the piazzas of Venice; yet, on the other, women do not only abandon their private condition, but they are also usually not silent. Portia leads the conversation at home and argues persuasively in public. Nerissa makes sharp, witty comments to her lady, as when Portia complains about her weariness and does not seem convinced about her serving woman's advice:

PORTIA Good sentences, and well pronounced.
NERISSA They would be better if well followed.
(1.2.9-10)

Furthermore, even Jessica is particularly assertive and her words lead to action – 'I will make fast the doors, and gild myself [...]' (2.6.50) – thus being able to defy what tradition has generally presented as the opposition of genders: 'women are words, men are deeds.'²⁰

¹⁹ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 104.

²⁰ Cited in Parker, p. 23.

When the play starts, the three female characters dwell in private spaces: Portia and Nerissa are in a room in the palace at Belmont, and Jessica appears at her father's home – the first time she is mentioned by name. However, throughout the play, all of them leave their original status and enter into the public sphere after a complex process in which they give up some of their feminine traits in order to participate in the men's world and use language as a weapon or strategy to attain their goals. How do these women move? Do they follow a pattern for their movements?

Shakespeare examines Portia, the noble and witty Belmont heroine, particularly in terms of the role she performs within her household and the way in which she moves in and out of it. Her palace is usually closed to visitors and she often shows her intolerance to outsiders. In fact, when Nerissa names the suitors, she mocks them and attaches stereotypes to them. As Richard A. Levin points out, 'just as Portia's attitude towards Morocco and Aragon highlights her intolerance for outsiders encroaching on her life, so her very different reception for Bassanio shows her insularity.'²¹ Her antipathy towards foreigners shows that her household is an enclosed space, a protected fortress, not open to anyone.

It is quite difficult to determine what interest Portia may have in moving from the private to the public stage. Her contradictory personality is misleading since 'she is, on the one hand, the trusting and dutiful daughter, but she is also a sceptical woman who apparently resolves to let Bassanio be tested: [If you do love me, you will find me out (3.2.41)].'²² Portia's urge to leave Belmont for Shylock's trial seems to originate in a combination of motivations. If we consider that by this stage of the play Portia has already chosen her suitor and future husband, we can state, as Barbara Hodgdon observes, that she

²¹ Richard A. Levin, 'Portia's Belmont', in *Love and Society in Shakespearean Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses), pp. 53-85 (p. 62).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

does not leave her household in order to look for a husband; she ‘does not assume a disguise in order to pursue a wooer or [...], to play gender games. As a married woman, she has no need to protect her virginity.’²³ She wants to save her husband’s life, and in so doing, she demonstrates that she is not only her household’s ‘master’, but is able to assume a powerful role in the public sphere. Playing the role of Balthazar, ‘a young doctor of Rome’, she puts Bassanio’s fidelity to the test and asserts her authority over men. Portia acquires control of both realms since she releases Antonio from his bond and, by analogy, frees the Venetians from their empty and merciless decrees, as she vehemently puts forward when she tries to persuade Shylock about her ideal of mercy and justice:

[...]
 It is an attribute to God himself,
 And earthly power doth then show likest God’s
 When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
 Tough justice be thy plea, consider this:
 That in the course of justice, none of us
 Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
 The deeds of mercy.
 (4.1. 191-97)

Even though Portia and Nerissa need to adopt a male disguise to be admitted into the court of law – a patriarchal territory within the urban sphere – these cross-dressed heroines challenge and question the inhuman Venetian concepts of justice, mercy and law. The court then becomes a contested space, one in which through the substitution of identity, ‘Shakespeare tests the city by bringing it through a crisis of law.’²⁴ In order to play the ‘spatial game’ Portia does not only need to move from household to court, but must also wear male garb to look like a man. In her case, changing roles implies becoming an unruly woman since, as Margaret King states, ‘masculine women represented a ‘refusal of

²³ Barbara Hodgdon, ‘Sexual Disguise and the Theatre of Gender’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 179-97 (p. 185).

²⁴ Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 222.

obedience' to the prevailing culture.'²⁵ Nonetheless, according to Karen Newman, the scene in which we can best appreciate Portia's 'unruliness' – that is, her command of the situation – is the ring episode after the trial. In her previous role as 'lord' of Belmont, she delivers a speech of total submission to Bassanio and gives him a ring that becomes the token of love and fidelity,

[...]
Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours
Is now converted. But now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord's. I give them with this ring,
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.
(3.2.166-174)

The last three lines, however, express a different mood because though in the previous ones she surrenders to her husband's control, in this statement, she leaves open the possibility that will later allow her to recover her power. In the fourth act, Bassanio gives away the ring in payment for Balthazar's services and unwittingly restores Portia's dominion. Moreover, he surrenders to an 'unruly woman'²⁶, one who steps outside her role of obedient woman since at the beginning she 'evokes the ideal of a proper Renaissance lady and then transgresses it [and] becomes an unruly woman.'²⁷

Portia's case is complex. On the one hand, she transgresses the boundaries of the private world because of love, and on the other, she searches for power. It seems that these motives are the ones that make her move from the private to the public sphere. According to Carol T. Neely, it is precisely the movement toward marriage, whether achieved or

²⁵ Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 189.

²⁶ Karen Newman, 'Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38.1 (Spring 1987), 19-33 (p. 28). The author borrows this concept from Lisa Jardine's article, 'Cultural Confusion and Shakespeare's Learned Heroines: These are Old Paradoxes', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38.1 (Spring, 1987), 1-18 (p. 12).

²⁷ Newman, p. 29.

failed, which constitutes the core dramatic action that influences the themes and structure of the plot in Shakespeare's comedies. Furthermore, 'marriage is the social context that centrally defines the female characters in Shakespeare's plays; with few exceptions their conflicts, crises, and character development occur in connection with wooing, wedding and marriage.'²⁸ Whatever form it takes, Shakespeare's courtship narrative always moves the characters from one state of being to another that is clearly differentiated. It seems that this transition from wooing to wedding becomes the route chosen by the women in this play in order to circulate from the private to the public space and vice versa. I could argue further that what links these opposite spheres is not only what Neely indicates, or what Stephen Greenblatt calls the 'circulation of social energy'²⁹, nor the search for erotic power, but a sort of 'spatial mobility' – a device that facilitates the communication between spaces as it enables the characters to move from one place to the other. Portia follows a pattern in her spatial process in order to leave the private space: first, she has a strong motivation that leads her to dress like a man; then, she acquires the rhetoric of law, and later, she transgresses the boundaries of the masculine domain. One might wonder if the spatial movement ends here; that is to say, once the heroine attains her goal of becoming a married woman and saves her husband. This is not the case with Portia, since at first glance there is a sort of 'boomerang effect' as she returns to Belmont by the end of the play. Nonetheless, she is still in command of the situation since she is the one who leads the conversation and invites the guests into her private household. She shows that she is still the 'master' of the house by giving orders: 'Go in, Nerissa:/ Give order to my servants that they take / No note at all of your being absent hence – [...]' (5.1.118-20), as well as by

²⁸ Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 2.

²⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 6. The 'circulation of power' is seen as an exercise of power and force. He describes social energy as something measurable, yet identified indirectly by its effects. It is manifested in the capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual traces to produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences.

opening her house to the visitors: '[...] But God sort all! You are welcome home, my lord' (5.1.132). Even though she calls Bassanio 'my lord', she only follows conventions, probably according to patriarchal custom, rather than because she is not completely empowered.

In *The Merchant of Venice* this spatial mobility takes often the form of mercantile voyages or journeys. Merchants move from Venice to sell their goods, Portia leaves Belmont not merely to save her husband's life, but also to check whether he still has her ring. In a sense, the play depicts a structure of exchange in which the movement of objects or people acquires different meanings during the different stages of the process. In fact, as Karen Newman explains, 'By following the movements of [Portia's] ring, we may discover something about how the play both enacts and interrogates Elizabethan structures of figural and sexual exchange. Objects, like words, change their meaning in different contexts; as things pass from hand to hand, they accumulate meanings from the process of exchange itself.'³⁰ In its multiplicity of movements – from Bassanio to Balthazar to Portia to Antonio and back to Bassanio – the ring becomes a commodity that determines to a great extent the future love and fidelity of the married couple. In the Venetian commercial market, the ring becomes a product that links romance and mercantilism and that regenerates the merchants' business. These journeys are a combination of love, commercialism and a search for power. They constitute games or contests between men and women to control either the domestic or the public space. According to Catherine Belsey, there is a sense in the comedies that love is a game played by both men and women. In fact, as the critic argues, 'Shakespearean lovers, in various forms of disguise,

³⁰ Newman, p. 28.

tease, tantalize and compete to outwit each other, usually, it has to be said, at the eventual expense of the men.’³¹

To refer to Jessica’s spatial movement or game, I need to deal with her relationship with Shylock, her father. The Jew lives in Venice, yet he is not part of the city’s public life even though he is a moneylender and participates in the economy of Venice. However, he lives a marginal life and tries to make his daughter obey his rules. Until the fourteenth century, Jews were allowed to go to Venice for money-lending activities, but they were not granted residence permits. In 1516, the ruling Council established the world’s oldest Jewish Ghetto of Venice. Jews were a minority group within the city: however, as Ania Loomba argues, ‘the significance of blackness or Jewishness in English culture cannot be reckoned by numbers alone. Outsiders provoked more debates, anxieties, and representations than the popular statistics can warrant.’³² As an alien, Shylock, is segregated from society.

He moves between the boundaries he has imposed on himself, and which he tries to impose on Jessica. When the masque is about to start, he warns her to stay inside the house showing that, as Gail Paster remarks, the moneylender has constructed ‘[...] a city within a city, a city apart.’³³

... Hear you me, Jessica,
Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum
And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Not thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces,
But stop my house’s ears – I mean my casements.
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house. [...]
(2.5.29-35)

³¹ Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (London: Palgrave, 2001), p. 49.

³² Ania Loomba, ‘Outsiders in Shakespeare’s England’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 147-66 (p. 148).

³³ Paster, p. 196.

For Shylock, windows constitute apertures into his private enclosure. In Lena Cowen Orlin's view, 'Shylock gets the meanings of his windows both right and wrong. He is afraid that the noises of the night will entice Jessica to the window'³⁴, but rather than 'ears', these holes are eyes for him; 'the problem for the anxious householder, however, is less that they are the source of the gaze than that they receive the gaze.'³⁵ Shylock does not only refuse to look outside, but does not want to be seen in an act of withdrawal that creates a hidden and personal space.³⁶

Just as in *Measure for Measure*, in *The Merchant* the term 'house' (22) is used more frequently than the notion of 'home' (8)³⁷, particularly in the case of Shylock's household. For Jessica, her father's 'house is hell' (2.3.2), to Lancelot it is simply 'the Jew's house' (2.2.34), and to the Jew it is a refuge from the Venetian often anti-semitic society³⁸, so he advises Antonio: 'See to my house left in fearful guard' (1.3.168). As I discussed in the previous chapter, 'house' can become a synonym of 'home' in a variety of contexts, but in these cases it acquires the material connotation of a building, which probably lacks a homey atmosphere. Unlike Shylock, Portia refers to her dwelling almost always as her 'home'; for instance, when she is speaking to Bassanio in the final act, and expresses her willingness to let him in: 'You are welcome home, my lord' (5.1.132). Her linguistic accuracy is revealed in the distinction she makes within the same speech between 'house' and 'home'. When she decides to forgive Bassanio, she advises him: 'Let not that doctor e'er come near my house' (5.1.223); then, a few lines later, Portia exchanges words

³⁴ Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Women on the Threshold', *Shakespeare Studies*, 25, ed. by Leeds Barroll (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), pp. 50-58 (p. 54).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁶ Cfr. discussion of withdrawal as a form of privacy in p. 79 of the thesis. See Sasha Roberts, 'Shakespeare "creepes into the womens closets about bedtime": Women Reading in a Room of Their Own', in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices, Bodies, Spaces: 1580-1690*, ed. by Gordon McMullan (UK: Hampshire, Palgrave 2001), pp. 30-63 (p. 33).

³⁷ Shakespeare Concordance, <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/> [accessed March 2013].

³⁸ Especially interesting regarding commercial language and anti-semitic readings of the play is Katherine Eisaman Maus's introduction in *The Norton Shakespeare* (2008), pp.1113-1115.

and warns her love not to lie ‘a night from home’ (5.1.230). This change of term could seem meaningless, yet I think the Belmont householder clearly differentiates between the rank and relationship of the people who will come into her place and the situation or context of their visit. Even if we know the real identity of the disguised doctor of civil law, this figure is associated with the ring conflict; therefore, that person would not be welcomed and the more impersonal ‘house’ is used. On the contrary, when she refers to the intimacy of wedlock, she speaks of ‘home’. It is as if the lady were able to distinguish between degrees of privacy, thus decide the people she lets in and out. Critics would attest that Portia is the epitome of the witty, unruly heroine who controls characters and plot; indeed, it is Portia who maneuvers the trial to achieve the outcome she desires; she is also the ‘master’ of her household in Belmont and exerts her influence on Bassanio, her husband; moreover, together with Nerissa, she orchestrates her choice of husband. To an extent, she makes all the deals and could be well called the “merchant” of this play. Her trade is made of clever language, appropriate apparel and precise movements.

Different from Portia in social status, but with a similar personality, Jessica is presented as a rebellious girl, notwithstanding that she remains mostly silent throughout the play. Her position in Belmont is ambiguous, as it is difficult to determine whether she is really ‘at home’ or incorporated by the Christian community after her conversion when, as she reveals, ‘Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well, / Stealing her soul with many vows of faith, [...] (5.1.18-19). She does not want to follow her father’s advice, nor does she plan to share his hidden, confined lodgings since she finds that life unbearable, as she confides to Launcelot: ‘I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so. / Our house is hell, [...] (2.3.1-2). She wants to create a space of her own, and in order to attain that goal she is unconcerned about stealing Shylock’s goods to finance her honeymoon with Lorenzo. As Maus observes, Jessica is the presumptive heir of the Jew and ‘because Shylock’s wealth is

entirely in chattels, Jessica can abscond with it, as she could not with a landed state.³⁹ Even though she throws down a casket full of money and jewels to her lover, for a moment she hesitates about running away with him and delays coming down. However, Lorenzo finally persuades her, and her fear of exchanging her dress for a doublet, her father for a lover, and Jewishness for Christianity fades away, to the extreme that she steals more money: 'I will make fast the doors and gild myself / With some more ducats, and be with you straight' (2.6.49-50). It is difficult to unveil her innermost feelings; moreover, we cannot tell whether she leaves home because she is really in love with Lorenzo, or simply because she wants to escape from that sort of life. She has to give up many things in order to become free – familial bonds, traditions, religion, and even femininity, in the sense that she has to dress as a boy in order to escape.

It may be argued that Jessica represents an exception because she belongs to a marginal group and, as such, she should have had less freedom than the rest of the female characters. It is clear that the Jewish girl stands for an ethnic minority and that, together with Nerissa, they perform less important roles within the comedy. Nonetheless, they are both lively and independent characters. Even if we consider Jessica as an unloving and frivolous daughter, her role in the play is active and essential for the sub-plot. In the case of Nerissa, we can realise that she is much more than a waiting maid, since she is not only taken continually into her lady's confidence, but is also brave enough to dress up as a boy and accompany Portia to the court. She is also important in the running of Belmont, since in the casket scene it seems that all the candidates have to deal with her before meeting the beautiful heiress, a task probably entrusted to her by Portia's father.

The three women portrayed in *The Merchant of Venice* are able to move from the private to the public space. In so doing, they need to disguise themselves like men in an

³⁹ Maus, p. 67.

effort to construct femininity and give weight to their arguments. However, after they move from the private to the public sphere, these female characters experience a ‘return movement’ or a kind of ‘boomerang effect’, which leads them back to where they started, not in the sense that Portia is not in control of the situation, but because once she has reached the goal of marriage and honoured her father’s will, she must fulfil her promise and will not need to ‘move’ anymore; in other words, all deals will be sealed and her business will be over. In the case of Jessica, she is able to escape from her father’s household through conversion and marriage, yet her exchange with Lorenzo with the invocation of love stories – all of which end badly due to unfaithfulness – suggests that his vows too will prove false. When she insinuates this possibility, he retorts: ‘In such a night / Did pretty Jessica (like a little shrew) / Slander her love, and he forgave it her’ (5.1.20-22). Jessica has moved from her father’s house to gain autonomy and attain the identity of a wife. However, her marital status does not seem to grant the security and self-assertion she was hoping for.

Shakespeare shows that women’s self-fashioning is not the result of a dress code, but a much more complex process. He endeavours to give female characters their space and voice, allowing them to play his ‘spatial games’ and linking the private and public spheres through their progression towards marriage and the achievement of power. Privacy in *The Merchant* is represented in a variety of ways by means of contrasts between Portia’s household in Belmont, Shylock’s enclosed house in Venice and the open port, the public court, the Rialto, and the streets of the city, which is not threatened by political affairs of state, as in *The Tragedy of Mariam* or in *Coriolanus*, for Venitian conflicts revolve around issues of law and mercy, similar to those presented by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*. In Portia, the central female figure, we do not see the embodiment of privacy, but

the possibilities offered by drama – substitution of roles, movement, language, and cross-dressing – in order to fashion her public identity.

CONCLUSION

The variety of meanings that the notion of private space and the concept of privacy can adopt in different historical contexts is manifold. According to Cecile M. Jagodzinski, ‘[a] reading of the supporting citations in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of the earliest uses of *private* and *privacy* indicate that, for the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century speaker of English, privacy was a concept different from, yet allied to, our modern notions.’¹ This thesis has attempted to examine the origins of these developing notions and how the terms were used, understood and represented in a selection of Shakespearean plays and early modern texts.

By the time Shakespeare incorporated these notions into his plays, the terms were not associated to the ideological connotations that the modern and post-modern eras have projected onto the public/private dichotomy. As late as the 1660s the achievement of privacy was still very often frustrated and viewed with a certain unease, so much so that, as Erika Longfellow explains, ‘the definition of *privacy* that arouses the most debate for us, “the state or condition of being alone, undisturbed, or free from public attention, as a matter of choice or right”², did not come into use until 1814.’³

The history of privacy is a history of tensions. Particularly in early modern society, privacy was prevented and monitored. The process of nation-formation and Elizabeth’s re-established Protestantism tested the government’s responsibilities allowing the private family to become a little commonwealth or kingdom where the individual householder was empowered. In its obsession to maintain public order, the state resisted privacy as it was beyond its surveillance. In other words, civil authorities could not control this space. These

¹ Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), p. 2.

² *OED*, s.v. “privacy” definition 1.b.

³ Erika Longfellow, ‘Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (The North American Conference on British Studies: April 2006), 313-334 (p. 315).

cultural changes were addressed in abundant early modern conduct literature, as well as in drama, because everyday life started to be represented onstage. However, privacy had already acquired a heavy ideological burden promoted by discourses on the role of husband and wife within the household, the prescriptions of marriage and the expected behaviour of women in relation to the private and public spheres. As Margaret Ezell states, 'it is very hard to escape ideology [because it] is among the shaping forces of the past.'⁴ Thus, most early modern discourses marginalised woman.

Some of the aspects of privacy that became crucial in early modern England, as Katharine E. Maus argues, were: 'the overarching influence of physical space in construing the notion of privacy, the effects of gender roles in the construction of privacy, and the hints, even in the seventeenth century, that a privileging of privacy might have negative consequences.'⁵ Taking into consideration all the aforementioned cultural and socio-historical elements, the thesis explored the possibility of using the private/public spatial dyad as an analytical tool or a point of departure in the study of Shakespeare. With this hypothesis in mind, I looked at the private/public space both as a socio-historical given entity and as a notion prone to be dramatically represented. I scanned the texts in search of Shakespeare's configuration of privacy which, I believed, involved the representation of places, activities, and objects that make reference to the private space, the actual use of the words 'private', 'privacy', and their associated or opposite terms – public, domestic (both as home and homeland), individual, secret, withdrawn, inward, illicit, among others – and the female characters' construction of 'self-in-relation-to-space' within each play as a kind of autonomous realm. In spite of the evident limitations of this theory, I think that I could draw some conclusions.

⁴ Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 13.

⁵ Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 164.

Determining the place and space of woman in early modern England and in Shakespeare's plays is definitely a great challenge, which entails looking for signs or pointers that communicate the sense of private space in the texts and onstage. Contrary to my preconceived ideas of the role of women in this period of history and literature, I can say that in the three Shakespearean plays that I studied, they are neither bound to, nor enclosed within the household. He grants them spatial movements – from the private to the public space – that, regardless of their temporary duration, allow his female characters to find a space of their own and thus acquire a voice that subtly exerts its influence on the public sphere.

Even though the terms – private and privacy – are sometimes not used explicitly in the texts, there is a sense of them, of space, constructed by poetic language and generally represented onstage by conventional properties, but mainly by language descriptions and references. Like other Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare made use of conventional devices to represent privacy such as the reference to places within buildings – closets, thresholds, chambers –, or domestic furniture like stools, chests, and beds, to mention but a few; however, I think the Shakespearean private goes beyond this level. Shakespeare's private is inspired in the myriad connotations of the term found in prescriptive manuals, legal documents and classical writings only to artistically recreate it, as in the case of the Petrarchan *otium*, and quite often to subvert it. He transcends the physical walls of the household, usually associated to the place of early modern woman and takes his female characters across the threshold towards the streets, the court, the garden, the brothel, and the forest in a series of spatial movements that reveal the flexible and porous nature of privacy in his texts. Despite the fact that both Shakespeare and his contemporaries were constrained by theatrical conventions, specifically by the lack of scenery, thus, by the absence of visual indications of locality onstage and the unmarked transition of places in

the texts, there is a sense of place and space that readers and audiences are able to recognise. Shakespeare does not only solve these obstacles by means of poetic and dramatic strategies, but shows that privacy is not circumscribed exclusively to the household; it can also be attained outdoors, sometimes performing illicit activities.

In the case of female characters, a process of wooing, wedding and marriage prompts their movements or their desire to transgress the boundaries of the household. However, it is also true that marriage, especially in prescriptive literature, functions as an enclosed space, similar to the supposedly restricted household limits. Therefore, I can say that while some female characters negotiate and win a space of their own, sometimes these movements have a 'boomerang effect', since, in the end, most of them, revert to their initial status. I would like to point out, however, that Shakespeare's women have a relevant role not only within, but also outside the private household; that is to say, their interaction with their family and the male characters becomes a source of participation in the public arena in ways that differ from modern conceptions of public life. The thesis offers good examples of women's agency during the early modern period, as well as in a variety of early modern texts and a selection of Shakespearean plays. The writings by Elizabeth Cary and Lady Margaret Hoby show, on the one hand, the conflicts between the domestic household and state, and on the other, the powerful inner side of privacy: the sense of inwardness. I cannot deny that conduct literature seems to suffocate and marginalise women, but at the same time it allows dramatists to contest those ideas. The women represented in these manuals, as well as the Shakespearean heroines, have a close relationship to spaces because in the ideology of the period they are equated with an enclosed space, a garden, a room where doors cannot be opened at will. Female characters construct their personal self in relation to the roles and functions they play within those spaces.

Space cannot be ordered into a pattern. Shakespeare plays with it in creative and unexpected ways. Sometimes he represents it as a socio-historical background to the plot; on other occasions, he gives a brief stage direction indicating location, or establishes a contrast between an urban and a more pastoral-like setting, but most of the time he talks about it and describes it through the characters' words. His spaces, private or public, are neither containers of characters or actions, nor inert theatrical devices used to position furniture, objects or characters. He fills the empty space of the script and the stage with human actions that transform places into spaces.

Some of the questions I posed at the beginning of the thesis remain unanswered. There is still ample material to study and analyse regarding these topics, especially regarding the theatrical space and the performance of privacy. My thesis is an attempt to approach space and gender roles from a multi-faceted perspective that, acknowledging the insightful work of critics, aims to avoid interpreting space from a reductive dialectical position that opposes public and private, as well as man and woman. As I stated in my acknowledgements, Shakespeare is an infinite and limitless space.

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