Tracing Private Conversations in Early Modern Europe

Talking in Everyday Life

Edited by
Johannes Ljungberg
Natacha Klein Käfer

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This volume is the result of a joint effort to explore various aspects of how people talked in private in early modern Europe. It was conceived in our PhD theses and further developed at the Centre for Privacy Studies (PRIVACY), a Centre of Excellence housed at the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, in collaboration with the Royal Danish Academy—Architecture, Design, Conservation, funded by the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF138). As editors, we initiated this project with the intention to broaden the scope of our individual contributions to the research field of early modern private conversations which are published in the volumes *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2021) and *Public/Private in 18th-Century Scandinavia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022). In October 2020, we launched a call for publication, and most of the texts in this volume were written by respondents to that call.

We would like to call this book project a "workshop volume". Our procedure has been to circulate written drafts and to dedicate our scheduled time for comments and discussions, thereby breaking with the traditional solitary work and long oral presentations which have traditionally characterized research within the humanities. Besides this book, our discussions have sparked many outlines for future research drawing on ways of studying privacy that have been formed and explored here. This book is not the final word in these matters, but rather an opening chord.

During two days in October 2021, we were lucky enough to convene in a time-typical hybrid event at the Centre for Privacy Studies in Copenhagen to discuss the first drafts for this volume. The discussions during and after this meeting—both in person and via mail—strengthened the volume significantly. After a few more rounds of internal revision and peer review, with the addition of two texts—one written by a colleague at the centre and another deriving from the seminar "Privacy and Freedom of Thought" that was held at the centre in November 2020—the volume gradually took its final form.

The process from creative drafts to a complete typescript is always a long and winding road. We are indebted to professional efforts from many people for leading this work to completion. As editors, we would like to express our gratitude to all those who have contributed to this book with their case studies. Without their continued enthusiasm for this project, our work would have been much more difficult. Working together with a group of colleagues who have always responded to our various suggestions, comments, and administrative enquiries made the entire process a delightful experience. We would also like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their generous and insightful comments on both the book proposal and the submitted typescript. A great thank you also goes to Sam Stocker, Eliana Rangel and Karthika Purushothaman at Palgrave Macmillan, who have supported us with swift and brilliant guidance and responded to our various queries throughout the process.

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stiftelse, and the Centre for Privacy Studies, which is hereby recognized with great gratitude.

Gotha and Copenhagen, spring 2023

Johannes Ljungberg
Natacha Klein Käfer

About This Book

People in early modern Europe had various reasons to talk in private. From sharing personal matters to discussing delicate secrets, all layers of society had their motives for wanting to keep certain exchanges out of public ears and ways of trying to achieve this. The typically secluded character of these conversations implies that we are left largely unaware of the exchanges that took place, what role they played, and what was being said. Nevertheless, this volume sets out to sift through a variety of sources in order to trace how people managed—or failed—to talk in private across early modern Europe. It offers new insights into how private conversations were created, conceptualized, and challenged in everyday life. It also discusses the extent to which such conversations form a part of what we could call early modern privacy. Thereby, the volume addresses the angle of privacy not as a notion of solitude, but as social-interactional engagement in conversations protected from exposure to certain authorities or communities.

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and the Others" in *Die Stadt und die Anderen. Fremdheit in Selbstzeugnisse und Chroniken des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* (Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2021).

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Abbreviations

AbPr	"Acta Brüttensia Privata"
AbPu	"Acta Brüttensia Publica"
AGAD	Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw
AN	Archives Nationales (France)
ANK	National Archives in Krakow
APT	State Archives in Toruń
BC	The Princes Czartoryski Library in Krakow
BJ	Jagiellonian Library in Krakow
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BO	Library of the National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław
TsDIAUL	Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv
VOC	United East India Company; Dutch East India Company
WI, WS, and WD	First, second and third volumes, respectively, of Hermann von Weinsberg's diary

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PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Language, Settings, and Networks for Early Modern Private Conversations

Johannes Ljungberg and Natacha Klein Käfer

People in early modern Europe had various reasons to talk in private. From sharing personal matters to discussing delicate secrets, all layers of society had their motives for wanting to keep certain exchanges out of public ears and ways of trying to achieve this. Political, clerical, and domestic authorities made use of their position to monitor conversations. Men and women across the social strata sought to establish more informal contexts within which they could interact more freely, unfettered by political, religious, or cultural expectations. Both urban and rural dwellers strove to find places and circumstances which allowed them to talk without having their concerns revealed to the community, the neighbourhood, or the village. Viewed from this perspective, people of early modern society were entangled in numerous relations and networks that

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J. Ljungberg and N. Klein Käfer (eds.), *Tracing Private Conversations in Early Modern Europe*,
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were developed and maintained by conversations conducted in private. The typically secluded character of these conversations implies that we are left largely unaware of the exchanges that took place, what role they played, and what was said. Nevertheless, this volume sets out to sift through a variety of sources in order to trace how people managed—or failed—to talk in private across early modern Europe. It offers new insights into how private conversations were created, conceptualised, and challenged in everyday life. It also discusses the extent to which such conversations form a part of what we could call early modern privacy.[1] We thereby address the angle of privacy not as a notion of solitude, but as engagement in conversations hidden or protected from authorities and communities.

The topic of early modern private conversations is scarcely covered by current scholarship. More attention has been paid to public conversations. Drawing on Habermas's paradigmatic theory about how a shared public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*) emerged in the eighteenth century, research has mainly focused on conversations and exchanges that took place in trading houses, coffee houses, salons, newspapers, periodicals, and various closed societies, and how these formed new networks for discussing public issues and criticising the state. The historical process at stake for such investigations has been how social engagements in these originally private circles received public attention and, ultimately, public recognition, thereby paving the way for a liberal society together with its respect for how people need privacy for developing opinions and publicity for sharing them. As a result, what has been deemed a noteworthy conversation in this field of research has often been limited to the historical agents who had active voices within these specific contexts.[2]

[1] This book has been produced within the research conducted at the Centre for Privacy Studies, University of Copenhagen, funded by the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF138). We wish to thank all our colleagues at the Centre for their input on this book project and the anonymous reviewers as well as Emma J. Forsberg for their comments on this chapter.

[2] Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962); Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture", *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995), 807–834; James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Brian Cowan, "What Was Masculine About the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England", *History Workshop Journal* 51 (2001), 137–158; Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph Ward, eds., *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe:*

Another strand of research has offered new perspectives on what the people who participated in the expanding public spheres of early modern Europe understood and learned from these discussions. Particularly, research in early modern literature has paid much attention to the role of private conversations in the development of interior psychological processes fostering the (early modern) self. Private conversations have been understood in a multi-layered sense, as conversational structures in printed texts, as readerly experiences of these texts, and as interpersonal discussions about them.[3] According to Katie Halsey and Jane Slinn, "conversation, as concept and practice, arrived at pivotal and unprecedented stages in its development during the historical period that has come to be known as the long eighteenth century".[4] To support their claim, they point to the fact that most definitions of "conversation" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* derive from the eighteenth century.[5] Moreover, the concept of conversation was not only developed by influential thinkers and authors of the time. Instructions for conversation also figured in numerous handbooks directed to a wider audience aiming to stimulate—and simulate—conversational practices. The art of conversation presented to readers drew on instructions in renaissance manuals for private communication as well as social practices in seventeenth-century salons and it gained momentum in the expanding landscape of popular print during the eighteenth century.[6]

Performance, Geography, Privacy (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2013); Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O. Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton, eds., *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[3] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999); John Richetti, "The Public Sphere and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Social Criticism and Narrative Enactment", in *Manners of Reading: Essays in Honor of Thomas R. Edwards*, ed. by Adam Potkay and Robert Maccubbin, *Eighteenth Century Life* 16:3 (1992), 114–129.

[4] Katie Kalsey and Jane Slinn, "Introduction", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1688–1848*, ed. by Katie Kalsey and Jane Slinn (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), ix.

[5] Halsey and Slinn, 'Introduction', ix.

[6] Christoph Strosetzki, *Konversation: Ein Kapitel gesellschaftlicher und literarischer Pragmatik im Frankreich des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978); Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *"Exclusive Conversations": The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1988); Peter Burke, *The*

Yet another strand of research has investigated the role of private conversations in the domestic realm. The five-volume book project *The History of Private Life* (*Histoire de la vie privée*), led by the French historians Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby in the 1980s, focused on domestic activities as a *longue durée* history of the ancient classification of *vita privata* as opposed to *vita publica*. In the volume dealing with the early modern period, edited by Roger Chartier, conversations are included among social exercises conducted at home that influenced how people perceived and lived their private lives.[7] The division into two separate spheres that structures *A History of Private Life* might give the impression of a strict opposition. According to most theories, however, both realms tended to replicate rather than oppose their inner logic.[8] Michael McKeon's work *A Secret History of Domesticity* came to add significant nuance to this opposition through a dialectical approach

Art of Conversation (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Delphine Denis, "Introduction", in *Madeleine de Scudéry: "De l'air galant" et autres conversations: Pour une étude de l'archive galante*, ed. by. Delphine Denis (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 251–274; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of a Polite Society, Britain 1660–1800* (Essex: Pearson, 2001); Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, trans. by Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review Books, 2005); Stephen Miller, *Conversation: A History of a Declining Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); David Randall, *The Concept of Conversation. From Cicero's Sermo to the Grand Siècle's Conversation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Stefan H. Uhlig, "Improving Talk? The Promises of Conversation", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation in the Long Eighteenth Century*, 1–19; Michèle Cohen, "'A Proper Exercise for the Mind': Conversation and Education in the long Eighteenth Century", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation in the Long Eighteenth Century*, 103–127; Valdemar Nielsen Pold, "Fiktionalitet i F.C. Eilschovs *Forsøg til en Fruentimmer-Philosophie:* Introduktionen af en ny retorisk strategi i dansk videnskabelig kommunikation", *1700-tal: Nordic Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (2021), 28–43; Paul E. Kerry, "Heinrich von Kleist and the Transformation of Conversation in Germany", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation in the Long Eighteenth Century*, 65–86.

[7] Roger Chartier, *Histoire de la vie privée. III. De la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), in *Histoire de la vie privée*, 5 Vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1985–1987), ed. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby. For a more recent argumentation for the role played by the domestic sphere as a preparation ground for the public life of the prince, see Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun, "'En privé et en public'. The Epistolary Preparation of the Dutch Stadtholders", *Journal of Early Modern History* 24:7 (2020), 253–279.

[8] Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime", *History and Theory* 31:1 (1992), 1; Corinne S. Abate, *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England*. Aldershot (Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 5.

involving literary, architectural, artistic, intellectual, and political works. McKeon analyses processes of distinguishing public and private from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, arguing for how such distinctions slowly sedimented more apparent separations between public and private by the eighteenth century—even if such distinctions could already be felt tacitly before. Predating the existence of a normative public sphere in the Habermasian sense, McKeon points to multiple conceptualisations of public and private—and how these conflicted and competed with one another. The art of conversation frequently appears in McKeon's account, straddling those conflicting notions of public and private. Conversations functioned not only as conveyers of secrets, but also as social tools of refinement. They contributed to shaping a domestic 'ethos', although not as an entirely private matter, but as something adjusted to public expectations, demonstrating a household's private values to the public.[9] In this light, domestic conversations were hardly the same as private conversations, if the latter refers to exchanges that people strove to keep private together with selected others, within or outside of the household. To take such a dimension of seclusion into account, it is crucial to consider the research field on early modern privacy.

Privacy has sometimes been hinted at as being an important factor that defined how early modern conversations would take place and be perceived by others. In her work *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*, Lena Cowen Orlin localises privacy to the confines of the home, particularly to the gallery where people could be seen conversing without being overheard. Orlin argues that "a great deal of early modern cultural anxiety also coalesced around the social privacy of confidential conversation" and that the private was generally considered to be a threat to the common good.[10] While Orlin brings to our attention the threatening aura that privacy could assume in the period, others have drawn attention to the simultaneous desire for privacy in early modern Europe. Ronald Huebert has turned to literary sources to explore what privacy could mean to early modern writers and what that tells us about how people would seek privacy. Huebert observes that "while privacy was by no means equally available to everyone, it was a highly desirable objective (in different ways)

[9] Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 10.

[10] Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

for women and men, for Puritans and Anglo-Catholics, for aristocrats, merchants, and even servants".[11]

In her introduction to the study of early modern privacy, Mette Birkedal Bruun explores notions of privacy in the retirement of the French nobleman known as *Le Grand Condé* at the castle of Chantilly after the end of his military career. Bruun shows how the nobleman's withdrawal could hardly be described as a case of privacy in the contemporary sense of the word, given that he was "neither alone nor enveloped in secrecy nor protected from prying gazes".[12] However, she suggests that descriptions of his dying hours could be read as an early modern understanding of privacy whereby he relinquished his bonds of attachment to the world step by step until he was completely alone with God. Departing from this instance, Bruun has challenged research on early modern privacy to present other examples of when privacy was desired, asking "what is sought, what is shed, and what is gained as we enter privacy".[13]

The present book offers a response to that intriguing question by studying social aspects of privacy in the form of conversations conducted in private. While previous research on early modern conversations has been focused primarily on establishing boundaries for what would constitute the public, the private, the domestic, or the self, less attention has been given to social-interactional dimensions of private conversations. How did people manage—and fail—to talk in private across early modern Europe? Further, how were private conversations created, conceptualised, and challenged in everyday life?

[11] Ronald Huebert, *Privacy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 7–8. In a similarly literary vein, Mary E. Trull shifts the focus to women, exploring how privacy could be something historically performed in female authorship on its way towards publicity. See Mary E. Trull, *Performing Privacy and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Joachim Eibach contends that privacy in the nineteenth century remained a desirable objective rather than a lived reality. See Joachim Eibach, "From Open House to Privacy? Domestic Life from the Perspective of Diaries", in *The Routledge History of the Domestic Sphere in Europe 16th to 19th Century*, ed. by Joachim Eibach and Margareth Lanzinger (Routledge: London, 2020), 347–363.

[12] Mette Birkedal Bruun, "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy: The Retirement of the Great Condé", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 12–13.

[13] Bruun, "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy", 53.

In this endeavour, the ten following chapters analyse a number of instances in which people were talking in private, focusing on how social interactions framed notions of private conversations. What can we learn about early modern private conversations from a pastor who discovered that his congregation kept certain exchanges private, from a married couple who struggled to solve their conflicts in private, and from a nobleman's exchanges about delicate political and religious issues conducted in private with his close friends? What can we glean from a diarist's annotations of what conversations he chose to conduct in private, from villagers' efforts to keep their sexual activities private, or from a publisher's astonishing decision to turn his study into a room for authorship through conversations? How can we trace private conversations in the captions of art prints discussing the topic of love with the viewer, in the depictions of everyday conversations involving disabled people on the streets, or in descriptions of a utopia in which everyday conversations were portrayed to be ideally conducted under an "effigy of silence"? Questions such as these are at the root of the ten case studies investigated in this volume.

Sources and Methods

The study of private conversations in early modern sources comes with several methodological challenges, which are partly shared with research on other aspects of everyday life. The attention to more informal practices typically calls for a complex pursuit of subtle references. However, conversations mentioned *en passant* can give us glimpses of how people talked in private. In reading against the grain, also unexpected sources can be revealing of what people aimed to protect from the scrutiny of others. The case studies of this volume demonstrate how letters, diaries, court records, fiction, treatises, art, and even songs can offer us hints about how private conversations took place and what they meant to people. Many times, both the absence and the selective presentation of information indicate practices of concealment, manipulation, or selective presentation of information from private interactions, either for personal safety or due to bonds of confidentiality shared by the interlocutors.[14]

[14] More details of such an approach can be found in Natacha Klein Käfer, "Dynamics of Healer-Patient Confidentiality in Early Modern Witch Trials", *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, 281–296. More generally, these methodological considerations

One fundamental methodological challenge is that conversations encountered in the sources are often retrospectively tailored after the recounted events took place. Consequently, conversations that were either explicitly defined as private or described as taking place in a private setting must be evaluated in the light of the purposes served by such reconstructions. For example, diaries were often written for posterity, and the statements in court records were obviously formed in assessment of the accusations being made. However, those conditions do not necessarily cause problems for our endeavour here. On the contrary, such accounts tend to tell us more directly what, according to the speaker, made a conversation private. Directing attention to the claims expressed in such accounts resonates with a key point in research on privacy as an anthropological phenomenon: that arguments for privacy protection are typically formed in response to experiences of intrusion or exposure.[15] Thus, there is good reason to investigate attempts to define certain conversations as creative interventions in an open-ended negotiation that shaped and reshaped what should be considered as talking in private.

These considerations prompt us to identify more precisely how people signalled that a certain conversation was meant to be private. What was the specific language used? Did it refer to words deriving from the Latin *privatus* or did it draw upon other—old or new—concepts? What hints can we read from preserved social communication and spatial practices? An interlinked challenge is to track the reasons why people preferred to keep certain exchanges private. Were conversations protected because of personal friendship or with reference to more or less formal bonds of confidentiality? Were they kept hidden in order to conceal something considered shameful, delicate, or intimate? Such motivations are only occasionally declared explicitly in sources. Mostly, they need to be teased out of the context. This enterprise also brings semiotic considerations to the fore. What was taken for granted in various forms of conversations?

draw from Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof. The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 24.

[15] This is further discussed in Johannes Ljungberg, "Talking in Private—and Keeping it Private. Protecting Conversations from Exposure in Swedish Pietist Investigations", in *Private/Public in Eighteenth-Century Scandinavia*, ed. by Sari Nauman and Helle Vogt (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 63–80. Similar methodological considerations are discussed in Barrington Moore, Jr, *Privacy: Studies in Social and Cultural History* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1978), and David Vincent, *Privacy: A Short History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

What did silence imply in different situations, relations, and places? What silent messages did bodies communicate?[16] The chapters of this volume interpret and explore such signals and arguments in a variety of ways.

Another methodological challenge is to assess the relation between how private conversations were presented in print and practised in everyday life. Literary sources—such as manuals or fictive accounts—give us stylised evidence of conversations. However, as some chapters will discuss, they reveal norms as well as practices of private conversation. Scholarship has recognised that writers of instructional guides in the art of conversation did make efforts to use the language of everyday life to stage authenticity.[17] Similarly, the design and material culture of buildings contributed to shaping private conversations. Rooms for guests and social activities in upper-class early modern houses were furnished to trigger conversations—for example, by offering topics of conversation through art serving as 'conversation pieces' and text on the walls serving as 'conversation starters'.[18] A more mobile artistic piece designed to trigger conversations was the art print which was provided with captions communicating with the beholder on various topics, not least those of a more private nature.[19] Since private conversations shape and are shaped by architecture, artworks, manuals of style and conduct as well as cultural, religious, and juridical norms, we need to address them via in-depth analyses and from a wide range of disciplinary angles. As such, the chapters in this book focus on the practice of everyday life by devoting special attention to the shaping and reshaping of norms and models within art, literature, theology, and law.

Thus, this book offers a much-needed contribution to the research field on early modern privacy by putting focus on its generally neglected social aspects. Privacy has often been defined in terms of individual autonomy, as

[16] These matters are further discussed in relation to semiotic theory in Burke, *The Art of Conversation*. While Burke focuses on handbooks instructing the art of conversation, this volume delves into everyday practices.

[17] Cohen, "A Proper Exercise for the Mind", 103–127.

[18] Kate Retford, *The Conversation Piece: Making Modern Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

[19] Peter Parshall, "Art and the Theater of Knowledge: The Origins of Print Collecting in Northern Europe", *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 2 (1994), 9. This reference is brought to our attention by Alexandra Kocsis who uses it as a point of departure for her chapter in this volume.

in the right to be let alone.[20] In contrast to such a point of departure, we aim to address the angle of privacy as social-interactional engagement in conversations protected from exposure to certain authorities or communities. Thereby, people are studied as parts of certain communities, or as nodes in social networks. We argue that such an approach is better adapted than the study of individual autonomy for research on notions of privacy before the modern era. As Dror Wahrman has argued in his seminal monograph on the emergence of modern identity, sources from the early modern period do not primarily point to the individual as an autonomous self, but rather to social dimensions of selfhood; how the self was connected to other people and objects.[21] In a similar way, this book gives multiple examples of how notions of privacy were present in social life. More precisely, the case studies highlight a variety of ways in which private conversations became a tool for navigating multiple and sometimes conflicting forms of social interactions and familial, communal, and societal expectations.

Social-Interactional Aspects

Based on these research questions and methodological considerations, we have chosen to direct our attention to three social-interactional aspects: language, settings, and networks of private conversations in the early modern period. Each of these aspects helps us zoom in on a dimension of private conversations from the past. By focusing on how people

[20] This is the classical definition given by the jurists Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis in their seminal article "The Right to Privacy", *Harvard Law Review* 4:5 (1890), 193–220. Consequently, this is the first definition in *Cambridge American Dictionary,* "Privacy", https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/essential-american-english/privacy, accessed 2 June 2022. A more elaborate criticism of the definition of privacy as a state of being alone was presented by Johannes Ljungberg and Mette Birkedal Bruun at the Ninth Berlin Summer Workshop entitled "Alone Together: Alienation & Reconciliation", Freie Universität Berlin, June 2021.

[21] Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Wahrman's theory is developed in critical discussion with previous literature on the early modern self, mainly Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: Anchor Books, 1959) and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). However, these works are primarily focused on the development of a modern self, which is not the subject of the present volume.

communicated in private, in what contexts, and with whom, we are able to shed new light on how early modern privacy was created, conceptualised, and challenged in everyday life. The following section will knit together various branches of scholarship on early modern society with the ten case studies of this volume to discuss these three social-interactional aspects.

Language—Concepts and Other Means of Communication

While much research has focused on how the art of conversation developed in handbooks and other sites of public debate, we extend the scope to how diarists, authors, secretaries, or material objects expressed or signalled that an everyday conversation was private. What indications do we get of how individuals kept things private through discretion, dissimulation, omission, or silence?

Everyday conversations were not restricted to the utterance of words. With reference to the literature of the early modern era, Katherine Larson has observed that "[c]onversation was an embodied act, signifying social intimacy, cohabitation, and even sexual intercourse".[22] In the chapter "'Unnecessary Conversations': Talking About Sex in the Early Modern Polish Village", Tomasz Wiślicz shows that the act of having a private conversation between a woman and a man would be considered potential evidence of sexual misconduct and labelled 'unnecessary conversation' in court to mark out its illicit nature. Here, the perception of private conversations referred to both talk and sex, as the act of talking in private was seen as a potential step towards sexual acts. However, it was not only the authorities who defined private conversations in this context. Intriguingly, Wiślicz also demonstrates how common women and men spoke about sex to each other with the aid of witty sayings. By using language creatively to make fun of official norms and church authorities, they managed to initiate private conversations with lower risks of retribution.

Another demonstration of how the creative use of language is crucial to how these past conversations have reached us today is given in Virginia Reinburg's contribution "Talking About Religion during Religious War: Gilles de Gouberville, Normandy, 1562". Reinburg describes

[22] Katherine Rebecca Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation. Early Modern Literature in History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2.

how contentious conversations between friends of different confessions were recorded in a diary at a time when wars between religious factions made it complicated to talk about certain issues. She notices how controversial topics were commented in cipher, silence, or—in at least one instance—via a poetic license by the diarist. This example also demonstrates that even when sources describe alleged conversations that happened in person, they might sound unreliable or staged. When put in writing, conversations had to be adapted to another genre of communication.

Liam Benison's chapter provides a case study of how descriptions of conversations in literature can be revealing of actual early modern ideals of talking in private. In his chapter "Talking Privately in Utopia: Ideals of Silence and Dissimulation in Smeek's *Krinke Kesmes* (1708)", Benison shows how dissimulation could be considered a useful conversational attribute in the sensitive political climate of "the age of secrecy".[23] His contribution explores how instructions for conversation informed early modern utopias while also taking into account how modulations of language could conduct social interactions, both in the literary world and among European nobility. Benison argues that early modern utopias could be read by contemporaries not only as provoking thought experiments, but also as teaching social codes for everyday life. Keeping silent was a key value in that regard.

Gestures, physical positioning, and silences can be as expressive as the words themselves. Non-verbal conversations took place not only among hearing-impaired people or within a vow of silence, but as a continuous engagement with peoples, landmarks, and art.[24] Looking at art could function as an intimate discourse between the piece and the viewer as well as instigate conversations among beholders through the medium of what already in the early modern period was referred to as 'conversation pieces'.[25] In her chapter entitled "Multimedia Conversations: Love and Lovesickness in Sixteenth-Century Italian Single-Sheet Prints", Alexandra

[23] Jon Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

[24] Axel Hübler, *Nonverbal Shift in Early Modern English Conversation* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company, 2007).

[25] *Oxford English Dictionary*, "Conversation", no. 10, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40748?rskey=4AHBgb&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, accessed 3 February 2022.

Kocsis demonstrates how sixteenth-century prints on love and lovesickness had a conversational potential to guide viewers into reflecting on their own relationships, showing how inscriptions became a direct interlocutor with the spectator—a practice that gained force in the sixteenth century when such intimate conversations became a part of a fashionable 'social game' among courtiers.

Thus, the language of talking in private extends over different media, tones, gestures, and silences shared between people in different settings. As the contributions in this volume show, we need to pay heed to how people expressed themselves in private conversations beyond the mere words being exchanged to include pauses, concealments, gesticulations, motions, and the very positioning of the bodies of the interlocutors, all of which communicated just as much as direct utterances.

Settings—Social and Material Conditions

Some conversations in early modern sources were explicitly defined as private while others were described as taking place in some kind of private setting. What was considered to be a private setting? How did spaces, gender, and social status enable or curb private conversations? How did spaces and social relations become sites of privacy?

Life in the early modern household took place in a collective space which might not seem to allow for much privacy in terms of opportunities for withdrawal or control of private information. Scholarship has also established that early modern houses were open spaces both in a material and in a social sense, easily accessible to neighbours, authorities, and outsiders.[26] Even though those who could afford to reserve some rooms for personal use increasingly did so during the early modern period, most people did not have such opportunities. In the countryside, families generally cohabited in the rooms available.[27] In city houses, stairs were rarely separated from people's living space, thereby necessitating movement across the rooms. Closets and studies were even rarer.

[26] Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household in Seventeenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), 333; Joachim Eibach, "Das offene Haus. Kommunikative Praxis im sozialen Nahraum der europäischen Frühen Neuzeit", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 38:4 (2011), 621–664.

[27] Raffaela Sarti, *Europe at Home. Family and Material Culture 1500–1800*, trans. by Allan Cameron (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 86–130.

Not until the eighteenth century do we see a broad development towards common installations of inner doors, locks, hallways, and backstairs separated from the living spaces—a tendency that can be traced in both larger and smaller cities of Europe.[28] This means that having access to a space of one's own at home behind a closed door during the period covered by this book was an unusual privilege.

Despite these conditions, scholarship has showed how people from all social strata were concerned with finding a personal space. Amanda Vickery has highlighted the importance of lockable boxes and Ariane Fennetaux has demonstrated the utility of portable pockets as material sites of spatial privacy, including for women of lower status.[29] Julie Hardwick has extended the angle of privacy to social encounters, unfolding how private conversations could be a gateway for young adults into intimate relationships and their path towards marriage.[30] Hardwick shows that these encounters were often supervised by peers and identifies the somewhat paradoxical condition that they actually had to be observed in order to be considered licit within the family, neighbourhood, and community. In this way, seeing could be combined with not overhearing, as in Orlin's aforementioned observations of Tudor London. On the other hand, Hardwick's findings reveal that young adults tended to successfully avoid supervision altogether by changing the site of their meeting to either their place of work or outside the city.[31]

[28] In London, this tendency can be seen already during the reconstruction after the Great Fire of 1666, while the trend has been detected somewhat later in other European cities. See Christopher Heyl, *A Passion for Privacy. Untersuchungen zur Genese der bürgerlichen Privatspähre in London (1600–1800)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004), 135, 169–212; Peter Mitchell, "The Development of the Apartment Building in 18th Century Vienna", in *Buildings in Society: International Studies in the Historic Era*, ed. by Liz Thomas and Jill Campbell (Oxford: Archaeo Press, 2018), 95–112; Dag Lindström and Göran Tagesson, "Spaces for Comfort, Seclusion and Privacy in an Eighteenth-Century Swedish Town", in *Private/Public in Eighteenth-Century Scandinavia*, 141–162.

[29] Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 28–29; Ariane Fennetaux, "Women's Pockets and the Construction of Privacy in the Long Eighteenth Century", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 20:3 (2008), 307–334.

[30] Julie Hardwick, *Sex in an Old Regime City: Young Workers and Intimacy in France, 1660–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 9.

[31] The topic of achieving privacy in outdoor spaces is further developed in Mary Thomas Crane, "Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England", *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9:1 (2009), 4–22.

Moving out of one's usual milieu was also a common strategy for maintaining private conversation among the elites. As explored by Hélène Merlin-Kajman, the French marquise Madame de Sévigné stressed that she preferred conversations with her gardener than with other courtiers. For her, having a private conversation with someone of a different status was a comfortable retreat from the extreme culture of visibility at court.[32] Moreover, research has pointed to 'liminal spaces' such as gardens, doorsteps, or balconies as accessible stages for women to engage in conversation, since they remained at the threshold between a domestic and public setting.[33] Bedrooms at inns were another liminal space where people of different status would be sheltered in the same household with its everyday evening routines and protection for the night and where—depending upon the conditions at hand—they might need to share a room or bed with a stranger. These arrangements would normally follow gender categories and social hierarchies, but, as noted by Sasha Handley, people also prized bedfellows for qualities that cut across social divisions, such as "by the quality of their conversation and their behaviour in bed".[34] According to her investigation of diaries and travel journals, such 'pillow talk' could range from eloquent discussions to comforting prayers, serving the purpose of bringing a sense of ease and security for the night.

Normally, however, social status had a crucial impact on the norms of how different sorts of conversations should be conducted. The officially recognised categories of secrecy were reserved for political, clerical, and domestic authorities. Here, private admonition was a formal category for a talk that was meant to remain private. This notion was based on biblical models for conflict regulation which stipulated a chain of steps from private to public reprimands, where the last step included public exposure of the sin followed by an act of reconciliation between

[32] Hélène Merlin-Kajman, "'Privé' and 'Particulier' (and Other Words) in Seventeenth-Century France", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, 97.

[33] Danielle van den Heuvel, "Gender in the Streets of the Premodern City", *Journal of Urban History* 45:4 (2019), 693–710.

[34] Sasha Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 176–180 (176). The quote derives from the diarist Samuel Pepys (1633–1703); B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2014), 160.

the sinner, God, and the congregation.[35] This path was institutionalised in monastic traditions, developed in the increasing practice of penitence in medieval theology, codified in church laws of both Reformed and Lutheran traditions, and deeply cherished in pious circles across the Western Christian confessions in the seventeenth century.[36] Thus, private admonitions offered a formal setting not only for clergymen but also for housefathers and various local authorities to talk privately with parishioners, household members, and local subjects. Even though this sort of conversation was hierarchical, the official secrecy of these talks did also equip the subordinated party with legitimacy to keep what had been said private. For instance, within Sweden's harsh Pietist investigations in the 1720s, people who were accused of being Pietists emphatically complained about how their soul carers exposed their conversations to the investigative commissions.[37]

In this volume, both Markus Bardenheuer and Lars Cyril Nørgaard offer case studies on different facets of monitoring conversations between clergymen and parishioners from the perspectives of different confessions. In his chapter "'So that I never fail to warn and admonish': Pastoral Care and Private Conversation in a Seventeenth-Century Reformed Village", Bardenheuer explores a Reformed pastor's efforts to employ the tool of private admonition in his parish to solve crises of melancholy and drinking. Reading through the pastor's own annotations reveals that

[35] Of particular importance among these biblical passages is Matthew 18:15–17: "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a Tax Collector" (New Revised Standard Version). See also Galatians 6:1–5, 1 Timothy 5:20, 1 Corinthians 5:1–2, 11–13, and 1 Corinthians 11:17–34. The reception history of the latter passage is the point of departure for Lars Cyril Nørgaard's chapter in this volume.

[36] Charles H. Parker, "The Rituals of Reconciliation: Admonition, Confession and Community in the Dutch Reformed Church", in *Penitence in the Age of Reformation*, ed. by Katherine Lualdi and Anne Thyler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 107–108; Suzannah Lipscomb, *The Voices of Nîmes: Women, Sex and Marriage in Reformation Languedoc* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 62–106; Katie Barclay, *Caritas: Neighbourly Love and the Early Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 118–130; Ljungberg, "Talking in private", 63–80.

[37] Ljungberg, "Talking in private", 69–71.

inhabitants of the parish kept certain exchanges—as well as things considered common knowledge in the village—out of the pastor's eyes and ears, and Bardenheuer analyses how the pastor tried to navigate the networks of the village using private conversations as his tool. Anchored in the same domain, Nørgaard's chapter "'The secret sins that one commits by thought alone': Confession as Private and Public in Seventeenth-Century France" follows a debate between two Catholic clerics discussing the modalities of private confession, a debate which centred on whether the penitence should be undertaken in public or in private. The focus is particularly on the 'Jansenist' theologian Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) who argued that Christians should practice public penitence like the ancient church fathers, thereby bringing these old and important distinctions for the history of keeping private conversations officially secret into the public debate of seventeenth-century France and the Catholic world at large.

Merchants constitute another group of actors who increasingly favoured conversations conducted in private. From the sixteenth century onwards, they tended to move their activities from the public square to indoor facilities in order to enable more private conversations regarding their sensitive business. They acquired trading houses with a detailed inner structure or rented rooms in proximity to the outdoor market spaces in order to secure the seclusion needed for protecting trade secrets. In rural areas, inner rooms of taverns—the so-called secret corners—served a similar function for local tradesmen.[38] In Krisztina Péter's chapter for this volume, "'Alone amongst ourselves': How to Talk in Private According to the Cologne Diarist Hermann von Weinsberg (1518–97)", we are introduced to what matters a Cologne merchant of the sixteenth century preferred to discuss in private. Besides debts and expenses, these matters

[38] Donald J. Harreld, "Trading Places: The Public and Private Spaces of Merchants in Sixteenth-Century Antwerp", *Journal of Urban History* 29:6, 657–669; Thomas Max Safley, "The Paradox of Secrecy: Merchant Families, Family Firms, and the Porous Boundaries Between Private and Public Business Life in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe", in *Early Modern Privacy*, 256; Lovisa Olsson; "Guest or Stranger? The Reception of Visiting Merchants in the Early Modern Towns of the Baltic Rim", in *Baltic Hospitality from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century: Receiving Strangers in Northern Europe*, ed. by Sari Nauman, Wojtek Jezierski, Christina Reimann, and Leif Runefelt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 143–166; Johannes Ljungberg, "Receiving and Controlling Strangers in eighteenth-century Altona", in *Baltic Hospitality from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, 247–271; Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order*, 169.

included conversations about inheritance and other private settlements within the family which were handled in indoor and outdoor spaces where the conversation would not be overheard or disrupted. Barbara A. Kaminska's chapter "'We take care of our own': Talking about 'Disability' in Early Modern Netherlandish Households" also directs our attention to movements from the streets and squares into wealthy trade houses by investigating a particular element of their interiors: conversation pieces of art depicting disabled people's social interactions in the urban landscape. Kaminska examines what such portrayals can tell us about how people visiting these trading houses were talking about 'disability'.

These efforts to establish private conversations were made in a culture in which most normative activities would take place openly, in sight of others. The relative lack of material conditions for and social acceptance of private conversations point to the oft-reiterated characterisation of early modern society as a culture of visibility.[39] However, as we have seen, there were also many ways of talking in private, both formally and informally, that were generally accepted. The relative limitations did not stop people from meeting in private. As Katie Barclay astutely states, early modern people navigated an environment where privacy could often be "an act of will, rather than a result of material conditions".[40]

Networks—Agency in Community with Others

Studying human interaction within these social and spatial settings leads us to address the function of conversation in networks. While conversations were a social networking tool in the early modern period, we need to take into account what kind of historical agents were doing the talking and in what kind of environment.[41] Research has assiduously and broadly demonstrated the role of the neighbourhood or wider community in maintaining social control and, as a consequence, the importance

[39] Rudolf Schlögl, *Anwesende und Abwesende. Grundriss für eine Gesellschaftsgechichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 2014); Fridrun Friede, "Einleitung", in *Offen und Verborgen: Vorstellungen und Praktiken des Öffentlichen und Privaten in Mittelalter und Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Caroline Emmelius, Fridun Friese, Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Petra Paschinger, Claudius Sittig, and Regina Töfer (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2004), 9–32.

[40] Barclay, *Caritas: Neighbourly Love and the Early Modern Self*, 29.

[41] Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 2.

of keeping certain matters private.[42] The significance of honour, the fear of gossip, and the threat of scandals were critical factors in deciding what could be shared widely and what should remain a secret.[43] However, there were different strategies to keep information private, and these manoeuvres were highly dependent on local interactions, conflicts, and suspicions.[44]

Secrets were a social endeavour, confined to inner circles of knowingness.[45] Without a clearly defined 'right to privacy'—which would be formulated for the first time in the latter half of the nineteenth century—people living in the early modern period resorted to establishing their own unique bonds of trust to keep their affairs within selected groups. Different modes of confidentiality could be established between people in ways that require a bottom-up approach.[46] Studies on merchant networks have revealed how this could be sealed through mutual agreements which occasionally took the form of forced pacts of secrecy due to business circumstances.[47] Being attentive to the bonds created by friendships has been another approach to studying local networks. As articulated by Lewis C. Seifert and Rebecca M. Wilkin in their introduction to a volume about men and women making friends in early modern France,

[42] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999); Heather Kerr and Claire Walker, eds., *Fama and Her Sisters: Gossip and Rumour in Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015); Camilla Scherning, "Of Chamber Pots and Scorned Houses: Exposing Hidden Bodies and Private Matters in Eighteenth-Century Copenhagen", in *Public/Private in Eighteenth-Century Scandinavia*, 119–138.

[43] Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meets Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[44] Inken Schmidt-Voges and Katharina Simon, "Managing Conflicts and Making Peace", in *The Routledge History of the Domestic Sphere in Europe 16th to 19th Century*, 254–268.

[45] Barclay, *Caritas: Neighbourly Love and the Early Modern Self*, 144.

[46] Klein Käfer, "Dynamics of Healer-Patient Confidentiality in Early Modern Witch Trials", 281–296.

[47] Thomas Max Safley, "'The Paradox of Secrecy': Merchant Families, Family Firms, and the Porous Boundaries Between Private and Public Business Life in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, 245–265; Willem Frijhoff, "How to Approach Privacy Without Private Sources? Insights from the Franco-Dutch Network of the Eelkens Merchant Family Around 1600", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, 105–134.

"intimate disclosure to the friend was a matter of ethical and social obligation as well as of self-expression".[48] In his contribution to the same volume, Peter Shoemaker examines the discourse of confidence or the ethics of confidentiality among friends in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France which, according to his analysis, "occupied a nebulous borderland between private and public, sentiment and the law".[49] All these various relations and arrangements could be broken, either to gain some perceived advantage or to deal with conflicts within the community. By default, these bonds of confidentiality had to be malleable in order to adapt to the shifting circumstances of early modern life, and conversations had the power to reveal and conceal information that could shift allegiances.

Researching private conversations involves asking how people managed to share their private matters and secrets with selected others in the early modern period. This includes looking at consolidation of bonds, maintenance of relationships, and the creation or resolution of conflict by means of conversation. In her chapter "Marital Conversations: Using privacy to negotiate marital conflicts in Adam Eyre's diary, 1647–49", Katharina Simon offers an intriguing example of a private settlement between the strong-minded spouses Adam and Suzannah Eyre as their marriage remained in perpetual tension, demonstrating the ways in which their struggles could be kept out of public knowledge even when their disagreements were unavoidable. Within their household, they managed the multiple connections they had with relatives, friends, servants, and professional affiliates to their advantage in settling things in private while simultaneously avoiding scandal and interference.

Such arrangements between people were essential to a harmonious life in society. However, under increasing influence from absolutist statecraft and fear of revolts, any settlements that did not involve the state risked being considered as a challenge to authorities. This had broader consequences for people's opportunities to convene. Authorities declared only certain spaces open for peasants, local merchants, and others to discuss local issues collectively. Such spaces—for example taverns—were

[48] Lewis C. Seifert and Rebecca M. Wilkin, eds., *Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France* (Farnham: Routledge, 2015), 28.

[49] Peter Shoemaker, "From My Lips to Yours: Friendship, Confidentiality, and Gender in Early Modern France", in *Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France* (Farnham: Routledge, 2015), 248.

categorised as public as opposed to being private in the sense of being secret to authorities, consequently becoming hotspots of surveillance.[50] As noted by B. Ann Tlusty, local authorities took to the taverns to pick up rumours, and tavern keepers "could be held partially responsible [...] even [for] the conversations that took place" not only during meetings but also in general.[51] These circumstances affected everyday life at large. Any conversation that was floating around in the nebulous borderland between 'private' in the everyday sense and 'private' as the legal category that criminalised activities as secret to authorities risked causing conflict between state and subjects. Different networks—governmental authorities, peasant villagers, and officers in between—intermingled, demonstrating the porosity of private and public in conversation and making even everyday exchanges among the population a matter of state security. Therefore, managing one's position within social networks was crucial in order to avoid friction with the authorities. Knowing who to share information with, what kind of information, when, and in what manner was an important skill not only for sociability but also to create and share knowledge and guarantee one's safety when sharing challenging opinions.

This takes us, finally, to the writers of the period. Writers whose work ended up on the public scene typically performed the writing in their private home, in their *studiolo* or *cabinet*. The expanding printing industry as well as the tightened censorship generated a greater divide between the private intellectual sphere of the home and the publicness of the act of publication.[52] In Adam Horsley's contribution to this volume, "When Private Speech goes Public: Libertinage, Crypto-Judaic Conversations, and the Private Literary World of Jean Fontanier (1621)", we get an extraordinarily closer look at how private conversation played

[50] Lucian Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit", in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, 8 Vols. (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1972–1997), Vol. IV: Mi–Pre, ed. by Otto Brunner (1978), 414–426; Jonathan Elukin, "The Public and the Secret in Government: Introductory Remarks", in *Das Geheimnis am Beginn der europäischen Moderne*, ed. by Gisela Engel, Brita Rang, Klaus Reichert, and Heide Wunder (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2002), 72–76. Such spaces should not be confused with the Habermasian notion of a public sphere of opinion. On the contrary, Habermas excluded such spaces from his analysis by categorising them as belonging to a "plebeian public sphere". See Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 8–21.

[51] Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order*, 161.

[52] Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print*.

an unusual and controversial role in a court case against a Libertine author, Jean Fontanier, who had made his home into a site for private conversations. The judges ignored the conversations and focused on the process regarding Fontanier's production of illegal literature. Intriguingly, however, the case reveals dynamics of private conversations in the context of writing which would have otherwise passed by unrecorded. To safeguard their collective authorship of controversial pieces, Fontanier required an oath to God, promising to keep their discussions private. This is a telling example of one of the ways in which early modern people created their circles of 'people in the know' and developed a sense of belonging within particular networks in their best attempts at protecting their privacy.

Structure of the Book

The ten case studies in this volume are divided into three parts. All these parts analyse the multifaceted ways in which language, settings, and networks factored in early modern conversations. The first part, "Between silence and talking", highlights the interstitial space between silence and talking. The chapters of this section illustrate both the needs and benefits of talking in private, but also the danger of doing so. The second part, "Navigating hierarchical conversations", centres on how domestic and clerical authorities made arrangements to talk in private and how they navigated distinctions between private and public conversations. It reveals to us how authorities exercised their social responsibilities in words and practice and how the population reacted to their overseeing. The third part, entitled "Intimate conversations", explores three types of exchanges: between spouses equipped with various agencies to conduct conversations in private, within non-marital relations among the rural population, and in upper-class trends to ponder the topics of love and lovesickness via commented images.

This volume is first and foremost an explorative endeavour. We invite the reader into a variety of environments where people were talking in private in early modern Europe. The collection of case studies covers a wide geographical scope, including France, the Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy, and England. This range balances the emphasis in previous scholarship on urban milieus of the eighteenth century with a focus on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including rural areas. In contrast to most previous scholarship, these case studies

pinpoint everyday dimensions of how private conversations were created, conceptualised, and challenged.

Our main goal is that sources, methods, and hypotheses presented throughout this volume—which are interlinked and further discussed in the last chapter of this book—will prompt further studies into the little-explored terrain of how people of the early modern period talked in private.

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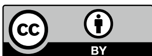

PART II

Between Silence And Talking

CHAPTER 2

Talking About Religion During Religious War: Gilles de Gouberville, Normandy, 1562

Virginia Reinburg

On 4 August 1562, Gilles Picot, seigneur de Gouberville, met Thomas Noël and Jehan France walking in the fields of rural Normandy. As they walked that morning, they talked about "religion and the opinions that are in great controversy and contradiction among men today". "We chatted until we reached the Argouges road", Gouberville recorded in his journal. "And France said in his own words, 'Believe me, we will make a new God who will be neither papist nor huguenot, so that we will no longer say such a one is a lutheran, such a one is a papist, such a one is a heretic, such a one is a huguenot'". Gouberville wrote, "Then I said, Unus est Deus ab eterno et eternus. We could not make gods, because

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we are but men". He further commented, "It seemed to me that Noël was very offended by France's words".[1]

We know about this conversation because Gilles de Gouberville recorded it in his journal which is well known to historians thanks to nineteenth-century editions and now a splendid new 2020 edition.[2] Gouberville's account raises several questions. Who were these three men who chewed over religious—and, let's be clear, political—controversies out in the fields of Normandy during a civil war over religion? How did people talk with family, neighbours, and acquaintances about matters that were not only sensitive but potentially dangerous? And what can we make of the strange mixture of French and Latin in which one speaker voiced an eerie scepticism ("we will make a new God"), another appeared to

[1] Gilles de Gouberville (1521–1578), *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, ed. by Marcel Roupsard and Philippe René-Bazin, for the Comité Gilles de Gouberville (Saint-Lô: Archives Départementales, Maison de l'Histoire de la Manche, Conseil Départemental de la Manche, 2020), III, 358. This is a new, revised edition of the journal, based on an older edition: *Le journal du sire de Gouberville, 1549–1562*, ed. by Alexandre Tollemer (Bricqueboscq: Les Éditions des Champs, 1993–1994), which was itself based on a late nineteenth-century edition of the manuscript journal. The original manuscripts have disappeared since they were last seen in the 1930s. Gouberville's journal covers the years 1549–1563. Journals for earlier and later years have not surfaced, but they probably once existed. This is the original passage: "En m'en revenant, je trouvé le contrerolleur Noël et maistre Jehan France qui se pourmenoyent aulx champs. Nous devisasmes jusques à ce que nous vinsons à la rue d'Argouges, et comme nous parlions de la relligion et des oppinions qui sont aujourd'huy entre les hommes en grande controversie et contradiction, led. France dist par ses propres motz: 'Qui m'en croyra, on fera ung Dieu tout nouveau qui ne sera ne papiste, ne huguenot, affin qu'on ne dise plus ung tel est luthérien, ung tel est papiste, ung tel est hérétique, ung tel est huguenot'. A donc je dys: 'Unus est Deus ab eterno et eternus. Nous ne pourrions fère des dieulx, puys que nous ne sommes que hommes'. Il me sembla que led. Noël fut fort offensé de la parole dud. France".

[2] On Gouberville and his journal, see the introductory essays by Yves-Marie Bercé and Marcel Roupsard in *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 13–36; Madeleine Foisil, *Le sire de Gouberville*, Rev. ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 2001); Katharine Fedden, *Manor Life in Old France: From the Journal of the Sire de Gouberville for the Years 1549–1562* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); Elizabeth S. Teall, "The Myth of Royal Centralization and the Reality of the Neighborhood: The Journals of the Sire de Gouberville, 1549–1562", in *Social Groups and Religious Ideas in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Miriam Usher Chrisman and Otto Gründler (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute, 1978), 1–11, 139–151; George Huppert, *Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes: An Essay on the Definition of Elites in Renaissance France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), chap. 9; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), chap. 3; Alexandre Tollemer, *Journal manuscrit d'un sire de Gouberville et du Mesnil-au-Var, gentilhomme campagnard au Cotentin de 1553 à 1562* (Valognes: Imprimerie de G. Martin, 1872).

take offence (but at what?), and the third—who, by recording it in his journal, had the last word—offered a lofty Latin maxim shutting down further irenic speculation?

Confronting the ambiguities that surface in this episode plunges us deep into the turmoil of Gouberville's world. It is but one private conversation that took place in a corner of the French kingdom on an August morning a few months into the first civil war between Catholics and Protestants—wars that were to last nearly forty years, from 1562 to 1598. But it suggests how neighbours and acquaintances talked their way into and out of divisions over religion. Circling around that enigmatic conversation, I consider everyday talk as an engine of both bonding and discord. I begin with Gouberville, his social networks, and his journal in order to locate the conversation. I then explore the conversations that Gouberville recorded in his journal, including the August 1562 conversation. I conclude with comments about religion and talk.

Gouberville, His Social Worlds, and His Journal

Gilles de Gouberville was a rural lord living in Normandy's Cotentin peninsula. The Cotentin was a region of extensive bocage, a mixture of woods, pastureland, rivers, and streams where hunting and fishing paid rich rewards. The Cotentin also boasted the port city of Cherbourg and a number of large towns such as Valognes. Lower Normandy—the larger region of which the Cotentin was a part—was primarily agricultural, but with cities like Bayeux, Coutances, and Caen where markets were held, law courts met, and administrative business was conducted. Further to the east of lower Normandy was the provincial capital of Rouen. Mesnil-au-Val, the estate where Gilles de Gouberville spent most of his time, was located south of Cherbourg. Gilles also had an estate at Gouberville (northwest of Barfleur) and, after his uncle's death in 1560, another one at Russy (near Bayeux). Gouberville's estates comprised a range of agricultural production: livestock, beehives, crops, vegetable gardens, and orchards. He lived in a large manor house at Mesnil with a household of about twenty relatives and servants. He never married, but he lived with half-brothers and half-sisters, the illegitimate children of his father. Gouberville worked his fields and orchards and cared for his animals alongside his half siblings, tenants, and hired workers. He also spent time at the grander manor houses at Gouberville and Russy where he enjoyed the more typically noble pursuits of hunting and fine dining.

Gilles de Gouberville was enmeshed in networks of lords and dependents, and he was very aware of his status in relation to others. He was born Gilles Picot, the oldest son of Guillaume Picot and Jeanne du Fou, inheriting lands from both parents. Gilles and his father, Guillaume, claimed that the family held noble status for generations. Guillaume Picot styled himself *sieur* or *seigneur* of Gouberville in order to signal that he was an *écuyer* during an era of increasing royal scrutiny over noble titles. Following his father's practice, Gilles Picot called himself Gilles de Gouberville.

Gouberville was a lord, but he was also dependent on greater lords. As part of the lower ranks of the local nobility (families that would be called gentry in England), Gouberville depended on the favour of greater lords. These were patron-client ties as well as traditional seigneurial bonds. Gouberville needed the support and connections that his patrons could provide. Thus, he was exquisitely attentive to favours and slights they tossed his way. He was also painfully situated between Catholic and Protestant noblemen in the early 1560s, as religious allegiances hardened. Gouberville felt his dependency on more powerful people every time he paid homage to nobles of higher rank or was called to muster. Calls to muster arrived with increasing frequency in the late 1550s and early 1560s as religious tensions in Normandy and across the French kingdom deepened and fears of insurrection and invasion surged.

Just as Gilles de Gouberville was a dependent and client, so others also called him master or lord. Seigneurial justice has been called "a peculiarly ramshackle method of government", with its mixture of neighbourhood, local, provincial, and royal authorities, not to mention the bewildering blend of formal with informal.[3] Gouberville was a paterfamilias —albeit one without a wife or legitimate children—who presided over a household of extended family and servants. His sphere of influence was local, extending to his household, his lands, the county and town of Valognes, and the Cotentin region. Local it may have been, but minor it was not. As seigneur de Gouberville, he exercised authority over his household, clan, tenants, and beyond that acted as a local mediator and peacekeeper. He sat on the local law court in Valognes. The office of lieutenant for waters and forests augmented Gouberville's authority, tasked as he was with conserving the resources of woods, streams, and sea coasts.

[3] Teall, "Myth of Royal Centralization and the Reality of the Neighborhood", 8.

Despite being a rural nobleman, Gouberville engaged in city life with relish. He was a gentleman of Valognes, the town near Mesnil where he often went to sit on the law court, carry out his official duties, conduct business, visit, and shop. He was a bourgeois of Cherbourg and maintained a residence there. Gouberville went to Caen and Bayeux so often that he regularly slept at the same inns and drank in the same taverns. Legal business took him to Rouen where he met with notaries and lawyers, dined with friends, attended mummeries and poetry competitions, and shopped.[4]

Gilles de Gouberville was an ordinary rural nobleman and part-time urban gentleman. What makes him extraordinary is the written record that he left behind. His journals for the years 1549–1563 have survived.[5] Journals, *mémoires,* and *livres de raison*—also called ego-documents or life writing—vary in form, although most blend family or personal records with notes about events of wider importance.[6] Gilles de Gouberville kept his as an account book and a daily log of events.[7] Gouberville wrote for his own reference, noting down series of memoranda about meetings, business transacted, agreements made, accounts paid, and receipts. But he may also have intended the journal to be useful for his heirs in case they needed to document an agreement he had made or a debt he had incurred.[8] While the journal is surprisingly detailed in some respects, Gouberville was guarded about intimate matters. He wrote cryptically about sexual liaisons.[9] His journal was not introspective, although he often confided feeling worried, angry, and afraid.[10] He meant to keep

[4] Philip Benedict, *Rouen During the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 12.

[5] See Footnote 1.

[6] A good introduction to these records is Michel Cassan, Jean-Pierre Bardet, and François-Joseph Ruggiu, eds., *Les écrits du for privé: Objets materiels, objets édités* (Limoges: Université de Limoges, 2007). On privacy and ego-documents in a later period, see Michaël Green, "Public and Private in Jewish Egodocuments of Amsterdam (ca. 1680–1830)", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 213–242.

[7] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 19–21, 29.

[8] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 31.

[9] Foisil, *Le sire de Gouberville*, 15, 175–179.

[10] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 183, 308, 321, 395; II, 432; III, 135, 137, 192, 279, 336, 345, 388.

his writing private, devising a code based on the Greek alphabet for some entries, mainly about debts and interpersonal conflicts.[11] This suggests that members of his households could read French and possibly Latin. Perhaps the journal was not secured in a locked box or cabinet. Even if it was secured, Gouberville may have wanted an additional level of protection for his journal.

Gouberville was a man of letters, after a fashion. We know little about his education. He probably attended a local school with a humanist curriculum, perhaps in Valognes or Cherbourg, where he would have studied what boys studied in such schools, in Latin.[12] Gouberville owned and borrowed books. He had medical books and law books.[13] He owned and consulted Nostradamus' prognostications.[14] He bought Clément Marot's French psalter on a trip to Rouen in 1551.[15] A priest from Cherbourg promised to lend him a French translation of Machiavelli's *The Prince*.[16] What most captures our attention as we try to understand Gouberville as a reader are stories—those he read aloud to his household (chivalric tales from *Amadis de Gaule*), tales that he recalled from books (Rabelais' *Quart Livre*), and stories that he heard from friends.[17] One day, Gouberville wrote that Symonnet came home and recounted how, following a day of hunting, he had heard at an inn the story of "Helquin's hunt", the tale of a ghostly army or hunting party sometimes called "the wild hunt", "the wild army", or "the furious horde".[18] A

[11] For example *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 331.

[12] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 316, 331, 455–456.

[13] Huppert, *Les bourgeois gentilshommes,* 106; *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 77.

[14] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 155, 391. Michel de Nostredame or Nostradamus (1503–1566) was a physician and astrologer who began publishing his prophecies and predictions in 1555.

[15] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 176.

[16] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 391, 456–457. The book was probably *Le prince de Nicolas Machiavelle secretaire et citoien de Florence*, trans. Guillaume Cappel (Paris: Charles Estienne, 1553). *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) was first printed in 1532.

[17] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 99; I, 297. *Amadis de Gaule* was an anonymous late medieval collection of chivalric tales often published in the sixteenth century. François Rabelais (1494?–1553) published versions of the *Quart Livre* beginning in the late 1540s.

[18] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 366. On these stories, see Marthe Moricet, "La 'Chasse Hellequin,'" *Annales de Normandie*, 2 (1952), 169–174; Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*,

folktale about an imminent invasion by a mysterious army might have sent a pleasurable chill down the spine of listeners who were residents of the Cotentin peninsula, accustomed as they were to watching for signs of armed invasion from England. Gouberville did not say whether Symonnet heard the story of Helquin's hunt read aloud from a book or recited. But Symonnet's night out illustrates perfectly how books were entangled with storytelling. Enmeshed as he was in writing and reading, Gouberville spent much of his time talking and listening.

Gouberville's Conversations

Gouberville's journal is full of talk. He spent a good part of each day conversing and doing business in person. He listed the names of many of the people he met, occasionally adding the topic of conversation. Sometimes he noted that "we chatted" (*nous dévisames*), a comment that I believe denoted a longer, informal exchange. Gouberville met neighbours and acquaintances after mass or vespers, often walking in the cemetery or a field while talking to them. When staying at inns, he recorded chatting after dinner with his hosts and fellow guests or with the people sharing his chamber or bed.[19] Gouberville often specified how long the conversation went on: "an hour", "about a half hour", "for a long time", or "until we reached the Argouges road".

To whom did Gilles de Gouberville talk and about what? That depends in part on who he spent time with. He was often with family, especially his half-sister Guillemette and his half-brothers Symonnet and Arnould. Two more half-brothers worked on the estate alongside them. Gilles sometimes saw his three legitimate brothers and three sisters. He often visited his uncle Jean Picot (d. 1560), seigneur de Russy, who was a priest, *curé*,

trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (New York: Penguin, 1983), 40–50; Wolfgang Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf: Chonrad Stoeckhlin and the Phantoms of the Night*, trans. by H. C. Erik Midelfort (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998); Ronald Hutton, "The Wild Hunt and the Witches' Sabbath", *Folklore*, 125 (2014), 161–178; Ottavia Niccoli, "The Kings of the Dead on the Battlefield of Agnadello", in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, ed. by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 71–100; Carlo Ginzburg and Bruce Lincoln, *Old Thiess, a Livonian Werewolf: A Classic Case in Comparative Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

[19] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 53, 93, 157, 183–84, 196, 313, 315, 401; II, 24, 38, 51, 74, 184, 246, 257, 281, 321, 337, 348, 362; III, 116, 129, 188, 299, 321.

local seigneur, and head of the Picot-Gouberville clan. Gouberville did family business with his uncle, and after his uncle's death in 1560, he worked closely with his brother François Picot (d. 1573), seigneur de Sorteval, to settle the estate and divide the property. Gouberville reported quarrels with his uncle and his brother about debts, family property, and inheritance. One disagreement troubled Gouberville so much that he noted "I am angrier than I have ever been".[20]

The journal discloses little about how Gouberville talked with his siblings, neighbours, and servants about religion and politics. However, since he spent a lot of time with them, he must have spoken freely on these topics when necessary. He often reached out for support to Symonnet, his neighbour Thomas Drouet, and Thomas Langloys, seigneur de Cantepye, his friend, frequent companion, and Guillemette's husband. Gouberville asked them to spend the night in his bedchamber when he was ill and implored them to talk to him to ease his worries.[21] Gouberville trusted these men and spent a lot of time in their company. He knew he could call on them, just as they could rely on him if they needed a loan or a more powerful man's support in the midst of a quarrel. Gouberville probably did not consider these men his social equals as they were all dependent on him in some way. But they were united by a shared attraction to Protestantism. So they must have spoken about religion and the attendant social and political controversies.

Of all his relationships, Gouberville's bond with his sister Renée stands out for its intimacy. He was close to both Renée and her husband Jacques du Moncel (1513–1584), seigneur de Saint-Nazer and *lieutenant général* of the bailliage of Cherbourg. The sibling bond was powerful and reciprocal. Renée sent for her brother when she was ill or her husband was away.[22] Saint-Nazer, a higher-ranking nobleman than Gouberville, was one of Gilles' most trusted friends. It was Saint-Nazer who wrote to urge Gouberville to come to Valognes to take an oath of obedience to the king on 1 October 1562, as other local gentlemen had done a day earlier, while rumours circulated that Gouberville was a Protestant.[23]

[20] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 321.

[21] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 235, 399; II, 31, 141, 319, 337, 366; III, 53, 84–85.

[22] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 93–104.

[23] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 376–377.

Gilles de Gouberville lived his life in a peculiar mixture of authority and subordination, formality and informality. Social rank defined life for everyone in the early modern world. But it had its subtleties. Gouberville was a gregarious man who enjoyed company. He was friendly with servants and retainers, artisans and innkeepers, priests, men in the legal profession, military officers, and nobles. Yet he spoke differently with different people. He gave orders to labourers on his lands, exchanged civilities and gifts with those he hoped to cultivate (higher-ranking nobles), and bribe (lower-ranking officials). Labouring alongside his subordinates at Mesnil tempered the obviously hierarchical relationship that Gouberville enjoyed with them. His education, level of culture, and intense entanglement in legal business and lawsuits put Gouberville at ease among men of the law. He often dined or drank with them and sought them out when he visited cities.[24] Gouberville was friendly with priests—everyone from the local *curé* to the *curé* of Valognes, the Cordeliers of Bayeux, and cathedral canons from Caen and Bayeux. He eagerly mixed with some of the higher-ranking nobility, recording with satisfaction their invitations to dine or visit.[25]

Gouberville was a pragmatist, and his journal was a pragmatic document. We know who he met every day, but it is more difficult to know with whom he exchanged closely-held opinions, let alone intimate beliefs and doubts. He probably shared his views on controversial topics with his sister Renée and her husband Saint-Nazer. Gouberville's August 1562 conversation with Jehan France and Thomas Noël, together with other episodes recorded in his journal, suggests that he may have talked most freely about politics and religion with men of the law. But possibly those conversations were more worthy of note because they were rarer than the ordinary talk he shared every day with his family and neighbours.

A few conversations stand out for the way that Gouberville recorded them in his journal. He sometimes quoted conversations verbatim, or at least wrote as if he did. This suggests that they held particular significance, either because they were about weighty matters like religion, or because they were with people on whose favour he depended. The August 1562 conversation is an example. But there are others. Gouberville recounted a heated argument with his uncle about the uncle's refusal to repay a

[24] See Huppert, *Les bourgeois gentilshommes*, 106–110.

[25] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 49, 66; III, 229, 234, 255.

debt, which ended with the uncle shouting that his nephew Gilles was "bad" and "saying that I will be damned to all the devils and other terrible and lying words".[26] Gouberville also recorded a quarrel with Thomas Laguette, vicomte de Valognes.[27] In the midst of a gathering at the château of Valognes with numerous local gentlemen and officials in attendance, the vicomte demanded to be allowed to cut wood in the royal forest for his private use. Gouberville said that the royal ordinances forbade it. The vicomte angrily repeated his demand a few days later, adding some sharp criticism of Gouberville, also in the presence of local gentlemen. The quarrel strained relations between Gouberville and the vicomte for a long time. This was potentially a grave matter. Gouberville depended on the good will of men of higher rank. If such good will was withheld, he might be left exposed during times of conflict.

The August 1562 conversation was rare but not unique in the way in which Gouberville framed it. As we shall see, Gouberville recorded other conversations about religion and politics in 1562 and 1563. Religious war created rifts in his social world and the fault lines wound their way through his journal.

Talking About Religion During Religious War, 1562–1563

Religion played a singular role in early modern life. A day in Gouberville's life before the war shows how religion—and Catholicism specifically—was entangled in everyday life. The first day of September was the feast of Saint Giles, the feast day of Gouberville's patron saint. On the eve of the feast in 1551, he had a sheep slaughtered for the next day's meal and attended vespers in the chapel of the Mesnil manor along with some priests and his servants.[28] The feast day began with a mass said by a Franciscan friar in the local parish church. Then a dozen friends and neighbours dined at the manor house. More guests arrived for the evening meal. The easy mix of clerics with laypeople and of activities which we might call 'religious' with those we could call 'secular', plus the movement back and forth between religious spaces and secular spaces, reveal a

[26] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 361.

[27] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 180–183.

[28] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 229–230.

world where religion could not be divorced from celebration, sociability, or the calendar without major disruption. Divisions over religion thus had a unique ability to erode social bonds and interrupt time-honoured customs.

Gilles de Gouberville's experiences during the first year of the religious wars (spring 1562 to spring 1563) show the cost that such close ties between religion and community life could exact.

Historians have spilled much ink over Gouberville's religious position.[29] Was he a Protestant or a Protestant sympathiser? Was he a religious moderate? A coward who retreated from conflict in 1562 and reluctantly swore obedience to the king? I do not claim new insight into Gouberville's beliefs. But a close reading of the journal shows how much he struggled to maintain his balance as Normandy and the French kingdom descended into civil war. The journal documents Gouberville's daily efforts to gather news about local conflicts and to learn how his friends and acquaintances were navigating them. Gouberville's journal paints a picture of a man enmeshed in local religious life and—after 1560—a religious moderate or a Protestant sympathiser uneasily situated among increasingly polarised groups. Gouberville also recorded his often-paralysing fear and worry as religious war reshaped his world.

Normandy was a centre of Protestantism in the 1550s and 1560s. Protestant ideas entered the region in the 1520s.[30] Protestant preachers proclaimed the word from urban and outdoor pulpits. Noblemen joined

[29] Luc Daireaux, "Gilles de Gouberville, un gentilhomme du Cotentin face à la Réforme", *Cahiers Léopold Delisle,* 56 (2007), 33–49; Hugues Daussy, "Une conscience tourmentée au révélateur de la guerre civile", in *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 7–14; Fedden, *Manor Life*, 174–193; Foisil, *Le sire de Gouberville*, 67–74, 88–103; and Stuart Carroll, "'Nager entre deux eaux': The Princes and the Ambiguities of French Protestantism", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44 (2013), 985–1020 (1001–1002).

[30] On the Reformation and religious wars in Normandy, see David Nicholls, "Social Change and Early Protestantism in France: Normandy, 1520–62", *European Studies Review* 10 (1980), 279–308; Benedict, *Rouen During the Wars of Religion*; Gaston Le Hardy, *Histoire du Protestantisme en Normandie depuis son origine jusqu'à la publication de l'Édit de Nantes* (Caen: E. Le Gost-Clérisse, 1869); Maryelise Suffern Lamet, "French Protestants in a Position of Strength: The Early Years of the Reformation in Caen, 1558–1568", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9:3 (1978), 35–55; Marcel Cauvin, "Le protestantisme dans le Cotentin (suite): Églises du nord-est", *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 116 (1970), 57–84; Isabelle Le Touzé, *Suivre Dieu, servir le roI, La noblesse protestante bas-normande, de 1520 au lendemain de la Révocation de l'édit de Nantes*, Ph.D. diss. (Université du Maine, 2012); Luc Daireaux, *Réduire les huguenots: Protestants et pouvoirs en Normandie au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2010).

the cause. Normandy became a centre of Protestant strength in the late 1550s as churches were established in Rouen, Caen, Saint-Lô, and Bayeux, attracting clerics, officers and lawyers, merchants, and artisans. There were more Protestants in upper Normandy than in Gilles de Gouberville's region of lower Normandy. But many nobles in lower Normandy sympathised with the Protestants and there were Protestant churches in the Cotentin, including one in Valognes by at least 1559.[31] Gilles de Gouberville, his friends, family, and neighbours had abundant opportunities to attend sermons if they wished and to talk openly about Protestant ideas.

We can follow Gouberville's growing entanglement in religious conflict in his journal. In January 1551, he bought a copy of the French Protestant psalter.[32] This book purchase stands out since it is one of only a very few that Gouberville recorded. In December 1554, he reported that iconoclasts damaged an image of Saint-Maur in Tourlaville.[33] He did not call the iconoclasts 'heretics' or 'rebels'. His neutral language suggests some sympathy for the Protestants. After this, we have to wait more than five years for the next clear mention of Protestantism. In April 1561 (on Easter Monday), Gouberville was present at a sermon in the courtyard of the rectory of Saint-Clément-sur-le-Vey in Osmanville.[34] Many were there, he wrote, including gentlemen, ladies, his cousin Nicolas Aux-Épaules, seigneur de Sainte-Marie-du-Mont (a local Protestant leader), and "a hundred men on horseback". Gouberville does not say if he went deliberately to attend the sermon or merely paused to hear it while passing by with his entourage.[35]

But in 1562 Gouberville's scattered gestures of curiosity about Protestantism bloomed into greater interest and even commitment. During the spring and summer, Gouberville and many of his circle were in the

[31] Theodore Beza, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises réformées au royaume de France*, ed. by G. Baum and E. Cunitz, 3 Vols. (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1883–1889), Vol. II, 836.

[32] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 176.

[33] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 88.

[34] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 209–210; Daireaux, "Gilles de Gouberville", 35.

[35] Daussy, "Une conscience tourmentée", in *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, I, 9. Nicolas Aux-Épaules (d. 1577), seigneur de Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.

Protestant orbit. In January, the Crown had issued the Edict of Saint-Germain authorising Protestant worship with some limits. So Gouberville and his friends may have understood the edict as sanctioning worship that most authorities had earlier proscribed. Symonnet, Arnould, and Thomas Drouet attended sermons in Valognes, Bayeux, and elsewhere.[36] Gouberville's brother François de Sorteval joined the army commanded by Henri-Robert de La Marck (1540–1574), duc de Bouillon, the royal governor of Normandy, a Protestant who was loyal to the Crown.[37] Eventually Symonnet joined too. Gouberville's own position would eventually evolve in the same direction taken by his brothers—a man of Protestant convictions, loyal to the Crown.

Over the following months, Gouberville's religious observance shifted. He did not record attending mass in May and June, but he did go to Protestant sermons. On 17 May 1562 (the Feast of Pentecost), he heard Pierre Loiseleur de Villiers, a minister from Rouen, preach in Bayeux. Later that afternoon, he attended another sermon at Étréham. Early the next morning, he heard Remon des Moulins preach in Carentan.[38] Gouberville was more purposeful in attending these sermons than he had been at Easter the year before. Staying away from mass was a significant step. Gouberville almost always attended mass on Sundays and feast days in his parish church. He usually brought friends and the priest home for dinner, making the weekly rite a household social occasion. So his new reticence about mass signals a notable change in his routine and possibly in his beliefs.

Gouberville travelled around upper Normandy and the Cotentin to hear Protestant preachers for a few months in 1562. But he did not need to go further than Valognes to find a Protestant community with its own space of worship. According to the Protestant historian Theodore Beza (1519–1605), a minister had been preaching in Valognes regularly "from the time of King Henry II" (r. 1547–1559).[39] Gouberville did not write about the Valognes church, but Beza described the small community of Protestants that included gentlemen, men of the law, an official,

[36] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 297–298.

[37] On Bouillon and other princes as Protestant loyalists, see Carroll, "Nager entre deux eaux".

[38] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 335.

[39] Beza, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 836.

a physician, merchants, and their families.[40] Valognes was Gouberville's neighbourhood. It was a town about an hour's ride on horseback from his manor at Mesnil. He went there nearly every day. Although Gouberville did not record attending services in the little church set up in a town official's house, it is impossible to believe that he did not know this small community so near his home. And knowing his attraction to Protestantism, and how often the men closest to him attended services, it is difficult to believe that Gouberville was not present at their gatherings.

The French kingdom gradually descended into civil war over the spring and summer of 1562. Although they were a minority nearly everywhere, Protestants displayed remarkable strength and determination not to be dominated by Catholic majorities and noble armies in 1562 and 1563. Protestant princes and noblemen raised armies. Many of the largest cities in the kingdom—including Normandy's Rouen, Caen, Saint-Lô, and Bayeux—fell under Protestant control in the summer of 1562.

During the period from 1562 to 1563—the last year for which Gouberville's journals survive—the nobility of lower Normandy was riven with conflict. Rivalries among noblemen predated the religious wars, of course. But increasing confessional polarisation and armed conflict led to an increasingly common inclination to resort to violence to defend one's side. A pervasive fear that the Crown was too weak to keep the peace raised the stakes. Gilles de Gouberville lived in this dangerous world. A word misspoken or an opinion disclosed to the wrong person, a failure to show up for a muster of troops, a perceived lack of deference to a powerful nobleman—any of these steps could threaten his honour, his reputation, his social position, his property, and even his life.

These threats burst into the open in May and June and, closer to home, in Valognes. Gouberville and his friends attended sermons on Pentecost and the following Monday in apparent safety. But on Monday night, while staying at an inn in Valognes, they heard the tocsin ring.[41] An alarm to summon help in an emergency, the tocsin commonly initiated an episode of collective Catholic violence against Protestants during the religious wars. Gouberville wrote no more about the May 17 incident. But according to Beza, although no violence took place that night,

[40] Beza, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 836–840.

[41] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 335.

the Catholics of Valognes had been preparing an attack on the Protestants.[42] Fearing a Protestant attack like those organised in Normandy's larger cities, Catholic men of Valognes had been meeting for weeks at the château, gathering weapons and mustering troops. On May 18, they rang the tocsin, but the attack was thwarted by a few Catholic and Protestant leaders who together pleaded for peace.

The Valognes massacre took place three weeks later on June 7. We have accounts of the massacre from both Beza and the Catholic historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou.[43] Gouberville's account largely matches theirs, although without the detail that Beza recounted, possibly because the incident was too horrific to dwell on.[44] Yet Gouberville wrote with the terror and panic of a man who surely knew both the Protestant victims and the Catholic perpetrators. He first heard of the massacre on June 8, the day after it happened. He immediately sent a messenger to Valognes to verify what he had been told, which a few hours later the messenger did. "I was told that last night at five o'clock there was a great popular riot at Valognes", Gouberville wrote. "Killed were the seigneur de Hoesville, the seigneur de Cosqueville, master Gilles Louvet, a tailor, Robert de Verdun, and Jehan Giffart called Pont-l'Evesque, and several wounded". The houses of some of the Protestants were pillaged and destroyed. Horrifically, "the bodies of the dead were still on the street" the following afternoon, "where the women of Valognes were still going to throw rocks and beat them with sticks". "The people of Valognes are greatly angry", Gouberville wrote. Gouberville anxiously sought out news and eyewitness reports. Visitors to Mesnil "who saw most of what was done" recounted the details. The massacre of Valognes conforms to a common scenario of a neighbourhood massacre during the religious wars: Catholic neighbours killed Protestant neighbours they knew well in a bloody series of attacks prepared in advance by local officials, often triggered by a Protestant worship service.[45] Gouberville surely grasped the full horror of the

[42] Beza, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 836–840.

[43] Beza, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 836–840; Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle depuis 1543 jusqu'en 1607*, Vol. 4 (London: No publisher specified, 1734), 233–234; Le Hardy, *Histoire du Protestantisme en Normandie,* 90–95.

[44] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 341–345.

[45] On neighbourhood massacres see Jérémie Foa, "From Sounding the Tocsin to Ringing the Doorbell: Some Reflections on Saint Bartholomew as a Neighbourhood Massacre", *French History* 37 (2022), 401–412; and Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the*

murders, pillage, and desecration of the victims' bodies from hearing local reports. His messenger must have seen the bodies of Gouberville's friends still lying in the street the following day. Gouberville was plagued with headaches and insomnia for weeks.

Gouberville was in danger after the Valognes massacre. Catholic and Protestant noblemen gathered their armies to respond to the bloodshed. Gouberville's family heard artillery booming night and day. Later, word spread in the neighbourhood that Jacques II Goyon (1525–1598), seigneur de Matignon, lieutenant general of the royal troops in lower Normandy and a staunch Catholic in hot pursuit of 'seditious' Protestants, was nearby. "I am warned again this morning that the seigneur de Matignon was very angry at me, hence I spent all day hiding my coffers" and sending the horses into the forest to keep them from being stolen, Gouberville wrote.[46] Rumours could be false. But rumours that Gouberville was in danger from Catholic leaders intent on pursuing Protestants were probably true. Terrified, ill, and beside himself with anxiety, Gouberville fled to Russy, as always seeking news about troop movements and the safety of his friends and kin.

The August 1562 Conversation

Six weeks after the Valognes massacre, Gouberville had the conversation with Thomas Noël and Jehan France with which I opened this chapter. Now that we understand the maelstrom of religious conflict that engulfed Gouberville, the conversation is more legible. Gouberville normally met these friends either at Russy or in Bayeux where the lawyer and notary worked. But Bayeux was almost a war zone by then, with bloody attacks and reprisals between Catholics and Protestants. Surely a conversation about 'controversies' was safer in the fields rather than in a city where bystanders could overhear or in Gouberville's Russy manor where servants might eavesdrop. Who were the two men to whom Gouberville spoke? Jehan France was a Bayeux notary. Gouberville probably first met him at his uncle's residence at Russy in 1557.[47] After the uncle died in

Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[46] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 344–345.

[47] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 348.

1560, Jehan France helped Gouberville and his brother François to settle the estate. He also handled other legal matters for Gouberville. Noël, a lawyer (*avocat*) in Bayeux and a tax official (*contrôleur d'élection de Bayeux*), was one of Gouberville's lawyers. Noël and France often worked together, the notary France assisting the lawyer Noël. Gouberville gravitated towards men of the law, often writing about meeting, dining, and talking with lawyers and notaries. Gouberville found men like Jehan France and Thomas Noël congenial companions. They were men of the city—literate and educated, steeped in politics, and aware of the news circulating from Bayeux to Rouen to Paris and back again. Gouberville would certainly have had much to chat about with them, either over dinner at an inn or while walking back and forth between the law courts and scribal shops, given that all three men were surely preoccupied by the religious divisions reshaping their world.

To return to the intriguing exchange on August 4 and its possible meanings, Jehan France struck an irenic note in saying "we will make a new God" and imagining a time when "we will no longer say such a one is a papist, such a one is a heretic". Gouberville believed that Noël was "offended" by Jehan France's words. By his own report, Gouberville shut down the conversation.

I propose two frameworks for understanding this enigmatic conversation: one about the three men and their religious and political convictions, and one about the ideas they expressed.

First, the men. I have no information about the notary Jehan France beyond what his friend Gouberville recorded. But Thomas Noël, the lawyer and Bayeux official, appears in the early histories of the religious wars in Normandy. Beza and De Thou number Noël among the zealous Catholic officials exacting reprisals against Protestants in Bayeux a few months after the August 1562 conversation. Beza called him "an apostate from the religion", suggesting that he had once been in the Protestant camp, and named him as an advisor to Giulio Ravilio Rosso, an Italian captain serving in the Duke of Ferrara's army in Catholic-occupied Bayeux in 1563.[48] De Thou described Noël as "the principal minister" of the horrific destruction perpetrated by Catholic armies and officials in Bayeux.[49] According to an eighteenth-century historian, Noël was

[48] Beza, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 415–416, 857.

[49] De Thou, *Histoire universelle*, 245.

killed in Bayeux in February or March 1563 when Protestant soldiers commanded by François de Bricqueville, baron de Colombières, invaded the city.[50] It is no surprise that he might have been a target of Protestant vengeance. According to De Thou, Noël conducted trials and punished many Protestants deemed guilty of "sedition", "disorders", and pillaging during the 1562 Protestant takeover of Bayeux.[51] Noël may once have been a Protestant sympathiser, but by early 1563 he was a Catholic opponent of the Protestants.

What of Jehan France? Here, we can turn to the ideas expressed in the conversation for some clues. France's comment about "making a new god" has the air of popular religious tolerance familiar from Carlo Ginzburg's and Stuart Schwartz's studies of peasants, exiles, and conversos hauled before the Italian and Spanish Inquisitions, who defended the equality of religions.[52] The French kingdom had its own home-grown relativists or moderates who defended liberty of conscience on religious matters.[53] Jehan France may have been among them. Is this opinion the reason why Thomas Noël was offended?

Gouberville shut down the conversation with a Latin phrase: "Unus est Deus ab eterno et eternus" (God is one, eternally and forever). I have not been able to trace the provenance of the phrase. Is Gouberville's turn to Latin a gesture of rising above contradictions or an effort to make a statement of undeniable truth, perhaps a refusal of the changeable? Gouberville may have been annoyed by Jehan France's foolish words. Was it wise to joke about plural gods during a religious war, or to show one's cards so openly to a staunch Catholic official, even one who was a colleague and friend? Perhaps the most we can say is that Gouberville appeared to call for an end to further irenic speculation without saying why—or so he indicated in his own account.

[50] See the unclear account in Michel Béziers, *Histoire sommaire de la ville de Bayeux* (Caen: J. Manoury, 1773), xxxvii, 26–27; and Le Hardy, *Histoire du Protestantisme en Normandie*, 84, who relies on Béziers.

[51] De Thou, *Histoire universelle*, 245.

[52] Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Peninsula* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. by John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

[53] Carroll, "Nager entre deux eaux"; Malcolm C. Smith, "Early French Advocates of Religious Freedom", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), 29–51.

I would like to offer one more observation about Jehan France's words "we will make a new god". Could a comment about plural gods or inventing gods, voiced in even a mild or jesting way, have wandered into the conversation from contemporary ideas about ancient mythologies? For example, in *De inventionibus rerum* (1499), the Italian historian Polydore Vergil recounted how ancient gods originated in ancient peoples' propensity to deify mortal heroes. French publishers issued Latin and French editions of Vergil's book throughout the sixteenth century.[54] Did Jehan France or Gilles de Gouberville know those stories? Gouberville's journal does not say. But Vergil's work was widely available. And Gouberville and his friends enjoyed a good tale from a French book, either read aloud or recounted at taverns or the fireside. Gouberville heard or read stories from Rabelais and *Amadis de Gaule*. Symonnet heard the tale of Helquin's hunt at an inn and went home to tell everyone. Gouberville seems to have enjoyed vernacular compilations of knowledge and stories. He wrote of borrowing from Jehan Bonnet, a Valognes notary, Pedro Mexía's *Diverses leçons* ("various histories and other memorable things").[55] Maybe Gouberville and his lawyer friends knew stories about the invention of gods from Polydore Vergil or other authors. We do not know if they did. But we do know that they enjoyed lowbrow vernacular compilations of the learned works that they may have studied as boys in their Latin schools.

A few weeks after the talk on the Argouges road, Gouberville recorded another notable conversation. On 30 August 1562, Gouberville went to Bayeux for a muster of gentlemen from his bailliage. After supper with Symonnet at his lodgings, he wrote that he walked around the great abbey

[54] For example, Pollidore Vergille, *Historiographe tres renomme nouvellement translate de latin en langaige vulgaire lequel sommierement et en brief traicte et enseigne par entendement plus divin que humain, qui ont este les premiers inventeurs de toutes choses admirables et dignes de memoire. Lequel livre est moult utile proufitable et recreatif a toutes manieres de gens qui ont desir de scavoir et clerement cognoistre la plus que ingenieuse et premiere invention desdictes choses par qui et la cause pourquoy icelles choses ont este ainsi ingenieusement et prouffitablement trouvees et inventees* (Paris: Pierre Le Brodeur, 1521). On euhemerism—discussion about the invention of ancient gods and speculation that they had originally been mortals—see Marek Winiarczyk, *The "Sacred History" of Euhemerus of Messene*, trans. by Witold Zbirohowski-Koscia (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

[55] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, II, 178. This book may have been *Les diverses lecons de Pierre Messie gentilhomme de Sevile, contenans le lecture des variables histoires et autres choses memorables*, trans. by Claude Gruget (Paris: Jean Longis, 1554), first published in 1552.

in Bayeux for an hour with a few men, some mentioned by name as well as "some others from Bayeux that I don't know, talking about the troubles and unhappiness that presently exist between the governors of this kingdom and the subjects".[56] This odd phrasing—that the governors (the king? the queen mother? the royal governors?) were at odds with "the subjects"—is a bit puzzling. Does Gouberville mean that the men were unhappy with the Crown's inability to keep the peace among its subjects or to maintain its own authority among its subjects? It is also notable that Gouberville talked with men he did not know about controversial topics like religion and governance. I surmise that the friends he named were truly trusted friends—possibly Protestants or religious moderates like himself. Or perhaps even better—men who would not betray their friends, men with whom one could safely air views on controversies. The unknown others were *their* friends, so they could also be trusted—or so Gouberville assumed. Seven months later, he sheltered three of his Bayeux friends, including two with whom he had walked at the Bayeux abbey, "who tell me they are fugitives from Bayeux because the Italian captain [Giulio Ravilio Rosso] threatened them" while Bayeux was occupied by Catholic troops.[57] They stayed for a few days at Mesnil and then proceeded to Cherbourg to stay with other friends.

The war injected rancour into Gouberville's relationships with his neighbours. Although Gouberville swore loyalty to the king in October (at Saint-Nazer's insistence), he felt uneasy. A few weeks later, he intervened in a heated argument between two local gentlemen and warned one man that if he did not hold his tongue he would fine him. The man "arrogantly" rejected Gouberville's intervention. Alarmingly, he also accused Gouberville of being present at the Protestant sacking of Catholic homes and the church of Valognes a week after the June 7 massacre.[58] Gouberville immediately complained to a local nobleman (the uncle of the man who had insulted him) and appealed to him to remonstrate with his accuser. The uncle declined to do so, and this unnerved Gouberville. The way Gouberville sought support not only shows that he felt his authority among his neighbours had weakened, but also suggests that his safety may have been at risk, especially if local Catholic men thought

[56] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 365.

[57] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 430–431.

[58] *Journal de Gilles de Gouberville*, III, 388, and 388–393 for further developments.

he had participated in sacking Catholic homes in Valognes. Was disagreement with the man who insulted him a more generalised result of the local conflicts? Perhaps. Or perhaps Gouberville's own ambiguous position was to blame. Differences over religion fractured people's bonds with each other. A few years earlier, Gouberville had known how to maintain his position in the complex social hierarchy of the Cotentin. He knew how to talk, where to talk, and with whom to talk. He knew what he could safely talk about. Religious division interrupted his conversation and threw him off balance. It pushed him into new conversations with different people in places he hoped were safe.

Conclusion

Because Gilles de Gouberville wrote nearly every day, his journal traces one man's entanglement in a rapidly changing welter of beliefs and allegiances. The journal allows us to piece together a picture of Gouberville's conversations and his religious position.

Gilles de Gouberville was caught in a predicament in 1562. The kingdom of France was at war. Normandy was divided between Catholic noblemen and their armies, Protestant noblemen and their armies, and forces loyal to the Crown. Was taking an oath of loyalty to the Crown—as Gouberville did on 1 October 1562—a way out of the predicament? That gesture could have divergent meanings for Gouberville. It could be a refusal of militant Protestantism. It could be a refusal of militant Catholicism. It could signal genuine fidelity to the Crown—a value that Gouberville also exhibited as the local lieutenant of waters and forests. Stuart Carroll has argued convincingly that in the early 1560s, many French princes were religious moderates or Protestants who were also loyal to the Crown.[59] They defended royal authority over public religious worship while at the same time signalling their belief in freedom of conscience for noblemen. Gilles de Gouberville fits that profile, albeit on the scale of his smaller world. He was attracted to Protestantism while also (except for a two-month period) attending Catholic mass. Almost every man he was close to attended Protestant services. Two of his brothers served in Bouillon's army. After taking the oath of loyalty, Gouberville did not again record attending Protestant worship. Much later, in his final

[59] Carroll, "Nager entre deux eaux".

testament written shortly before his death in 1578, Gouberville expressed a wish to be buried with his ancestors in their parish church while also professing faith in Christ's intercession, precisely as a Protestant would.[60] For a gentleman enmeshed in networks of hierarchy and support so implicated in Catholicism, full withdrawal from Catholicism would be not only impossible to manage but difficult to imagine. Moreover, by the 1570s, Normandy's Protestants were much reduced in numbers and strength. Before 1562, Gouberville could continue his ancestral religious practices while at the same time indulging his curiosity about Protestantism. He probably believed that the January 1562 royal edict gave him permission to attend sermons. Events of the summer and autumn of 1562 permanently changed the religious and political terrain. Gouberville's life, property, and social position would be in danger if he threw in his lot with the Protestants who opposed the Crown. By October, he was back at mass while also harbouring his friends who were fleeing persecution by Catholics.

To turn to Gouberville's conversations: did talking to family, neighbours, and friends drive him towards and away from beliefs, loyalties, and gestures of support for those fleeing division? The short answer is yes. Gouberville was born into a world of social hierarchy. He navigated his place amid dependents, equals, and lords. He built relationships through every form of conversation available to him. Gouberville navigated his world as a talker, not as an armed nobleman. He avoided mustering whenever he could. By early 1562, many of those closest to him—his brother, his half-brothers, his neighbours, his cousins, his Bayeux notary, many of his Valognes acquaintances—had gravitated towards Protestantism. Religious difference and confessional conflict reshaped Gouberville's conversational practices, altering what he said, where, and to whom. But Gouberville was an active speaker: he spoke, and thus, he altered his world. His journal reveals precious fragments of information about how people talked to each other about religion during a war over religion.

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[60] *Le journal du sire de Gouberville*, IV, 100, 103.

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CHAPTER 3

When Private Speech Goes Public: Libertinage, Crypto-Judaic Conversations, and the Private Literary World of Jean Fontanier 1621

Adam Horsley

In 1619, René Descartes meditated on his impending steps into an ambiguously public space described as the world: "so far, I have been a spectator in this theatre which is the world, but I am now about to mount the stage, and I come forward masked".[1] Fundamentally, he alludes here to a transition from a space of unscrutinised safety to one of performative exposure. The passive spectator observes from the viewpoint of a homogenising audience, offering a certain degree of privacy to its composite members who direct their scrutinising gaze outwards towards

[1] "Sic ego, hoc mundi theatrum conscensurus, in quo hactenus spectator exstiti, larvatus prodeo". René Descartes, 'Cogitationes privatae' (January 1619), in *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 12 Vols (Paris: Cerf, 1897–1910), X (1908), 213. The English translation is taken from René Descartes, "Early Writings", in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 Vols, trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Duglad Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–91), I (1985), 2.

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the performer rather than towards each other. The actor, conversely, is distinguished from the spectator not only by his conscious decision to tread the boards, but also by the wearing of a mask in order to hide his inner identity and character. In early modern libertine literature, the motif of the mask recalls the writing strategies of *simulatio* and *dissimulatio*; of pretending to hold views conforming to Catholicism or criticising it in ways that are only detectable by a privileged, clear-sighted few.[2] Perhaps inevitably, such writing strategies are played out in a public literary sphere. Unlike the preparation of a text for reading aloud or for critical comment within an epistolary network of trusted readers, the decision to publish a text brings with it the risk of controversial ideas being exposed to eyes whose number, identity, and potential to persecute are beyond the author's control.

This chapter explores a rare exception to these habitual practices of speaking privately, writing covertly, and disseminating publicly within the field of libertine literature. Instead, the trial of Jean Fontanier (1588–1621) scrutinised the defendant's activities which were more strongly anchored—though not entirely restricted—to private spaces of talking and writing.[3] A Protestant who claimed to have converted to Catholicism, Fontanier was arrested in 1621 for authoring and teaching from a Jewish manuscript entitled *Le Trésor inestimable* (*The Inestimable Treasure*) which was burned along with Fontanier at his execution. This study begins by outlining the means through which Fontanier became interested in Judaism and how he subsequently attracted students to read from and reproduce his text at his home. In doing so, I wish to argue for a tension between the legal identification of a literary crime and the considerable degree to which Fontanier's actions were influenced by private

[2] The most frequently cited study of early-modern French simulation and dissimulation is Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, *Dis/simulations: Jules-César Vanini, François la Mothe le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto: Religion, morale et politique au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2002). See also Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, *Les Déniaisés: Irréligion et libertinage au début de l'époque moderne* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013).

[3] I have recently provided the first dedicated study of Fontanier's trial to draw from all of the known surviving material on his case. See Adam Horsley, *Libertines and the Law: Subversive Authors and Criminal Justice in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 177–250 (Chapter 4). While the present chapter will draw from the findings in my book, my aim here is to use the lens of privacy studies to propose new readings of Fontanier's authorial enterprise, his interactions with others, and his subsequent trial.

conversations, which were largely ignored by the judges assigned to his case.

A Private Sphere Created and Shared

Fontanier's case has left relatively few reliable sources. The records of his first trial at the Paris Châtelet have not survived, whereas those of his appeal against his death sentence before the Parlement de Paris are limited to two hearings.[4] The judge in charge of hearing the latter, Nicolas de Bellièvre (1583–1650), helpfully left an account of the Fontanier affair in his private memoirs which lay undiscovered until the twentieth century, and which elucidate the official records held at the French National Archives.[5] Fontanier's path to the stake apparently began while travelling home from a trip abroad. On an unknown day during his journey, he had a chance encounter with a Jew named Daniel Montalto who was the son of the royal family's former doctor, Elijah Montalto (1567–1616).[6] Fontanier was a restless spirit whose various journeys to Italy, Amsterdam, and Constantinople appear to have been motivated by his desire to lay his doubts regarding certain aspects of Roman Catholic orthodoxy to rest. Although the precise subjects of their private conversations remain unknown, it would seem that Montalto's words made a strong impression, for in June 1621 the two men arrived together in Paris. Fontanier's recollection of the beginning of their project places strong emphasis on their private talk:

[4] For these records, see Frédéric Lachèvre, *Mélanges sur le libertinage au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1920), 60–81.

[5] BNF MS Fr 18,319: Nicolas de Bellièvre, *Remarques de monsieur le président de Bellièvre, sur ce qui s'est passé au Parlement de Paris (1607–1627)*, vol. I, fols. 220 v–230 r. (henceforth 'Bellièvre'). Wherever possible, this study will also reference the partial transcription of Bellièvre's remarks by its discoverers: Elisabeth Labrousse and Alfred Soman, "Un bûcher pour un judaïsant: Jean Fontanier (1621)", *XVIIe siècle* 39:2 (1987), 113–132. Fontanier's case is touched upon briefly in Alain Mothu, "Pierre Petit à l'école antichrétienne de Jean Fontanier (1621)", *La Lettre clandestine* 23 (2015), 261–270, which centres on one of Fontanier's students.

[6] On Elijah Montalto, see Harry Friedenwald, "Montalto: A Jewish Physician at the Court of Marie de Médicis and Louis XIII", *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 3:2 (1935), 129–158 and Jean-Marc Pelorson, "Le docteur Carlos García et la colonie hispano-portugaise de Paris (1613–1619)", *Bulletin Hispanique* 71:3–4 (1969), 518–576.

> Six months ago, returning from the Netherlands via Cambrai, he found Montalto, brother of the doctor, with whom he conversed for two hours. […] Montalto told him that they would talk with each other further in Paris. Three or four days after his arrival in Paris, they met up and spent two months conversing. During this time, over a twelve-day period, Fontanier had copied out this book that Montalto dictated to him or sometimes lent to him.[7]

Thanks to the star piece of evidence at Fontanier's trial (the *Trésor inestimable*), it is clear that the subject of the two men's extensive conversations was Judaism, whereas the key question during the trial was to determine whether Fontanier or Montalto had written this text. It seems likely that Fontanier had already been tempted towards Jewish conversion, or had at least been curious to hear its arguments, much earlier in life. He recalled at trial how he had travelled to Constantinople in 1610 "in a galley alongside Frenchmen, that he had Jews as translators, and [that he] asked them nothing about their beliefs".[8] It comes as no surprise that these discussions had taken place in private, since the casual criticism of Catholic doctrine in favour of another faith could hardly have taken place openly within a policed public arena at this time.[9] Furthermore, the phenomenon of practising and spreading Judaism in secret—*crypto-judaïsant*—was established, known, and hyperbolically demonised at this

[7] "Depuis 6 mois revenant des pais bas passant par Cambrey il y trouva Montalte frere du Medecin, avec lequel il eust conference 2 heures […] lequel luy dit qu'ils s'entretiendroient davantage a Paris. 3 ou 4 jours apres son arrivée a Paris le rencontrerent, ont communiqué 2 mois ensemble, pendant lequel temps il avoit en douze jours coppié ce livre Montalte dictant ou quelques fois luy prestant son livre". Bellièvre, fol. 218 v. The brother in question was Daniel Montalto's brother Isaac, who had followed in his father's footsteps as a doctor.

[8] "en une gallère avec des françois, qu'il avoit des juifs pour truchement, ne leur a rien demandé de leur croyance". AN X 2A 985, interrogation of 10 December 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 69. See also Bellièvre, fol. 222 v; Labrousse and Soman, "Fontanier", 118.

[9] There is a perhaps surprising discrepancy here with the early modern speech crime of blasphemy. Owing probably to the difficulty of finding witnesses or even detecting this crime within private spheres such as the home, the majority of blasphemy cases heard by the Parlement de Paris in the seventeenth century took place in the street. For corresponding statistics, see Alain Cabantous, *Histoire du blasphème en Occident: XVIe–XIXe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2015), 143.

time.[10] Originating from a complex history of Jewish migration from the Iberian Peninsula and marked by an increasingly oral culture of practice and teaching within repressive Catholic states, the practice of Judaism in early seventeenth-century France was associated with secrecy and private gatherings.

The result of these conversations—the writing of the *Trésor inestimable*—was thus a relatively unusual strategy. So too was the means by which Fontanier acquired his students. Fontanier advertised his 'lessons' through a cryptic placard in the streets of Paris, which may have been co-written with Montalto. Given the apparent aims of the *Trésor inestimable* to convert its readers to Judaism through critiques of Catholic beliefs, the placard was a misleading advertisement to say the least:

> Instead of taking a little money from you (which would not be pleasing to God for me to ask of you), on the contrary it is to give you the means to acquire riches in abundance and to spend them liberally. As such, in a short space of time you will become very rich, and do you know how? In such a way that it will no longer be necessary to go off in search of Peru in a new world, nor cross the seas, nor mountains, deserts, or countryside to acquire treasures. Your riches are right here, there is no need to go looking for them elsewhere.[11]

[10] There is a considerable body of literature on early modern Crypto-Judaism. For examples within the French context, see Anne Zink, "Une niche juridique: L'installation des Juifs à Saint-Esprit-lès-Bayonne au XVIIe siècle", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 49:3 (1994), 639–669 and Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). For cross-European vistas, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World of Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Juifs, judaïsme et affrontements religieux (XVIe siècle—milieu XVIIe siècle)", in *L'Europe en conflits: Les affrontements religieux et la genèse de l'Europe moderne vers 1500—vers 1650*, ed. by Wolfgang Kaiser (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 363–409; Natalia Muchnik, "La conversion en héritage. Crypto-judaïsants dans l'Europe des XVIe et XVII siècles (Espagne, France, Angleterre)", *Histoire, économie & société* 4:33 (2014), 10–24; and Gary K. Waite, *Jews and Muslims in Seventeenth-Century Discourse: From Religious Enemies to Allies and Friends* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

[11] "Au lieu de prendre de vous quelque peu d'argent (ce que à Dieu ne plaise seulement que je vous en demande) qu'au contraire c'est pour vous bailler les moyens pour en acquérir avec abondance et en user avec largesse, et ainsi dans peu de temps vous faire devenir trestous riches: et sçavez-vous comment? d'une telle façon qu'il ne sera plus nécessaire de rechercher le Perou dans un nouveau monde, ny traverser les mers, ny les montagnes, les deserts ny les campagnes pour acquerir des trésors, vostre richesse est icy presente, il ne la faudra point chercher ailleurs". Quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 63. A

This strategy for reaching a readership was the first stage of Fontanier's unusual method of textual creation and engagement, in which we see a deconstruction of the traditional binary between the *private* authorship of a text and the subsequent *public* acquisition of printed copies from a bookshop or street seller. The five students who were enticed into Fontanier's home were offered lessons via dictation after they had first signed an oath of secrecy. Beginning as his conversation partners, they would subsequently become readers and (co)writers of copies of the *Trésor inestimable,* before finally serving as the text's publishers in the broader sense of the term. Significantly, Fontanier's arcane knowledge was not what was offered in the placards. Rather, somewhat cyclically, they invited the reader back into their author's private domestic sphere.

In this cross-pollination of ideas, his students were enticed by the placards with their colourful descriptions of exotics lands, overflowing hordes of treasure, and the satisfaction of material needs. However, they did not obtain their reward after the seeds of Fontanier's ideas had been cast out from his private domestic sphere and into a public space of acquisition such as a bookshop. Rather, the nectar was to be enjoyed by abandoning the public space of the street where the placards appeared, in favour of the locus in which Fontanier's seeds of doubt had been produced—his private home—with the intention that his visitors should then carry his ideas out into the world in seditious imitation of the Apostles. Thus, it was only in a private space that they could obtain the *Trésor inestimable*, both as a form of gnosis and as a physical text, after having sworn before God that their discussions would remain private. This editorial strategy is quite exceptional for a text intended to spread subversive ideas, not least when we compare this to the more traditional journey of a subversive text across privacy thresholds.

An author's initial thinking and writing would typically take place within a mental or domestic space of privacy such as the mind, the home, or the *cabinet*. Once the text was published, however, it entered the

complete copy of Fontanier's placard and the oath of secrecy he asked his students to swear to can be found in *Histoire veritable de la vie de Jean Fontanier* (Paris: Melchior Mondiere, 1621), 7–10 and François Garasse, *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps* (Paris: Sebastien Chappelet, 1623), 149–152. A manuscript copy can also be found in BNF MS Baluze 212, fol. 167 v.

public spheres of the bookseller, the hawker, or the tavern.[12] In doing so, such texts also escaped the author's control over who would read, own, or share them as material objects and potentially as ideological weapons. Indeed, the very use of *simulatio* and *dissimulatio* in subversive literature stems from a similar concern regarding the potential readers of a text and the consequences of their critical (and potentially hostile) reactions for the author.[13] In turn, from the perspective of the defenders of orthodoxy, as an author's private views became public knowledge via the publication and commercialisation of a text, the 'libertine menace' was that subversive ideas became visible or even audible entities, circulating among the fast-flowing human traffic of public spheres.[14]

Fontanier's case is quite different, since the reading *public* received an invitation to become *private* guests;to engage with Fontanier's esoteric teaching within the private space in which the text had originally been conceived rather than following the traditional textual "movement from a private realm of creativity to a public realm of consumption".[15] Having entered the author's personal and private spheres, both domestic and intellectual, Fontanier's readers were both conversation partners and disseminators of text via a primary oral engagement with their source through dictation. To return to Descartes' metaphor: if most libertine texts wear their masks of *dissimulatio* publicly on stage, then in

[12] As Harold Love reminds us, the act of 'publishing' a text in the early modern period could also include circulation (i.e. the making public) of hand-written manuscripts and letters, without the absence of a printed page necessarily detracting from a text's literary value. See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 36.

[13] I have explored this anxiety towards the potential readership of controversial texts passing from private to public spheres through the lens of the poet François Maynard. See Adam Horsley, "'Mon livre, je ne peux m'empescher de te plaindre': Reflections on the compilation of François Maynard's 1646 Œuvres", in *"A qui lira": Littérature, livre et librairie en France au XVIIe siècle*, ed. by Mathilde Bombart and others (Tübingen: Nar—Biblio 17, 2020), 633–642 and Adam Horsley, "Secret Cabinets, Scribal Publication and the Satyrique: François Maynard and Libertine Poetry in Public and Private Spaces", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 51:1 (2020), 55–78.

[14] Stéphane Van Damme, *L'Épreuve libertine: Morale, soupçon et pouvoirs dans la France baroque* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2008), 44: "la menace libertine". On the difficulties of policing subversive speech acts born from reading texts aloud or reciting them from memory, see Nicholas Hammond, *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019).

[15] Love, *Scribal Publication*, 36.

Fontanier's case, the reader was invited backstage to where the lines of public performance were learned and rehearsed. His home can thus be likened to the backroom of a shop proposed by Michel de Montaigne—that private space so propitious for free-thinking without fear of reprisal, the "room, just for ourselves, at the back of the shop".[16] Thus, the private space for the teaching of Judaism was also one where the agency of teacher and student, as well as of reader and writer, was both strikingly fluid and quite exceptional for the habitual relationship between the producer and consumer of a text.

The crucial distinction between authoring and producing a text is also visible in the law. Let us take as points of comparison the sentences (*arrêts*) read against Roberto Bellarmino on 26 November 1610 for proposing limits on the authority of kings in his *Tractatus de potestate summi pontifices in rebus temporalibus* (1610) and against Théophile de Viau and other poets for authoring pornographic and obscene poetry (1623):

> [It is a crime] to receive the book, keep hold of it, pass it on, print, have it printed, or display it for sale.[17]

> They have written the book, had it printed, and displayed it for sale.[18]

As these examples demonstrate, sentences against subversive authors typically list their crimes as writing (*composer*), printing (*faire imprimer*), and displaying for sale (*exposer en vente*), or variations of these terms. In censoring Bellarmino's text, the magistrates first identified the private acquisition and possession of the work (since any public procurement of

[16] "Une arriereboutique toute nostre". See Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Pierre Villey and V. L. Saulnier (Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 2004), I, xxxix, 241. The English translation is taken from Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), 270.

[17] "[Il est un crime de] recevoir, retenir, communiquer, imprimer, faire imprimer, ou exposer en vente ledict livre". BNF MS Dupuy 90, fol. 193 r: Condemnation of Robert Bellarmine's Tractatus de potestate summi pontifices in rebus temporalibus (1610), 26 November 1610.

[18] "Ilz ont composé, faict imprimer et exposé en vente le livre". AN X 2B 342: sentence against Théophile de Viau and other authors of *Le Parnasse satyrique* (1622), 29 August 1623, quoted in Frédéric Lachèvre, *Le Libertinage devant le parlement de Paris: Le Procès du poète Théophile de Viau*, 2 Vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1909), I, 143.

the text, such as through a bookshop, would necessarily become impossible due to this legislation being passed) before referring to the chain of material and commercial production of subsequent copies. Similarly, in the case of Théophile and other prosecuted contributors to *Le Parnasse satyrique* (1622), poetic composition is the sole private activity included in the charges against them, with all other activities pertaining to the public activities of printing and commercial display. It is striking and by no means accidental that in doing so, sentences handed down by the law courts recognised the dangerous progression of seditious ideas from private spaces of conception to public commercial spaces of inspection. Once again, the private literary world of Jean Fontanier is an exception to the rule in more ways than one:

> He has produced, written, composed, taught and dictated the book entitled *Trésor inestimable*.[19]

Fontanier's death sentence bears no trace of public activity and does not even go as far as to accuse him of advertising his text in the public sphere, which would be a reasonable charge to level against him given his use of placards to garner students. Yet his mission to lead his listeners from the Catholic faith through a combination of discussion and dictation—endeavours that one would usually associate with personal conversations between the converter and the listener—is not couched within oral culture. Instead, his libertinism is described as textual, with four of the five composite verbs pertaining to textual rather than spoken transgressions of the law and the Catholic faith. As such, the dichotomy between public readership and private speech and thought is inverted. This in turn led the magistrates to adopt the logical strategy of prosecuting Fontanier for the authorship and material production of a physical text, as opposed to the spoken blasphemies and anti-Catholic teachings which constituted his pedagogical method of instruction.[20] Fontanier's case was more unusual still. First, during Fontanier's discussions with

[19] "Il a fait, écrit, composé, enseigné et dicté le livre intitulé *Trésor inestimable*". *Arrêt* against Jean Fontanier, 26 November 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 66.

[20] This said, the privacy in which the text was produced nonetheless posed a problem for the authorities, for as Hélène Duccini notes, "Il est plus facile de poursuivre ceux qui fabriquent les livres, et qui ont pignon sur rue, que ceux qui les écrivent dans l'espace privée de leur logis" ("it is easier to pursue those who print books, and who are established in the trade, than those who write them in the private space of their lodgings"). See

both Montalto and his subsequent students, the private spheres of conversation and of literary production are as one. As such, discussion fed directly into authorship which, in the field of libertine studies, was an unusual example of multiple individuals working together in person to write a text. Second, in keeping with the function of the text as a tool for conversion to Judaism, Fontanier's interlocutors were first converted into co-authors, with the potential aim to transform them a second time into co-publishers of daring, illegal blasphemy. I want to argue that these beginnings, methods, and intended outcomes of subversive ideological and literary production are distinctive in the history of French literature and libertinism. Fontanier's early conversations with Montalto, his tripartite relationship with his students and the texts that were produced within his private home, the fact that a textual trace remains of these private discussions, and the unusual wording of his death sentence, all lead us to conclude that Fontanier's authorial and editorial practices were clearly—and exceptionally—a private affair.

Private Spheres Invaded

Fontanier's highly regulated private arena for anti-Catholic teaching sought to control the outward emanation of his text into the public sphere through his students. Unfortunately for our would-be rabbi, his plans would not remain private for long. Instead, they were subjected to a number of invasive and violent analyses by the legal agents of Catholic hegemony embodied by the magistrates. Two of Fontanier's four students denounced him to the authorities, claiming "that people were practising Judaism in that house".[21] Just a few days later, his residence was raided, the students interrogated, and Fontanier arrested. The invasion of this private literary and conversational space was not a premeditated action, but was impelled by a second betrayal of Fontanier's trust by his two denouncers, as Bellièvre's account makes abundantly clear:

> The two who lived at the Golden Feather on the rue des Mathurins [Pierre Petit and Jean Gaultier] informed Mr Fouquet, Councillor of State, previously *président* in Rennes, who in turn alerted the Chancellor and the

Hélène Duccini, *Faire voir, faire croire: l'opinion publique sous Louis XIII* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2003), 35.

21 "'Que l'on Judaïsoit en ceste maison-la". Bellièvre, fol. 218 r.

> Governor of Paris, after which the Governor gave his orders. In fact, these two students waited all morning inside the house for the *lieutenant criminel* to arrive in order to help him surprise this Jewish proselyte. This is why he allowed them to go free on bail.[22]

Once they had become the eyes and ears of the magistrates, Fontanier's two denouncers became participants in a dual dialogue. Communicating back and forth between Fontanier and the magistrates, they caused the boundaries between private conversation and public interest (that is to say, the rule of law) to be eroded, as if by the ebb and flow of a tide of incriminating information or the proverbial sawing of the wooden bolt securing the door of their private domestic space. Thus, Fontanier's domestic and pedagogical private sphere began as something of a 'safe space' for the airing of doubts regarding Catholic dogma, the oral presentation of Jewish beliefs and practices, and the weaponising of this rhetoric through the production of dictated copies of conversation. Upon the revelation of their subversive conversations, this space then found itself delineated by increasingly porous privacy boundaries, in terms of both the transmission of information and the physical invasion by the arresting parties.

It might be assumed that the act of teaching with a view to convert one's audience from Catholicism would, in early modern France, be a sufficient cause to instigate an arrest and pass a deterring sentence against the accused. The magistrates, however, drew a striking distinction between talking and writing. According to Bellièvre, the two denouncers were adamant "that they had only written things down on that occasion [the day of the arrest], but that they had followed three lessons after they had already started".[23] The surviving records reveal that engaging in anti-Catholic discussions was not deemed to be worthy of pursuit by the authorities. Admittedly, the difficulty of finding evidence

[22] "Les deux logés rue des Mathurins [Pierre Petit et Jean Gaultier], à la plume d'or, en avoient donné l'advis à monsieur Fouquet, conseiller d'Estat, cy-devant président à Rennes, lequel en ayant adverty monsieur le chancellier et monsieur le gouverneur, ledict sieur gouverneur luy avoit faict donner [ordre]. Et d'effect, ces 2 escholiers-là attendoient dedans la maison toutte la matinée que luy lieutenant criminel vint pour luy ayder à surprendre ce judaïsant. Raison pourquoy il les auroit laissé aller à leur caution". Bellièvre, fol. 228 v; Labrousse and Soman, "Fontanier", 125–126.

[23] "Ils n'avaient écrit que cette-fois, mais qu'ils avaient pris trois leçons commencées". Bellièvre, fol. 219 r.

of oral infractions of the law—particularly within this private space of collective discussion where bearing witness was synonymous with self-incrimination—may have been a more practical reason for the judges' seemingly lenient approach. What was of apparently greater significance was the act of recording those conversations in manuscript form and the potential harm that these copies could cause if they made their way into further groups of readers or, worse still, a clandestine printing press.

One of Fontanier's defences was that he had written the text to satisfy his theological doubts—one of his many counterintuitive strategies, given that he also repeatedly denied writing the text at all. As seen earlier, those doubts probably date back to 1610 when he first conversed with Jewish translators during his travels. On multiple occasions in his short life, Fontanier's faith had given way to doubts. There were no correspondences with Jews elsewhere in Europe found in Fontanier's possession when his home was searched, no personal words of encouragement penned by Montalto, and no private diaries or reflections in which the accused recorded his inner thoughts for the sake of his own spiritual exploration or salvation. Instead, the trial records repeatedly indicate that Fontanier's doubts were expressed and addressed in private conversations—from those initial admissions of uncertainty while sailing alongside Jewish translators, to conversations with Montalto while travelling, and to their subsequent preparation of a holographic account of their discussions at Fontanier's home. These Jews were not the only ones to contribute to Fontanier's eventual crimes through the medium of orality. Dutifully seeking to assuage his doubts by approaching Catholic theologians, he found himself prohibited even from articulating them, all of which would likely have contributed to his interest in conversing with Montalto:

> [He] confesses that he has had a few doubts about his faith. He sought instruction from his confessor and other Catholic doctors who were not willing to hear his doubts.[24]

[24] "Confesse qu'il a eü quelques doute [sic] de la foy, pour s'instruire a affiché son Confesseur et autres Docteurs Catholiques n'ayant voulu ouyr ses doubtes". Bellièvre, fols. 218 r–218 v.

> He looked for doctors from the Sorbonne whom he was unable to name. They told him that he should not speak about it. This was to find greater certainty about the things that he doubted.[25]

We might understandably question the extent to which the writing of a text played a role in what was otherwise so obviously a case of Fontanier fulfilling his wish to *talk* in private. He even defended the advertising of his 'lessons' through placards not as a means to acquire scribes for his teaching, but to engage in more informal and perhaps egalitarian private conversations pertaining to his doubts. In these discussions, the students could become either affirming allies or corrective advocates for Catholic doctrine: "what he had advertised was only to resolve a few doubts he had with those who would come to see him, who could only be men of spirit and learning".[26] Furthermore, Fontanier's defence appears to claim that his students' previous level of education permitted them access to unorthodox ideas that might otherwise be dangerous for the wider populace, who would lack the intellectual skills to fully understand his lessons. Thus, his students' prior education was used as evidence that Fontanier's text was unworthy of condemnation for irreligious ideas with which such men of learning would not deign to engage. Notwithstanding the extent to which Fontanier's crimes were associated with orality, from the perspective of the magistrates it was only natural that their lines of questioning should instead pertain to the sizeable piece of damning evidence seized during the raid: the *Trésor inestimable*.

Whereas an analysis of Fontanier's text (as far as can be ascertained from the extant records) would go beyond the scope of this chapter, the judges' interest in his education and the books in his possession

[25] "Il a recherché des docteurs de Sorbonne et ne les a peu nommer qui luy dirent qu'il ne debvoit parler de cela et que estoit [sic] pour avoir plus grande certitude de ce qu'il doubtait". AN X 2A 985, interrogation of 10 December 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 69.

[26] "Ce qu'il avoit affiché n'estoit que pour se resoudre de quelques doubtes qu'il avoit avec ceux qui le viendroient voir qui ne pouvoient estre que gens d'esprit et de sçavoir". *Histoire veritable de la vie de Jean Fontanier*, 13. Taken as a whole, Fontanier's situation exemplifies Benedetta Craveri's assertion that "conversation was not only a means of escape. It was also an education in the world—for many, the only one available". See Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, trans. by Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review Books, 2005 [2001]), 343.

shed more light on their strategies for finding him guilty.[27] In addition to the *Trésor*, Fontanier's learning and collection of writings were also potentially incriminating:

> His chests and *cabinets* were immediately searched. A few Hebrew books were found [as well as] Hebrew prayers translated into Latin, confesses that he has some knowledge of the Hebrew tongue.[28]

A search of the accused's premises was a common part of carrying out due legal diligence in compiling a case against the accused in this early stage of the investigation, as was the recording of the students' oral interrogations as textual transcripts.[29] Nevertheless, it is striking that Bellièvre returned to Fontanier's education in his interrogation at the Parlement, to which the latter responded that:

> [He has] studied philosophy and logic, does not understand the Greek language and was taught it by a Scotsman of the so-called reformed faith. […] Has not learnt Hebrew and had gained some knowledge of it through grammar.[30]

The language of the Jews was thus seen as synonymous with the subversive, anti-Catholic message of the *Trésor inestimable* (which was nevertheless written in French) despite the fact that there existed a healthy body of literature on Hebrew scholarship and language at this time.[31]

[27] No copies of this text have survived, though Bellièvre's manuscript does provide a summary of its contents. I have proposed a reconstruction of the *Trésor inestimable*, as well as a hypothesis about how Fontanier and his students potentially engaged with it in the days leading up to his arrest, in Horsley, *Libertines and the Law*, 212–220.

[28] "A l'instant visitation faicte des coffres et cabinets quelques livres Hebreux trouvés, prieres des Hebreux traduictes en Latin, confesse qu'il scait quelque chose de la langue Hebraique". Bellièvre, fol. 218 v.

[29] On the strong culture of orality in the Parlement de Paris, see Marie Houllemare, *Politiques de la parole: le Parlement de Paris au XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 131.

[30] "A faict son cours de philosophie et sa logique, n'entend la langue grecque et l'a apprise d'un écossois de la religion prétendue réformée. […] N'a appris l'ébreu et en a eu quelque cognoissance par la grammaire". AN X 2A 985, interrogation of 10 December 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 69.

[31] On this point, see in particular Lyse Schwarzfuchs, *Le Livre hébreu à Paris au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Editions Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2004) and Lyse Schwarzfuchs, *L'Hébreu dans le livre lyonnais au XVIe siècle* (Lyon: ENS Editions, 2008). On the

The weaponising of the defendant's use and knowledge of Hebrew was a double-edged sword, for not only was Fontanier reproached for the physical evidence attesting to his knowledge of the language of Judaism, but Bellièvre also claimed, somewhat paradoxically, that the *Trésor inestimable* could only have been written by him precisely because of its *lack* of Hebrew learning! The text was devoid of:

> [A]ll the languages and sciences that Montalto knew very well: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian; [there was] not a word on the humanities, antiquity, history, philosophy, medicine, all of which Montalto excelled in. [There was] not a single conception of a Portuguese national or a pleasant spirit or even a story from the countries in which he had lived.[32]

It is possible (though not explicitly stated) that the magistrate's focus on Fontanier's linguistic abilities intended to paint a picture of the defendant and Montalto conversing in Hebrew while compiling their text. A more likely explanation, however, is that in debating Fontanier's ability to understand Hebrew, both judge and defendant were engaging in a subtle rhetorical game in which the unspoken yet mutually understood stakes were that speaking this language and spreading the Jewish faith were considered to be one and the same.

Fontanier was to suffer one further examination of an altogether different kind before being condemned to burning at the stake. Bellièvre had previously asked for surgeons to be made ready to examine Fontanier in order to determine whether he had been circumcised. He recalls the revelation of his plans to the accused with chilling satisfaction:

> [Asked] if he was circumcised.

differently perceived relationship between Jewish scholarship and Christian theology, see Theodor Dunkelgrün, "The Christian Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe", in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. by Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 316–348 (322–329). On medical texts, see also in the same volume Adam Shear, "Science, Medicine, and Jewish Philosophy", 522–549.

[32] "Touttes les langues et sciences que sçavoit excellement Montalte: hebreu, grec, latin, espagnol, italien; un seul traict d'humanité, d'antiquité, d'histoire, de philosophie, de medicine, en quoy excelloit Montalte, mais pas une seule conception d'un Portugais ou gentil esprit, ny pas mesmes une histoire des pais qu'il avoit habités". Bellièvre, fol. 223 v; Labrousse and Soman, "Fontanier", 120. For more on Bellièvre's forensic linguistic analysis of the *Trésor inestimable* for the purposes of author attribution, see Horsley, *Libertines and the Law*, 220–232.

> Said that he was not, very quietly.
> Was warned that they were about to find out.[33]

The surgeons' report, summarised briefly in the trial records, was but further evidence of the defendant's guilt:

> [He] was visited by the surgeons La Noue and Guibert in order to determine if he were circumcised. After they had been sworn in, the surgeons said that there was a white scar and that it was difficult to cover the head of the penis; and that the scar had been there for some time, at least ten years, and was now no more than a soft white mark.[34]

Fontanier's freedom of thought and his resulting textual enterprise were all confined to private and largely domestic spheres from both oral and textual perspectives. There was no mention of blasphemies spoken on the road, of lips loosened by wine in the tavern, nor was any significance even afforded to the publicly displayed placards. Fontanier's medical examination reveals that on a confessional level too, his deviance remained private. He did not wear clothes or symbols indicative of his faith, a fact which Bellièvre was sure to emphasise in his memoir as if to insist upon the danger of hiding in plain sight within Catholic society.[35] He did not convey his faith through dietary choices; nor move to one of the cities in the south of France with Jewish communities; nor did he even change his name as Elijah Montalto did after his own conversion. Rather, Fontanier's break with Catholicism was grafted on to his body—a physical and private manifestation of his Judaic beliefs, mirroring the hidden

[33] "[Enquis] s'il est prépucié.
A dict que non, fort bas.
Remonstré qu'on le verra maintenant".
AN X 2A 985, 10 December 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 71.

[34] "Fut visité, sçavoir s'il estoit préputié, par La Noue et Guibert, chirurgiens juréz, et après serment ont dit qu'il y a une cicatrice blanche et que mal aisément on a pu couvrir le gland, et qu'il y a longtemps pour le moins dix ans et ne reste qu'une blancheur sans dureté". AN X 2A 985, 10 December 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 71.

[35] "He was more of a short man than a tall one, shapely, with very black hair, tanned skin, his beard in a point as was popular at court and in Paris, which I say to show that he looked like any other man" ["C'estoit un homme plustost petit que grand, bien faict, de poil fort noir, de couleur bazané, la barbe en pointe comme la portoit le monde de la Cour et de Paris: ce que je remarque pour monstrer qu'il estoit faict comme un autre"]. Bellièvre, fol. 222 r; Labrousse and Soman, "Fontanier", 118.

environments in which his crypto-Jewish activities took place. In invading that private bodily space (as it had done with Fontanier's space of oral and domestic privacy), the Parlement had, in its eyes, flooded the murky corners of dangerous private spaces for freespeaking and thinking with the light of Catholic orthodoxy. In doing so, they had found Fontanier to be something legally worse than a Jew: a lying pseudo-Catholic.

Ultimately, Fontanier's fate was sealed by the same unrestrained tongue that had led the legal authorities to his door. Desperate for his life to be spared, he made the fatal mistake of proposing something of a verbal plea-bargain which, in reality, may as well have been a signed confession:

> The sincere declaration he will make of his Catholic religion will do more good than the death he will suffer, and he invokes the mercy of God who said that he did not wish for the death of the sinner but that he should convert, and places his hope in death in the Passion of our saviour Jesus Christ, that by your will he will have a gentle death so that no one will fail to be aware of the true profession that he would make.[36]

The promise to instrumentalise his language and oral confessional identity for the good of the Catholic faith of his persecutors paradoxically provided the magistrates with an admission—made in court, no less—that his long-claimed conversion to Catholicism had in fact yet to take place. Whether this was yet another unfortunate slip of the tongue under the pressure of a criminal trial or a revelation of his true Catholic scepticism was of little consequence. Fontanier was burned at the stake the very same day, while the pages of his *Trésor inestimable* were consigned to the flames alongside their author.[37] Ironically, the sole fragments of this text have survived within another space conceived as private: the personal memoirs of Nicolas de Bellièvre.

[36] "La déclaration de l'onnête [sic] profession qu'il fera en la relligion catholique fera plus de proffict que la mort qu'il souffrira et a recours à la miséricorde de Dieu qui a dict qu'il ne veult la mort du pescheur mais qu'il se convertisse et espère en la mort de la passion de nostre sauveur Jesus-Christ que par vostre volonté luy sera procuré une mort doulce affin qu'on ne mécognoisse la vraye proffession qu'il fera". AN X 2A 985, 10 December 1621, quoted in Lachèvre, *Mélanges*, 71.

[37] Though there are a number of author trials and executions that have formed the subject of modern studies, it is nonetheless the case that death sentences for subversive authors were relatively rare. See *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. by Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, 4 Vols (Paris: Promodis, 1982–1985), I: Le livre conquérant (1982), 372.

Concluding Remarks

In the case of Jean Fontanier, we are repeatedly confronted with a duality between talking and writing in private. From his initial conversations with Jews abroad, to his house-guest Daniel Montalto, to his 'lessons' with students, Fontanier sought to air his doubts on Catholic doctrine, and subsequently to teach his newfound and presumably more solid Jewish faith, in the intimacy of private conversation. As Roger Chartier notes, this was entirely in keeping with the early modern period's "new modes of engaging with writing [that] constructed a sphere of intimacy, which was at the same time a retreat and a refuge for the individual subjected to the controls of the community".[38] Indeed, for libertine writers in particular, this retreat in the face of certain persecution was an essential condition for autonomous reflection.[39] This study has shown how Fontanier's writing strategy was exceptional. Rather than allowing his text to speak for him within a reading public, he allowed the security afforded by his private home to become porous by inviting his readers to become conversation partners and co-writers of his text prescribing Judaism. However, as his students penetrated his domestic and intellectual private sphere, they left behind them a proverbial point of entry through which information could be communicated orally and reciprocally between the agents of the law and two of his students who betrayed Fontanier's trust. The magistrates would soon step physically into this breach of the private in order to extract Fontanier violently into the public arena of legal examination and exemplary death. A pamphlet written in 1621 makes a Socratic criticism of Fontanier's loose lips:

> Socrates used to say that there were only two instances when one should speak and two things about which it was permitted to write: either about things that one understood clearly or about things that it was necessary

[38] "Des modalités neuves du rapport à l'écrit construisent une sphère de l'intimité, à la fois retraite et refuge pour l'individu soustrait aux contrôles de la communauté". See Roger Chartier, *Histoire de la vie privée. III. De la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 113.

[39] Such is the view expressed in Laurence Tricoche-Rauline, *Identité(s) libertine(s): L'écriture personnelle ou la création de soi* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009), 661, 712.

> to know, assuring that any other theme and subject could not form the subject of wise discourse.[40]

Ironically, of course, for Fontanier it really *was* necessary to assuage his doubts by knowing the truth, in order to gain either instruction or affirmation from those with whom he conversed, and to find a purpose in life founded on a solid belief system forged in the spirit of private free-thinking and speaking. Tragically, his private speech was made public not by the dissemination of his text at the hands of his students but by an invasion of his private domestic, scribal, and pedagogical spheres by the legal authorities. As such, his case offers the modern historian a relatively rare glimpse into how subversive conversations were conducted, regulated, and pursued by the authorities at a time when transient verbal infractions of the law were notoriously difficult to transpose (and, ironically, immortalise) into written legal record.

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[40] "[Socrate] avoit costume de dire qu'il n'y avoit que deux temps de parler, et deux choses desquelles il fut permis d'escrire, sçavoir est ou de ce qu'on sçavoit et cognoissoit clairement, ou de ce qui estoit necessaire d'estre sçeu, asseurant que toute autre matiere et subjet ne pouvoit estre le subjet d'un sage discours". *Histoire de la vie de Jean Fontanier*, 2.

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CHAPTER 4

Talking Privately in Utopia: Ideals of Silence and Dissimulation in Smeeks' *Krinke Kesmes* (1708)

Liam Benison

Utopias of the early modern period typically envision societies with a transparent communality and no private property. In Thomas More's much imitated and adapted *Utopia* (1516), the narrator, Raphael Hythloday, reports that "there is nothing private anywhere [...] [the Utopians] live in the full view of all". People's homes have doors "which open easily with a push of the hand [...] [and] let anyone come in".[1] We might therefore expect utopias to provide a scarce source of evidence about the practices and ideals of early modern private conversations. However, a utopia such as Hendrik Smeeks' *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koningryk Krinke Kesmes* (*Description of the Mighty Kingdom of Krinke*

[1] Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. by George M. Logan, trans. by Robert M. Adams, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 48, 62. All subsequent references to the text are to this edition by page number.

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Kesmes), published in Amsterdam in 1708,[2] is striking for depicting conversations involving discretion, dissimulation, intimacy, silence, and secrecy, allowing substantial room for the representation and imagination of private experience. Dissimulation even appears to be an ideal of the utopian society, contradicting the transparent communalism expected of utopia. What is the ideological role of dissimulation in *Krinke Kesmes* and what can it tell us about ideals and practices of private conversations in early modern Europe?

Utopian literature provides an excellent source of evidence to study the role of early modern dissimulation in conversation because dialogue plays such an important role in propelling utopian narratives. The dialogic framework of utopias is seen in the binary contrast of an existing and ideal society and in the use of characters' dialogues to mediate the comparisons.[3] Plato's Socratic dialogue *Republic* (c. 375 BCE) has been said to "haunt" *Utopia*.[4] However, More goes beyond Plato, not only presenting a humanist model for utopian sociability in More, Giles, and Hythloday's philosophical comparison of contemporary England and Utopia in the Socratic setting of a garden in Antwerp.[5] Utopia is presented—unlike ideal societies described by Plato or Aristotle—as actually existing in the world.[6]

[2] The modern Dutch critical edition is Hendrik Smeeks, *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koningryk Krinke Kesmes*, ed. by P.J. Buijnsters (Zutphen: W.J. Thieme & Cie, 1976). In this chapter, page numbers for quotations from the Dutch text are from Buijnsters' edition. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in English are from Robert H. Leek's translation, Hendrik Smeeks, *The Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes (1708)*, ed. by David Fausett (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995).

[3] Vita Fortunati discusses the dialogic role of utopian characters in "Fictional Strategies and Political Message in Utopias", in *Per una definizione dell'utopia: metodologie e discipline a confronto: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Bagni di Lucca 12–14 settembre 1990*, ed. by Nadia Minerva (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1992), 17–27 (23).

[4] J.C. Davis, "Thomas More's Utopia: Sources, Legacy and Interpretation", in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. by Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28.

[5] Indeed, it has been proposed that Utopia's social model is conceived as an extension to the whole society of the intimate practices and ethics of humanist friendship. See Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski, "Triangulating Humanist Friendship: More, Giles, Erasmus, and the Making of the Utopia", in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, ed. by Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 45–64.

[6] More, *Utopia*, xix.

Utopias also typically set up multiple intertextual, often contrapuntal, dialogues with previous utopias and works from other genres. Explicit or implied references and borrowed or reframed *topoi* often assume a satirical tone. In More's *Utopia*, for instance, the poet Anemolius strikes a competitive contrast with Plato's *Republic* in the paratext which explains the pun of 'utopia':

> 'No-Place' was once my name, I lay so far;
> But now with Plato's state I can compare,
> Perhaps outdo her (for what he only drew
> In empty words I have made live anew
> In men and wealth, as well as splendid laws):
> 'The Good Place' they should call me, with good cause.[7]

Later utopias diverge in many ways from More's model and, from the seventeenth century onwards, shift to a narrative form based on the model of contemporary travel accounts. However, while an overt Socratic structure is abandoned, dialogue remains crucial to the utopia as travel narrative through the narration of the journey to utopia and characters' reported discussions of utopian society. As Chloë Houston has persuasively demonstrated, both the dialogue and travel account "assert that it is conveying a real experience" and both draw "attention to the reader's role in making sense of the text by maintaining the parallel between the experience recorded—be it physical journey or oral conversation—and the reader's act of reading". Houston argues that, in the predominantly narrative form of utopias after More's work, dialogue is incorporated within the narrative to shape "multiple layers of meaning", "an uncertain relationship with the truth", and a parallel between "the reader's experience of reading the text and the author's experience within it". Characters' conversations therefore remain at the heart of the distinctive form of utopian narrative.[8] These dialogues describe strange but plausible utopian societies as though they were real, incorporating travel observations of non-European peoples while reminding readers of the early

[7] More, *Utopia*, 117.

[8] See Chloë Houston, *The Renaissance Utopia: Dialogue, Travel and the Ideal Society* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 9. Nina Chordas also discusses the way in which dialogue 'haunts' early modern utopias in *Forms in Early Modern Utopia: The Ethnography of Perfection* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 17–34.

modern truism that "travellers may lie by authority".[9] Utopian authors exploited this gap to allow readers space to speculate on an ever greater variety of social possibilities and utopian models.[10]

Krinke Kesmes includes all these dialogic facets of the utopian form. It unfolds the comparison of two societies largely through conversations between the narrator, Juan de Posos, who travels to Krinke Kesmes from Europe, and a local host, the Garbon, whose responsibility is to take care of visiting aliens. The reported conversations between these two and other characters convey the experience of utopia as real and make expedient use of opportunities to highlight parallels between the reader's, author's, and narrator's experiences of the text. The complex and eclectic intertextuality of *Krinke Kesmes* combines references both to earlier utopian works such as *Utopia* and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), travel literature, political satire, geography, ethnography and political theory, wisdom literature, the autodidact tradition, as well as practical literature such as recipes and lists. This makes a utopia like *Krinke Kesmes* a rich source for examining the ideal forms of privacy in early modern conversation.

In this chapter, I will examine how dissimulation is represented in De Posos' conversations as a tool intended to secure the privacy, secrecy, or silence of the characters' intentions or desires and consider dissimulation's significance as part of the ethical and ideological framework of *Krinke Kesmes*. This will require a consideration of the fluid and shifting senses of the terms 'privacy', 'secrecy', 'silence', and 'dissimulation', which were widely discussed in the conduct literature of Smeeks' day and which carry meanings that differ in important ways from these terms as generally understood today.

In his study of the "normative disciplinary discourse" of dissimulation in treatises of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Jon R. Snyder defines dissimulation as "the disciplined use of reticence, taciturnity, diffidence, negligence, omission, ambiguity, irony, and tolerance". By 'tolerance', he means the pretence of not seeing or hearing something.

[9] Daniel Carey, "The Problem of Credibility in Early Modern Travel", *Renaissance Studies* 33:4 (2019), 524–547.

[10] For some examples of how utopian authors combined travel accounts with utopian speculation, see David Fausett, *Writing the New World: Imaginary Voyages and Utopias of the Great Southern Land* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993) and Alfred Hiatt, "Terra Australis and the Idea of the Antipodes", in *European Perceptions of Terra Australis*, ed. by Anne M. Scott, Alfred Hiatt, and Christopher Wortham (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 9–43.

Snyder argues that as "states and societies grew in size and complexity" in the early modern period, an "ever-increasing circulation, contamination, transformation, and appropriation" of knowledge produced a culture of secrecy that stimulated an extensive literature on the theory and conduct of dissimulation. In the absolutist political and religious culture of the Old Regime, the capacity to disguise one's intentions, feelings, and opinions and accurately determine the sincerity of others "could make the difference between life and death".[11] Although the art of dissimulation was originally intended for use by princes, courtiers, and diplomats, its practices were adopted by other social groups in time. However, Snyder points out that it is impossible to recover how people practised dissimulation in the early modern period; scholars can only seek to understand the discourse that arose about it and how it shaped how individuals might "perform, legitimize, interpret, or contest dissimulatory acts".[12] Dissimulation is not peculiar to the early modern period. Forms of deception are practised by humans everywhere and have been the subject of storytelling and myth for centuries in many cultures. The Kaurna people of Adelaide in Australia tell the story of Tjirbruke, who uses dissimulation to avenge the murder of his nephew Kulultuwi by the brothers Jurawi and Tetjawi, who try to cover up their crime.[13] Odysseus disguised himself as a beggar to enter Troy.[14] Hamlet is racked by the task of discovering his mother's deceit. Deception has also been observed in non-human primates, although its intentionality and similarity in cognitive form to human practice remain the subject of research and debate.[15] However universal dissimulation's appearance might be in human societies, early modern Europeans made it a subject for special attention.

It is by no means straightforward to explain why dissimulation was given such emphasis during the early modern period. Snyder proposes it

[11] Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 1–26.

[12] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 45–46.

[13] Karl Winda Telfer and Gavin Malone, "Tjilbruke/Tjirbruki Story", City of Port Adelaide Enfield, 2020, https://www.cityofpae.sa.gov.au/explore/arts-and-culture/explore-first-nations-culture/m2y/more-stories/tjilbruke-story, accessed 8 December 2023.

[14] Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1.

[15] Brian Hare, Josep Call, and Michael Tomasello, "Chimpanzees Deceive a Human Competitor by Hiding", *Cognition* 101:3 (2006), 495–514.

was the emphasis placed on display and observation to establish a person's status and reputation that contributed to the intense interest in dissimulation. This created an acute tension because, paradoxically, dissimulation "had to exist unseen"—that is, the dissimulator must not be seen to dissimulate. Snyder regards the early modern culture of secrecy and dissimulation as integral to the Old Regime and argues that it was swept away by a shift to transparency with the French Revolution.[16] Miriam Eliav-Feldon argues that early modern Europeans' interest in dissimulation was obsessive and stemmed from a concern with "identification and from a deep anxiety that things were not what they seemed and people were not who they said they were".[17] Her focus is the role of dissimulation in efforts to avoid persecution during the violent religious conflicts of the Reformation. People knew that a few reckless words or gestures giving the appearance of their being on the wrong side of a confessional divide could not only undermine their reputation but threaten their property and even life.[18]

I will consider how representations of dissimulation in conversations in *Krinke Kesmes* might reflect both an imaginary of Smeeks' own society as well as of the utopian one presented for comparison, highlight relevant commercial and imperial spheres outside the utopian text in which the concept of dissimulation circulated and was thought to be practised in everyday life—for example, in the realm of commerce, and consider the way in which dissimulation is presented for social critique through the ambiguities of utopia's dialogic form.

I will also pay attention to the multisensorial aspects of dissimulation and its related terms. Their representation in *Krinke Kesmes* is more than a matter of intellectual interest at the level of the word alone; rather, their appearance is part of the author's representation of conversation as an embodied experience which assumes strong visual and physically felt components. Smeeks' representations are informed not only by contemporary conduct literature but also by theories of visual art which were

[16] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 61, 178.

[17] Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors*, 3.

[18] See also Virginia Reinburg's discussion in this volume of the subtle silences and omissions that Gilles de Gouberville used in order to report conversations about religious ideas and events in his diary, including avoiding the mention of his attendance at Protestant ceremonies he had good knowledge of to protect his reputation as a Catholic gentleman.

prominent and well understood by literate individuals (such as Smeeks himself) in the Low Countries in the early modern period. It is telling that the print editions of *Krinke Kesmes* supported this strong visual element with the inclusion of a number of copperplate illustrations. These demand to be included as part of the examination of private conversations in the utopia.

Following a brief introduction to *Krinke Kesmes*, I will review some of the most important early modern commentaries on dissimulation and its uses, and highlight the relevance of utopian literature to a discussion of dissimulation in conversation. I will then discuss in detail pertinent examples of represented conversation in *Krinke Kesmes* in its historical context and ask how the novel's ethic of dissimulation can inform our understanding of the experience and practice of early modern conversations.

Krinke Kesmes

The first-person narrator of *Krinke Kesmes* is a Dutch merchant who conducts profitable business in Panama before setting his sights on trading opportunities in Asia. After a summary of his early life, he recounts a chance meeting with his dear friend and mentor, whom he calls 'the Master', outside Visscher's map shop in Amsterdam. Instead of More's garden in Antwerp, they go to the Master's room in an inn where they catch up on each other's lives and converse about issues of the day, such as what secrets the 'Southland' (now called Australia) might hold and the best means to uncover them. As in *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*, European imperial exploration of the world stands as a metaphor for extending human knowledge of the secrets of nature.

The outer narrative frame—the story of the Dutch merchant's experiences in the author's and reader's world before he reaches Krinke Kesmes—sets up dissimulation as a key theme. We know the narrator only as Juan de Posos, the name he has adopted from a Spanish friend of his from Ronda, Andalusia to improve his trading opportunities in South America, where he succeeds in making good profits. His name change recalls the 'merchants of light' in *New Atlantis* who travel the world incognito, collecting knowledge for use in the utopian research institution of Salomon's House. De Posos travels in the opposite direction, returning to Europe from Krinke Kesmes with a trove of papers about utopia which have been generously shared with him by his host,

the Garbon. It is ironic therefore that the Kesmians possess an ethical maxim on the virtues of silence which recommends that "[o]ne should be discreet, and not expose oneself to all the world; but change one's name in accordance with situations and business".[19] This maxim not only contradicts the expected transparency of utopias and reveals the Garbon's breach of a maxim of his own society by sharing so much with his foreign guest, but it explicitly endorses the dissimulatory practice of the foreigner, De Posos. This crux highlights an essential tension over privacy at the heart of utopia. Paradoxically, this maxim on silence is essential to the privacy of utopia as a whole society because—as in More's and Bacon's models—even as privacy within utopia is typically limited or eliminated, utopia must maintain its private isolation from the rest of the world to protect its enhanced society.[20] Despite the expectation of utopian transparency, various forms of deceit and dissimulation exist in Krinke Kesmes, although their interpretation is complex.

De Posos' next venture is to Asia. He boards a ship in Panama bound for the Philippines, but it is blown off course in a storm and stranded on an island of the Southland called Krinke Kesmes. The Kesmians have a harmonious society without the religious dissension of Europe. Unlike More's *Utopia* or Vairasse's *Sevarambians,* in which private property is abolished and opportunities for private experience explicitly limited, in *Krinke Kesmes*, there is no explicit mention of private property nor any instance of the Dutch word *privaet*, derived from the Latin *privatus*.[21] However, like many early modern archistic utopias, Krinke Kesmes has a centralised (monarchical) state in which the King controls all political and economic power.[22]

After landing on an unpopulated part of the coast, De Posos and his companions explore their surroundings and eventually sight a city from

[19] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 95.

[20] On the importance of utopian isolation, see Vita Fortunati, "L'ambiguo immaginario dell'isola nella tradizione letteraria utopica", in *Il fascino inquieto dell'utopia: Percorsi storici e letterari in onore di Marialuisa Bignami*, ed. by Giuliana Iannaccaro et al. (Milan: Ledizioni, 2014), 51–61.

[21] *Privaet* had been in use in Dutch since the sixteenth century. See *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, q.v. 'privaat' sense II. Leek's English translation uses 'private' twice: 'Private Soldier' for *Soldaat* and 'private' for *stille* ('silence', 53). The latter instance is discussed later in this chapter.

[22] Nicole Pohl, "Utopianism After More: The Renaissance and Enlightenment", in Claeys, *Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, 51–78.

a mountain top. At this point, they are arrested by the king's soldiers and taken to the city, which is called Taloujaël. There, De Posos meets the Garbon who will be his guide for the remainder of his stay in Krinke Kesmes. The Garbon informs him about the Kesmians' political institutions, geography, and history. The relationship between De Posos and the Garbon plays out a clash of ethics about property and personal autonomy. Their conversations and exchange of knowledge and material goods comprise the mirror through which Smeeks' society in early eighteenth-century Netherlands is contrasted with his utopian ideal.

Dissimulation in Early Modern Europe

It will be useful to digress briefly to survey the discourse on dissimulation in its early modern European context as this will better inform the discussion of its appearance in Smeeks' text, which will then be the focus of the remaining part of this chapter.

Concern with display, identity, and dissimulation can be seen in contemporary literature and drama. From Portia's suitors in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) to Iago in *Othello* (1604) and Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale* (1610), Shakespearean plots are driven by deception and dissimulation. Early modern theories of art both emphasised and valued art's power of illusion and dissimulation. Willem Goeree observed that artworks "show us the truth of the things that are, through untruth and a disguised appearance". Samuel van Hoogstraten wrote that paintings "make things appear to be that are not", while Franciscus Junius defined grace as "the effect of a carefully disguised and cleverly concealed Art" that achieves "a certain sort of carelessness".[23]

What is especially striking is the expansive conduct literature in which the theory and practice of dissimulation is discussed in detail. Snyder identifies *The Prince* by Niccoló Machiavelli (1469–1527) as the starting point for the early modern discourse on dissimulation. Although printed in 1532, it was probably written almost two decades earlier. Machiavelli argues that dissimulation is one of the techniques a prince must master to maintain the state and the loyalty of his subjects. To this degree, a

[23] Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, trans. by Beverley Jackson and Lynne Richards, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 239, 281.

prince's political action is subject to different standards from those of ethics and religion. However, the purpose of dissimulation is not opportunistic amorality for its own sake, but rather a pragmatic acceptance that, to gain and maintain power, a prince must often "act against faith, against charity, against humanity, against religion". Snyder outlines how exponents of the doctrine of reason of state followed Machiavelli in advocating a prudent use of dissimulation. However, anti-Machiavellians argued that princes should be motivated by honesty and Christian values and often misinterpreted or exaggerated Machiavelli by condemning those who allegedly equated dissimulation with prudence.[24]

The conduct literature highlights the role of conversation in the everyday experience of practising and discovering dissimulation. Stefano Guazzo (1530–1593) connected dissimulation with grace and civility in conversation in *La civil conversazione* (*The Civil Conversation*, 1574). In *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* (*The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, 1647), the Spanish Jesuit, Baltasar Gracián y Morales (1601–1658) advises that, in conversation, "discretion matters more than eloquence".[25] This idea probably reflects the impact on discourse and rhetoric of the seventeenth-century shift to realism and, in epistemology and natural philosophy, the movement away from Aristotelian reasoning to empirical observation and experiment, exemplified by the approach of Francis Bacon.[26] Gracián's handbook of three hundred aphorisms was widely read and translated into many languages. Among his recommendations were several on dissimulation, the practice of concealing an individual's thoughts, feelings, and character.

The belief that "communication with others risks revealing one's inner state" has been proposed as the first principle of the discourse of dissimulation in early modern Europe.[27] In the preface to his English translation of Lipsius' *On Constancy* (1595), John Stradling warns his readers to "talk as affable as you shall see cause; but keep your mind secret unto

[24] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 109–114. The translation from *The Prince* is Snyder's.

[25] Baltasar Gracián, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom: A Pocket Oracle*, trans. by Christopher Maurer (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 148.

[26] See Lorraine Daston, *Observation as a Way of Life: Time, Attention, Allegory*, the Hans Rausing Lecture 2010, Uppsala University, Salvia Småskrifter 13 (Uppsala: Tryck Wikströms, 2011).

[27] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 290.

yourself".[28] Conversation is a double-edged sword: it can trigger conflict, but is also the means to its resolution. Dissimulation likewise may allow a speaker to avoid conflict and promote their interests in intercourse with another, but if not done discreetly and if one speaker becomes aware that the other is holding something back, it may easily have the opposite effect, as we will see in a critical episode of *Krinke Kesmes*.

The art of conversation was not limited to the use of words alone. Its objective also involved the conscious and careful curation of gesture and the physical expression of feeling to match and convey the impression of the spoken word.[29] As Bacon observed in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), conversation involves composing and ordering the passions and countenance to match the words spoken because "it is nothing won to admit men with an open door, and to receive them with a shut and reserved countenance".[30] In addition to his essay "Of Simulation and Dissimulation" (1625), Bacon discussed dissimulation elsewhere in his writings. His discussion in *The Advancement of Learning* highlights that he regarded it as more than simply a social and political matter of display and interpreting the intentions, identity, and status of others. It was foundational to the framework of early modern epistemology.

Smeeks' Main Sources on Dissimulation

Smeeks would have generally known the conception of dissimulation from these commentators as they circulated throughout Europe, especially through neo-Stoic discourse. He was influenced in *Krinke Kesmes* most particularly by Gracián's treatise and by Bacon's writings, including

[28] Justus Lipsius, *Tvvo Bookes of Constancie. Written in Latine, by Iustus Lipsius. Containing, Principallie, A Comfortable Conference, in Common Calamities. And Will Serue for a Singular Consolation to All That Are Priuately Distressed, of Afflicted, Either in Body or Mind*, trans. by John Stradling (London, 1595).

[29] Much research attention has been paid to the art of conversation. See, for example, Peter Burke's comments on the development of bodily self-control in Protestant northern Europe in *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

[30] Francis Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. by Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 266.

his utopia, *New Atlantis*.[31] Gracián offered much advice on dissimulation in conversation in his popular work, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*. Gracián makes clear the connection between speech, gesture, and feeling. He understood that "[w]e see very few things for ourselves, and live by trusting others. The ears are the back door of truth and the front door of deceit. Truth is more often seen than heard".[32] For Gracián, "[t]he passions are the gates of the spirit. The most practical sort of knowledge lies in dissimulation. [...] Let no one discover your inclinations, no one foresee them, either to contradict or to flatter them".[33]

Gracián emphasised that it was critical for the success of dissimulation to ensure that the act of dissimulating was also dissimulated. Like many other writers of conduct literature, Gracián used the example of the Roman emperor Tiberius (r. 14–37 CE) to illustrate this precept in his *El Héroe*. The source is Tacitus, who marked the irony that Tiberius expressed his belief that his greatest virtue was dissimulation—hence betraying his own art of dissimulation.[34] Dissimulation is political. Gracián advised, "Master yourself, and you will master others".[35]

In the *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon discussed the role of dissimulation in learning and advised against it, because "[d]issimulation breeds mistakes in which the dissembler himself is caught". He concluded that "the continual habit of dissimulation is but a weak and sluggish cunning, and not greatly politic".[36] Zagorin argues that Bacon's attitude to secrecy and dissimulation was ambivalent. He was critical of philosophers such as alchemists who claimed to have hidden knowledge, but in his own writings he sometimes tried "to veil his doctrines by an affected obscurity", probably motivated, as Zagorin suggests, by the fear that he would be misunderstood and misrepresented.[37]

[31] Buijnsters notes that Gracián's *Art of Worldly Wisdom* was the main source for the maxims on silence and Gian-Paolo Marana's *L'Esploratore turco* (Paris, 1684) was also a source for the maxims on religion. See *Krinke Kesmes*, ed. by Buijnsters, 39–40.

[32] Quoted by Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 4.

[33] Gracián, *Art of Worldly Wisdom*, Aphorism 98.

[34] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 15.

[35] Gracián, *Art of Worldly Wisdom*, Aphorism 55.

[36] Bacon, "Advancement of Learning", in *The Major Works*, 281.

[37] Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, 274.

Bacon expresses this ambivalence in his essay "Of Simulation and Dissimulation". His discussion is indebted to Lipsius.[38] He compares three forms of deceit or veiling of the self: (1) dissimulation, (2) simulation, and (3) closeness, reservation, and secrecy.

Bacon explains that dissimulation is "when a man lets fall Signes, and Arguments, that he is not, that he is". It is a second-rate kind of secrecy, albeit one that is acceptable when it is necessary to prevent the disclosure of important secrets. However, it is a difficult behaviour to pull off successfully and risks betraying secrets because of the effort of hiding them. Strategies such as withdrawing from a conversation are likely to arouse suspicion in one's interlocutors, and "equivocations, or oraculous speeches" are generally unpersuasive.

Bacon defines simulation as a vice, although he admits it may be used as a last resort to protect important secrets in extreme circumstances.

The third form of deceit has the most positive value. Bacon defines it as "closeness, reservation and secrecy". It is a conduct that makes it impossible for others to tell a person's character. As a result, others often feel willing to share intimacies with such a person. For Bacon, this "Habit of Secrecy, is both Politick, and Morall". However, it requires control of the passions, the non-betrayal of emotions to others. Used successfully, it also means having "that penetration of judgment [that a person] can discern what things are to be laid open, and what to be secreted, and what to be shewed at half lights, and to whom and when".[39]

Thus, Bacon sets up a moral hierarchy in practices of deceit with dissimulation situated midway in value between simulation and secrecy.

It is interesting that Bacon found it necessary to use three words—closeness, reservation, and secrecy—to define the most positive form of deceit. When he refers back to the concept later in his essay, he abbreviates to "secrecy", but it appears that this word alone did not fully cover the meaning of the concept he had in mind. Bacon's conception seems to approach what today we might call 'privacy'. His idea is perhaps closest in sense to the modern use of the adjective for a reserved, 'private' person. This sense was attested in the early seventeenth century for the adjective

[38] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 56.

[39] Bacon, "Of Dissimulation and Simulation", in *Major Works*, 349–351.

'private'.[40] He probably could not use the word 'privacy' because, at the time, the prevailing sense of the noun was closer to the Latin otium, meaning a state of withdrawal from public or political engagement.[41]

In Bacon's *New Atlantis*, there are two particularly strong references to deceit. The central edifice of the utopia, both architecturally and ideologically, is the scientific college of Salomon's House, described as "the very eye of this kingdom". The collegians' purpose is "to discern (as far as appertaineth to the generations of men) between divine miracles, works of nature, works of art, and impostures and illusions of all sorts".[42] They unlock the secrets of nature or interpret God's works, thereby creating many ingenious inventions for the benefit of their society. It is a figure for Bacon's scientific method, an institution which could overcome the three barriers to the progress of knowledge Bacon identified in *Advancement of Learning*: attacks on learning by the Church and political men, and poor scholarship.[43]

The other critical reference to dissimulation is the method by which the Bensalemites of *New Atlantis* gather the best knowledge from all parts of the world to add to the sum of human knowledge and inform the experiments and inventions of Salomon's House. 'Merchants of light' travel around the world to observe and collect intelligence. They travel like spies, dressing as the locals do, speaking their languages, and telling no one where they come from.

Bacon opened "Of Simulation and Dissimulation" with an apparent dismissal of dissimulation as "but a faint kind of policy or wisdom; for it asketh a strong wit and a strong heart to know when to tell truth". However, he admits that dissimulation is sometimes necessary, even if it may carry risks. In New Atlantis, God leaves secrets to be unlocked by humanity, but Bacon would probably have associated the secret workings of creation with a closeness, reservation, and secrecy rather than charging God with dissimulation. However, he would probably have accepted that

[40] Oxford English Dictionary, q.v. "private", sense 10: "Of a person, etc.: retiring, reclusive; living a quiet or secluded life; reserved, unsociable".

[41] Oxford English Dictionary, q.v. "privacy", gives a contemporary instance from Act III, Scene iii of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1609). Achilles says, "Of this my priuacie, I haue strong reasons". Ulysses replies, "But gainst your priuacie, The reasons are more potent and heroycall".

[42] Bacon, "New Atlantis", in *Major Works*, 464.

[43] Bacon, "New Atlantis", in *Major Works*, 577–579.

it was necessary in a fallen world for the merchants of light to use dissimulation to gather intelligence for the higher purpose of advancing human knowledge. How did Smeeks interpret Bacon and Gracián?

It is in the conversations between De Posos and the Garbon that the reader learns about Smeeks' utopian society and reflections on philosophical questions of his day. Their conversations show a clash between prevailing European practices of commerce based on dissimulating desires and interests to gain trade advantages and the more open values characteristic of the Kesmians' enhanced sociability. Through their exchange of goods and knowledge, Smeeks' conception of dissimulation can be examined.

Under the Effigy of Silence

On one of his tours of Taloujaël, the Garbon takes De Posos inside the most important building at the heart of the city. De Posos describes it as "a striking large Pyramid or Tower, which one could climb by steps ascending on the outside".[44] From a platform at the top, there is a synoptic view of the city and surrounding countryside, including the city's thirteen bastions. Its form resembles the image of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan in Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (1572–1617),[45] but its structure is also reminiscent of the central buildings of other seventeenth-century utopias such as Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun*, Denis Vairasse's *History of the Sevarambians,* and Gabriel de Foigny's *The Southland Known*. It may also be a reference to the Tower of Babel, in part because of the Kesmians' facility with languages.[46]

The Garbon has the keys to the pyramid/tower and leads De Posos inside and shows him its many rooms and spaces. De Posos is awed by his entry to the first main room: "I saw a spacious hall which was neither light nor dark, but, like the twilight filtering through the forests, fit for enticing bashful Maidens: for this was the *Hall of Love*."[47] In the Hall of Love are

[44] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 87.

[45] See Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Cities of the World: 363 Engravings Revolutionize the View of the World: Complete Edition of the Colour Plates of 1572–1617*, ed. by Stephan Füssel (Hong Kong: Taschen, 2008).

[46] Fausett, "Introduction", in Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, xv.

[47] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 92.

many effigies symbolising Kesmian virtues and vices. Each effigy stands on a pedestal inside which, behind a locked door, are papers with the maxims of Sarabasa, known as the 'Old Philosopher', the wise man who once established the principles of the Kesmians' deistic religion. Descriptions of the effigies and their symbolism are drawn from the emblematic literature of the time. Alexandra Kocsis discusses in this volume how similar kinds of printed images of intimate topics and their accompanying texts were a focus for private conversations.[48] It can be inferred that the effigies were intended to inspire the Kesmians to contemplate and talk about vices and virtues, as emblem books and prints did in early modern Europe.

During the tour of the Hall of Love, the Garbon is interrupted by someone who beckons him away for a private conference. The Garbon excuses himself and takes a paper from the locked cupboard in the pedestal under the Effigy of Silence. He hands it to De Posos and asks him to read and copy it down. It contains the Kesmian maxims on silence—a long list of aphorisms, including several derived from Gracián. They begin: "Silence is the first step to Wisdom, the Loving Mother of Peace, and the Guardian of Virtue. [...] In the art of Silence, of not revealing oneself, resides all secrecy".[49] Silence is presented in the first maxim as a positive virtue: it fosters wisdom and peace. The second maxim explains that silence also involves some form of dissimulation: the art of "not revealing oneself". Silence is conceived as more than not speaking; it is an active, judicious attempt to conceal and select parts of the self to be kept secret from others. The close conceptual relationship between silence, secrecy, and dissimulation in the maxims highlights aspects of the relation between the interior self and society that affords an understanding of the meaning of privacy in Smeeks' day.

Many parallels can be observed between Sarabasa's maxims on silence and Gracián's aphorisms. For example, three maxims read as follows:

> A wise Man does not declare himself because he knows that he will pay Dues to as many people as he reveals himself to.
>
> A heart without secrecy, is like an open Letter and a disclosed resolve, and is like a game given away, which is held in low regard.
>
> He who is able to abstain from speech has great power over himself.[50]

These make a close translation of Gracián's aphorism 179:

[48] See Alexandra Kocsis' contribution to this volume.

[49] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 92.

[50] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 93–94.

> A breast without reserve is an open letter. Have depths where you can hide your secrets: great spaces and little coves where important things can sink to the bottom and hide. Reserve comes from having mastered yourself, and being reserved is a genuine triumph. You pay tribute to as many people as you discover yourself to.[51]

Careful control over what one reveals about oneself is a form of self-mastery and also gives one the power to master others and thereby discover their dissimulations, secrets, and deceptions. Therefore, both silence and dissimulation have political objectives: to control or master others by learning what motivates them while not giving away one's own motives. As Gracián warned, discovering oneself to others carries a high cost: "You pay tribute to as many people as you discover yourself to". This political aspect is summarised in the cryptic maxim, "Whoever discovers, will be Master".[52] To discover is to uncover the concealed and dissimulated intentions and feelings of others. It is also related to the imperial notion of 'discovery', the effort of merchants, adventurers, and explorers to identify new markets and sources of profitable trading commodities to exploit. This imperial context for dissimulation will be discussed at greater length below.

Sarabasa's maxims on silence show a great deal of overlap between the notions and associations of the concepts of dissimulation and silence, but it is not easy to appreciate the value that Smeeks and his contemporaries might have attached to these ideas in different contexts, particularly when they are presented in a list of maxims. Dissimulation appears to be associated with the virtue of silence (that is, virtue in the Machiavellian sense), albeit not always positively. To understand the subtleties of these terms better, it is necessary to analyse the text of *Krinke Kesmes* more closely. The modern Dutch word for dissimulation is *veinzerij*, from *veinzen,* 'pretend'. It is a loanword from the Latin *fingere* (via the French *feindre*) and is cognate with the English 'feign'.[53] In *Krinke Kesmes*, three words formed from the root of this word express aspects of dissimulation: *veinsen*, *ontveinsen,* and *geveinstheid*. The first two appear in three maxims on silence:

[51] Gracián, *Art of Worldly Wisdom*, Aphorism 179.

[52] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 95.

[53] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, q.v. "feign" and *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, q.v. "veinzen", sense I.

> A shrewd person must be nimble-minded, see, penetrate and judge everything, say little, feign [*veinsen*], and cover up his thoughts and intentions; yet act truly with courtesy, affability, and a happy countenance.
>
> One should be shrewd enough to hide one's shortcomings, and adroit at disowning [*ontveinsen*] one's passions, in order that others may never know your urges [...]
>
> Dissimulation [*Ontveinsen*] is most important in Politics; one must often seem and pretend [*veinzen*] not to understand, what one understands.[54]

In the first two maxims, *veinsen* and *ontveinsen* are associated with shrewdness: it is prudent to cover up or dissimulate one's thoughts and passions.[55] Here, Smeeks draws heavily on the discourse of dissimulation in the conduct literature. The practice of covering one's own thoughts and desires and attempting to perceive and judge the motives of others while maintaining 'affability and a happy countenance' are virtues recommended by Castiglione, Accetto, and Gracián. In the last maxim quoted here, the idea of the prudent man who pretends not to understand what he does understand is expressed by Bernardo Bibbiena in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528).[56] This last maxim would probably have been understood less positively by Smeeks' contemporaries, because the reference to politics indicates the more extreme and sustained level of dissimulation required of princes and in the field of reason of state.

A still darker representation of dissimulation appears in another hall of the pyramid. The room of the Sovereign has effigies associated with politics and government. There is an effigy of Cham-Hazi, the king who with Sarabasa established the Kesmians' utopian regime, alongside effigies of a Historian, Polity, Avarice, Nobility, War, and Excise. Among them, an effigy depicts dissimulation (*Geveinstheid*) specifically as "a skinny Hag [*Wijf*], dressed in Sheepskins, from below which a Wolf's head peeps;

[54] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 95. For the Dutch equivalents, see Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, ed. by Buijnsters, 214.

[55] Leek's translation of *ontveinsen* as "disowning" in the second maxim seems a step too far. Citations in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (q.v. "ontveinzen") suggest that the sense of denying that one's feelings belong to oneself is a nineteenth-century development. The seventeenth-century citations have a meaning closer to 'covering up', more synonymous with *veinzen* (sense I). The practice of dissimulation requires one to possess a clear knowledge of one's own feelings, even while it is denied to others.

[56] See Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, chapter 2.

in her hand she held a Book and a Rosary".[57] This representation is a concise combination of elements from the two emblematic descriptions of hypocrisy in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. In the first, a woman (*Vrouwe*) with leprous face and hands and leprous and naked feet is dressed in a sheepskin from under which a wolf peeps out. In the second description, a thin, pale woman, dressed in a torn, half-woollen, half-linen robe holds in her left hand a rosary (*Paternoster*) and a breviary which she is reading. At the same time, she passes alms with her right hand to a beggar sitting behind her with wolf-like legs and feet (Fig. 4.1). Smeeks probably knew the 1644 Dutch translation of Ripa's *Iconologia* by Dirck Pieterszoon Pers, which includes an illustration of the second woman with the rosary and breviary handing alms to the beggar, based on the Italian original.[58] However, in Pers' image, the woman's feet—rather than those of the beggar—appear wolf-like.[59]

Ripa's emblematic representations of hypocrisy rely on a number of contrasts: sheep and wolf, wealth and poverty, able-bodied and disabled. The first named in each of these pairs suggested goodness to early modern Europeans whereas the second suggested falseness and duplicity. As Barbara Kaminska explains in this volume, the poor, disabled, beggars, and lepers were all associated with feigning and cheating.[60] The source of the contrast between the false wolf and good sheep (an image of Christ) is Matthew 7.15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves".[61] Ripa's

[57] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 104.

[58] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, of Uytbeeldingen des Verstands*, ed. by Giovanni Zaratino Castellini, trans. by Dirck Pieterszoon Pers (Dirck Pieterszoon Pers: Amsterdam, 1644), 165–66. Both entries are entitled "Hippocresia. Geveinstheyt, Schijnheyligheyt". A later Dutch edition of Ripa's *Iconologia*, published by Dirck Pieterszoon Poot in 1743, has two images: the same image for the second description and an additional one for the first, showing the wolf peeping out from the woman's sheepskin dress. This image appears in no pre-1708 edition that I have seen, and therefore may not have been known to Smeeks.

[59] The woman's feet do not look wolf-like in the illustration in the Italian edition, suggesting that this detail was added by the Dutch illustrator to clarify the woman's hypocrisy and align the two descriptions in the same image. For the Italian image and text, see Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. by Sonia Maffei (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 2012), 244–245.

[60] See Barbara Kaminska's contribution to this volume.

[61] Maffei, ed., *Iconologia*, 714, no. 8.

Fig. 4.1 Illustration of Hypocrisy in the 1644 Dutch translation of Ripa's *Iconologia* (From Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, of Uytbeeldingen des Verstands*, trans. Dirck Pieterszoon Pers [Amsterdam: 1644], 166. Koninklijke Bibliotheek/Early European Books, © 2017 ProQuest LLC)

emblem recombines these contrasting symbols of goodness and falseness in a variety of ways to reaffirm the lesson on hypocrisy. Smeeks could probably expect his readers to be familiar with the frequently reprinted image and needed only a couple of words to remind them of its symbolism. The second description explains that the woman is hypocritical because the vain 'ambition' of her almsgiving is to be regarded well by others. The rosary is also suggestive of a Jesuit or Roman Catholic, which was the definition of a false prophet for Protestants (Smeeks was

a member of the Dutch Reformed Church). The effigy of *Geveinstheid* recalls Bacon's critical description of dissimulation in the *Advancement of Learning* as "but a weak and sluggish cunning, and not greatly politic".[62] The wolf imagery shows that the vain self-aggrandisement of this hypocritical form of dissimulation is ethically more disreputable than the self-protecting forms which appear in the maxims of silence. The need for such an effigy in Krinke Kesmes emphasises that the Kesmians—like humans everywhere—need moral instruction to help guide them away from the social risks of hypocrisy and deceit.

A final maxim will help conclude this discussion of dissimulation and hypocrisy. One of Sarabasa's maxims of religion states: "Doet u Godsdienst in't stille buiten roem", which Leek translates as "practise your religion in private without display".[63] However, *stille* would be rendered more precisely as 'silence' and *roem* would be better translated as 'fame' or 'repute'. "Practise your religion in silence without [ambition for good] repute" highlights the value of silence or 'privacy' in the sense of being alone and candid with one's god, without thought to how to burnish one's public reputation.

The effigies and maxims of *Krinke Kesmes* represent acts of dissimulation, covering up or keeping private, and feigning, deceit, or hypocrisy in a number of different contexts. Dissimulation can be a tool of prudent, self-protective silence in conversation or a vain act intended to look good before others which backfires and reveals one as a hypocrite if detected. It is also a necessary tool of politics, for use in governing peoples. The political aspect receives less emphasis in *Krinke Kesmes* than in utopias such as *New Atlantis* or Denis Vairasse's *L'Histoire des Sévarambes* (*History of the Sevarambians*, 1675–1679) where fake miracles are used for the good purpose (sensu Machiavelli) of maintaining popular consent for the regime.[64] Smeeks was more interested in its role in imperial commerce, which is the focus of discussion in the final two sections of this chapter.

[62] Bacon, "Advancement of Learning", in *The Major Works*, 281.

[63] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, ed. by Buijnsters, 154; Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 53.

[64] On miracles in these two works, see Richard Serjeantson, "Natural Knowledge in the New Atlantis", in *Francis Bacon's New Atlantis: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. by Bronwen Price (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 82–105 and Dino Carpanetto, "Religione e politica: Considerazioni sull'utopia dei Sevarambi dell'ugonotto Denis Veiras", *Riforma e Movimenti Religiosi* 1 (2017), 179–220 (203–204). Cyrus Masroori examines Vairasse's contrast of the use of deception for good public and evil

Foxes and Monkeys in the Southland

Before De Posos sets out on his main voyage, he discusses the use of dissimulation with his close friend and mentor, the Master in Amsterdam. De Posos asks why explorers such as Willem de Vlamingh and William Dampier were unsuccessful in their attempts to acquire knowledge of the Southland, referring to the continent now called Australia. At the time, the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) had sent ships to the continent for more than a century with the aim of learning what the inhabitants valued and traded. The VOC hoped initially to find the gold that was rumoured to lie there. The sailors who landed brought back samples of natural materials and reports of unusual animals, fragrant trees, and 'savage' peoples. Some recounted tales of shipwreck and other life-threatening adventures at sea. Expeditions consistently failed expectations and the VOC concluded that the continent was dry and barren with nothing of value to trade.

Very little was published of the VOC agents' observations of the continent and its peoples aside from a standard description of about half the coastline which circulated with disembodied Dutch toponyms commemorating the VOC ships, directors, and captains credited with charting it. However, fictional works like *Krinke Kesmes* provide evidence suggestive of the copious conversations that spread to the wider community from VOC agents' accounts of their experiences in the Southland. Speculation filled the gaps in knowledge. Some were inclined to think—like those French merchants and bureaucrats who became rivals of Dutch interests in the last quarter of the seventeenth century—that the VOC was keeping its knowledge secret. Smeeks offers his own ideas through the conversation of De Posos and the Master.

The Master proposes that De Vlamingh and Dampier failed to gain knowledge of the continent because, although they were capable seamen, accomplished at protecting their ships and crews from the risks of sailing, they lacked the skills necessary to negotiate with the inhabitants. These skills include dissimulation and deceit. The Master explains that a successful explorer "must be able to perform wondrous and awesome

private ends. See Masroori, "Toleration in Denis Veiras's Theocracy", in *Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. by John Christian Laursen and María José Villaverde (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 121–138 (130).

Miracles, at the right time and in the right place" to awe and deceive the indigenous inhabitants:

> Look at the title Illustration, where a grim Lion, a Serpent, a Fox, and a Monkey are shown with me. An Explorer of Countries must be able to acquire these characteristics; he must be able to change shape like *Thetis*, in response to circumstances.[65]

Thetis is the goddess of the sea and mother of Achilles. Although the text is not explicit about the characteristics which the four animals are supposed to possess, each had a metaphorical meaning in the contemporary discourse on dissimulation.

Machiavelli argued in one of the most infamous passages in *The Prince* that a prince needs the skills of the lion to "frighten off the wolves" and of the fox to know the snares. However, it is better for the prince to be a fox because he "must be a great simulator and dissimulator", able to outwit those "who will let themselves be deceived".[66] Machiavelli took these symbols of the lion and fox from Cicero's *De Officiis* (44 BCE).[67]

Giambattista della Porta (1535–1615) wrote in *De humana physiognomonia* (*On human physiognomy*, 1599) that dissimulators could be recognised because they looked like monkeys.[68] Monkeys have long been associated with simulation, although the meaning of their use, particularly in travel and colonial literature, has a complex of associations. Christina Normore tells us that although simians were rare in Europe until modern times, they became more common as anthropomorphic metaphors from the late medieval period onwards. Owing to their appearance as "humanity's imperfect doubles", monkeys were often used as metaphors for human failings, in particular, to satirise elites.[69] This association with 'fallen' humanity might also partly explain why the monkey

[65] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 23.

[66] Quoted by Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, chapter 4.

[67] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. and trans. by Peter Bondanella, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108, no. 60.

[68] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 200.

[69] Christina Normore, "Monkey in the Middle", in *The Anthropomorphic Lens*, ed. by Walter Melion, Bret Rothstein, and Michel Weemans (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 43–66.

was used in imperial contexts to ridicule or dehumanise peoples considered inferior to Europeans. Simianism has a long history of association with dehumanisation and racism.[70]

Dampier compared the Bardi people he met in northern Australia to monkeys when they failed to understand and obey his orders to carry barrels of water to his ships: "[A]ll the signs we could make were to no purpose for they stood like statues without motion but grinned like so many monkeys staring one upon another".[71] The ostensible meaning of Dampier's metaphor is that the Bardi are stupid, but the context of the episode might also suggest Dampier's fear that he is the object of the Bardi men's fun. Dampier was desperate to resupply his ships with water and he often projected his frustrations onto a land and people he regarded as inhospitable. He might also have projected his own effort at dissimulation on to the Bardi. Since he gave the Bardi dissimulatory gifts of friendship in the form of trinkets and clothes intended to persuade them to carry water to his ships, he might have interpreted the Bardi men's grins as an attempt to dissimulate their refusal to help.

Smeeks knew the water-carrying episode because he makes a precis of Dampier's constant search for water. Indeed, this is the trigger for the discussion between De Posos and the Master.[72] Smeeks might also have been inspired by the copperplate illustration of the episode by Caspar Luyken in the 1698 Dutch translation of Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World*.[73] The monkey metaphor is therefore turned back on Dampier in *Krinke Kesmes*. The Bardi may be monkeys to Dampier, but Dampier is not monkey enough to get the Bardi to do his bidding.

In Diego de Saavedra Fajardo's *Idea of a Christian Political Prince* (1640), the serpent's twisting movement is a metaphor for the thoughts of a prince whose direction cannot be guessed.[74] The serpent thus suggests a metaphor for the higher form of deceit, which Bacon defines as

[70] Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills, and Silvia Sebastiani, eds., *Simianization: Apes, Gender, Class, and Race* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2015).

[71] Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*, chapter 16.

[72] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 22.

[73] Liz Conor, "Found: The Earliest European Image of Aboriginal Australians", *The Conversation*, 5 November, 2018, http://theconversation.com/found-the-earliest-european-image-of-aboriginal-australians-106176; William Dampier, *Nieuwe Reystogt rondom de werreld*, trans. by Willem Sewel (s'-Gravenhage: Abraham de Hondt, 1698).

[74] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, chapter 4.

"closeness, reservation, and secrecy" since it makes it impossible to know the prince's mind.

The quoted passage is challenging to interpret not only on the level of content. Until this point, the Master has been speaking to De Posos, so the reader must understand the deictic statement "Look at the title Illustration, where a grim Lion, a Serpent, a Fox, and a Monkey are shown with *me*" (my italics) as spoken by the Master. However, on turning to the frontispiece, the reader sees De Posos looking back at them, writing his description of Krinke Kesmes and pointing with his left hand through the frame of a curtained window to the Southland. His ship can be seen off the coast, and a monkey, serpent, fox, and lion sit or lie at his feet (Fig. 4.2).

This breach of the fourth wall marks a moment of estrangement, since suddenly, De Posos addresses the reader directly, as though we were in the inn with him and the Master, observing their conversation like a fly on the wall or a theatre audience. One explanation proposed for this estrangement is that both the Master and De Posos are alter egos of Smeeks himself.[75] The consequence is that Smeeks reveals his own practice of dissimulation as author and invites the reader into an intimate sphere of shared, complicit knowledge about the composition of his book.

Smeeks makes clever use of a highly visual description in both illustration and text of the context, words, and gestures of a private conversation to enhance the impact of this moment. The composition of the frontispiece also invokes the practices of viewing visual art that were so important to the contemporary culture of display. The curtain recalls van Hoogstraten's comment on the dissimulation inherent in Dutch realist or descriptive painting in the seventeenth century—that paintings "make things appear to be that are not".[76] "Look", the deictic imperative that opens the estranging statement by De Posos/the Master, combines with the image of De Posos' left-hand gesturing pointedly through the curtained window to persuade readers of their intimate involvement in a conversation with the author/narrator. Paradoxically, the intention and effect of the breach of the fourth wall is to enhance the fiction that De Posos' conversations with the Master and—by extension of his deictic left hand—his entire experience and account of Krinke Kesmes are true.

[75] *Krinke Kesmes*, ed. by Buijnsters, 108n.

[76] Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 281.

Fig. 4.2 Frontispiece of *Krinke Kesmes* showing the narrator, Juan de Posos, with a monkey, serpent, fox, and lion at his feet, writing and pointing at the Southland through a curtained window (From Hendrik Smeeks, *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koningryk Krinke Kesmes: Zynde een groot, en veele kleindere Eilanden daar aan horende; Makende te zamen een gedeelte van het onbekende Zuidland gelegen onder den Tropicus Capricornus ontdekt door den Heer Juan de Posos, en uit deszelfs Schriften te zamen gestelt door H. Smeeks* [Amsterdam: Nicolaas ten Hoorn, 1708], frontispiece)

Folding Mirrors

Towards the end of *Krinke Kesmes*, there is an unexpected rift in relations between the Garbon and De Posos. It comes amid a trade fair on the beach. The agreement is that the market is strictly regulated by the

king. The Garbon asks for a full inventory of all the goods that De Posos plans to sell, claiming that the king will pay for everything that is bought. Everything is going very well. De Posos is making huge profits selling wares to the Kesmians, he entertains the Garbon on his ship with wine and food, and there is a lively exchange of knowledge about each other's societies and goods. However, when De Posos gives a folding mirror to the Garbon as a gift for someone else, relations sour.

A folding mirror (*boekspiegel* in Dutch) was an optical instrument consisting of three hinged mirrors which folded together like a book. When folded out and facing each other, the mirrors created illusions of infinite repeating reflections.[77] The folding mirror's original purpose is no longer clear, but the VOC transported many such mirrors to Asia. There were twenty in the cargo of each of the two ships of the VOC expedition which circumnavigated the continent now called Australia in 1642 and 1643, commanded by Abel Janszoon Tasman (c. 1603–1659).[78] The purpose of the folding mirrors on Tasman's voyage seems to have been to enchant and awe the local inhabitants so that they would reveal 'secrets' about their trading interests to the VOC's agents. They were tools of distraction to facilitate dissimulatory commercial negotiations favourable to the VOC. Tasman's instructions included the following on how to negotiate with "civilised men" should they meet them and how to dissimulate and play down the VOC's interest in precious metals:

> [Let] them know that you have landed there for the sake of commerce, showing them specimens of the commodities which you have taken on board for the purpose, […] closely observing what things they set store by and are most inclined to; especially trying to find out what commodities their country yields, likewise inquiring after gold and silver whether the latter are by them held in high esteem; making them believe that you are by no means eager for precious metals, so as to leave them ignorant of the value of the same; and if they should offer you gold or silver in exchange for your articles, you will pretend to hold the same in slight regard,

[77] *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, q.v. "boekspiegel".

[78] J.E. Heeres and C.E. Coote, eds., *Abel Jansz. Tasman's Journal of His Discovery of Van Diemen's Land & New Zealand in 1642, with Documents Relating to His Exploration of Australia in 1644*, Project Gutenberg Australia, eBook by Colin Choat and Bob Forsyth (Amsterdam: F. Muller & Co, 1898), Appendix G, 140.

> showing them copper, pewter or lead and giving them an impression as if the minerals last mentioned were by us set greater value on.[79]

The Garbon takes a great interest in the folding mirror, and De Posos recalls that he has not given a folding mirror to the Garbon, even though he has two other chests full of them on his ship. When he reveals this, the Garbon becomes pale and says:

> I believed you to be an honest Man, whose word was to be trusted. I have given you so many papers; tomorrow another box-full will arrive here for you, and you will have yet more before you leave, such as have never been outside our Country, I have shown you all the friendship that is in my power, and you deceive me? What cause have I given you to do so? Have I not instructed you to sell such Merchandise only to the King, and to no-one else?[80]

The Garbon explains that he could send De Posos to the capital city to face justice for having concealed on his ship goods he plans to sell. The Garbon asks again for a full list of the ship's cargo to take to the king. Over the following days, De Posos repairs his breach of trust. However, it is clear that his inclination to dissimulate, to not reveal all that he has in the chests of his heart and on his ship, has momentarily failed. Like Tiberius, he failed to dissimulate his dissimulation and, as a result, put himself in grave danger of permanent imprisonment far from home.

It is not a coincidence that the fall of De Posos' dissimulatory mask was triggered by the Garbon's interest in the folding mirror. Mirrors were common metaphors in early modern Europe and were particularly associated with the discourse on prudence (of which dissimulation was a part). The mirror would have been recognised by early modern readers of *Krinke Kesmes* as a reference to the dictum *nosce te ipsum*, "know thyself", ultimately derived from an inscription at Delphi. Smeeks would have been familiar with Aphorism 89 in Gracián's *Art of Worldly Wisdom*:

[79] Heeres and Coote, eds., *Abel Jansz. Tasman's Journal*, Appendix E.

[80] Smeeks, *Krinke Kesmes*, 124.

> [K]now yourself: your character, intellect, judgment and emotions. You cannot master yourself if you do not understand yourself. There are mirrors for the face, but the only mirror for the spirit is wise self-reflection.[81]

This episode reinforces the message of the treatises on dissimulation by Gracián and others that, although dissimulation is sometimes necessary, it also carries risks. Dissimulators must know themselves to dissimulate without giving away their dissimulation. It required a constant effort of attention to both the emotions and feelings or passions as well as to the form of words used in conversation, which is why Bacon believed that the practice of "closeness, reservation, secrecy" had a higher ethical value, because it enabled a more natural engagement in conversation without the risk of exposure as a fake. De Posos puts himself at grave risk when his mask slips.

Conclusions

Whatever might be expected about the transparency of social relations in a utopia, dissimulation exists in the ideal society of Krinke Kesmes. Since dissimulation entails a conscious distinction between the outward and interior person, a notion of privacy therefore also exists in Krinke Kesmes. Smeeks' engagement with the early modern discourse on dissimulation supports Snyder's thesis about the emphasis placed on cultivating secrecy in the Old-Regime period, before the development of a culture of transparency associated with the French Revolution. As Snyder argues, such texts explain what was considered ideal practice, not what actually took place. There is little sign of a critique of this form of privacy in *Krinke Kesmes* because dissimulation exists in both the utopia and the status-quo society (in the practices of European commerce and exploration). The translation of Gracián's aphorisms on dissimulation in the Kesmian maxims on silence indicates Smeeks' acceptance—perhaps even internalisation—of the need for such conduct in social interactions. Smeeks does not envision a utopia of people with an essentially different human nature, as Foigny does in his utopia of gynandrous people in *The Southland Known*. The Kesmians' traits resemble those of Eurasians from the northern world.

[81] Translated by Snyder in *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 48.

The dialogues between the Garbon and De Posos include an important commentary on the ethic of dissimulation, one which comes to a conclusion in the folding-mirror episode. On the surface, De Posos and the Garbon conduct their conversations in accordance with the recommendations of the conduct literature on dissimulation, with courtesy, affability, and a happy countenance. It is De Posos rather than the Garbon who seems to profit most from this 'friendship'. De Posos gains huge receipts for his sales of goods and a vast amount of knowledge about the Kesmian utopia. He sails away with his treasure trove, having also escaped punishment or loss for deceiving his host. Given the criticisms of Dampier and De Vlamingh in the dialogue between De Posos and the Master, it is clear that De Posos wants the reader to know that he is a more successful "explorer of countries" than they were. His use of dissimulation in his conversations with his host—his adoption of the skills of the fox—plays an important role in his achievement.

An important insight of Snyder's concerns the effect of the spread of printed texts on the early modern culture of dissimulation. Citing Lina Bolzoni's discussion of how writing removes words from the unrepeatable flow of oral communication and turns them into objects that can be seen and analysed in space,[82] Snyder observes that, although the printed text promises to hold a mirror to the hidden interior or private self, in fact it makes explicit a "dissimilarity (if not a rupture) between inside and outside" which produced an anxiety about the identity between the two. He proposes, therefore, that the discourse on dissimulation was an "antidote" for the resulting anxiety about the identity of interior and exterior selves.[83]

Therefore, it is ironic that when De Posos offers a folding mirror to the Garbon, he exposes his own deceit and dissimulation rather than discovering more secrets about the foreign country. The folding mirror reveals more about its user than about the hidden other. Despite De Posos' confidence about discovering a new society, much of the knowledge the Garbon shares is itemised only as lists of categories of information—in fact, De Posos finds one of the maps entirely illegible. This absence of detail suggests the possibility that the Garbon is less candid

[82] Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, trans. by Jeremy Parzen, Toronto Italian Studies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), xviii.

[83] Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, 1–26.

than he appears and his description of Krinke Kesmes is less than it purports to be. De Posos' report from utopia is ultimately unverifiable and rather a mirror of his own society. Utopia remains a private unknowable place, as ephemeral as the specifics of an oral dialogue not written down. The folding mirror is an emblem of the anxiety caused by privacy's unknowable negation.

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PART III

Navigating Hierarchical Settings

CHAPTER 5

“Alone Amongst Ourselves”: How to Talk in Private According to the Cologne Diarist, Hermann von Weinsberg (1518–1597)

Krisztina Péter

The manuscript diary of Hermann von Weinsberg (1518–1597), a wine merchant and city councillor living in Cologne, is a remarkable source for understanding everyday life in sixteenth-century Germany. Among the many instances of family matters connected to upbringing, celebrations, reputation, wedding strategies, and the writing of wills, he recorded a number of discussions and conversations with his family members, neighbours, acquaintances, and other dwellers of the city. Although there are surprisingly few occasions in his diary in which Weinsberg explicitly mentions that he talked privately with someone, the source nevertheless offers valuable indications and describes intriguing instances of how Weinsberg conducted his private conversations as well as how he instructed his imaginary heirs to monitor conversations that should be kept private. Furthermore, Weinsberg explicitly expressed several times

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that the entire journal was conceived as a private conversation with his future family members, such as on the introductory pages of his diary.[1] In 1582, he commented that he was actually speaking to his descendants—in this case, to the wife of the future family head addressed as “my beloved daughter”[2]—through the means of pen, ink, and paper in writing. In this sense, his diary operated as a posthumous letter since correspondence itself was perceived as a written conversation with absent persons in the sixteenth century,[3] presumably under the influence of the popular treatise *De conscribendis epistolis* (On the Writing of Letters, 1522) by Erasmus. Thus, while describing the minute details of their everyday life, Weinsberg, in fact, publicised the private life—including the private conversations—of his own and of his environment, albeit to a restricted reading public only.[4]

This chapter investigates some of these private conversations recounted by the diarist from the perspective of privacy, more precisely through the lens of one individual as a node within broader social and intellectual networks.[5] Beginning with a section on the virtues of silence and speaking—on whether to talk in private and how much—and exploring

[1] “Dem erenthaften fleisligsten zukunftigen hausfatter zu Weinsberch, minem geliebten erben, untbieten ich Herman von Weinsberch minen grutz und alles goden”. See Hermann von Weinsberg, *Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann Weinsbergs. Digitale Gesamtausgabe*, ed by Tobias Wulf, Manfred Groten, and Thomas Klein [hereafter W], http://www.weinsberg.uni-bonn.de/. The three volumes of Weinsberg’s journal are referred to as WI, WS, and WD respectively in the footnotes. All quotations from Weinsberg’s text are from this collection. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. The aforementioned quotation is from WI 2r.

[2] “[M]iner geleibten dochter”. The full quotation can be found at WS 371r: “Der ehrundtugentricher zur zit haußmottern zu Weinsberg in Coln miner geleibten dochter”.

[3] Paul M. Dover, *The Information Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 107; Jürgen Herold, “Von der ‘tertialitas’ zum ‘sermo scriptus’. Diskurswandel im mittelalterlichen Briefwesen und die Entstehung einer neuen Briefform von der Mitte des 13. bis zum Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts”, in *Briefe in politischer Kommunikation vom Alten Orient bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Christina Antenhofer and Mario Müller (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2008), 83–113.

[4] Jean-Marie Goulemot, “Literary Practices: Publicizing the Private”, in *A History of Private Life*, ed. by Philippe Ariés and Georges Duby, 5 Vols, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA.–London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 382–392.

[5] Two examples of using egodocuments for studying early modern privacy: Michaël Green, “Spaces of Privacy in Early Modern Dutch Egodocuments”, *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 18:3 (2021), 17–40; úël Green, “Public and Private in Jewish Egodocuments of Amsterdam (ca. 1680–1830)”, in *Early Modern*

what it meant for Weinsberg to talk 'freely' or 'alone' in the bedchamber, this approach will focus on the term 'private' and other cognates for talking in private in Weinsberg's diary, including his instructions to his future readers regarding what conversations should be held in private.

Hermann von Weinsberg was born in 1518 in the family of an emerging wine merchant.[6] He attended the University of Cologne from where he graduated with a law degree in 1543. However, he never worked as a lawyer, earning his living as a wine merchant as well as from sundry other income sources and rents instead. Later, he became city councillor and churchwarden of St. Jakob, his parish church. Although he married wealthy widows twice, both marriages remained childless. In 1560, he started writing his extremely detailed diary (*Gedenckboich*). It comprises three parts: the *Liber Iuventutis* (Book of Youth) which covers the years between 1518 and 1577, the *Liber Senectutis* (Book of Old Age) which constitutes the second part and covers the years between 1578 and 1587, and the *Liber Decrepitudinis* (Book of Decrepitude), the final part which covers his last years from 1588 onwards and ends with an unfinished sentence on financial matters on 27 February 1597, three weeks before his death.

Weinsberg kept the existence of his diary secret from his family members; in fact, they were surprised when they discovered it after his death in his study room (*Schreibkamer*,[7] *Schrifstoblin*[8]) on the second floor of the family house called *zur Cronenberg*. In addition to his room upstairs, the diarist also had a small chamber (*min stoblin*[9]) on the ground floor which he used during winters.[10] In the same house, in a "neat, cheerful room",[11] according to Weinsberg's description, lived his younger sister Sibilla (1537–1598) who had separated from her husband. A third

Privacy. Sources and Approaches, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 213–242.

[6] For a general biography on Hermann Weinsberg, see Manfred Groten (ed.), *Hermann Weinsberg 1518–1597. Kölner Bürger und Ratsherr. Studien zu Leben und Werk* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 2005); Matthew Lundin, *Paper Memory: A Sixteenth-Century Townsman Writes His World* (Cambridge, MA and Harvard University Press, 2012).

[7] WI 660r, 1 January 1574.

[8] WS 636v, 28 February 1587.

[9] WD 372v, 2 August 1594.

[10] WD 195r, 25 October 1590.

[11] "hubsch lustich gemach". WS 666r, 14 August 1587.

member of the household was another Hermann (1560–1604), the eldest son of their late brother Christian (1529–1564), with whom the diarist shared the upstairs bedchamber (*sclafkamer*[12]). The neighbouring three-storey house called *Haus Weinsberg* was the ancestral home of the family. In the 1580s and the 1590s, it was occupied by Weinsberg's younger brother Gottschalk (1532–1597) and his wife Elisabeth Horn. The two houses were interconnected by a common courtyard and back doors facing the courtyard. However, Weinsberg referred to both houses as his own[13] and friends, relatives, and business partners made visits to him in both houses. There was a parlour in the *Haus Weinsberg* called *sprechkamer*[14] which was used for formal occasions by the entire family. For instance, the solemn marriage proposal for Sibilla[15] as well as the announcement of the news of the death of one of their nephews living in Speyer were received in this room.[16] Therefore, Weinsberg's home offered several places for withdrawal as well as, at the same time, many possibilities to interact in a more or less private setting.[17] The family members lived in proximity to each other; they shared spaces, and some of the extended family kept the house together as well. The everyday expenditures were diligently recorded and shared among the family members and the common meals were consumed in the upstairs room of *Haus Weinsberg*.[18]

[12] WS 86r, 7 August 1578.

[13] WD 59v, 6 August 1588.

[14] WD 497r, 30 November 1595.

[15] WD 59v, 6 August 1588.

[16] WD 142r, 18 September 1589.

[17] The house was rebuilt in Renaissance style in the 1520s. See Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 54. See also Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially chapter 2 ("Rebuildings") and Chapter 3 ("Alice Barnham in the Rebuilt World") and Christopher Heyl, *A Passion for Privacy. Untersuchungen zur Genese der bürgerlichen Privatspähre in London (1600–1800)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2004).

[18] E.g. WS 189v, 20 March 1580.

Virtues of Silence and Speaking

Living together with his young nephew, the diarist took diligent notice of his behaviour in various everyday conversations. In the early 1580s, Weinsberg was rather worried about his nephew because the young man tended to be remarkably speechless and silent. In a long diary entry, the older Hermann recounted his nephew's failures in which he deviated from contemporary social norms: Hermann was silent at meals, at family gatherings, among relatives, and also in the church. Together with these places were listed some of the most important occasions in which conversations took place within the urban environment. However, Hermann neither discussed news nor chatted with maids. When asked questions, he gave only laconic answers, and he himself barely asked questions spontaneously. When he was requested to do something, he obeyed but remained silent.[19]

The diarist comforted himself by recalling the many proverbs regarding conversation that his mother would keep telling and which she herself had heard from her own parents—such as "silence is an art".[20] However, Weinsberg's mother had also added that no mute people had ever become rich. Weinsberg continues with another piece of proverbial wisdom—that it is not a coincidence that men have two ears but only one mouth, and while the ears are always open, there are two bulwarks in the mouth—the teeth and the lips—to prevent unwanted words from leaving it.[21] For it is well known, goes on Weinsberg, that a wicked tongue and too much 'gaping' (*klaffenß*) can cause a lot of damage. Consequently, concludes the diarist, his nephew's extreme reticence (*swigen*) is probably much better than if he were too talkative (*swetzhaft*).[22]

While vacillating between these contemporary evaluations of being talkative,[23] Weinsberg also realised that while people praised being silent as a principle, in practice, if one indeed remained speechless and did not

[19] WS 312r, 4 October 1581.

[20] "swigen ist kunst vil klaffens bringt ungunst". WS 312r, 4 October 1581.

[21] These expressions stem originally from the baptismal instructions of St. John Chrysostom .

[22] WS 312r, 4 October 1581.

[23] On contemporary fears of ungoverned speech, see, for instance, Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. 17–18.

participate in conversations, he or she soon became unpleasant to others. According to his own observations, being too tight-lipped was considered to be a sign of dumbness (*blodicheit*)[24]—a mark, that is, of a disability by his contemporaries—and the diarist was worried that it would hamper the marriage prospects of his nephew.

The nephew's habit of spending a lot of time in his room regardless of the season was even more alarming for the diarist.[25] In doing so, Weinsberg echoes contemporary norms according to which everyone who tried to avoid observation by the community was immediately suspected.[26] Therefore, we can assume that Weinsberg probably thought that his young nephew endangered himself by spending too much time alone. The diarist's remarks probably also reflect another contemporary supposition—that obsessive withdrawal from company could be a warning sign of inner crisis, such as a case of melancholy.[27] Although there were positive attitudes towards solitude as well (such as the place of pious reflection or a retreat for scholarly or literary work),[28] Weinsberg's own approach towards solitude was far from positive—ironic, since he himself must have had to spend a considerable amount of time alone writing his journal.[29]

[24] Another example of connecting the lack of conversation skills with dumbness: WS 68r, 5 April 1578.

[25] WS 312r, 4 October 1581. On the changing perception of solitude, see Karl A.E. Enenkel and Christine Göttler (eds.), *Solitudo: Spaces, Places, and Times of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Cultures* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018).

[26] Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies*, 45:2 (2006), 313–334, 325; Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 2–3, 13. For connections with these links to suspicions of heresy, see Ronald Huebert, "Privacy: The Early Social History of a Word", *The Sewanee Review*, 105:1 (1997), 21–38, 30.

[27] Huebert 1997, 34–35. On melancholy see for instance Angus Gowland, "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy", *Past and Present,* 191 (2006), 77–120. See also Markus Bardenheuer's chapter in this volume.

[28] Christine Göttler, "Realms of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern European Cultures: An Introduction", in *Solitudo: Spaces, Places, and Times of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Cultures,* ed. by Karl A.E. Enenkel and Christine Göttler (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 1–28.

[29] Roger Chartier, "The Practical Impact of Writing", in *A History of Private Life. III: Passions of the Renaissance*, 111–159.

As Arlette Farge has argued, people of early modern Europe were expected to be talkative (*gespreich*), and talking as a skill was well prized.[30] Good speaking skills were indeed valued highly by Weinsberg. The diarist regularly noted the presence or absence of this skill when describing recently deceased persons, regardless of their gender.[31] There were some who were especially accomplished in this skill.[32] For instance, Weinsberg was proud of all three of his sisters: he described them as intelligent (*verstendige*) women capable of being eloquent and holding conversations with others.[33] He was also very pleased with Margret von Aussem (1565–?), the fiancée of one of his nephews. After having met Margret for the first time, the diarist wrote that she seemed to be a well-mannered and well-educated young lady who could not only read, write, and calculate but also talk eloquently.[34] Therefore, good speaking skills were linked not only to intelligence but also to good manners and good education.[35] On the other hand, on some rare occasions, certain people were frowned upon because they talked too much.[36]

Precisely because talking was an important social skill and due to the ambiguities surrounding it, Weinsberg supplied his descendants—the intended readers of his diary—with some pieces of useful advice on conversing and inserted them into his journal. For instance, after encountering the speechlessness of Hermann, the diarist wrote an admonition addressed directly to him (since he was the most plausible family head to read it after Weinsberg's death) in which he warned him that his muteness might be harmful to him.[37] Weinsberg returned to the issue a couple of years later when he penned another piece of advice on the subject of

[30] Arlette Farge, "The Honor and Secrecy of Families", in *A History of Private Life. III: Passions of the Renaissance*, 571–607 (582). See also Jean-Louis Flandin, "Distinction Through Taste", in *A History of Private Life. III: Passions of the Renaissance*, 265–308.

[31] E.g. WS 684v, 20 November 1587; WD 424v, 9 February 1595.

[32] WD 180v, 1 June 1590.

[33] WS 102v, 21 November 1578.

[34] WD 336v, 8 December 1593.

[35] See also Katherine Rebecca Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 170.

[36] WD 155r, 20 November 1589.

[37] WS 312v–313r, Ermanung an Herman.

the art of conversation, influenced probably by the flourishing contemporary literature on this theme.[38] In this entry, his advice was that his descendants should be very cautious when talking in good company and at the dining table. One should be neither too dumb nor too smart. They should not interrupt others or monopolise the conversation. His descendants should not say anything unpleasant or against 'peace, friendship and joy' (*friden fruntschaft und freude*). Malicious rumour, gossip, and ridicule should be avoided and should under no circumstances be passed on, as otherwise his future readers would bring dishonour upon and harm to themselves, warned Weinsberg.[39]

Talking "Alone"

When tracing private conversations in Weinsberg's journal, the term 'alone' (*allein*) seems to particularly warrant discussion as the diarist used it to describe how certain exchanges were kept within the family. For instance, the diarist recorded that in 1578, he and his family celebrated Ash Wednesday 'alone' (*allein*) without 'strangers' (*Fremden*), in the sense that no guests were invited—simply that the entire extended family living together was present at the banquet.[40] Consequently, in this case, 'alone' means a smaller group of people being present. There are other examples as well in which Weinsberg uses the expression 'alone' in the sense of 'among us'—that is, this term was used by him for the domestic context to refer to people within the house. For instance, the Weinsbergs celebrated Easter in 1578 in the same way, alone among themselves (*unter uns allein*), quietly but cheerfully with singing and with a bit of drinking.[41] Similarly, the Weinsberg family observed New Year's Eve in 1587 without any friends, "among us in the house alone",[42] quietly with a glass of wine, thanking God for his favours in the last year and asking

[38] See, for instance, Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 89–122. On the impact of conduct literature and the importance of dissimulation, see also Liam Benison's chapter in this volume.

[39] WD 70r, 12 September 1588.

[40] WS 64v, 10 February 1578.

[41] WS 67r, 30 March 1578.

[42] "under unß im hauß allein still gewest". WS 694r, 31 December 1587.

him for prosperity and peace in the next one.[43] In these depictions of merry dinners, we seem to encounter the ideal image of domesticity[44] described by Weinsberg for his future family members. At the same time, this is probably also an indicator of the desire to establish a private setting, albeit not necessarily a literally 'alone' one.

However, Weinsberg also frequently used the word 'alone' literally regarding private converastions. For instance, in 1578, when one of his acquaintances, Gruitgin von Gusten visited the diarist in order to discuss some financial problems privately, Weinsberg tentatively began to talk about an idea that had occurred to him. More precisely, he admitted, it was Sibilla who had told him that her sister-in-law, Tringin suggested the idea of the marriage between Gottschalk's illegitimate son Peter (1552–?) and Anna, the maid of Tringin who was the daughter of Gruitgin. Marriage was obviously not a private matter in the early modern period, and we can see that an entire network of persons was already involved in this case, as well. However, Weinsberg emphasised that he mentioned this marriage proposal to the girl's mother at that time because had been talking alone.[45] He probably considered it important to discuss marriage issues privately first in order to avoid public rejection. Weinsberg tried to convince the would-be mother-in-law by detailing Peter's annual income. He told Gruitgin to consider the proposal, discuss it further with her family, and, in case of an agreement, inform him so that he could then notify Gottschalk—rather than Peter directly—about the decision. Gruitgin agreed, they departed,[46] and the young couple were married three months later.[47] Since marriage was a family arrangement that could seriously affect financial and social status, negotiations regarding marriages usually started by talking alone with one of the members of the families involved. Financial questions as well as issues of inheritance were also frequently dealt with in private by the Weinsberg

[43] WS 694r, 31 December 1587.

[44] Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005); Martine Van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing: Domesticity, Privacy, and the Public Sphere in England and the Dutch Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[45] "dieweil wir beide doch eitz allein in gespreich sin, sprach ich". WS 67v, 5 April 1578.

[46] WS 67v, 5 April 1578.

[47] WS 77r, 13 July 1578.

family.[48] Sometimes these issues had to be kept private in order to maintain an appearance of status—a requirement that was probably even more important when such status could not be backed financially.[49]

We have seen that, according to Weinsberg, there was a clear distinction of what could be voiced and what could not, and such standards of decent behaviour were to be maintained even during family meals. Consequently, people were not allowed to talk about anything and in any way even when they were 'alone', at least not according to Weinsberg who expected the rules described in his journal to be obeyed by others. He was particularly adamant about the avoidance of sensitive topics which could provoke arguments or quarrels. For instance, he was rather resentful when a major dispute on the expansion of the Jesuit order in Cologne erupted at a birthday party between his younger sister, Sibilla and one of his nieces, Elisabeth Horn, thereby spoiling the good spirit.[50] On the other hand, he was delighted when the scandals around a shooting competition that ended up in an urban uprising were not mentioned at all during a family banquet he attended as a guest only two weeks after the events.[51]

A marriage that went wrong is another revealing case regarding rules of talking. Both Weinsberg and his young brother, Gottschalk were aware that the marriage of their nephew—also called Gottschalk Weinsberg (1561–c.1603)—with Margreth Swelhem (?–c.1625) was not a happy one and that the couple quarrelled a lot. As it was rumoured, they were on the verge of separating by 1594. They lived as tenants in a house called *zur Trauben* which was the property of the diarist Weinsberg and which was built right next to the *Haus Cronenberg*. The two buildings were separated by a wooden door, and when one talked a little loudly in the kitchen of *zur Trauben*, it could be heard and understood in the *Haus Cronenberg* as well. Both Sibilla and the young Hermann kept eavesdropping deliberately and then intervened in the marital conflicts, siding with Gottschalk since he was the younger brother of the young Hermann. While describing these details, Weinsberg adds in his diary that he does not record these facts to praise eavesdropping but to explain the events

[48] E.g. WS 67v, 5 April 1578; WD 372r, 31 July 1594.

[49] E.g. WS 499v–500r, 4 May 1585.

[50] WS 362r, 7 October 1582.

[51] WS 309v, 5 September 1581.

that followed.[52] Thus, in this case, we can observe two types of violation of social norms. On the one hand, family conversations which could be heard by others were probably annoying to the neighbours and we can assume that these were not uncommon in a densely populated urban environment. On the other hand, deliberately listening to the private conversations of others was also a reproachable act,[53] although Weinsberg never mentions in his journal that he ever actually reproached his relatives for doing so. Therefore, we can perhaps state very cautiously that there was a desire or aspiration towards living and letting live within a family setting without the intrusions of outsiders. It should also be noted that neither Sibilla nor the young Hermann had any reservations regarding eavesdropping or were bothered by the noise, which means that different attitudes towards this type of privacy existed within one family.

Even though Weinsberg and his brother Gottschalk were aware of the marital conflicts between the young Gottschalk and Margreth, the first serious conversation between the two brothers about solving the problem began only when they realised that the couple had fallen into heavy debt. The two brothers spent days discussing the problem since the debt could put the entire family's financial stability and reputation in danger. In the next couple of days, both brothers held conversations with both the spouses separately (*allein*), asking them to list their complaints against each other and confronting them with the objections raised by the other party. After this, another conversation was held with both spouses present during which Weinsberg and Gottschalk acted as mediators[54] trying to reconcile and pacify them. The Weinsberg brothers told them that they were willing to help them financially, provided that Gottschalk found a proper job and the couple promised to live peacefully, especially promising to talk quietly ("stillich reden") so as not to disturb anyone in the *Haus Cronenberg*.[55] If not, the couple would not receive any money. The diarist and his brother took the oaths of both spouses to behave as

[52] WD 372v, 2 August 1594.

[53] On the important role of scenes of overhearing in early modern English drama, see: Mary Trull, *Performing Privacy and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4–6.

[54] On conflict management in the early modern period, see Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounne (eds.), *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), and Katharina Simon's chapter in this volume.

[55] WD 380r–380v, 14 September 1594.

agreed.[56] Therefore, the well-to-do Weinsberg family had the means to enforce desired levels of privacy and prevent the intrusion of neighbours into their family life.

Based on the information gathered partly by overhearing, Sibilla kept talking rather maliciously about the young couple and did not restrain herself even at family meals, mostly scolding Margreth and her mother. Gossiping played an important role in regulating community behaviour and reinforcing moral values. It also gave women a tool of social control and a sense of power.[57] It was not necessarily gendered,[58] but it was traditionally seen as such and was typically associated with women.[59] Gossiping, evil speaking, and scolding were considered particularly feminine offences.[60] At a certain point, the diarist became "listless"[61] with all these talks and rebuked her sister at the dining table, saying that he was not willing to listen to quarrelling and strife "among friends"[62] anymore. Sibilla did not at all agree with her brother that such topics could not be discussed at the table. Being offended by the rebuke in front of the entire family, she left the table, expressing her wish to stay away from the common table from that time onwards. However, later that day, Sibilla entered Weinsberg's room in order to ask something. Weinsberg took the opportunity to return to the events at lunch and explained the causes of his anger to his sister. The diarist said that Sibilla should

[56] WD 380r–380v, 14 September 1594.

[57] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 120; Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Horodowich, "The Gossiping Tongue: Oral Networks, Public Life and Political Culture in Early Modern Venice", *Renaissance Studies* 19:1 (2005), 23–24.

[58] Horodowich, "Gossiping Tongue", 36.

[59] Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, 7; Elizabeth Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 54, 153–154, 163.

[60] David Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England", in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. by Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 116–136; Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 16–42; Kamensky, *Governing The Tongue*, 19–21; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 121–23; Horodowich, "Gossiping Tongue", 44.

[61] "unlustig". WD 372v, 2 August 1594.

[62] "under gutten frunden". WD 372v, 2 August 1594.

have thought about what would happen if their adversaries and enemies[63] heard that they lived such an unfriendly life. Not only would they be very happy to realise that the Weinsbergs had such domestic tensions and would laugh at them, but perhaps they would even try to take advantage of these conflicts. Thus, Weinsberg suggested that making family quarrels public would undermine the reputation (or even the economic prosperity) of the family, and he managed to persuade Sibilla to return to the common table with this argument.[64] The fact that honour had economic value was accepted by one and all in the early modern period.[65] However, in this case, we can see that even the dining table of the family was seen as not entirely private by the diarist since the behaviour shown by family members during these meals could affect the reputation of the whole family as if it had taken place publicly. Thus, these occasions were seen by Weinsberg as both private ('alone', 'among us') and public (having an impact on the family's reputation) at the same time. This case perfectly complements David Cressy's observation that in the sixteenth century, "even within the recesses of domestic routine, every action, every opinion was susceptible to external interest, monitoring, or control. Walls had ears, and everybody's business was a matter of credit, reputation or common fame".[66]

Another revealing case occurred in 1578. After a family contract regarding financial issues was drawn between the four members of the family, Sibilla (who had no income at all after having separated from her husband) followed Weinsberg to his upstairs room in a rather panicky state. In the room of her brother, Sibilla asked him about the details of the contract, especially about her annuity. Weinsberg reassured her that her annuity of 33 dallers was included in the contract. Since 200 dallers were to be divided between Sibilla and three other members of the family, she demanded at least 5 dallers more, but her request was declined. Even though Weinsberg tried to calm her by saying that they had no intention to deceive her, Sibilla felt that she was being dispossessed. She started crying and shouting, and—according to Weinsberg—"became very fierce

[63] "widderseieger und finde".

[64] WD 372v, 2 August 1594.

[65] Farge, "Honor and Secrecy of Families", 585.

[66] 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 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 187–197 (187).

and impetuous"[67] and ran away from the house to the street, "making such a noise and great howl"[68] that Weinsberg was convinced it was heard by all the neighbours who probably thought that Weinsberg had beaten her or tried to murder her. Weinsberg also added that he had never imagined that his sister would behave in such an "unmannerly way" (*so unmaneirlich sich stelte*) when her demands were not fulfilled immediately.[69] After this quarrel, Weinsberg was not willing to talk to his sister for a couple of days. Thus, while partly repeating the contemporary stereotypes according to which women were overruled by passions,[70] what really worried Weinsberg was making a private family quarrel public to the neighbours—this is precisely what Sibilla did, obviously purposefully in order to draw public attention to it since the offence was so severe for her. Thus, Sibilla used both the dining hall and the public streets of Cologne for her own private goals without reservations,[71] whereas Weinsberg vehemently opposed both. This is probably where we can find a shifting boundary between public and private in the sixteenth century.[72] Not only were the boundaries of the private sphere elsewhere for Sibilla, but she also had different perceptions of what appropriate topics and proper manners were in these settings.[73]

Moreover, the diarist clearly linked his sister's behaviour with vehemence and bad manners. Weinsberg was particularly concerned with good manners throughout his life. He praised some of his acquaintances for their civility (*manier*)[74] whereas his younger brother's table manners were appalling to him.[75] As illustrated above, he was very concerned about good manners during discussions. These concerns show that the

[67] "Wart sie gar heftich und ungestumb mit weinen und schreien". WS 98r, 23 October 1578.

[68] "macht da sulich lauth und groiß karmen und hevlen". WS 98r–98v, 23 October 1578.

[69] WS 98r–98v, 23 October 1578.

[70] Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, 4, 6.

[71] Nicole Castan, "The Public and the Private", in *A History of Private Life. III: Passions of the Renaissance*, 403–446 (414).

[72] Castan, "The Public and the Private", 414.

[73] See also Larson, *Early Modern Women*, 2, 7.

[74] "wol maneirter". WS 679v, 20 October 1587.

[75] WS 423v, 5 October 1583.

appropriateness of conversations—not only his own but of his entire household—was a subject of particular significance to Weinsberg, especially when it came to what he deemed as appropriate to talk about and what to keep private. In 1596, the diarist recalled that he had been taught from the book *De civilitate morum puerilium* (On Civility in Children, 1530) by Erasmus while studying at high school in Emmerich in the early 1530s[76] and admitted that he had remained a great admirer of the philosopher during his lifetime.[77] This was probably the way in which he learnt and internalised the forms and manners of the new type of civility popularised by Erasmus.[78] Weinsberg, just like other members of the emerging social group of learned functionaries,[79] echoed values such as self-control and self-discipline[80] which were typically associated with the 'middling sort'. At the same time, his beliefs also embodied the aspiration for privacy which can also be linked to the emergence of this group.[81] In fact, he was the one who tried to propagate these new attitudes and ideas not only among his family members—directing them especially at his sister who seems to have represented a more traditional perception—orally, but also to his future descendants through the medium of writing.

[76] WD 546v, 20 July 1596.

[77] Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 104; Gérald Chaix, "Humanism et élites urbaines à Cologne au XVIe siècle", in *Humanismus und höfische-städtische Eliten im 16. Jahrhundert. Humanisme et élites des cours et des villes au XVIe siècle*, ed. by Klaus Malettke and Jürgen Voss (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1990), 195–210.

[78] Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 96.

[79] Wolfgang Herborn, "Der graduierte Ratsherr. Zur Entwicklung einer neuen Elite im Rat der frühen Neuzeit", in *Bürgerliche Eliten in den Niederlanden und in Nordwestdeutschland*, ed. by Heinz Schilling and Hermann Diedericks (Cologne–Vienna: Böhlau, 1985), 337–400.

[80] Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 2012, 105. On the connection between the emergence of the literate middling sort and the spread of the novel values of civility, see also Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, 2003, 377.

[81] Sjoerd Keulen and Ronald Kroeze, "Privacy from a Historical Perspective", in *The Handbook of Privacy Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. by Bart van der Sloot and Aviva de Groot (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 21–56 (24–26). See also Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 2012, 24.

Talking in the Bedchamber

One of the most important places where intimate and lengthy private conversations took place within the *Haus Cronenberg* was the bedchamber (*sclafkamer*) of the diarist.[82] These conversations happened almost exclusively with his early orphaned nephew with whom the diarist shared the same bedroom and whom he took into his house after his mother's death. Having no legitimate children of his own, Weinsberg regarded himself as Hermann's foster father and Hermann as his future heir and tried to bring him up accordingly.[83] These conversations began either in the morning or in the evening while they were both lying awake in bed.[84] People in the early modern period woke up and went to bed earlier than people today, and the main reason for this was the bad quality, high price, and relative lack of lighting. Weinsberg went to bed usually at 9 pm and woke up at 5 or 6 am.[85] Teaching in schools and some council meetings would also begin already by 6 am in sixteenth-century Cologne.[86]

Lying in bed one early November morning in 1580, Weinsberg and his nephew discussed Hermann's future. Weinsberg reminded Hermann that six months earlier, he had promised him to start his university studies. However, by November, the diarist realised that his nephew had not enrolled at the university and probably only pretended to attend the lectures. Weinsberg now confronted his nephew with these accusations and reproached him seriously. His nephew admitted that he could not understand the lectures and thought that studying at home (*privatim studern*) would be more useful.[87] Weinsberg allowed this wish because he considered his nephew to be equipped with the necessary knowledge

[82] On the role of bedroom as one of the most private areas of life, see: Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 138.

[83] Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 250.

[84] On the experience of sleeping in the early modern period, see: Sasha Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2016); Anja Schumann, "Die Freuden und Sorgen des Schlafens. Schreiben über eine alltägliche Erfahrung in der Frühen Neuzeit", *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 26 (2015), 164–177.

[85] "Vom sclaifen und wachen". WS 35r–35v.

[86] WD 79r, 18 October 1588.

[87] WS 254r, 25 November 1580.

in order to be able to continue his studies at home. As in other cases, here too Weinsberg adds the reason behind his decision to put this particular conversation to paper—his wish that it might serve as a reminder for Hermann so that when he would read it in the future, he would not blame the diarist but only himself for what he had missed.[88] Thus, although the diarist did not use the term 'private' regarding conversations, he knew the word very well. Being a university-educated lawyer, Weinsberg must have been acquainted with the legal notion of *ius privatum* enshrined within Roman law. He was also well-versed in the works of Cicero and was probably aware of the Ciceronian differentiation between civic duty and private existence.[89] The term "*privat*" indeed occurs several times in the diary, mostly regarding legal issues—for instance, in relation to properties and ownership[90] in the case of Weinsberg's last will.[91]

However, in the case mentioned above, he used the term to express withdrawal, which is also a frequently used meaning of the word in Weinsberg's writings. For instance, on another morning, the young Hermann asked his uncle why he would not collect the data registered dispersedly in the shrine books of Cologne and write a book about them, saying that that would be a useful activity. Weinsberg did not record the entire conversation, jotting down only the remarks of the young Hermann, so we do not know what his prompt response was. However, he answered the question in his diary.[92] He explained that, first of all, he did not agree with many of these written customs since many of them were biased or 'against nature' (for instance, some taxes were required to be paid in grain, even though there was no grain production within Cologne). Intriguingly, he stated that it was not his task as a private person to point out these mistakes or to strengthen them further by collecting them into

[88] WS 253v–254r, 25 November 1580.

[89] Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard and Mette Birkedal Bruun, "En privé & en public: The Epistolary Preparation of the Dutch Stadtholders", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 24:3 (2020), 253–279 (266); Susan Treggiari, "Home and Forum: Cicero Between 'Public' and 'Private'", *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 128 (1998), 1–23. On the influence of Cicero on Weinsberg, see Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 11, 24.

[90] Huebert, "Privacy", 3.

[91] E.g. WD 31r, 3 April 1588, WD 68v–69r, 6 September 1588.

[92] WD 136r–136v, 16 August 1589.

a book.[93] He also explained that he had no inclination to become a public historian since historians were harassed if they wrote the truth. Furthermore, he added in this entry that the purpose of his diary-writing was not to serve the community (*gemeinde*) but to secretly serve only his private paternal home, family, and lineage.[94] Thus, in this case, Weinsberg associates the term *privatim* with withdrawal[95] in the sense of not holding public office, not being an official historian of Cologne.[96] However, this withdrawal from public offices and roles is not perceived negatively[97] by Weinsberg since it allows him to fulfil his ambitions as a historiographer of contemporary events.[98] These ambitions are clearly explained in a couple of diary entries—they include the desire to write the truth, the reality "as it truly was"[99] with all its precise circumstances.[100] Thus, it was precisely this refuge from the public realm[101] that gave Weinsberg the desired authorial freedom as a historian.[102]

In addition to withdrawal, Weinsberg also associates the term 'privacy' with secrecy, a frequent signification of the word 'private' in the early

[93] "mir und andern privaten besondern personen" WD 136r–136v, 16 August 1589.

[94] "mins fatters haus, gesclecht und geblode privatim ins geheim und besonder". WD 136r–136v, 16 August 1589.

[95] Cf. 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: Chicago University Press, 1997), 1–42 (5); Van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing*, 4.

[96] Huebert, "Privacy", 29; Mette Birkedal Bruun, "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy: The Retirement of the Great Condé", in *Early Modern Privacy. Sources and Approaches*, 12–60.

[97] Huebert, "Privacy", 29.

[98] On Weinsberg as a historian, see Josef Stein, "Hermann Weinsberg als Mensch und Historiker", *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins* 4:1 (1917), 109–169; Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 239–245.

[99] "wie es in der warheit were". WS 589v, 22 July 1586.

[100] "Dem erenthaften fleisligsten zukunftigen hausfatter zu Weinsberch, minem geliebten erben, untbieten ich Herman von Weinsberch minen grutz und alles goden". WI 1r.

[101] Huebert, "Privacy", 31.

[102] Another example of connecting the expression of truth with freedom is found in WS 186r, 10 March 1580: "daß der doch ein theil klein oder groiß an siner voreltern hauß Weinsberch mogt haben und frei mit warheit kunnen sagen, er sie dar an geerbt und ein geerbter burger oder originarins viß Coln". WS 186r, 10 March 1580.

modern period.[103] This secrecy protected Weinsberg's writings as his aim was to record his accumulated knowledge and many pieces of advice in order to secure the survival and prosperity of his family and lineage[104] in a work that belonged to the popular genre of family books or house books.[105] He wrote his diary for posterity but—as he clearly stated—for family members only, not for everyone.[106] Thus, for Weinsberg, keeping things private—exclusive, secret, or confidential[107]—served as a way of securing the future of his family.

Talking "Freely"

Weinsberg's ambition to write his history for posterity in a way that did not have to abide by officially acceptable structures was also linked to another recurring label for his conversations: 'free' (*frei*). In an entry from 1578, Weinsberg explained to his future readers that he wanted not only to talk about the major issues occurring within the city and in the country during his lifetime, but also about himself and his family and their domestic issues, as well as their friends, neighbours, and other burghers "in a safe and free way".[108] Again, we can see that penning a secret and confidential piece of writing gave Weinsberg a certain amount of freedom

[103] Van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing*, 147.

[104] "Dem erbaren vorsigtigen vornemen hausfatter zu Weinsberch jeder zeit wesendt untpieten ich Herman von Weinsberch lic. vil glucks und heils". WS 2r. See also Gregor Rohmann, "Der Lügner durchschaut die Wahrheit: Verwandtschaft, Status und historisches Wissen bei Hermann von Weinsberg", *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins* 71:1 (2000), 43–76.

[105] Birgit Studt, *Haus- und Familienbücher in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2007).

[106] "Dem erbaren vorsigtigen vornemen hausfatter zu Weinsberch jeder zeit wesendt untpieten ich Herman von Weinsberch lic. vil glucks und heils". WS 2r.

[107] Birgit Studt, "Orte der Exklusivität", in *Geschichte schreiben. Ein Quellen- und Studienbuch zur Historiographie (ca. 1350–1750)*, ed. by Stefan Benz, Susanne Rau and Birgit Studt (München: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 111–114. See also in the same volume; Marc von der Höh, "Historiografie zwischen Privatheit und Geheimnis—das Familienbuch des Werner Overstolz", in *Geschichte schreiben. Ein Quellen- und Studienbuch zur Historiographie (ca. 1350–1750)*, ed. by Stefan Benz, Susanne Rau and Birgit Studt (München: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 115–126.

[108] "alles ungefairt und frei" WS 6v. On connecting retreat with safety by Montaigne see Chartier, "The practical impact of writing", 134.

and perhaps a sense of power to express his honest opinions and views explicitly and without restrictions.[109]

There are a few other occasions in which Weinsberg employs the term "freely" in relation to talking, and they are well worth exploring here.[110] One of them is an entry from 1578 in which he describes himself in terms of his social self.[111] He admits that, like everyone else, he too has both good and bad qualities. Therefore, he promises to his readers to describe first his good personality traits and subsequently confess and show his bad traits as well "equally freely".[112] Among his many negative personality traits, Weinsberg lists his quality of occasionally being "not careful enough" and "speaking too freely on matters of faith and religion".[113] As Cecile Jagodzinksi has suggested, "the tensions between public and private in the early modern period arose first in the religious sphere, where they were embedded in the oppositions between official church teachings and the call for individual interpretations of the word of God".[114] Weinsberg's remark shows his desire to talk about religious matters without restrictions as well as his awareness that doing so can be dangerous. His frustration thus indicates what we may understand as an unfulfilled wish for privacy. However, it is worth noting that Weinsberg lists this personality trait among his bad habits. Speaking freely about religion was not only potentially dangerous but was also probably considered as a sign of an outburst of spontaneity which was also not deemed to be an entirely positive quality in this period.[115] In this case again, freedom is associated with negative connotations by Weinsberg.

[109] Chartier, "The practical impact of writing", 137.

[110] On the connection of freedom and privacy, see Johannes Ljungberg, "Talking in Private—And Keeping It Private: Protecting Conversations from Exposure in Swedish Pietism Investigations, 1723–1728", in *Private/Public in 18th-Century Scandinavia,* ed. by Sari Nauman and Helle Vogt (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 63–80 (64).

[111] On Weinsberg's self-representation, see Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 205–209. On the place of Weinsberg's work in the history of autobiography, see Lundin, *Paper Memory*, 25–32. See also Keulen–Kroeze, "Privacy from a Historical Perspective", 2018, esp. 26–27.

[112] "glicherweiß frei"; "Von tugent und laster". WS 33v.

[113] "bin zu zeiten nit so behuit, glaubens und religions sachen frei darvon zu reden". WS 34r. Trans. by Martin Lundin.

[114] Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print*, 24.

[115] Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print*, 24.

Another occasion in which Weinsberg's desire to talk freely with someone was thwarted occurred in May 1584. His foster daughter, Marie Luchelgin (1558–1584) fell very sick and asked the diarist to visit her urgently and help her make her last will. When Weinsberg arrived, the young lady showed him into a chamber and asked him to draft a written list of her properties and their approximate values. In this case, Weinsberg explicitly expresses his frustration that they were barely left alone, because Marie's step-parents arrived during their conversation and the other women and servants living in the household kept walking up and down around them.[116] Therefore, not only did it take a long time to discuss everything, but they also could not talk completely "freely", once again probably meaning "without any restrictions or limitations".[117] The case clearly illustrates not only how difficult it occasionally was to arrange a completely private discussion in the urban environment, but also how hostile the environment was for private conversations. For as soon as Weinsberg left, Marie was interrogated by her family members and they soon found out that a testament was being made.

Consequently, when Weinsberg returned in the afternoon to Marie with a preliminary draft of the will in order to finish their discussion, he met with an unfriendly reception. Marie's stepmother informed him that, in the meantime, Marie had had a conversation with her stepfather's son and had changed her mind. When Weinsberg insisted on meeting the girl again in order to make sure that she really wanted to waive her previous will, Marie's stepmother became furious and told Weinsberg to be ashamed of himself—a remark which made the diarist indignant. However, she said she would allow Weinsberg to talk to Marie alone (*allein*) once again and showed him into the upstairs hall. When Weinsberg met Marie again, he tried to talk to her in private. However, Marie's stepmother was still there and was not willing to leave. Weinsberg told Marie that if she really wanted to change her will, she should tell him freely (*frei*). She answered that she would do so and remained silent. Weinsberg repeated his request, to which Marie finally responded by saying that she had no intention of stealing anything from anyone or harming anyone, but was unwilling to say anything more. Consequently,

[116] "Aber under disser handlung mogten mir besweirlich allein sin und samen zur noitturft redden". WS 453r, 8 May 1584.

[117] "da mit mir nit allerding frei samen mogten unß besprechen". WS 453r, 8 May 1584.

Weinsberg told the stepmother—who was still standing beside them—that Marie must have lost her senses and a good night's rest would probably help her. However, as he prepared to leave, the girl took his hand and asked him three times to come back in any case on the next day, a request which Weinsberg vowed to uphold. However, Marie's condition did not improve the next day, so Weinsberg decided not to visit her again.[118] Many conclusions can be drawn from this occasion. Similar to Weinsberg's nephew's longing for spatial privacy, private conversations in the early modern period were also suspicious for the social circles of the interlocutors. Furthermore, Marie was an unmarried girl and, as Erica Longfellow has observed, "men and women who were not married to one another sought to lock doors or to meet in secret" as they were immediately regarded with suspicion by their social circles.[119] Therefore, we can assume that this was probably another reason behind the stepmother's unwillingness to leave them alone and her harsh scolding of the diarist. Marie also probably needed some private moments to organise her last will, but for those who might have lost financially from the change of the will, such a conversation happening in private must have indeed been very threatening.[120] Likewise, we can also assume that the stepmother understood the word 'alone' in its sense of 'among us'—the sense in which Weinsberg frequently used it—and not literally as 'alone', as the diarist had wanted at that moment.

Conclusion

To sum up, we can probably agree with Arlette Farge's statement that in the early modern period, "conversation created society but it could also endanger members of that society".[121] This dual nature of conversations and the importance of oral communication were precisely what persuaded Weinsberg to give detailed instructions to his descendants on

[118] WS 453r, 8 May 1584.

[119] Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household", 325. See also Tomasz Wislicz's chapter in this volume.

[120] Death in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period was, however, usually a public ceremony. For more on this, see Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, translated by Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), 12; Cressy, "Response", 188, 191.

[121] Farge, "Honor and Secrecy of Families", 582.

how to talk properly in his diary, which is in itself a private conversation with his future family members. Although the diarist knew the term 'private' very well, he mostly used the expression 'alone' regarding private discussions. However, the meaning of this word was also ambiguous, sometimes referring literally to *tête-a-tête* talks, sometimes to conversations within larger, mostly familiar or domestic groups 'among us', and this ambiguity occasionally led to misunderstandings.

In the Weinsberg household, situated in sixteenth-century Cologne, private talking took place mostly in order not to endanger the reputation or status of the interlocutors involved (for instance, not making family secrets, domestic affairs, or financial problems public). However, private conversations (real or fictive) sometimes also allowed a certain degree of freedom of talk (regarding personal devotion or scholarly activity) to be possible. In Weinsberg's diary, we can see the different types of violations of contemporary norms regarding private talking—from overhearing conversations because the conversants were being too noisy or talking about inappropriate topics to disclosing domestic affairs publicly and the attitudes towards them. Moreover, we can also see that there were disagreements even within the diarist's family itself—both about what decent behaviour and appropriate conversation exactly meant as well as where the boundaries of the private sphere were. Thus, appropriateness depended on where the family members saw the boundary between private and public falling—one that they had a hard time negotiating.

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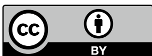

CHAPTER 6

"We Take Care of Our Own": Talking about 'Disability' in Early Modern Netherlandish Households

Barbara A. Kaminska

In an essay recently reprinted in the volume *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*, Harriet McBryde Johnson (1957–2008), an American lawyer and activist with a neuromuscular disease, shared her experience of strangers routinely approaching her in the street with unsolicited comments: "I admire you for being out; most people would give up", "God bless you! I'll pray for you", and "If I had to live like you, I think I'd kill myself".[1] Her testimony is not unique: many people with mobility and sensory impairments are subjected daily to unwanted advice that range from pity to admiration to the promise of prayer and supernatural delivery from their presumed suffering. Those

[1] Harriet McBryde Johnson, "Unspeakable Conversations", in *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Alice Wong (New York: Vintage Books, 2020), 6–7.

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comments are based on the assumption commonly held by non-disabled people that what all disabled people long for is a cure. June Eric-Udorie—another author in the same volume—shares a more intimate experience of growing up with nystagmus, a condition in which eyes move involuntarily: “At home, conversations about my nystagmus were sparse, except when discussed as a thing that God would ‘deliver me’ from. [...] I was praying a lot, asking God to heal me so that I could have some sort of normality”.[2] Although the first testimony records public encounters and the second captures both the existence—and lack—of private conversations, they both reveal, first, that a religious framework continues to be a common—if not the dominant—narrative in discussions of disability and, second, that people with disabilities are forced to consider their bodies as broken and in need of fixing.

In Western cultures, this perception of mobility and sensory impairment as a ‘defect’ in need of overcoming or compensating had already been introduced by Graeco-Roman mythology (see, for instance, the stories of Hephaistos and Tiresias) and, most compellingly, by the New Testament stories of miraculous healing.[3] In addition, even though biblical accounts of healing mandate compassion, people with visible disabilities have for centuries experienced discrimination and—as we shall see in this chapter—endured accusations of being ‘lazy cheats’. These contradictory reactions coexisted in deeply religious communities whose members conformed to the role of ‘good Christians’ in public, but mocked and rejected their impaired and impoverished neighbours in private. In the early modern period, this bifurcated attitude towards disability is confirmed by, among other sources, the display of paintings on the theme of Seven Works of Mercy in alms-houses and the private ownership of images that stigmatised anonymous disabled paupers encountered in the streets. This has a special relevance today since although we live in a time of unprecedented reconsideration of disability and disabled bodies, the dissonance between the public and the private performance of attitudes towards disability has not so much disappeared as it has taken on new forms, of which perhaps the most distinct are considerations of human biodiversity and what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has termed

[2] June Eric-Udorie, “When You Are Waiting to Be Healed”, in *Disability Visibility*, 55.

[3] It is important to acknowledge that those narratives of miraculous overcoming of disability transcend the Christian West and can be found in virtually all world religions.

"velvet eugenics".[4] Parallel to these processes runs the perception of conversations about disability as inherently difficult—unspeakable even, as McBryde Johnson has called some of them. Disability's oft-perceived status of a taboo suggests that the framework of privacy is a particularly productive angle for its analysis.

This chapter offers an analysis of two perspectives on encounters involving people with disabilities in early modern Netherlandish society. I will discuss how images displayed in private and public spaces as conversation pieces constructed the identity of impaired persons as 'the Other' as well as how families approached an impairment when it affected one of their relatives. Within the context of the present volume, I will thereby suggest how we can employ domestic decoration to reconstruct people's privacy and the boundaries between the private and the public spheres in the early modern period. By privileging the visual arts, I show that images developed a nuanced and perceptive vocabulary of impairment and were thus at the centre of early modern disability discourses at a time when no term equivalent to what today we call 'disability' existed. Finally, while this chapter explores terms used in the period to define bodily difference, it will demonstrate how contemporary conversational language has preserved ableist attitudes and misconceptions about people with disabilities that persist to this day.

Early Modern Concepts of Disability and Bodily Difference

In the twenty-first century, Western societies embrace some variation of the definition of disability as codified by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The ADA defines disability—as applied to an individual—as "(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such

[4] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Human Biodiversity Conservation: A Consensual Ethical Principle", *The American Journal of Bioethics* 15:6 (2015), 13–15. For an excellent example of public and private attitudes towards children with Down Syndrome and their portrayal in the media, see also Sarah Zhang, "The Last Children of Down Syndrome", *The Atlantic*, 18 November, 2020.

an impairment".[5] As Elizabeth Bearden further explains, ADA's "definition is normative, basing the designation of disability in parts A and B on what are considered normal life activities and labor, and on what the medical establishment deems to be within normal physical or intellectual parameters respectively. On the other hand, the definition is aware of the social construction of disability, represented in part C, which can account for discrimination that is based on people's perception of limitations, even if no such limitation actually exists".[6] Modern legal documents thus offer a broad, general, normative definition of disability, although its boundaries are fluid and prone to stereotyping.[7] Among different modern definitions of disability, Steven D. Edwards' assertion matches early modern reality well: "disability is both a relational concept and a value-laden concept, implying a failure to match the competence and capabilities of bodies deemed 'normal'".[8] Using early modern egodocuments, Bianca Frohne and Klaus-Peter Horn have concluded that the early modern status of being disabled presented both a medical and a social challenge whereby "neither physical nor mental afflictions absolved the person in question and his or her family from the responsibility of

[5] Elizabeth Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 8.

[6] Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds*, 8–9.

[7] For instance, many people with sensory impairments or chronic pain do not wish to be identified as legally disabled as they are not 'a person in a wheelchair', while others who suffer from diseases such as fibromyalgia do wish to be considered disabled in the eyes of the law. These distinctions are extremely important to keep in mind because—as the authors of the *Disability Visibility* volume remind us—no two persons with a disability are the same and a range of discourses is encountered even within the disability community itself.

[8] Steven D. Edwards, *Disability: Definitions, Value and Identity* (Oxford and Seattle: Radcliffe Publishing, 2005), 7.

finding individually tailored ways of providing for him or her".[9] Interwoven with the concept of disability as an inability to perform functions deemed 'normal' from the standpoint of corporeal and social factors is the concept of 'deformity' which, as David M. Turner and other scholars point out, is an aesthetic category, describing a failure to comply with a body which is considered visually 'standard', a "deviation from normal appearance".[10] Finally, it must be noted that in early modern Europe, impairments associated with old age—which typically call for medical intervention today—were considered natural changes and did not stigmatise the affected individual nor their family the way in which congenital impairments did. This does not mean that such impairments were not at times a source of suffering: at the age of 74, Maria de Neufville (1699–1779) from Amsterdam complained in her diary about the progressive loss of vision that amplified her unhappiness and—as far as one can deduce from her story—her decades-long depression.[11]

[9] Bianca Frohne and Klaus-Peter Horn, "On the Fluidity of 'Disability', in Medieval and Early Modern Societies: Opportunities and Strategies in a New Field of Research", in *The Imperfect Historian: Disability Histories in Europe*, ed. by Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein, and Pieter Verstraete (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 38. The term 'egodocuments', increasingly popular among historians of privacy, applies to "texts written by an author who writes about him or herself" and thus encompasses "diaries, letters, travel journals, memoirs, and autobiographies". See Michaël Green, "Spaces of Privacy in Early Modern Dutch Egodocuments", *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 18:3 (2021), 19–20, https://tseg.nl/article/view/11041/12337#toc; Michaël Green, "Public and Private in Jewish Egodocuments of Amsterdam (ca. 1680–1830)", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun. (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 213. These documents present some of the most compelling sources for studying the history of disability and, in some instances, provide a first-person narrative of living with disability in the early modern period. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this chapter, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic significantly limited access to such archival documents.

[10] David M. Turner, "Introduction: Approaching Anomalous Bodies", in *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (London–New York: Routledge, 2006), 2. In recent years, scholars have also looked into the premodern concept of the 'monstrous' in order to understand the bodily difference in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. For various approaches to the monstrous, see Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds*; Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman, eds., *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); and Jenni Kuuliala, "Miracle and the Monstrous: Disability and Deviant Bodies in the Late Middle Ages", in *Disease and Disability in Medieval and Early Modern Art and Literature*, ed. by Rinaldo F. Canalis and Massimo Ciavolella (Brepols: Turnhout, 2021), 107–130.

[11] For the discussion of Maria de Neufville, see Green, "Spaces of Privacy", 29–39.

While social and medical constructions of disability differed considerably in the early modern period and no equivalent of the word 'disability' existed, we can recover other specific terms used at the time. Late medieval and Renaissance sources, including early vernacular translations of the Bible, repeatedly use the words 'cripple', 'lame', 'leper', and 'deaf and dumb' which, however discriminatory, can still be found on many museum labels. We can find copious examples of this crude language in *The Book of Vagabonds and Beggars*, first published in Dutch by Jan de Laet in Antwerp under the title *Der fielen, rabauwen, oft der schalcken vocabulaer* (1563). Crucially, *The Book of Vagabonds* reveals how deeply this vocabulary was tied to the attitudes towards disabled members of society and the suspicions surrounding them, and later in this chapter, we shall see how the oppressive power of this language continues to shape approaches to physical and sensory difference. The anonymous author of the book distinguishes between several categories of beggars, each with a specific name such as "cripples" (*clinckeneeren*), "strollers" (*vagieren*), "false begging priests" (*schlepperen*), "spurious beggars" (*momsen*), and "pretended lepers" (*jonffrouwen*, a term which in and of itself sounds neutral, but which takes on a wholly different meaning when read in the context of the short chapter in which it appears).[12] Each group described in *Der fielen* has a different way of 'cheating the mankind', either by feigning their impairment or lying about how they have become disabled. The ultimate purpose of the booklet was to inform honest citizens about the means of deception used by beggars. This association of blindness and mobility impairments with deceit serves also as the fundamental premise of a vernacular table-play that would have been performed at a private house—*Twee Rabbouwen* (Two Thieves), written around 1599. The play's protagonists pretends to be "a crippled man leading a blind man" in order to live a life of idleness by trying to extort alms from hardworking burghers.[13]

[12] I am citing the English terms after the translation of *The Book of Vagabonds* by John Camden Hotten, published in London in 1860 and available through Project Gutenberg: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46287/46287-h/46287-h.htm.

[13] Patricia Lammens-Pikhaus, *Het Tafelspel bij de Rederijkers* (Ghent: Secretariaat van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1988–1989), 99. The table-play (Dutch: *tafelspel*) was a genre of plays written by Dutch and Flemish rhetoricians for a small number of actors and performed at private houses and guild halls in order to celebrate events such as baptisms and weddings.

Distribution and Functions of Paintings in Domestic Spaces

The crude vocabulary and the persistent suspicion that people who displayed their infirmities in public were faking them match the genre iconography of disability that we find in Netherlandish homes. However, before we look at examples of such works, alongside the generally more positive representation of bodily difference in religious artworks, a few comments on early modern dwellings and their decoration are necessary. The boundaries between private and public spaces in a Renaissance home were much more porous than in a modern one. In the southern Netherlands in the sixteenth-century (with which much of this section is concerned), the centre of an upper-class house was called a *neercamer* (often, we encounter both a small and a large *neercamer* in the same house). The space was used by the family both for personal use as well as to entertain guests, although in the mid-sixteenth century, a separate dining hall (*eetkamer*) began to emerge in the dwellings of the elite. The semi-private/semi-public character of the domestic space did not preclude the owner's control over who was admitted and where. Although the dual function of an entrepreneur's house as a private residence and a place where one conducted business must have necessarily meant admitting some unwelcome associates and customers into one's home, such visits could have been limited to the *voorcamer aen de straete* (*winckel*), the room which was entered directly from the street and which served as the office.[14]

Michaël Green has attributed the emergence of a new house layout in the seventeenth century—one that allowed family members greater privacy—to Simon Stevin's (1548–1620) unfinished treatise *De*

[14] On the fluidity between private and public aspects of the lives of merchants, see Thomas Max Safley, "The Paradox of Secrecy: Merchant Families, Family Firms, and the Porous Boundaries between Private and Public Business Life in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe", in *Early Modern Privacy*, 245–265. On the layout and decoration of sixteenth-century Netherlandish houses, see, among others: Maximilian P.J. Martens and Natasja Peeters, "Paintings in Antwerp Houses (1532–1567)", in *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450–1750*, ed. by Neil de Marchi and Hans J. van Miegroet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 35–53; Carolien de Staelen, "Spulletjes en hun betekenis in een commerciele metropool: Antwerpenaren en hun materiële cultuur in de zestiende eeuw" (Ph.D. diss., University of Antwerp, 2007); and, most recently, Julie De Groot, *At Home in Renaissance Bruges: Connecting Objects, People and Domestic Spaces in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022).

Huysbou.[15] However, there was an older architectural book immensely popular in sixteenth-century Antwerp that gives us an idea of how an upper-class residence (albeit a suburban one) would have been designed. In 1565, Christophe Plantin (1520–1589) published Charles Estienne's (Dutch: Kaerl Stevens, 1504–1564) Dutch paraphrase of his *L'agriculture et maison rustique*, *De Landtwinninge ende Hoeve* which proposed that the central space of a suburban villa should consist of a kitchen and a dining room connected to a basement used for storing locally grown food and wine. According to Estienne's recommendation, the residence should also include guest rooms, while the family's living quarters should be separated from those more public spaces.[16] The book became an instant bestseller which strongly suggests that Estienne's guidelines must have matched the preferences of wealthy homeowners.

Some elite early modern houses—like the famous Hof van Busleyden in Mechelen, the residence of the founder of Leuven's Collegium Trilingue, Jeroen van Busleyden (ca. 1470–1517)—had a separate *stoove*, a small room next to the dining room. The *stoove*—into which van Busleyden invited only his closest and most esteemed guests—was used for conversations rather than as a personal retreat. Its significance lies not only in the list of esteemed guests—including Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) and Thomas More (1478–1535)—who spent their time there, but also in its decoration.[17] Hof van Busleyden's *stoove* was embellished with wall paintings whose subjects combined mythological and biblical banquets (the feast of Balthazar, the feast and punishment of Tantalus), classical exempla of virtue and warnings against hubris (the Roman hero Mucius Scaevola, the fall of Phaeton), and other themes that simultaneously encouraged an atmosphere of friendly discussion as well as provided pleasant ornamental background while bolstering the social status of the host (the Muses, Venus and Diana, Busleyden's coat-of-arms). The *stoove* has been open to visitors since 2018, and although only fragments of the wall paintings have survived, it still approximates the experience of conversations that must have taken place there. The *stoove* can only be entered

[15] Green, "Spaces of Privacy".

[16] Barbara A. Kaminska, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Religious Art for the Urban Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 34–35.

[17] For the discussion of Busleyden's *stoove*, see Claudia Goldstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 20–21 and Kaminska, *Pieter Bruegel*, 48–51.

from a large and lavish dining hall, with the entrance located at its end. The spatial layout itself thus determines the temporal sequence of a dinner party. It is a small space: it would have seated perhaps a dozen guests (most likely fewer) and its size would have helped to create an ambience of intimate friendship while bringing the interlocutors in proximity with the pictorial decoration.

That the *stoove*'s decoration and conversations that took place there left a deep impression on Busleyden's guests is confirmed by Thomas More's poems praising the residence. Hof van Busleyden also served as one of the models for Erasmus's *Convivium Religiosum* (*The Godly Feast*). In the colloquy, written around 1520, guests (all married laymen) gather for a luncheon at a suburban villa. They discuss scriptural excerpts, walk in the gardens, and admire secular and religious paintings decorating the house of their host, Eusebius. Wandering through galleries above the loggias adorned with paintings of the life of Christ and typological scenes from the Old Testament, Eusebius tells his guests, "Here I stroll sometimes, conversing with myself and meditating upon that inexpressible purpose of God by which he willed to restore the human race through his Son. Sometimes my wife, or a friend pleased by sacred subjects, keeps me company".[18]

Erasmus's colloquy and the history of Busleyden's *stoove*, together with other pictorial cycles that I discuss elsewhere, register three important features of domestic decoration in sixteenth-century Netherlands.[19] First, paintings on display were anything but silent backdrops, actively stimulating the conversations of both family and guest. Second, the subject of those paintings was often biblical, encouraging an everyday engagement with religious stories as well as the cultivation of the ethos of a good Christian household. Finally, they were crucial instruments of fashioning the identity of one's family, both shaping their members' virtues and their performance before the outside world. All these factors play a role in how we should understand the representation of disabled bodies in domestic spaces.

[18] Desiderius Erasmus, "The Godly Feast", trans. by Craig Thompson, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, XXXIX (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 206.

[19] See Barbara A. Kaminska, "'That There be No Schisms Among You': Saint Paul as a Figure of Confessional Reconciliation in a Series of Paintings by Martin de Vos", *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 3:1 (2016), 99–129 and Kaminska, *Pieter Bruegel*.

The Disabled 'Other' in Netherlandish Art Placed in Domestic Space

One of the most famous painters of complex discursive images that could spark a discussion among family members and their guests—what art historians have come to call 'conversation pieces'—was Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525/30–1569). Around 1559–60, Bruegel completed three paintings identical in size and compositional approach: *Netherlandish Proverbs*, *Children's Games*, and *The Fight between Carnival and Lent*. Although there is no documentation of the patronage of these three paintings, formal similarities among them and their complementary subjects leave little doubt that they were commissioned as a set. These three busy ethnographic images, lacking a singular compositional focus and offering multiple scenes instead, engage the viewer in an open-ended, multivalent reading. They thus invite an experience akin to browsing through a commonplace book, a collection of adages, or surveying a *kunstkammer*.[20] As scholars over the past two decades have repeatedly shown, Bruegel's paintings were almost exclusively collected by wealthy Antwerp entrepreneurs, the most famous among them being the tax collector Niclaes Jonghelinck (1517–1570) and the Master of the Antwerp Mint, Jan Noirot (1530–after 1580). In the words of Amy Orrock, "Bruegel's paintings would therefore have been enjoyed communally and by invitation only".[21] They were scrutinised by members of the financial elite, people for whom the economic prosperity and social harmony of their city were of great importance.

This is an important context for the reception of *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* which concerns us here because of its inclusion of persons with physical impairments (Fig. 6.1). The setting is an urban square which strengthens its relevance for city dwellers. Among the various customs of the seasons of Lent and Carnival, we find several figures of disabled beggars and generous almsgivers, possibly moved to charity by the Lenten call to repentance. While there are no beggars in

[20] For these interpretations of Pieter Bruegel's paintings, see Mark Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 'Netherlandish Proverbs' and the Practice of Rhetoric* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2002) and Amy Orrock, "Homo Ludens: Pieter Bruegel's 'Children's Games' and the Humanist Educators", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 4:2 (2012): https://jhna.org/articles/homo-ludens-pieter-bruegels-childrens-games-humanist-educators/

[21] Orrock, "Homo Ludens".

front of the church on the right-hand side—their absence belies a stereotypical notion we find in contemporary literature—two figures receive alms from a well-dressed man at some distance from the church. We initially recognise them as blind because a dog accompanies them, but upon closer scrutiny, we realise that one of the men has no eye sockets while the other man's eyes are shut. Next to this couple is a man with missing limbs, introduced to passer-by by a woman with pilgrim's badges on her hat. This man also receives alms from one of the wealthier citizens. Finally, across from the figures with sensory and physical impairments, we find a family with a small child, likewise receiving money. Although these three small groups seem to belong to the category of the so-called 'deserving poor'—that is, people who fell into dire poverty because of some misfortune but who were honest and worthy of public assistance—the case is more complicated. The child in the lower right corner is accompanied by both parents rather than only her mother whereas, per imperial orders, such a family would not have been allowed to ask for money in the streets. Moreover, neither of the two parents appears to be disabled. Around the time when Bruegel finished this composition, Antwerp had strict regulations against begging. Unless one was a leper or a member of a mendicant order, they could not beg; transgressions would be met with corporal punishment and a short jail sentence.[22] Even more suspicious, especially in the context of the religious subject of the panel, is the woman wearing pilgrim's badges, carrying on her back a woven basket with a small child inside and pointing towards the man with a mobility impairment.

The accumulation of these motifs taps into many of the anxieties surrounding paupers in the mid-sixteenth century. First, viewers might have wondered whether the woman was a 'false pilgrim', someone who has stolen badges and has only pretended to have visited various pilgrimage sites, counting on the traditional Christian charity shown to pilgrims. Second, the small child in the basket recalls complaints in the so-called 'beggar literature' about 'lazy' parents who taught their children the beggar's trade from infancy and sometimes even kidnapped other people's children and harmed them in order to make them look more

[22] For a discussion of this legislation, see Barbara A. Kaminska, *Images of Miraculous Healing in the Early Modern Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), esp. chapter 2.

Fig. 6.1 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Fight between Carnival and Lent*, 1559, oil on panel, 118 × 163.7 cm. Courtesy: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

pitiful.[23] Finally, there is the disabled man on the ground. His impairment seems genuine as he presents his legs and left arm to passers-by. On the one hand, this ostentatious presentation of the missing limbs proactively precludes any suspicion that the man feigns his disability; on the other hand (as I shall discuss later), it echoes the frequent complaints about repulsive beggars presenting their sores and impairments in public spaces contained in sixteenth-century Netherlandish literature and city ordinances.

Antwerp, for whose burghers Bruegel painted, was a city of stark contrasts where exorbitantly wealthy entrepreneurs lived side by side with populations impoverished due to the rapid urbanisation, rising prices, and new taxes. The city also attracted so-called hired hands—that is,

[23] For a discussion of such stereotypes, see Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 60–62.

tradesmen who were not guild members and therefore could not rely on the support provided by guilds in the time of illness or impairment. At the same time, public spectacles, prognostications, vernacular poetry, and sermons repeatedly reminded Antwerp citizens about the necessity of showing charity to those in need. The original viewers of *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* would have been the primary addressees of this message, and the equivocal nature of the almsgiving scenes in Bruegel's painting would have invited them to discuss the nature and limits of charity. The placement of all the almsgivers in relative proximity to the church also raises questions about their motives: are they concerned about their community or their own salvation? Bruegel seems to be suggesting the latter to be true. To the left, in the middle ground and far from the church, we find six men with mobility impairments, four of whom strongly resemble the group portrayed in Bruegel's painting of *The Beggars* (1568), now in the Louvre Museum (Fig. 6.2). These men are wholly abandoned and no one pays any attention to them, a fact which strengthens the idea that the right-hand-side almsgivers are primarily motivated by the promise of heavenly reward and their charitable behaviour is a part of the Catholic apparatus of seasonal repentance. In contrast, in the world of Carnival pleasures, no one is concerned with the fate of those living on the fringes of society. These two portrayals of people with disabilities provide two alternative answers to the question about the role of charity in sixteenth-century society. In doing so, Bruegel replicates the strategy of vernacular theatrical plays written and performed by rhetoricians (amateur poetry and theatrical organisations) which typically posed a question at the beginning of the play and presented multiple answers to ultimately reveal the 'correct' solution at the end.[24] Here, viewers need to come to their own conclusions by looking at the painting and discussing it with their company. The open-endedness of Bruegel's compositions was what drew elite viewers to them and enabled an experience summarised by Michel de Montaigne's (1533–1592) dictum that "[t]here is no conversation more boring than the one where everybody agrees".[25]

[24] See, for instance, Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel*.

[25] Todd Richardson, Pi*eter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 69.

Fig. 6.2 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Beggars*, 1568, oil on panel, 18.5 × 21.5 cm. Scala/Art Resource, NY

To better understand how a conversation sparked by *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* might have looked, it will be helpful to pair this panel with another image. *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* shares the quality of a visual collection with the print published in Antwerp around 1570 by Hieronymus Cock (1518–1570), known as *Cripples* or *The Crippled Bishop* (Fig. 6.3). The engraving has been associated with two drawings—one in the Albertina, Vienna and one in the Royal Library in Brussels.[26] Each completed by a different artist, the drawings present a more detailed depiction of various mobility and visual impairments than

[26] Although the drawing in Brussels bears the signature of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the print indicates that Hieronymus Bosch was the author of its composition, art historians have rejected these attributions as apocryphal.

the print. As confirmed by the small circles made with a dark crayon above many of the figures, the drawings were used as pattern sheets, providing painters with examples of disabled figures for their images.[27] In a crucial departure from the two drawings, Cock added to the print the following verses: "All who would gladly live by the blue beggar's sack/Go mostly as cripples". In Netherlandish popular culture, blue was the colour of deceit. The inscription verbalises the common sentiment that beggars with visible impairments were lazy cheats, faking their impairment to extort alms from wealthy burghers and avoiding making a living through honest labour. Cock's print had a much broader viewership than Bruegel's paintings and its copies were owned by non-elite, 'middle-class' viewers.

How, then, would these viewers have approached this collection of figures suspended in the void of the white sheet? The print can be ascribed a cognitive and didactic value. It is a symptom of the sixteenth-century culture of collecting, marked by a compulsive need to bring various "'things' of the world" together.[28] Scientific and cultural artefacts, natural marvels, and other specimens instilled wonder and an array of different emotions in their viewers—from curiosity through awe to fear and disgust. By transporting several beggars displaying their impairments from the street on to paper, Cock amplified the revulsion associated with 'abject' paupers while allowing his viewers to see them in a somewhat sterile manner, without the need for an immediate reaction. Disabled paupers occupying public spaces had been described as *abiectus* since the late Middle Ages,[29] and Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540) considered their presence disturbing enough to propose in his *On Assistance to the Poor* (*De Subventione Pauperum*, 1526) several solutions to removing them from the streets. Such actions, Vives asserts, would make it "safer, healthier, and pleasanter to attend churches and to dwell in the city. The hideousness of ulcers and diseases will no longer be imposed on the general viewing, eliminating a spectacle revolting to nature and even

[27] Erwin Pokorny, "Bosch's Cripples and Drawings by His Imitators", *Master Drawings* 41:3 (2003), 297.

[28] Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel*, 64.

[29] See, for instance, Irina Metzler, "Indiscriminate Healing Miracles in Decline: How Social Realities Affect Religious Perception", in *Contextualizing Miracles in the Christian West, 1100–1500*, ed. by Matthew M. Mesley and Louise E. Wilson (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2014), 169–170.

Fig. 6.3 Anonymous after a follower of Hieronymus Bosch, *Cripples*, ca. 1570, engraving, 30.3 × 21.9 cm. Courtesy: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

to the most humane and compassionate mind".[30] Incidentally, Vives' proposals are almost identical with the so-called 'ugly laws' that were in place in many American cities between 1867 and 1974 and which banned physically disabled people from public spaces. Viewers of Cock's print would have experienced disgust and fear, but their reactions would not have stopped there. Early modern collections were always meant to have a pragmatic function and produce new knowledge, especially knowledge that worked in the service of the community's good. Can we imagine an owner pondering over this print or drawing, trying to identify whose impairment was genuine and whose was feigned, which one was a result of immoral, dissolute life, and which of innocent, inescapable misfortune? The image distils a contemporary paradox surrounding beggars: to be considered deserving of charity, paupers needed to display their impaired or diseased bodies, but these, in turn, made them abject.

Although we have to rely on circumstantial evidence for much of our reconstruction of private conversations on disability, in one case, we know precisely how a Renaissance viewer reacted to one of Bruegel's paintings. An early owner of Bruegel's *Beggars* attached a note in Latin to the reverse of the painting: "Here Nature, transformed in painted images and seen in her cripples, is amazed to see that Bruegel is her peer". The response is striking: it focuses on the artistic qualities of the composition—more specifically, on the classical *topos* of art as imitation of nature. With inimitable virtuosity, Bruegel achieved the most important goal of visual art and deceived nature in such a way that his creative powers equalled hers. As a result, Bruegel's disabled protagonists become a token within humanist art theory, and the owner's learned response exposes an existential social gap between him and the figures depicted in his work. However, the commentary also recognises mobility impairment as "natural" ("Nature … seen in her cripples"): on the one hand, such an assessment helps to reject the then-commonplace notion of disability as divine retribution, but on the other, there is a suggestion here that physical, visible impairment is a deformation and a deviation from the normative body. A disabled body is a form of an abject curiosity and, as such, is a fascinating subject for an innovative artist such as Pieter Bruegel.

Indeed, at a time when the medical and civic vocabulary of disability was vague, crude, and discriminatory, artists such as Bruegel created

[30] Juan Luis Vives, *On Assistance to the Poor*, trans. Alice Tobriner (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 55.

convincing naturalistic portrayals of sensory and mobility impairments. This is particularly true of another late painting by the artist, *The Parable of the Blind* (1568). The subject would have been well-known to mid-sixteenth-century Netherlandish viewers, with numerous engravings portraying this parable. Although first documented as part of the collection of Giambattista Masi of Parma (ca. 1575–1611), requisitioned in 1611 by Ranuccio Farnese (1569–1622), *The Parable of the Blind* was likely painted for a Netherlandish patron, perhaps for a suburban villa outside Brussels, the city in which Bruegel lived at the time.[31] Christ's words on which the composition is based—"Let them alone: they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit" (Matthew 15:14. See also: Luke 6:39)—is a metaphor for blindness caused by self-righteousness and false confidence.[32] However, as Walter Gibson has argued, Bruegel's extremely detailed portrayal of ophthalmological conditions transcends the didacticism of the biblical parable.[33] Bruegel's painting offers its viewers a captivating paradox by inviting them to scrutinise the very detailed depiction of various conditions that cause blindness—that is, conditions that would prevent such scrutiny. The image thus re-creates the dynamic between the non-disabled sixteenth-century burghers who would have been its primary viewers and the impoverished, vagrant blind men it depicts. This act of recognising their privilege would have engaged the empathy of the original viewers and perhaps would have served as the ultimate call to charity. The six blind men wander through the countryside, away from the village in the background. In mid-sixteenth-century Netherlandish literature, wealthy, industrious burghers sometimes entertained the fantasy of carefree life.

[31] Angela Cerasuolo, "The Parable of the Blind and The Misanthrope: Glue-Tempera Technique in Bruegel's Canvases in Capodimonte", in *Bruegel: The Hand of the Master: Essays in Context*, ed. by Alice Hoppe-Harnoncourt, Elke Oberthaler, Sabine Pénot, Manfred Sellink, and Ron Spronk (Veurne: Uitgeverij Kannibaal, 2020), 65, and Jamie Lee Edwards, "Still Looking for Pieter Bruegel the Elder" (MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), 60, no. 379. Now in Naples, both of Bruegel's paintings were presumably acquired by Giambatista's father, Cosimo Masi when he lived in the Low Countries as the secretary to Alessandro Farnese, the governor of Flanders. Masi lived in the Netherlands for a total of twenty-three years between 1571 and 1594, having remained there for two more years after the death of Alessandro.

[32] Richardson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 155.

[33] Walter S. Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 62.

In the *Beggar Talk* (*Ptochología*, 1524), Erasmus likewise projects such a fantasy by having one of the mendicants explain that theirs is the best kind of life since no one investigates them and they are completely free.[34] Not surprisingly, the departure of the painting's protagonists from the village together with the church towering over the landscape between the second and the third man have often been interpreted as an embodiment of this fantasy: a rejection of the true faith and the constraints of an orderly society. However, with its uncanny naturalism, *The Parable of the Blind* is in fact a depiction of sixteenth-century reality in which there were few institutions to support persons with chronic illness and disability. Rather than encouraging the fantasy of a carefree life, Bruegel's painting exposes elite viewers to the reality of the lives of disabled and impoverished persons.

Early modern artists were, of course, primarily concerned with the marketability of their works and meeting patrons' expectations rather than social justice and the "repression of outcasts".[35] Nonetheless, it was in the sixteenth century that the presence of disabled beggars was first approached as a social concern rather than a religious consideration. It was also at that time that vernacular theatrical plays, poems, and prognostications performed and published in the urban centres of northern Europe began to stress the importance of charity as social virtue essential for the well-being of the community.[36] Bruegel's interest in disabled paupers in *The Parable of the Blind* and *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* suggests the necessity for a transition towards this new understanding of charity as a pragmatic social virtue whose cultivation benefits the entire community.

[34] Desiderius Erasmus, *Beggar Talk*, trans. Craig Thompson, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, vol. 40 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 567.

[35] Tom Nichols, *The Art of Poverty: Irony and Ideal in Sixteenth-Century Beggar Imagery* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 238.

[36] See, for instance, Ethan Matt Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Kaminska, *Pieter Bruegel*.

Impaired Family Members in Early Modern Households

Inspired by a well-known biblical passage, Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Parable of the Blind* crossed boundaries between genre and religious iconography. However, the most common context for early modern depictions of people with disabilities were images of miraculous healing based on New Testament stories.[37] These paintings and prints presented idealised visions of impaired supplicants seeking deliverance from their suffering—a deliverance that would not only remove the impairment and restore health to their bodies but also enable their full participation in the social and religious lives of their communities. In other words, images of miraculous healing capture both the deliverance from a bodily 'defect' and from social marginalisation. In contrast to what we may expect, those paintings were typically displayed in private houses rather than hospitals or alms-houses, and in the rare cases in which we find such images in the inventories of charity institutions, they were hung in spaces intended for their regents rather than the inmates. The preferred location of images of miraculous healing can be explained by the patterns of care in the early modern period: a reasonably well-to-do person would never seek treatment at a hospital, nor would a hospital admit a person with a chronic disease or impairment. Thus, it would have been common for families to care for a frail or an impaired relative, and such biblical imagery provided them with models of compassionate behaviour. It should be noted here that while compassion is now commonly associated with condescending pity within the context of disability, to apply this definition to early modern societies would be misguided. Compassion and charity were understood as actionable virtues that required one to assist those in need and—in the context of sixteenth-century households—encouraged the kind of caregiving and intimate concern that we may recognise as familiar.[38]

[37] For a survey of these images, see Kaminska, *Images of Miraculous Healing*.

[38] In her 2020 memoir, Rebekah Taussig proposes a productive distinction between "self-serving kindness that seeks to fuel an ego, a kindness interested in claiming the heroic role in the story" and genuine and active kindness that empowers disabled people through their active participation in society. See Rebekah Taussig, *Sitting Pretty: The View from My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body* (New York: Harper Collins, 2020), 182–183, 197. While this distinction cannot be easily applied to early modern experiences of disability, we could propose the following equivalent: compassion fuelled by the economy

Much like today, as their primary caregivers, parents of children with mobility and sensory impairments were worried about their children's day-to-day life, especially in the event of their death. The mother of Hendrick Avercamp (1585–1634), a deaf Dutch painter best known for his winter landscapes, requested that her son should be permitted an annual allowance that would be paid by herself since he could not live off the portion of her estate. His mother worried that if he was not provided with such an allowance, he would "become a burden to others".[39] For middle-class (such as merchant) and elite families, physical and mental afflictions posed further challenges, since conditions such as congenital deafness precluded early modern men from inheriting the estate (the likely reason behind Avercamp's mother's petition) and impeded their participation in family business.

Parents also expressed concern about their children's suffering, even acknowledging that their search for a cure might have contributed to it. This experience transcended chronological and geographical boundaries and has been commented upon by parents and children alike. In 1564, the German merchant and Nuremberg council member, Endres Imhoff (1491–1579) remarked on the death of his 31-year-old disabled son: "He did not live through many healthy days, was in great pain and did suffer much, especially due to the many cures we tried on him",[40] and the sixteenth-century deaf shoemaker Sebastian Fischer (1513–?) complained in his diary about painful therapies on which his family insisted and which only worsened his hearing.[41] Over 500 years later, Jaipreet Virdi, who lost her hearing at the age of four after a severe case of meningitis that was diagnosed too late, commented on her family's efforts to find a cure for her deafness as painful, isolating, and incomprehensible at her

of salvation which saw it as a good deed versus compassionate acknowledgement that people with various impairments form the fabric of the same community.

[39] Jonathan Bikker, "Hendrick Avercamp: 'The Mute of Kampen'", in *Hendrick Avercamp: Master of the Ice Scene*, ed. by Pieter Roelofs (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2010), 12.

[40] Frohne and Horn, "On the Fluidity", 34.

[41] Frohne and Horn, "On the Fluidity", 37–38. On Fischer, see also Philip Hahn, "The Emperor's Boot, or: Perceiving Public Rituals in the Urban Reformation", in *German History* 35:3 (2017), 362–380.

young age.[42] Such responses to disability and chronic disease are aptly summarised in the title of Liz Moore's essay "I'm Tired of Chasing a Cure".[43]

Early modern parents were also worried about their children's salvation. Sight and hearing were defined as instrumental senses for one's faith by the Catholic and Protestant Churches, respectively. Congenitally deaf children were for a long time considered beyond salvation, something which must have been a heavy burden for their parents. In the late 1680s, Johann Conrad Amman (1669–1724), a Swiss doctor who worked in Amsterdam and studied in Leiden, was hired as a teacher to a prelingually deaf girl, Esther Koolaert (ca. 1684–1737). When Amman published a treatise entitled *The Talking Deaf Man* (*Surdus Loquens*) in 1692 in which he explained his didactic methods, he underlined that Esther could not only converse with others but also gained access to faith and salvation.[44] Concerns about deaf persons' redemption and the ensuing social stigma were also proactively countered in family chronicles. A seventeenth-century portrait painter active in Friesland and Groningen, Jan Jansz de Stomme ("the Mute"; 1615–1658) was said to have discussed sophisticated theological problems with his wife and a servant using sign language.[45] While this assertion may at first strike us as apocryphal, given that a formalised, complex sign language did not exist yet in the Dutch Republic, it likely contains a grain of truth, since seventeenth-century authors such as Michel de Montaigne observed that "[o]ur mutes dispute, argue, and tell stories by signs. I have seen some so supple and versed in this, that in truth they lacked nothing of perfection in being able to make themselves understood".[46] Physical blindness, besides precluding one from partaking in iconic devotions of the Roman Catholic

[42] Jaipreet Virdi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History* (Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 3–4.

[43] Liz Moore, "I'm Tired of Chasing a Cure", in *Disability Visibility*, 75–81.

[44] Ruben Verwaal, "Een nieuwe blik op doofheid", https://rubenverwaal.com/index.php/node/93.

[45] Rudi Ekkart, *Deaf, Dumb & Brilliant: Johannes Thopas, Master Draughtsman* (London: Paul Holberton, 2014), 15.

[46] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Silent poetry: Deafness, Sign, and Visual Culture in Modern France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 16.

Church, could have been interpreted as a metaphor for spiritual blindness.[47] The Judaeo-Christian tradition of linking disease and disability to sin meant that a child's impairment was a matter of the whole family's salvation and social status.[48]

Parental sociomedical and religious responses to their child's condition differed considerably. In medieval and early modern Spain, where congenital deafness—a hereditary condition—was common among aristocratic families, deaf children were placed in convents, away from the prying public eye but also amidst a community that provided physical and spiritual assistance.[49] Parents could also take the child to a wonder-working shrine[50] or secure more immediate means of enabling not only their child's comfort but also his or her salvation. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, a couple from Mechelen, Jacob Van den Putte and Margaretha Svos, commissioned a *besloten hofje* (an enclosed garden), a type of multimedia altarpiece that also included a depiction of the spouses and their visually impaired daughter, the Augustinian nun Maria Van den Putte. As Andrea Pearson has compellingly argued, the *besloten hofje* was linked to the parent's donation to the Order that accepted their daughter even though she could not participate in the caregiving duties of the sisters in the hospital (*gasthuis*) which they oversaw. It was also, Pearson elaborates, an object that—thanks to its multisensory design—facilitated

[47] For different interpretations of the relationship between the senses and faith, see, among others, Susan Plann, *A Silent Minority: Deaf Education in Spain, 1550–1835* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1997); Andrea Pearsonv, "Sensory Piety as Social Intervention in a Mechelen Besloten Hofje", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 9:2 (2017), https://jhna.org/articles/sensory-piety-social-intervention-mechelen-besloten-hofje; Anna Kvicalova, "Hearing Difference in Calvin's Geneva: from Margins to Center", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 49:1 (2018), 25–47 and Kaminska, *Images of Miraculous Healing*.

[48] This connection has remained very powerful for centuries, even though the Gospel of John clearly rebuts it, noting how when the disciples asked Christ about a man born blind, "Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Christ answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:2–3).

[49] Plann, *Silent Minority*, esp. chapter 1.

[50] See, for instance, Jenni Kuuliala, *Childhood Disability and Social Integration in the Middle Ages: Constructions of Impairments in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Canonization Processes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

Maria's devotional experience.[51] *Hofjes* consisted of intricate floral decorations made from paper, silk, and wire and included relics—the ultimate healing instruments of the Catholic Church. The *hofje* stimulated a tactile devotion that compensated for Maria's lack of visual access to the Catholic devotional apparatus. At the same time, the depiction of Maria and her parents on the wings presented them as "ideal supplicants". Jacob and Margaretha were introduced as offering a "charitable spiritual provision" on behalf of their daughter, and Maria was shown "as a spiritually abled if not a visually abled member of the hospital community, one who is deserving of profession and redemption".[52]

Maria Van den Putte's case in particular shows that if parents strove for the impaired child's removal from the public eye and restricted social integration, it was because an impaired child put the entire family at the risk of marginalisation. Such efforts also indicate that while it would have been common for early modern families to care for a disabled or chronically ill relative, the prevalence of such care did not remove the stigmatising connection between sin and disease. The opportunity to conceal one's impairment, or an impairment of a family member, was a social and a religious—even a salvific—privilege. Images of the disabled 'Other' displayed in the domestic space bolstered this agenda: they served to distinguish impaired and possibly dishonest paupers encountered in the streets from middle-and upper-class persons with disabilities. Genre paintings, prints, books, and plays surveyed earlier in this chapter brought the experience from the public space of Netherlandish cities into a private, controlled setting, facilitating a conversation that framed disability (and poverty) as a communal challenge and detached it from the experience of well-to-do disabled persons and their guardians who looked at stories of miraculous healing as models of compassion.

How We Talk About Disability: Ableist Language Then and Now

Early modern societies—not unlike our own—cultivated a bifurcated view of disability in which anonymous disabled paupers encountered in the streets engendered hostility and disgust, while a loved one's impairment

[51] Pearson, "Sensory Piety".

[52] Pearson, "Sensory Piety".

precipitated the concern for his or her well-being, salvation, and cure. Renaissance houses, with their porous boundaries between the private and the public spheres, functioned as primary spaces in which societies negotiated their understanding of disability through its textual and visual representations. However, except for rare cases (such as Imhoff's and Fischer's stories, which did not circulate broadly), it was an abstracted version of disability constructed by non-disabled people. In contrast to first-person twenty-first-century narratives, they tell us little about the actual experience of disability and did not present relatable models for people who lived with them. At most, images of biblical healing miracles would have provided people with disabilities with idealised—and unattainable—examples of piety that made one worthy of healing.[53]

However, at least one aspect of these early modern representations of disability and conversations perpetuated by them provides an important insight into our own conversations about bodily difference. While reading *The Book of Vagabonds* and looking at *The Crippled Bishop*, we immediately and instinctively identify the discrimination and contempt at the centre of these works and reflexively try to sanitise their language and the language that has been used to discuss them for centuries. We cringe when Erasmus of Rotterdam uses in his colloquies sayings such as "You're no different than a crippled cobbler, forever sitting at home" and when he describes one of the protagonists of *Patterns of Informal Conversations* as "[a] chatterbox. A bit deaf but by no means dumb".[54] However, in our quest to anachronistically sanitise and ultimately erase the vocabulary of early modern disability, we risk overlooking that our own manner of everyday speech reflects centuries-old prejudices. The often seemingly innocuous ways in which we employ various words and sayings grounded in language around disability have continued to foster marginalisation of persons with disabilities and erase the lived experience of disability. Many languages have preserved the suspicion towards persons with mobility impairments in common proverbs. In German, Polish, Italian, and Czech,

[53] On this topic, see Edward Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 184, and Kaminska, *Images of Miraculous Healing*, 241–246.

[54] Desiderius Erasmus, "Patterns of Informal Conversation", trans. Craig Thompson, in *Collected Works of Erasmus. Colloquies*, XXXIX (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 19–20. For early modern English examples of similar proverbs and metaphors, see Emily Cockayne, "Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England", *The Historical Journal* 46:3 (2003), 494–495.

to name just a few, one often says that 'lies have short legs' ('*Lügen haben kurze Beine*', '*Kłamstwo ma krótkie nogi*', '*Le bugie hanno le gambe corte*', and '*Lež má krátké nohy*'), with an even more derogatory variation in Spanish: '*la mentira tiene cortas patas*' (*patas* describes the legs of animals or inanimate objects, as opposed to *piernas*, which describes human legs.) Similarly, the English proverb 'he hasn't got a leg to stand on' indicates how the truth or evidence does not support one's position; in fact, the proverb is usually abbreviated into the adverb 'legless', synonymous with 'baseless'. Dutch has a proverb '*de leugen gaat op krukken*', which literally means 'lies walk on crutches', where *kruk* can mean both a 'crutch' and a 'crook'. In Italian, instead of saying 'birds of a feather flock together', one says '*chi va con lo zoppo impara a zoppicare*', that is, 'those who go with the lame learn to limp', which captures the common late medieval and early modern notion that beggars would often form dangerous groups. It also corresponds to the stereotype that feigning a mobility impairment is a trade which lazy vagabond parents teach their children. In the light of these examples, one of the valuable lessons that we can learn from early modern conversations on disability is to become more conscientious and informed about our own word choices, beyond the obviously problematic and ableist terms such as 'lame', 'cripple', and 'deaf and dumb'. While acknowledging the impact that biases around disability have had on our language systems cannot replace systemic social changes, it is a good place from which to start our reconceptualisation of disability in the public and private spheres.

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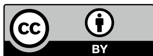

CHAPTER 7

"So that I Never Fail to Warn and Admonish": Pastoral Care and Private Conversation in a Seventeenth-century Reformed Village

Markus Bardenheuer

On 20 October 1631, the village of Brütten was left in shock by the suicide of the local schoolmaster, Lienhart Weber. The village pastor, Hans Rudolf Fischer (1601–85), in particular, was stunned to hear that Weber—a man he held for a pious Christian—had been drawn to kill himself. After the villagers had burned the schoolmaster's body, the pastor began to inquire among his parishioners, seeking explanations for Weber's tragic fate.[1] Much of what he was told was the kind of slander bound to

[1] Staatsarchiv Zurich TAI 1.562, ERKGA Brütten IV A 1 a, Teil 1, S. I-VIII, 1631: Titel und Vorrede: "Uff fleißiges erkundigen unnd erforschen hab ich volgende sachen von imm vernommen unnd erfahren, die mir aber gantz unbewust unnd unbekant gsein sind". Fischer's records, along with those from other seventeenth-century parishes in the domain

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surface about a man who had disgraced himself in the eyes of his community by the manner of his death. The dead schoolmaster's best friend told Fischer that Weber had been "lewd and obscene in his speech like no one else" and had been chasing after the young girls of the village.[2] Two village officials even suggested that Weber had been secretly involved in Anabaptist circles and implied that he had engaged in bestiality. However, the statement of Weber's wife was disconcerting to the pastor in a wholly different way. Her husband, the woman told Fischer, had long been seen as a loner and oddball among the villagers and had increasingly withdrawn himself, praying alone and haunting the forest where he eventually killed himself.[3] Completely unbeknownst to Fischer, Weber appeared to have suffered from a deep and long-lasting crisis in both his social life and in his faith.[4] About any of this, Fischer confided to his notes, he had been "wholly unaware and unknowing", despite the relatively small size of his parish—only around two hundred parishioners lived in the village and surrounding hamlets—and despite having had a long and pleasant conversation with Lienhart Weber merely a few days before his death.[5]

of the city-state of Zurich, have been transcribed and published digitally by the Staatsarchiv Zurich. See https://www.archives-quickaccess.ch/search/stazh/stpzh, accessed 2 February 2022. Fischer's records can be accessed at https://suche.staatsarchiv.djiktzh.ch/detail.aspx?ID=660736, accessed 2 February 2022. Fischer's notes, as I will explain below, are subdivided into two different bundles called "Acta Brüttensia Publica" and "Acta Brüttensia Privata". In the following discussion, I will refer to the "Acta Publica" as AbPu and to the "Acta Privata" as AbPr.

[2] ABPu Vorrede und Titel: "In reden unnd wortten über die maßen unfletig unnd unzüchtig gsein sein, das man kum seins glichen funden".

[3] On suicide and dishonour, see David Lederer, "The Dishonorable Dead: Perceptions of Suicide in Early Modern Germany", in *Ehrkonzepte in der frühen Neuzeit. Identitäten und Abgrenzungen*, ed. by Sibylle Backmann et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 349–365.

[4] Staatsarchiv Zurich TAI 1.562, ERKGA Brütten IV A 1 a, Teil 1, S. I-VIII, 1631: Titel und Vorrede, pp. 1–7. Fischer's records, along with those from other seventeenth-century parishes in the domain of the city-state of Zurich, have been transcribed and published digitally by the Staatsarchiv Zurich, https://www.archives-quickaccess.ch/search/stazh/stpzh, accessed 2 January 2022. Fischer's records can be accessed at https://suche.staatsarchiv.djiktzh.ch/detail.aspx?ID=660736, accessed 2 January 2022. Fischer's notes, as I will explain below, are subdivided into two parts. In the following, I will refer to the "Acta Publica" as AbPu, and to the "Acta Privata" as AbPr.

[5] ABPu, Titel und Vorrede: "Uff fleißiges erkundigen unnd erforschen hab ich volgende sachen von imm vernommen unnd erfahren, die mir aber gantz unbewust unnd unbekant gsein sind".

Pastor Fischer's investigations among his parishioners reveal much of his ignorance of the most mundane realities of life in his community—an impression frequently reiterated in scholarship on early modern rural pastors. The relation between Protestant pastors and their rural parishioners, historians have argued, was largely characterised by mutual incomprehension, if not outright hostility, with some even claiming that the end of the sixteenth century witnessed a new wave of anticlericalism rising up across Protestant Europe.[6] While such a grim view has been countered with examples of a lively culture of dialogue, adaptation, and compromise between pastors and villagers, pastors certainly did struggle with the task of reconciling a host of different—and sometimes contradicting—demands: from religious authorities' calls for order and confessional adherence, to their parishioners' desire for spiritual services and advocacy for their concerns, to their own need for self- and familial sustenance.[7] How did this complex blend of demands impact the pastor's relationships with his parishioners? How did it impact his life and work in the village?

The records of pastor Hans Rudolf Fischer offer a fresh perspective on the dynamics of pastoral care in early modern rural Europe. After the death of Lienhart Weber, Fischer began to chronicle a large part of his daily interactions and conversations with the members of his parish.[8]

[6] James Goodale, "Pfarrer als Aussenseiter. Landpfarrer und religiöses Leben in Sachsen zur Reformationszeit", *Historische Anthropologie* 7:2 (1999), 191–211; James Goodale, "Pastors, Privation, and the Process of Reformation in Saxony", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33:1 (2002), 71–92; Robert W. Scribner, "Wie wird man Aussenseiter? Ein- und Ausgrenzung im frühneuzeitlichen Deutschland", in *Aussenseiter zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. by Norbert Fischer and Marion Kobelt-Groch (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 21–46; Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Neoclericalism and Anticlericalism in Saxony, 1555–1675", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 24:4 (1994), 615–637.

[7] Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550–1750* (London–New York: Routledge 1989); Bruce Tolley, *Pastors and Parishioners in Württemberg during the Late Reformation, 1581–1621* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Scott C. Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). On Catholic clericalism and anti-clericalism, see Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[8] ABPu 1631 Titel und Vorrede, 1. See also Nicole Zellweger, "Wächter der Seele und Hüter des Gesetzes. Zürcher Pfarrer als Seelsorger", in *Gelebte Reformation. Zürich 1500–1800*, ed. by Francisca Loetz (Zürich: TVZ, 2022), 410–432.

Beginning in late 1631 and ending a decade later in 1641, Fischer chronicled his life and work in brief but succinct monthly entries, offering a unique insight into early modern parish life. Largely, historians have approached the early modern parish with the help of visitation reports and—for Reformed territories—consistory protocols. Available over long stretches of the early modern period for a host of Lutheran, Reformed, and some Catholic territories, such records have enabled scholars to reconstruct post-Reformation pastor-parishioner relations to remarkably complex degrees.[9] At the same time, a narrow reliance on visitation and consistory records threatens to exaggerate the significance of institutional and disciplinary encounters between pastors and parishioners at the expense of informal modes of interaction.[10] As Judith Pollmann has argued, using personal diaries, journals, and chronicles alongside visitation and consistory protocols offers a more encompassing view of the activities of local church representatives, providing valuable insight into the variety and importance of their daily, informal encounters with parishioners.[11]

Specifically, Hans Rudolf Fischer's notes enable an exploration of the various negotiations between pastors and parishioners taking place through private conversation. Talking in private, this chapter argues, was

[9] Research on visitations and consistories goes back decades and is consequently vast. For an overview of first-wave research, see the contributions in Ernst Walter Zeeden and Peter Thaddäus Lang, eds., *Kirche und Visitation. Beiträge zur Erforschung des frühneuzeitlichen Visitationswesens in Europa* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984). For an extended discussion of newer research, see Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation*, as well as the overview by Päivi Räisanen-Schröder, "Improving the Christian Community: Agents and Objects of Control in Early Modern Church Visitations", in *Morality, Crime and Social Control in Europe 1500–1900*, ed. by Olli Matikainen and Satu Lidman (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2014), 127–156. For the Swiss Confederacy, see esp. Heinrich R. Schmidt, *Dorf und Religion. Reformierte Sittenzucht in Berner Landgemeinden der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich–Vienna: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 1995). For Zurich, see Hans Ulrich Bächtold, *Heinrich Bullinger vor dem Rat. Zur Gestaltung und Verwaltung des Zürcher Staatswesens in den Jahren 1531 bis 1575* (Bern: Lang, 1982). For the history of the Zurich consistories, see Daniel Pünter, "Der Stillstand als gemeindliche Verwaltungsbehörde und Wächter über Sitte und Moral", in *Memorial und Stäfner Handel 1794/1795*, ed. by Christoph Mörgeli (Stäfa: Gemeinde Lesegesellschaft, 1995).

[10] On consistories, see esp. Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2002); Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

[11] Judith Pollmann, "Off the Record: Problems in the Quantification of Calvinist Church Discipline", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 33:2 (2002), 423–438.

a crucial tool within the repertoire of pastoral care in the early modern village. It was essential to the pastor's role as guardian of souls since private talk allowed Fischer to discreetly identify and address concerns which touched on such sensitive matters as honour, reputation, and social status. Furthermore, talking in private was key to fulfilling his duties as guardian of laws and morals and head of Brütten's consistory. The consistory required active participation of its lay members to function as the central institution for moral oversight in the parish. However, local hierarchies and dynamics often prevented it from working in this way.[12] Private appeals, in turn, allowed the pastor to address and negotiate the collective handling of issues which the consistory and village community were divided on.

Hans Rudolf Fischer's record-keeping was situated within greater trends towards increased regulation of rural religious culture within the Zurich Reformed Church. In 1628, the Zurich synod replaced the disparate set of rules and regulations which had accumulated over the previous century with a comprehensive framework for rural church life.[13] In the first place, these regulations contained a detailed catalogue of pastoral responsibilities. The pastor was to preach the word of God, administer the sacraments, oversee the local school, and visit the sick. He was also to act as guardian of divine law and "admonish every day and night, seeking in particular and by all means that his teaching bears fruit and that it is followed obediently by all people".[14] Matthew

[12] On the discussion on state-centric versus community-centric approaches to social disciplining, see Heinrich Richard Schmidt, "Sozialdisziplinierung? Ein Plädoyer für das Ende des Etatismus in der Konfessionalisierungsforschung", *Historische Zeitschrift*, 265 (1997), 639–682 and Schmidt, *Dorf und Religion*.

[13] Ordnung der Dieneren der Kilchen in der Statt unnd uff der Landschafft Zürich, ernüweret und inn Truck verfertiget, [Zurich] 1628, ZB Zurich, https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-9896, accessed 2 January 2022. See also *Zürcher Kirchenordnungen 1520–1675* (Zurich: TVZ, 2011), ed. by Emidio Campi and Philipp Wälchli, 672–692; Bruce Gordon, *Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation: The Synod in Zurich, 1532–1580* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992); and Wilhelm Baltischweiler, *Die Institutionen der evangelisch-reformierten Landeskirche des Kantons Zürich* (Ph.D. diss., University of Zurich, 1904).

[14] Ordnung der Dieneren der Kilchen in der Statt unnd uff der Landschafft Zürich, ernüweret und inn Truck verfertiget, 23: "einen jetlichen tag unnd nacht ermanen/ besonder/und in allweg trachten/daß syn lehr ihr frucht trage/unnd derselben von allem volck gehorsamlich gevolget werde".

18:15–17 provided the foremost model for pursuing this latter task.[15] First, the pastor was to reprimand offenders “fatherly, friendly, virtuously, diligently, earnestly” in person and, where this was impossible or unsuccessful, the pastor was to ask a relative or friend of the offender for assistance.[16] If all these measures had failed, the pastor was supposed to turn to the parish consistory. The synod’s directive from 1628 specified that once a month, parish elders, officials, and the so-called *Ehegaumer* (literally, “moral guardians”) were to meet with the pastor after church service. This so-called *Stillstand* (for the fact that its members “stood still” while the other parishioners left the church) was to discuss moral transgressions, reproach offenders, and, if necessary, report delinquents to higher authorities. In another mandate from 1636, the synod further required pastors to keep written protocols of these *Stillstand* sessions.[17] Although these measures were adopted only slowly and reluctantly in many places, a growing number of parishes introduced consistories and kept written records of their sessions in the course of the following years.

Situated within these larger transformations in seventeenth-century Zurich Reformed culture, Fischer’s turn to writing also arose out of a state of deep personal and communal crisis. Fischer had already served the parish for five years at the time of the schoolmaster’s suicide. Before this incident, the pastor explained in one of his earliest entries, he had considered it unnecessary to keep a record: “I and the sworn jurors decided all occurring incidents in such a way that we could hope to have given our best, followed the laws of our gracious lords, and defeated evil and planted good”.[18] Lienhart Weber’s death robbed him of this confidence.

[15] On the biblical foundation of church discipline, see Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 184, 188–189.

[16] Ordnung der Dieneren der Kilchen in der Statt unnd uff der Landschafft Zürich, 1628, 24: “die fählbaren personen zum ersten verwarnet/un vom unrechten abzustahn/vätterlich/fründtlich/tugenlich/yferig/ernstlich/allwegen nach gstalt der sachen gmanet werden söllend”.

[17] Hedwig Strehler, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Zürcher Landschaft. Kirche und Schule im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Lachen: Buchdruckerei Gutenberg, 1934), 42. Fischer attested this change to a high-profile trial against a peasant suspected of magical healing practices. See ABPu April 1636.

[18] ABPu 1631 Titel und Vorrede: “Schrifftliche verzeichnus unnd b’schrybung aller der fählen unnd sachen, so sich in meiner vertruwten pfarr Brütten alhie vom 1626. jar […] zugetragt unnd begäben habend bis uff das 1631. jar, hab ich unnöttig sein geachtet,

The pastor hoped that keeping a written memory of his activities would push him to remain vigilant and assertive in his future work "so that I never fail to warn and admonish".[19] Philip Benedict writes that for pious men such as Fischer, "maintaining such documents served at once as an instrument of self-monitoring and self-improvement, as a way of sharing with others one's personal experience of grace, and as a means of establishing a personal record of God's graces and mercies that could be reread in times of ebbing faith to revive one's assurance of one's own election and to prompt a more ardent service of God".[20] In Fischer's case, furthermore, this exercise was of an essentially communal nature—the tribulations suffered by Brütten's inhabitants inevitably constituted the pastor's very own moments of divine temptation and grace.

Fischer's records, meanwhile, not only predated but also surpassed the Zurich synod's regulations in breadth and detail. After all, the synod's writ from 1636 only asked pastors to protocol consistory sessions—an order already hard enough to enforce in most parishes.[21] Fischer's records, in turn, move seamlessly between documenting official sessions and public acts and revealing deeply personal observations and intimate encounters. The pastor divided his records into two volumes, entitled "Acta Brüttensia Publica" and "Acta Brüttensia Privata". Fischer subtitled the former as "a

wyl ich mit sampt den gschwornen unnd ehegaumren die fürgfallnen fähl jederzeit alßo decidiert, das wir verhoffen wir unser bestes gethon, den satzungen u. gnedigen herren g'folget unnd das böß abgwert unnd das gutt pflanzet habind".

[19] ABPu 1631 Titel und Vorrede: "als hab ich von derselbigen zeitt an umb gewüßer ursachen wëgen, das ich nüt versumpt mit wahrnen unnd vermannen etc., angfangen schrifftlich verzeichnen".

[20] Philip Benedict, "Some Uses of Autobiographical Documents in the Reformed Tradition", in *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich. Europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quellen*, ed. by Kaspar von Greyerz, Hans Medick, and Patrice Veit (Cologne: Böhlau 2001), 366. See also Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. chapter 12. Lorenz Heiligensetzer makes a similar point about a Reformed pastor in nearby Toggenburg in chapter 5 of his work *Getreue Kirchendiener—Gefährdete Pfarrherren. Deutschschweizer Prädikanten des 17. Jh. In ihren Lebensbeschreibungen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).

[21] In many—if not most—parishes, pastors would disobey the synod's order altogether. See, for instance, the Stillstandsprotokoll from Kyburg in 1675, https://suche.staatsarchiv.djiktzh.ch/detail.aspx?ID=2136864. In other parishes, Stillstand records would be destroyed by pastors or parishioners. See, for instance, Hedingen 1695–1727, https://suche.staatsarchiv.djiktzh.ch/detail.aspx?ID=1496937. See also Baltischweiler, *Institutionen der evangelisch-reformierten Landeskirche*, 25–26.

written inventory of what I said and did with my trusted parishioners of Brütten during the monthly *Stillstand* in church and parsonage in the presence of the village bailiff, the *Ehegaumer*, and elders of the parish", while he called the latter a "short inventory of what I said and did at times with my parishioners in the parsonage and other places".[22] "Public" and "private", in Fischer's understanding, thus constituted different realms of pastoral activity—one being the "public" institution of the *Stillstand*, the other being the practice of individual, "private" talk with his parishioners.[23] Both Fischer's "public" and "private" interactions were inherently part of his responsibility of "diligently overseeing his whole flock daily and tirelessly", and his decision to distinguish between them in his writings seems to have been first and foremost a means to provide an orderly account to prospective readers.[24] In all likelihood, Fischer intended his account to also serve as testimony of his activities to his successors in office and as proof of his diligence and thoroughness at a time when the death of Lienhart Weber had called those very qualities into question.[25] This is underscored by Fischer's readiness to abandon his categorisation for the sake of comprehensibility—if an issue arose

[22] ABPu 1631 Titel und Vorrede, VII; ABPr 1631 Titel und Vorrede, S.I.

[23] On early modern conceptions of public and private, see Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies* 45:2 (2006), 313–334. On varying definitions of privacy more generally, see 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: Chicago University Press, 1997), 1–42 and Peter von Moos, "Das Öffentliche und das Private im Mittelalter. Für einen kontrollierten Anachronismus", in *Das Öffentliche und Private in der Vormoderne*, ed. by Gert Melville and Peter von Moos (Cologne: Böhlau, 1998), 3–86.

[24] Ordnung der Dieneren der Kilchen in der Statt unnd uff der Landschafft Zürich, 1628, 24. On privacy and moral discipline, see Rudolf Schlögl, "Bedingungen dörflicher Kommunikation. Gemeindliche Öffentlichkeit und Visitation im 16. Jahrhundert", in *Kommunikation in der ländlichen Gesellschaft vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne*, ed. by Werner Rösener (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 241–262.

[25] While Fischer never states such an intention openly, his notes sometimes feature cross-references and explanatory statements clearly designed to help readers navigate his account and comprehend his chosen course of action. On the practice of self-narrative among Swiss Reformed pastors, see Heiligensetzer, *Getreue Kirchendiener*. On the demands placed on pastors in the Zurich Reformed Church, see Bruce Gordon, "The Protestant Ministry and the Cultures of Rule: The Reformed Zurich Clergy of the Sixteenth Century", in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, ed. by C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 137–155.

within one volume, Fischer would often document further steps in this matter within the same volume, no matter the place and mode of interaction. Thus, notes on consistory meetings found their way into the "Acta Privata" while intimate conversations between pastors and parishioners, in turn, spilled over into the "Acta Publica".

Not much is known about Hans Rudolf Fischer before he arrived in Brütten. Born in 1601, the Zurich citizen was ordained in 1622 and became deacon in the city of Winterthur in 1623 before taking over the parish of Brütten in 1626.[26] To his great advantage, Fischer had his own house in Brütten and held some property in a nearby village, thus rendering him less dependent on contributions from his parishioners than many of his colleagues. The parish he had been allocated comprised around 200 parishioners in the village itself and surrounding hamlets. Households in Brütten seemed to have been relatively well-off—one villager told Fischer how no one had ever heard of a household forced into bankruptcy—yet the threat of dearth and poverty still remained tangible.

Although dominion over Brütten was shared in a complex arrangement between the Catholic abbey of Einsiedeln and the Reformed city of Zurich, religious life was strictly organised along the terms of the Zurich Reformed Church.[27] The Zurich city council passed the mandates and doctrines binding for the community and claimed jurisdiction over all disputes and offences. Although integrated into these larger worldly and spiritual hierarchies, power relations in 1630s Brütten retained a strong communal aspect. The village was governed by officials put forward by the village assembly itself who were then confirmed in a process of negotiation with the village's rulers.[28] Local jurisdiction as well as the administration of village finances and commons lay in the hands of the *Untervogt* (usually referred to by Fischer as simply *Vogt* or "bailiff") and two elders or *Dorffmeyer*, who reported to the bailiwick's highest official, the *Landvogt* of Kyburg. Pastoral care and moral oversight in the village

[26] Emanuel Dejung and Willy Wuhrmann (eds.), *Zürcher Pfarrerbuch 1519–1952* (Zürich: Schulthess, 1953), 273.

[27] On the Zwinglian church, see Emidio Campi, "The Reformation in Zurich", in *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation*, ed. by Amy Nelson Burnett and Emidio Campi (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 59–125.

[28] Gottfried Morf and Hans Kläui, *Geschichte der Gemeinde Brütten* (Brütten 1972).

needed to factor in this division of powers and its occasionally conflicting understandings of order.[29]

This chapter will approach Fischer's conversations with his parishioners from two perspectives. In the first section, the focus will be on Fischer's pastoral care in the sense of *Seelsorge*—cure of souls. Tracing Fischer's effort to aid people afflicted by grave spiritual doubts, this section reconstructs a shared concern with sin and salvation expressed in a vocabulary that drew on tenets of Reformed belief on both the pastor's and the parishioner's side. However, it also shows how the pastor's attempts at accessing people's concerns were hampered by his position within the village and towards higher authorities. In the second section, this chapter then seeks to relate Fischer's account to questions of moral oversight and discipline in early modern rural life. Looking at Fischer's attempts to moderate Brütten's drinking culture, this section argues that local power relations turned the local consistory into a relatively minor vehicle for the enforcement of Reformed norms. Fischer's campaign against drinking was founded upon personal initiative and an occasionally successful, occasionally tenuous combination of private admonition and public reproach.

Pastoral Care and the Threat of Melancholy

The threat of melancholy—which had struck Brütten so violently with the suicide of the schoolmaster—never quite dissipated during the following years.[30] In his efforts to prevent another such tragedy, Hans Rudolf Fischer was constantly on the lookout for any signs of crisis among his

[29] Keith Wrightson, "Two Concepts of Order: Justices, Constables and Jurymen in Seventeenth-Century England", in *An Ungovernable People: The English and their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by John Brewer and John Styles (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 21–46.

[30] On melancholy and suicide, see Vera Lind, "The Suicidal Mind and Body: Examples from Northern Germany", in *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Jeffrey Watt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 64–80. On melancholy as a spiritual condition, see Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Angus Gowland, "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy", *Past and Present* 191 (2006), 77–120; Alexander Kästner, *Tödliche Geschichte(n). Selbsttötungen in Kursachsen im Spannungsfeld von Normen und Praktiken (1547–1815)* (Konstanz: UVK, 2012). On Schwermut and suicide in early modern Zurich, see Markus Schär, *Seelennöte der Untertanen. Selbstmord, Melancholie und Religion im Alten Zürich, 1500–1800* (Zürich: Chronos, 1985).

parishioners. His conversations with parishioners struggling with spiritual doubts make up a large part of his records and confront us with a side of early modern rural pastoral care we are hardly familiar with.[31] Seeking to counter the spread of melancholy, Fischer needed to find ways to access a community that was partially indifferent or even hostile to his aims. Wielded the right way, community networks could aid his cause, yet they could just as easily turn against Fischer. Furthermore, the pastor also needed to balance his roles as caretaker of sick bodies and souls with his role as agent of discipline and order. This task required establishing different modes of address as well as different modes of confidentiality in his conversations with parishioners.[32]

Fear for the salvation of the soul was a common affliction in 1630s Brütten. The pastor's conversations reveal a widespread concern among his parishioners about the severity of their sinfulness and the limits of God's grace—fears that were intimately connected to experiences of deprivation and social exclusion. Parishioners traced back their state of poverty and strife to God having abandoned them due to their sinful way of living—an abandonment perceived, despite Fischer's frequent reminders of God's grace, as permanent and absolute. One parishioner once told Fischer about being struck in broad daylight by a sudden vision of evil spirits on horses chasing him, shouting that "he has gorged and boozed all his life, sworn to do right so often yet done nothing; his belief is void, and he must come away with them".[33]

[31] On doctrinal and legal frameworks for pastoral approaches to melancholy and suffering, see Ronald Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[32] On early modern patient-healer confidentiality, see Natacha Klein Käfer, "Dynamics of Patient-Healer Confidentiality in Early Modern Witch Trials", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 281–296.

[33] ABPr March 1639: "Als den 20. martii Ulrich Morff in ein bi seim hauß nechst glëgne matten gangen, seigs imme (also zeigt er selbst an) einsmolls also worden, ja wie er meine heig er es gsëhen, das alls voll böse geister mit spießen uff pferden so kheine köpf ghan uff ihn zuritind, hinnen unnd vornen uff ihn stächind unnd imm fürhaltind alle seine sünden, mit vermëlden, was er wölle machen. Habe sein lëbtag gfräßen unnd gsoffen, sich villmohl erbotten rëcht zthun unnd seig doch nit beschëhen, sein glaub seig nüt, müß mit ihnen fort". On visions and dreams in Protestant culture, see Andreas Bähr, "Furcht, divinatorischer Traum und autobiographisches Schreiben in der Frühen Neuzeit", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 34:1 (2007), 1–32, and Alec Ryrie, "Sleeping, Waking

Faced with such existential sorrows, Fischer often liked to sit down with parishioners and explain to them the conditions of God's grace and the extent of Christ's sacrifice. "Two and a half hours" he spent with two widows on one occasion, as he noted, "comforting them and teaching them on a number of issues".[34] Often, Fischer simply marked extended personal lectures by adding an "etc., with amply more words" *(mit wytgloüffigen worten)* at the end of an account.[35] In these conversations, the pastor presented divine grace as the defining factor in the relationship of believers with God. Fischer insisted in one such conversation that a "heartfelt trust in God the Almighty" was necessary so "that He in His pure grace and by Christ's merit forgives our sins".[36] Furthermore, faith in God was not just the path to salvation but also the most useful remedy against worldly concerns, for even though "God often withholds His help for long" (as the pastor conceded), He "still lives and His helping hand has not been withdrawn".[37] At the same time, Fischer assured those shaken in their faith that moments of doubt were not only common, but could even be a mark of piety. "Even the most pious children of God", the pastor consoled one parishioner, "yes, most of them indeed, often sink into grave doubts and great temptations".[38] To underscore his points, Fischer drew extensively on scripture, bringing a Bible, prayer books, or works by leaders of the Zurich Reformed Church along

and Dreaming in Protestant Piety", in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2012), 73–92.

[34] ABPr March 1632.

[35] See, for instance, ABPu June 1632, March 1633, December 1634, January 1636, January 1637.

[36] ABPr April 1632: "zu sölicher erkantnus unßrer sünden wie auch zum roüwen derselbigen ghöre ein herzliches vertrouwen zu gott dem allmächtigen, das er uns die selbigen uß luthrer seiner gnad wie auch umb Christi verdienst willen gnedigklich nachlaßen unnd verzihen werde". On Zurich Reformed theology, see Gottfried W. Locher, *Die Zwinglianische Reformation im Rahmen der europäischen Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1979).

[37] ABPr April 1632; ABPu February 1632: "Wer der seig, so ihnne nun in die 70 jar so vätterlich erhalten, das imm an zeitlicher narung nüt gmanglet. Ob es nit gsein der eewig allmechtig gott? etc. Nun, der lebi noch unnd seig sein hand zhälffen nit verkürtzt [...]".

[38] ABPr February 1633: "Auch die aller frömbsten kinder gotts, ja die selbigen mehrtheils alle, fallind offt in schwere gedancken unnd große anfěchtungen". On religious doubts as a mark of Protestant piety, see Ryrie, *Being Protestant*. See also the discussion in Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul*, chapter 3.

with him on his visits and littering his lectures with citations from the Old and New Testament.[39] Although his parishioners certainly fashioned these biblical and catechetical examples to their own understandings, they formed a shared source of solace and edification for both parties.[40]

Female parishioners, particularly those at the fringes of Brütten's family networks, showed little hesitation in sharing their sorrows with the pastor. The village midwife repeatedly turned to the pastor when the death of a newborn threatened to bring her into disrepute.[41] Several of Brütten's widows also sought the advice and help of the pastor in disputes with neighbours and relatives, with one Margretha Wäber complaining to Fischer that "she is abandoned by everyone, has much debt and barely manages to sustain herself".[42] To those women whose material welfare and standing in the village was—either by occupation or by misfortune—tenuous and dependent on the goodwill of family and neighbours, the pastor represented both a kind spirit to turn to as well as someone able to put his weight behind their cause.[43] An outsider to the village's family networks and yet a man conferred with the authority of his pastoral office

[39] On the Zurich clergy, see Gordon, *Clerical Discipline*. On the Bible as the basis of Reformed pastoral care, see Andreas Mühling, "Die Bibel als Trostquelle bei Heinrich Bullinger. Vom Umgang mit der Bibel in Bullingers Trostschriften", in *Auslegung und Hermeneutik der Bibel in der Reformationszeit*, ed. by Christine Christ-von Wedel and Sven Grosse (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 265–280.

[40] For example, one woman once asked Fischer for some holy water, meaning to add it to a soup she was preparing as a remedy against the bed-wetting of her son. Appalled, Fischer denied the request and contacted his superior for advice in such an embarrassing affair. See ABPu September 1641. Generally, however, Fischer was well-content with his parishioners' doctrinal knowledge. Most of Brütten's young parishioners, for example, could recite not only the Articles of Faith and the Lord's Prayer, but also large parts of the Catechism. See StaZH E II 700.13, Verzeichnis aller Ehen, Hushaltungen, Kindren, Knächten und Diensten der Pfarr zu Brütten, 1634 as well as ABPu March 1638, January 1639, March 1640.

[41] ABPr April 1632, June 1636.

[42] ABPr December 1633: "Als ich Margretha Wäber Jagli Rüdimans s[elig] hinderlaßne wittfrau bsucht unnd sie tröst, klagte sie s[onde]rlich, sie seig von jederman jetz verlaßen, heig vill schulden unnd mög sich kum erhalten". See also ABPr April 1632.

[43] On widowhood, see Ulrich Pfister, "Haushalt und Familie auf der Zürcher Landschaft des Ancien Régime", in *Schweiz im Wandel: Studien zur neueren Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, ed. by Sebastian Brändli, David Gugerli, Jaun Rudolf, and Ulrich Pfister (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1990). For consistories as vehicles for female agency, see Schmidt, *Dorf und Religion*.

and his position as head of a household, Fischer could act as an advocate for concerns which had a difficult standing within the village's family networks.

Fischer's spiritual care was thus tangled up with parish hierarchies and dynamics, a fact which became most evident in his ambiguous relationship with the male parish elite. On the one hand, male heads of households—or housefathers —shared and supported Fischer's mission of strengthening faith in Brütten, not least by actively partaking in the *Stillstand*. Housefathers also informed Fischer of neighbours and friends struggling with their faith, even if they insisted on doing so in secret.[44] Furthermore, even if they denied the allegation, housefathers suspected of being afflicted with melancholy were open to discussing their doubts and temptations to some degree and—as Fischer liked to stress—often expressed gratitude for his edifying words.[45] Yet, at the same time, housefathers clearly viewed the pastor's intervention with suspicion or even outright hostility.

The case of Ulrich Morff is illustrative in this case. In February 1633, "a good friend" informed Fischer that "Morff has been seized by severe melancholy concerning his salvation".[46] While Morff himself stubbornly denied suffering from spiritual afflictions and attributed his occasional outbursts to either anger with his sons, too much drink, or bodily ailments, Fischer kept watch. Over the following weeks, the pastor gathered clues from different sources and questioned acquaintances and relatives of Morff until it finally became clear that Morff was indeed

[44] On housefathers, see Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). On patriarchalism turned against housefathers, see Heinrich R. Schmidt, "Hausväter vor Gericht. Der Patriarchalismus als zweischneidiges Schwert", in *Hausväter, Priester, Kastraten. Zur Konstruktion von Männlichkeit in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Martin Dinges (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 213–236. On manhood, honour, and credit, see Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2006). On economic failure and suicide, see Jeffrey R. Watt, *Choosing Death: Suicide and Calvinism in Early Modern Geneva* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2001).

[45] This accords roughly to the different modes of emotional restraint and openness described by Bernard Capp in his essay "'Jesus Wept' But Did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England", *Past and Present* 224:1 (2014), 75–108.

[46] ABPr February 1633: "Den 11. tag diß ist mir von einem guten fründ z'wüßen gmacht worden, wie Ulrich Morff ein zimlicher schwermutt gfaßet seiner selligkeit halben etc".

involved in several lawsuits and afflicted by crippling fears of death and damnation.[47]

Useful information often reached Fischer through confidential and convoluted channels. While looking for clues on Morff's case, Fischer once travelled to nearby Oberwinterthur to confer with Morff's sister, who professed to have heard nothing. Overhearing their conversation, her daughter-in-law, however, told the pastor how some days earlier, Morff had drunkenly lamented to a neighbour that "he has great sorrow in his house".[48] Afterwards, Fischer confronted *Untervogt* Jakob Steffen, who told the pastor that Morff's wife had confided in his own wife, disclosing that Morff had indeed said that "praying is futile, he is lost". Morff's wife, the bailiff told Fischer, had explicitly demanded that "one shall not tell the pastor about this".[49]

In response, Fischer was intent on establishing a reputation of discreetness and secrecy, even withholding the identity of some of his sources from his own notes. Fischer emphatically assured distressed parishioners that he would keep their conversations private and took care to present himself as a spiritual advisor rather than a spiritual authority. "And if he reads something in the Holy Gospel which he does not understand", Fischer once noted telling Ulrich Morff, "or if anything else is on his

[47] On the historiography of early modern fear, see Andreas Bähr, "Die Furcht der Frühen Neuzeit. Paradigmen, Hintergründe und Perspektiven einer Kontroverse", *Historische Anthropologie* 16:2 (2008), 291–309.

[48] ABPr February 1633: "Morndeß gieng ich zu seiner schwöster der alten undervögtin zu Oberwinterthur (uß befelch vogts, die wüß was imm seig) unnd fragte sie ernstlich. Aber sie wolt auch nüt wüßen ohne allein, es bekümbre ihn, das er sölt die schwer krancheit überkommen. [...] In allem gsprech sagte der undervögtin sohnsfrauw, Ulrich Morff habe am frytag, wie er vom meister Jacoben kommen (deme er das Waßer z'bschauwen gebrocht hatt) unnd mit ihrem brüder Hans Rudli Stäffen heimgritten, trunckner wyß gredt zu ihnen also: O Hans Rudli bätt, bätt weidlich unnd thu rächt, ich han ein große nott in meim huß. Unnd als Hans Rudli gfraget, öb dan etwar in seim huß kranch seig, heig er gsagt nein. Doruff habe er Hans Rudli nit wyters ihnne Ulrichen Morffen dörffen fragen".

[49] ABPr February 1633: "Vogt Stäffen zeigt den 4. martii an, dises mans frauw habe zu siner frauwen gsagt unnd darbi hoch verbotten, das sie es sonst niemandts sägen sölle, ir man Ulrich habe gredt, bätten seig vergëbens, er seig verlohren, das sie 4 tag lang kum gnug mögen sorg han. Doch söll man dem pfarer nüt von dem ding sagen".

mind, he shall visit me in secret in the parsonage. There I will help him repent with God's aid and keep to myself what he says and laments".[50]

Despite such assurances, no male parishioner ever actively sought out Fischer's advice and some fiercely resisted the notion that they suffered from melancholy. Housefathers did communicate their grief to friends and neighbours in more or less subtle ways (for instance, by refusing to eat or staying awake all night) and yet sought to keep such information from reaching Fischer.[51] Bringing in the pastor in such situations always held the risk of incurring the wrath of one's friends and neighbours. One *Dorffmeyer* complained to Fischer in 1632 how "it is said about him that he tells the pastor everything that goes on in the parish. If somebody says something, the people hate him".[52]

For the early modern rural pastor, spiritual care was hardly a straightforward affair.[53] Pastor and parishioners clearly drew on a shared vocabulary to express fears and concerns which placed questions of grace and salvation at the centre of individual and communal life. Based on these shared concerns, the pastor also managed to establish intimate relationships with many of his parishioners, in many cases women, becoming privy to fears which went to the core to their social and spiritual existence. However, parishioners could also stubbornly refuse the pastor's offers of spiritual aid, particularly when matters of patriarchal honour, authority, and autonomy were at stake. Pastoral care in the seventeenth-century village necessitated a combination of zeal and restraint, an awareness of power relations within the community and its households, as well as persistence in repeating one's message over and over. Talking in private

[50] ABPu April 1633: "Unnd da er etwan in h. schrifft etwas läse unnd nit verstande oder sonst imme etwas anglëgen, sölle er heimlich zu mir ins pfarhus kommen. Da wölle ich ihme mit gottes hilff fein z'ruwen hälffen unnd was er klage unnd sage bi mir selber bhalten etc".

[51] For instance, the case of Schwiderus Balthensperg in ABPu February 1632.

[52] ABPr August 1632: "Den 19. augusti fragte ich Felix Balthensperg den küffer einen dorffmeyer, ob er nüt ghöri von des Schwideris (der sich entlibt) volck, wie sie mit ein andren lëbind etc. Er antwortet, er ghöre gar nüt. Er klagte sich aber gegen mir, man gëb von ihm uß, er sage dem pfarer sonst alles, was in der gmeind fürgang. Wën einer etwas sag, so haßind d'lüt ihn etc".

[53] See also Warren Sabean, P*ower in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Hans-Christoph Rublack, "Der wohlgeplagte Priester. Vom Selbstverständnis lutheranischer Geistlichkeit im Zeitalter der Orthodoxie", *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 16:1 (1989), 1–30.

formed a crucial part of these efforts as it allowed pastors to cut through the tight bonds of family and village communities, to build a wide-ranging network of informants and supporters within the village and beyond, and to bypass the conventions of honour and reputation which required that so many concerns remained unspoken.

Pastoral Care and the Threat of Drink

If the private discussion of spiritual doubts and melancholy could already put a strain on the relationship between pastor and parishioners, what about the public reproach of sin? In theory, the *Stillstand* was in charge of calling to order "perpetrators of both tablets of the Ten Commandments [...] and all statutes of our gracious lords concerning common piety, discipline, and honour".[54] As outlined above, biblical precedence provided a model for this process which proposed private reproach first, admonishment in the presence of one or two witnesses second, and finally, admonishment before the consistory or even the whole parish.[55] Yet how did such a model square up against reality?

One persistent topic in 1630s Brütten seems especially suited to discuss this question—village drinking culture. After the Reformation, drinking habits had been increasingly subjected to official regulation, particularly in Reformed territories where authorities sought to curtail the occasions, places, and times in which their subjects got drunk with increasing detail.[56] Fischer also liked to remind his parishioners that the drunken spirit could not pray but was instead prone to swearing and cursing, to neglecting his Christian duties towards his family and neighbours, and committing other offences against the divine order. "First", Fischer

[54] Stillstandsordnung von 1656, Staatsarchiv Zürich E II 2, 431–441, cit. Pünter, "Der Stillstand als gemeindliche Verwaltungsbehörde und Wächter über Sitte und Moral", 77f.

[55] Helga Schnabel-Schüle, "Calvinistische Kirchenzucht in Württemberg? Zur Theorie und Praxis der württembergischen Kirchenkonvente", *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte* 49 (1990), 170–223.

[56] On drinking in early modern society, see Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters: Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014). On Zurich specifically, see also Fritz Blanke, "Reformation und Alkoholismus", *Zwingliana* 9:2 (1949), 75–89 and Gordon, *Clerical Discipline*, 129–130.

explained, “he and other such fellows will reject the call of God, then they will neglect Christian prayer for themselves and their wives and children. But where there is no right prayer, what does the evil spirit not do?”[57] While Fischer worked hard to convince people of the dangers of drinking, collective boozing did remain a key practice of early modern sociability, in Brütten as elsewhere—as a parishioner once cheekily retorted to Fischer, “if all drunkards go to hell, it sure must be mighty large”.[58]

Communal conviviality in Brütten centred on the house of *Untervogt* Jakob Steffen.[59] As bailiff, Steffen occupied the highest-ranking office in the village and was charged with various judicial and administrative duties. At the same time, Steffen also held the only licence in the village to serve food and alcohol in his house—a business which, for want of extensive property, was crucial to sustain his household. His inn provided the central stage for Brütten’s adult male villagers to make merry and indulge in drink.

Jakob Steffen was therefore a key figure in Fischer’s attempts to turn Brütten into a more sober and pious community in more than one way. As bailiff, Steffen was an important aide of the pastor, repeatedly supplying Fischer with the latest village rumours, denouncing his co-parishioners during *Stillstand* meetings, or accompanying the pastor on visits to troublesome parishioners. However, Fischer and Steffen were also frequently at odds with one another, particularly when it came to the role of the *Stillstand* in controlling drinking culture. During *Stillstand* sessions, Fischer would often lament the drinking bouts in the bailiff’s inn, while Steffen,

[57] ABPr December 1634: “Anfangs so schrittind er unnd andre sölche gsellen uß dem bruff gotts, darzu sie gott brüfft. Demnach versuminds durch sölch ding ihr christl. gebätt für sich unnd ir wib unnd kind. Wo aber khein rächt bätten seig, sölle er bedëncken, was der böß fiendt nit thüge?”

[58] ABPr May 1634: “Den 3. diß gieng ich zu Felix Balthensperg ihnne ernstlich von seim vertruncknen wäsen abmannende. Empfieng aber spröden bscheid: Gäb imm niemand nüt dran, wen die vertruncknen all in d’hell kömmind, so müß sie groß sein”. See also Lyndal Roper, “Drinking, Whoring and Gorging: Brutish Indiscipline and the Formation of Protestant Identity”, in *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe,* ed. by Lyndal Roper (London: Routledge, 1994), 145–170; Johannes Wahl, “Kulturelle Distanz und alltägliches Handeln. Ökonomie und Predigt im Spannungsfeld von Pfarrfamilie und Laien”, in *Ländliche Frömmigkeit. Konfessionskulturen und Lebenswelten 1500–1850,* ed. by Norbert Haag et al. (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2002), 43–58.

[59] Another tavern existed for some years in the household of Jagli Trindler, but Trindler seems to have stopped hosting gatherings around 1633.

in turn, would strike back when the pastor became too domineering.[60] Early in 1644, after being reproached repeatedly by Fischer, Steffen once retorted in front of the whole consistory: "[H]e does not care about me, does not fear me, wants to host people, wants to go to heaven as much as me, knows the way as well as I do".[61]

Like the other *Stillstand* members, Steffen too clearly struggled with reconciling the established traditions of communal life with his oath to divine and worldly authorities. Meanwhile, Fischer's own approach to the *Stillstand* was beset with inconsistencies. On the one hand, the pastor sought to portray the consistory as a place for the parish community to resolve its own conflicts. Repeatedly, the pastor insisted that it was not him, but the other consistory members who needed to lodge and decide on accusations.[62] A number of times, the pastor even experimented with convening the *Stillstand* in front of all parishioners "so that the whole village may hear what one does in the meetings and it is deplored all the less if a juror brings something forward".[63] On the other hand, Fischer stressed that the consistory ultimately remained accountable to the Zurich authorities. During consistory sessions, Fischer frequently reminded deviant parishioners of the oaths that they had sworn to their rulers, referred to recently proclaimed mandates and prohibitions, and invoked the harrowing measures of punishment at the disposal of the Zurich council.

Reconciling the different understandings of order and authority that came to collide in the *Stillstand* remained a notoriously thorny issue, and

[60] For appeals to denounce Steffen, see ABPu April 1640.

[61] ABPu April 1634: "Er ward trutzig, frag mir nüt nach, förcht mich nit, wöll wirtten, begär so wol in himmel als ich, wüß den wëg so woll als ich etc. Ich antwortete, mög woll wirtten, aber den sazungen gmeß. Nit der den wäg zum himmel wüße, der denselbigen auch gange unnd wandle, werd inn himmel kommen".

[62] E.g. ABPr May 1632.

[63] ABPu October 1633: "hab ich die fürgsezten imm biwëßen der gantzen gmeind gfraget, was sie wüßind, das in diser monatsfrist fürgangen were wider die satzungen unßrer gnedigen herren, das sie ihres eids yndënck sein unnd trülich ohn forcht anzeigen wöllind unnd söllind, damit grad die gantz gmeind höre, was man in denen stillstënden handle unnd verrichte unnd man es desto minder zürne, wan ein geeideter etwas anzeigt, das wider die satzungen begangen worden. Hieruff die umbfrag ghalten worden unnd wolt mit namen keiner der fürgsezten etwas anzeigen unnd wüßen". Tellingly, this only made members of the Stillstand even less willing to accuse their fellow parishioners of any wrongdoing. See also ABPu December 1634, January 1637.

the consistory retained an ambiguous position within Brütten's conflict culture. Certainly, the *Stillstand* did not figure as a measure of last resort or as a definite turn to formal processes when all informal means had been exhausted without improvement. Most of the 'usual suspects' instead found themselves cited before the *Stillstand* one month, admonished by the pastor in private the next, and cited to the parsonage and reproached by the pastor again the following month. One short period in the convoluted conflict between bailiff and pastor may serve to underline this dynamic. In November and December 1634, the pastor privately reprimanded Jakob Steffen several times for his impropriety in hosting gatherings at his tavern, addressing the topic anew the following month in a *Stillstand* session. An altercation between Steffen and a *Dorffmeyer* landed both in front of the regional court the following February, after which they were admonished before the *Stillstand* yet another time in May. For a couple of months, things were quiet until, one Sunday in September 1635, the pastor again admonished Steffen in private for cursing at his family.[64] *Stillstand* proceedings were thus much less dependent on any abstract model than on village politics re-negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

A crucial part of Fischer's efforts at creating a more pious community involved the use of informal village networks. In this effort, private talk was essential. For one, private talk allowed the pastor to get a sense of the disruptions caused by boozing culture within the community itself. Fischer occasionally mentioned "rumours going round in the whole village" that bailiff Steffen sometimes reached into the community's coffers to settle his personal accounts.[65] Even some of the regular patrons of the bailiff's inn, Fischer noted, seemed to be rather uncomfortable with the pull that Brütten's drinking culture exerted on them. The pastor learned as much when he confronted the newly elected *Dorffmeyer*, Hans Balthensperg who, despite having once been an exceptionally sober fellow, had developed a habit of spending his days in Steffen's inn after he had taken office. The regretful Balthensperg professed to "know well

[64] ABPu January—May 1635; ABPr November 1634—September 1635.

[65] ABPr August 1634.

his mistake" but declared that "if he did not drink like the others, they would despise him".[66]

Brütten's drinking fellows, furthermore, incurred significant expenses at Steffen's inn while simultaneously neglecting their household duties, leaving their wives behind with scarce funds and mounting work.[67] "One after the other, wives go to the bailiff's house, crying and wailing in the morning and afternoon to fetch their husbands", Fischer wrote in 1638, "and they complain that their men are being taken away and made as licentious as the bailiff himself".[68] Some of these women actively addressed Fischer, imploring him to make their husbands amend their ways. Anna Rösch, the pregnant wife of Jagli Trindler, turned to the pastor in April 1638, stricken by grief over the drunkenness of her husband to such degree that "she could not properly pray anymore and [...] is robbed of her wits and senses".[69] Fischer sought to harness this current of despair and discontent among Brütten's female parishioners by appealing to the bailiff's wife Barbara Bachmann instead of the bailiff himself. Fischer visited Bachmann personally and also sent his own wife Dorothea over to talk to her, "hoping something might be accomplished this way".[70]

[66] ABPr March 1638: "Unnd wën nun des vogts hauß nit weri, so were es gut handlen. Thüge er nit wie andre, so verachte man ihn". See also the statement by Joseph Trindler in April 1638: "Könt woll erkënnen, er wüße woll wies ein gstalt, wölle best seins vermögens sich gaumen. Unnd seit, man sölt eben ins vogthauß nit also wirtten. Man müßts nit lyden, wenn man sonst wölt".

[67] Beat Kümin, "Wirtshäuser auf dem Prüfstand. Zur sozialen Ambivalenz öffentlicher Trinkkulturen in der Frühen Neuzeit", *Historische Anthropologie* 28:2 (2020), 229–249.

[68] ABPr January 1638: "Jetz gang ins vogtshauß, jetz das, bald ein anders wib mit hülen unnd weynen vor unnd nach mittag ihrere männer abzehollen unnd klagind sich, [...], man zühe ihnen ihre mënner yn unnd mache sie so liederlich er der vogt selber". See also Patricia Fumerton, "Not Home. Alehouses, Ballads, and the Vagrant Husband in Early Modern England", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32:3 (2002), 493–518.

[69] ABPr April 1638: "So könne sie nit mehr rëcht bätten unnd werde glichsamm durch solichen kumber braubet ihres verstands unnd sinnen etc".

[70] ABPr January 1638: "Das aber nit ich sonder mein haußfrouw auff mein begären mit vogt Stäffen unnd seiner haußfr[auwen] also gret, ist uß der ursach beschëhen, wyl ich von gedochtem wirtten unnd übermachtem trincken den vogt schon villmollen auch imm monatlichen stillstand in der kilchen abgmannet, beides mit früntligkeit unnd rühi unnd doch nüt verfangen, ja etwan von imm nur mit unguten worten überfahren worden. Hoffende, es möchte etwan uff die form etwas ußzbringen sein". See also ABPr December 1639.

At other times, Fischer turned to friends and relatives of offenders for advice and assistance. Communal work ostensibly offered the most innocuous environment for such inquiries. In May 1632, while clearing the local forest with the other villagers, Fischer approached Jagli Trindler, the son of the drunkard Joseph Trindler, for advice on his father. Fischer and Trindler agreed to let the family try to deal with the problem themselves for another month, after which Fischer would bring the matter before the *Stillstand*.[71] The following year, Fischer used the communal cutting of the hay to talk to another parishioner called Jörg Balthensperg about the case of a neglected elder widow among Balthensperg's relatives. Balthensperg promised to fulfil Fischer's assignment "to inquire into the matter diligently and earnestly, but in secret, and as if he was merely asking for no reason at all".[72]

Talking in private also gave Fischer the opportunity to deploy a vocabulary that differed distinctly from his appeals in the *Stillstand*. While his lectures in the consistory were dominated by appeals to oaths and mandates, the menace of God's punishment loomed large in Fischer's more intimate reprimands. The threat of boozing and its accompanying sins to the salvation of the soul in the afterlife were one thing. "This I wanted to tell him as guardian of his soul", Fischer implored one notorious drunkard, "that it is burning, that the sword of divine punishment will certainly come over his soul and body if he does not turn his life around".[73] The pastor extensively played to his parishioners' fear of divine punishment in both the afterlife and in the present. The unrepentant, he insisted, were never safe from divine wrath and were particularly vulnerable when their mind was weakened by drink. "He sees well how our Lord can come so suddenly at times when we would not suspect it", Fischer warned another parishioner, adding that "if God would strike out at him at such a time when he lies there in all drunkenness like a dead man, think

[71] ABPr May 1632.

[72] ABPr July 1633: "Disem hab ich imm befelch gëben, er sölle doch durch ihre vertruwte leüt der sach yfrig unnd ernstlich nachfragen, doch heimlich unnd als wën er sonst ungfart so fragte, unnd mich dan wyter brichten, was er erfahren, werde gott ein angnemm werck sein".

[73] ABPr December 1634: "Deß wölle ich als ein wächter seiner seel imm gseit han, das es brünne, das das schwert göttlicher straffen über seel unnd sein lib gwüß kommen werd, wo er nit anderst sein lëben anfahe".

how bad could it turn out".[74] Notorious drunkards, Fischer suggested, effectively revoked their covenant with the Lord and excluded themselves from God's protecting hand.[75]

The divine community Fischer invoked with such words was certainly meaningful to his parishioners as well, and yet it was only one of several that they found themselves a part of. Although the Brütten *Stillstand* charged villagers—including its own members—with drunken swearing, cursing and adultery, excessive drinking on feast days, or missing church service while drunk plenty of times, it never acted to curb the practice of drinking itself. Contrary to Fischer's demands, the Brütten *Stillstand* only enforced those rules that Brütten's boozing fellowship itself considered integral to their cherished practice. Nevertheless, the pastor's efforts were hardly a lonely crusade. Fischer took up concerns related to him by villagers—particularly by those afflicted by the consequences of drinking culture without playing much part in it—and tried to act on them according to the possibilities available to him. Although official responsibilities as well as spiritual convictions could provide strong motives to support the pastor in his mission, they could hardly override material needs and the mutual dependencies upon which the village community was founded. Like the pastor himself, villagers too needed to manoeuvre between different communities of belonging as well as the value systems attached to them. Private talk allowed a negotiation between these systems and their competing demands without openly calling into question the integrity of the village community.

Conclusion

Hans Rudolf Fischer was part of a movement seeking to impose Christian order on all aspects of rural life. To achieve this end, the pastor needed to navigate Brütten's intricate web of conflicting concerns and agendas without causing further strife. For this task, the consistory often turned out to be too harsh an instrument, however crucial the pastor doubtlessly considered it. The *Stillstand* demanded its members to publicly break

[74] ABPr April 1638: "Er gsëhi woll, wie unßer herrgott so unversëhenlich daher komme zu zeit unnd stunden, da wirs nit wüßind unnd nit meinind. Söll sich nit so voll trincken, wenn ihn gott angriffen wurde zu sölicher zeit, da er so ligge in der trunckenheit wie ein todtner, wies so übel könt fehlen".

[75] ABPr December 1634.

with their relatives, drinking fellows, and neighbours—an act many were unwilling to perform. Abetting his initiatives in the *Stillstand* with the help of informal networks built through private talk could ease this process. Yet, private talk also constituted an entirely separate realm of interaction—one which allowed the pastor to identify and address individual concerns in more subtle ways and to invoke different registers of Reformed orthodoxy. At the same time, private conversation and public condemnation could never be neatly discerned from each other despite Fischer's best efforts. Fischer's embeddedness within village circles encouraged restraint in his handling of the consistory while the shadow of his institutional role as an agent of disciplinary control loomed over his intimate interactions.

Hans Rudolf Fischer's "Acta Publica" and "Acta Privata" provide testimony of the multiple practices, occasions, and sites of pastor-parishioner interaction in the early modern parish. A magnified view of the social fabric of the early modern rural parish opens up in between the lines of Hans Rudolf Fischer's diaries, revealing a village where questions of gender and status determined the division of work, property, and authority, the organisation of sociability, as well as the understanding of emotional and spiritual affliction. Not just the pastor, but each of his parishioners also needed to conform to conflicting demands: Bailiff Jakob Steffen needed to fulfil his role as the secular guardian of order in his community while supporting his family through the proceeds of his inn; widows needed to maintain the outward veneer of familiar harmony while fighting their own children for a liveable allowance; the village midwife needed to figure out how to avoid becoming the scapegoat after a newborn's death. While Fischer—like many of his fellow pastors—could often see himself on a lonely mission against a parish which was at best indifferent and at worst hostile, his notes reveal him and his parishioners as firmly placed in a common pursuit for a Christian community. In private conversations in the parsonage, on the streets and fields, and in people's homes, Fischer deeply shaped his community in intimate interaction with his parishioners.

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CHAPTER 8

"The Secret Sin That One Commits by Thought Alone": Confession as Private and Public in Seventeenth-Century France

Lars Cyril Nørgaard

This chapter deals with penitence as a personal state and a public act. This distinction traverses Western Christendom, but my contribution focuses on a debate that unfolded during the 1640 s and pitted the Jansenist Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) against the Jesuit Denis Pétau (1583–1652). I show how Arnauld's *De la fréquente communion*[1] collapses the distinction between the internal state of being penitent and the external act of performing penitence. This distinction is defended vehemently

[1] Antoine Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion, où les sentiments des Pères, des Papes et des Conciles, touchant l'usage des Sacrements de Pénitence & d'Eucharistie, sont fidèlement exposez: pour servir d'adressé aux personnes qui pensent sérieusement à se convertir à DIEU; & aux Pasteurs et Confesseurs zelez pour le bien des Ames* (Paris: Antoine Vitré, 1643).

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in Pétau's critical response.[2] Specifically, this seventeenth-century debate centres on an age-old question concerning worthiness that is posited in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34.[3] However, Arnauld and Pétau offer us with different reconstructions of penitence as an interior state and as an exterior act encompassed by the sacrament of penance. It is these competing notions that I shall engage with. How did Arnauld and Pétau represent the private state of penitence in the interior and how did they relate this state to penitential acts in public?

First, I offer a historical background for the early modern debates on penitence, focusing on how medieval developments illuminate later controversies. Next, I outline the historical context for the conflict between Arnauld and Pétau, turning hereafter to *le grand Arnauld* and his analysis of private confession and public penitence. On his analysis, verbalisation of sins in confession is either redundant or must translate into public acts of penitence; the state of being penitent is constrained by the act of doing penitence. Finally, I turn to Pétau's criticism of this stance and the strong limitations it imposes upon auricular confession. By evoking this criticism, the chapter demonstrates that the confessional

[2] Denis Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique et de la préparation à la communion* (Paris: Gabriel Cramoisy, 1644). Arnauld's and Pétau's works have left behind legacies of complicated historiographical reconstructions. See Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le Catholicisme classique et les Pères de l'église. Un retour aux sources (1669–1713)* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1999), 25–64, 520–528.

[3] 1 Corinthians 11:17–19, 27–34 (New Revised Standard Version): "Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. […] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement again themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brother and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come". See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987). See also Lee Palmer Wandel, "The Moment of Communion", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 159–178.

speech-act—in secret and in public—played a central role in the early modern history of privacy.

Medieval Penitence

Theologians of the third and fourth centuries wrestled with the problem that, although believers had been baptised, they continued to sin. Public penitence offered them a solution. Different transgressions could be taxed with different punishments. Penitence in public combated the manifold manifestation of post-baptismal sin. As an example, we might recall the famous story of Ambrose (c. 339–397) who, after the Massacre of Thessalonica (390), banned Theodosius the Great (347–395) from participating in the Eucharist. The bishop of Milan required that the Emperor performed public penitence in response to his sinful act. This type of penitence was understood to be repeatable. A member of the community could be submitted to this public ritual several times. Post-baptismal sin was perceived as a fact of life, and penitence hereby reinforced the community and its beliefs. Public penitence could also refer to the ritual acts whereby somebody was temporarily or permanently excluded from the community. These ritual acts performed the external boundaries of the community, symbolically transferring somebody from the inside to the outside.[4]

Sometime after the ninth century, a new terminology emerged. Henceforth, penitence could be classified as solemn, public, or secret. These classifications constitute a crucial moment in the history of privacy because secret penitence supported a personal devotion that was modelled on the repeatable type of public penitence and eventually took on a life of its own. To elucidate what secret penitence signified, I would like to draw attention to the stational liturgy. During the period between the pontificates of Leo the Great (r. 440–461) and Gregory the Great (r. 590–604), a particular Roman church could be chosen as a *statio*, and the Pope would thereafter move in solemn procession from the Lateran palace to this location where Mass would be celebrated. This liturgy was adopted from Jerusalem, where it had centred on holy

[4] For the early history of the ritual of penitence, see Ludger Körntgen, *Studien zu den Quellen der frühmittelalterlichen Bußbücher* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993); Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 37–100.

sites, and from Constantinople, where John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) promoted it. Collectively, the Roman stational liturgy performed the cityscape as a Christian cityscape. Such performances, headed by bishops, continued to be performed throughout the medieval and early modern periods. However, these public performances were supplemented by a more personal liturgy. Thus, monastic churches of the tenth and eleventh centuries became equipped with side chapels and altars where lay believers could perform their faith. Put differently, these places inside particular churches became *stationes* that plotted a personal topography of spirituality. In many cases, this personal mode of a stational liturgy was penitential.[5] By reciting a specific number of prayers at a saint's chapel, believers paid a tariff imposed upon them for sinful behaviour. In this sense, penitence was imposed individually but continued to take place inside a church, never entirely eclipsing the communal structure of medieval societies.[6]

Indeed, confessions did not at this time take place in a confessional but in the open space of the church where the priest would sit. Bowing his head or kneeling down, the penitent was to avoid direct eye contact with the priest. This gesture of deference was supported by the priest wearing a cowl or a hood: this garment created a distance and made their conversation appear as more than an everyday exchange. After a greeting, the priest would make inquiries into the faith of the penitent. Once this had been established, the sincere contrition of the penitent had to be determined. On the basis of this calculation, sins could be confessed. The actual act of confession could follow a ritual sequence or it could take a more free-flowing and spontaneous form. Hereafter, the priest would elaborate upon what he had heard, using the examples of the Seven Deadly Sins, the Ten Commandments, or another template . The aim of this response was to assist the penitent in giving a more comprehensive account: it probed deeper into the nature of the type of sins. During the medieval period, this conversation was perceived as private, although it unfolded in public. Confessional conversations also aimed to impose a punishment upon the

[5] Éric Palazzo, *Liturgie et société au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Aubier, 2000), 23–25.

[6] Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). For the Following Description, see Joseph Goering, "The Internal Forum and The Literature of Penance and Confession", *Traditio* 59 (2004), 193–195.

sinner that would not remain entirely hidden but, to varying degrees, publicise sinfulness.

Further conceptual clarification began in the twelfth century[7] and it was Gratian's *Decretum* (c. 1140) that defined the parameters of this conceptualisation. Initially, the *Decretum* stipulates that "it is as clear as day that sins are forgiven by heartfelt contrition and not by confession of the mouth".[8] This distinction between contrition of the heart (*contritio cordis*) and confession of the mouth (*confessio oris*) is based upon an earlier argument according to which guilt of sin does not always require an action. Guilt can be a matter exclusively of the will (*voluntas*). Put differently, one can be guilty of sin without realising one's evil wishes: intentions that never become actions can be crimes and, accordingly, worthy of punishment. This conception of the *voluntas* has important implications for the *Decretum*'s understanding of penitence. If evil intentions already merit punishment, then we might also imagine that sinners, in their *voluntas*, can fight against and actively suppress their sinfulness. Without ever engaging with the external world, the evil plotting of the *voluntas* can be tempered, and the person who performs this level of self-regulation is not worthy of punishment. Forgiveness, then, can take place without confessing sins to a figure of authority. Secret penitence can take the form of a contrition of the heart and a silent confession, understood as an internal conversation between the sinner and God. Gratian confirms the validity of such interior penitence (*penitentia interior*).

Somewhat surprisingly, a cluster of canons later in the *Decretum* stipulates what seems to be the opposite view.[9] After quoting a number of sources, Gratian remarks: "By these authorities, it is asserted that no one can be cleansed from sins without penance and the confession of his own mouth. Hence, the formerly mentioned authorities, by which it appeared to be proven that mercy is offered by contrition of the heart alone, are to be interpreted in a manner other than they are explained by

[7] See Joseph Goering, "The scholastic turn (1100–1500): Penitential Theology and Law in the Schools", in *A New History of Penance*, ed. by Abigail Firey (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 219–237.

[8] "luce clarius constat cordis contritione, non oris confessione peccata dimitti". Gratian, *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. by Emil Friedberg, (Graz: Akademische Druch, 1959), I, 1165. This passage is a quotation from the influential pseudo-Augustinian text *De vera et falsa penitentia*.

[9] See Gratian, *Corpus iuris canonici*, I, 1177–1184.

them [the proponents of the interior penitence]".[10] Thus, it is concluded that the *Decretum* has presented "the authorities and the arguments for both views of confession and satisfaction. It is left to the judgement of the reader which side he will prefer".[11] Closely following Gratian's dual framework, Peter Lombard (1100–1160) included penitence among the sacraments but also remarked that unlike the other sacraments (such as, for instance, baptism), pentience "is called both a sacrament and a virtue of the mind".[12] In the latter sense, where penitence unfolds inside the mind (*mens*), contrition is a sufficient reason for the forgiveness of sin. Again, the external confession of sins and the accomplishment of external acts of satisfaction are not always required. Sins are forgiven neither because they are confessed nor because acts of satisfaction are carried out. These external features are not the root of forgiveness. Rather, God forgives when sinners are truly sorry—that is, when they are in a state of contrition of the heart. Nevertheless, Peter Lombard maintains the importance of confession of the mouth—where sins are verbalised to a priest—as well as satisfaction—that is, the external acts imposed as punishment for the confessed sins. In some cases, the priest may be better at measuring the depth of sins and identifying the best remedy. In other cases, confession can make the sinner think twice before sinning again. Thus, Lombard follows the *Decretum* in not deciding. In both of these influential textbooks, penitence pertains both to an internal state and to exterior acts—it is both secret and public.

This picture of penitence also emerges in Peter Comestor (†1178) according to whom not every sin requires the undertaking of the sacrament of penance. Instead, the sacrament is reserved for grave sins that necessitate an exterior display of satisfaction—that is, an act of public

[10] "His auctoritatibus asseritur, neminem sine penitencia et confessione propriae uocis a peccatis posse mundari. Unde premissae auctoritates, quibus uidebatur probari, sola contritione cordis ueniam prestari, aliter interpretandae sunt, quam ab eis exponantur". Gratian, *Corpus iuris canonici*, I, 1184.

[11] "Quibus auctoritatibus, vel quibus rationum firmamentis utraque sentencia confessionis et satisfactionis niatur [...] Cui autem harum potius adherendum sit, lectoris iudicio reservatur". Gratian, *Corpus iuris canonici*, I, 1189. Goering insists that Gratian's textbook did not aim to shape the existing discourse on penitence but rather to present the different views that had traditionally dominated this discourse and therefore would be relevant to a discuss in the classroom. See Goering, "Scholastic turn", 226.

[12] "[D]icitur et sacramentum et virtus mentis". Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in iv libris distinctae*, ed. by Ignatius Brady, 2 Vols. (Rome: Grottaferrata, 1981), II, 819.

penitence.[13] By comparison, interior penitence is a type of contrition that targets minor sins and unfolds in the heart (*cor*) where it activates the mental faculties. Thus, "for contrition to be true, three things [must] coincide: the mind should be illuminated, memory should grieve for the past, [and] the will should make a pledge for the future".[14] In sum, penitence had two significations in the twelfth century. On the one hand, it referred to a sequence of acts that involved contrition, but also, by necessity, confession of sins to a priest and the subsequent imposition of acts to satisfy the wrongdoing. On the other hand, penitence could also be used to designate heartfelt contrition alone: for such penitence as an emotional state, theologians and jurists could refer to interior penitence (*penitentia interior*). Here, we might view penitence as a silent or internal conversation. The sinner was to verbalise their transgression before God, and this verbalisation, when it sprang from a truly contrite heart, was seen as a sufficient reason for forgiveness.[15] In this latter sense, the terminology that theologians and jurists developed in the twelfth century used the terms *privatus* and *secretus* to define penitence as an internal state of *contritio*.

The duality of public and private penitence remained in place until the late-fifteenth century. By this time, theology had changed its way of producing knowledge. During the early decades of the thirteenth century, disputations had become the preferred medium for debating. This scholastic culture of knowledge had been institutionalised with the emergence of universities and disseminated through the growing influence of mendicant orders. Techniques of debating were popularised far beyond the relatively insular networks of scholars working in the twelfth

[13] Peter Comestor, "De sacramentis", in Henri Weiswiler, *Maître Simon et son groupe: De sacramentis* (Leuven: Peeters, 1937), 66.

[14] "Verum, ut vera sit contricio, tria concurrunt, scilicet ut mens illuminetur a Spiritu Sancto, ut memoria doleat de preterito, ut voluntas caveat de futuro". Comestor, "De Sacramentis", 62.

[15] This *penitentia interior* allowed sinners to handle minor offences for which they often would not have been able to find a priest that could take their confession. As such, the new ideas about interior penitence were a response to a fundamental change in the social world—namely, the growing laity and its spiritual needs. The interior sense of penitence allowed members of the laity to handle minor sins without having to consult a priest. For the laity, its penitential spirituality, and its growing influence from the late twelfth century, see André Vauchez, *Les laïcs au Moyen Âge. Pratiques et expériences religieuses* (Paris: Cerf, 1987).

century. Following this scholarly practice, Martin Luther proposed his famous theses in 1517, where, echoing critical theological voices from the 1480s, he questioned the efficacy of indulgences and, in more general terms, the validity of penitential punishments meted out by the priesthood. Eventually, Luther and his followers would deny the existence of purgatory and also the sacramental status of penitence, thereby abandoning public penitence while wholeheartedly endorsing a new form of private confession.[16] One of the hallmarks of Lutheranism became such private sessions, where the priest could enculturate believers with the need to prepare themselves for hardship and death, essentially teaching them to become their own pastors.[17]

Although we might suspect the Council of Trent to have offered a clear response to the Protestant position, this holds true only for the rejection of purgatory. By comparison, the decrees and canons of the fourteenth Tridentine session (held on 25 November 1551) that engaged precisely with penitence seem almost intentionally ambiguous:

> For the rest, with regard to the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, although Christ has not forbidden anyone to confess his sins publicly—in expiation for his offences and in self-humiliation, both as an example to others and for the edification of the church which has been offended—this is not commanded by divine precept, nor would it be very well-considered to enjoin by human law that sins, especially secret ones, must be revealed by public confession.[18]

[16] For the Lutheran reconfiguration of confession and penitence, see Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[17] Johann Anselm Steiger, "Die Geschichts- und Theologie-Vergessenheit der heutigen Seelsorgelehre. Anlass für einen Rückblick in den Schatz reformatorischer und orthodoxer Seelsorgeliteratur", *Kerygma und Dogma* 39 (1993), 64–87.

[18] "Caeterum quoad modum confitendi secreto apud solum sacerdotem etsi Christus non vetuerit quin aliquis in vindictam suorum scelerum et sui humiliationem cum ob aliorum exemplum tum ob Ecclesiae offensae aedificationem delicta sua publice confiteri possit non est tamen hoc divino praecepto mandatum nec satis consulte humana aliqua lege praeciperetur ut delicta praesertim secreta publica essent confessione aperienda". See "Sessio XIV", in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. by N.P. Tanner, 2 vols. (Washington: Georgtown University Press, 1990), II, 707.

This statement locates the confession of sins in two different arenas. Confession can take place in public, where it serves a positive purpose by reaffirming the normative space that sinful behaviours transgress. Such acts of confession are exemplary and edifying for other Christians. Sins on display support the codes by which the community abides. However, sins can also be confessed in secret—that is, *apud solem sacerdotem* (in the presence of a single priest).[19] Here, the adjective *solus* designates a space that is not public. Significantly, the relationship between the non-public space and the public space of confession is left open to interpretation. It is not forbidden to confess sins in public, but the decrees *de reformatione* that enact the provisions of the canons leave it entirely to the local bishop's discretion to decide when secret confession is allowed.[20] Furthermore, public penitence cannot be imposed by reference to divine law. The decree quoted above warns against having formulations in civil law which prescribe acts of penitence. Accordingly, the proceedings from the Council of Trent, in their convoluted formulation, facilitate the undertaking of secret confession of sins when and where this is deemed preferable. The relationship between *secretus* and *publicus*, understood as different fora of confession, is not regulated on a general level. On the explicit suggestion of the French delegates, the issue of public penitence was therefore debated again by the council in 1563. As a result, the twenty-fourth session stipulates:

> The Apostle warns against the fact that public sinners should be openly rebuked. Therefore, when someone commits a crime publicly and in the view of many, by which others are offended and scandalised and disturbed, then without a doubt a fitting penitence for the crime in question should be publicly imposed on such a person, so that one who has incited others to evil by his example should recall them to an upright life by the evidence

[19] The stipulation that afforded members of the laity the opportunity to individually confess their sins to a priest dates to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): "Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, omnia sua solus peccata confiteatur fideliter, saltem semel in anno proprio sacerdoti […]" ("After having reached the age of discernment, every faithful of either sex should at least once every year confess all their sins to their own priest: [this confession should be done] alone and in a truthful manner"). See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, I, 245. On the novelty of this annual pre scription, see Martin Ohst, *Pflictbeichte: Untersuchungen zum Bußwesen im Hohen und Späten Mittelalter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 14–32.

[20] See "Sessio XIV", in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, II, 714–718.

> of his penitence. A bishop may, however, commute this kind of public penitence into another one that is secret when he considers this more profitable.[21]

This canon reaffirms public penitence as a fitting sanction for public offences while simultaneously allowing bishops to opt for a different solution when circumstances require it. Secret penitence can be imposed as an alternative, and this reveals what we might call a hesitation towards public penitence. We must infer that in certain situations, although sins could cause public damage, satisfaction could be performed in secret. As a result, the private space of confession and the verbalisation of trespasses took on a place of prominence, and the stipulations of the Council of Trent anchored this understanding in tradition. This invited subsequent authors to re-examine the patristic sources on penitence and, in some cases, question the validity of private confession. The debate between Arnauld and Pétau can be situated within this climate of a return to the patristic sources. However, there are also more specific circumstances that motivated Arnauld's *De la fréquente communion* and Pétau's critical response, and it is to these that I now turn.

Debating Penitence in the Early Modern Period

In 1588, the Spanish Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535–1600) published his *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis* where he argued that God had bestowed sufficient grace to humans for them to be able to perform good deeds. The divine will could be accomplished in the lives of humans, even though their will remained completely free; grace was, therefore, a sufficient—not a determining—condition for salvation. Inspired by the teachings of the Jesuit Pedro de Fonseca (1528–1599), Molinism caused immediate debate: the Dominicans rejected the Jesuits' interpretation

[21] "Apostolus manet, publice peccantes palam esse corripiendos. Quando igitur ab aliquo publice et in multorum conspectu crimen commissum fuerit, unde alios scandalo offensos commotosque fuisse non sit dubitandum: huic condignam pro modo culpae poenitentiam publice iniungi oportet, ut, quos exemplo suo ad malos mores provocavit, suae emendationis testimonio ad rectam revocet vitam. Episcopus tamen publicae hoc poenitentiae genus in aliud secretum poterit commutare, quando ita magis iudicaverit expedire". See "Sessio XXIV", in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, II, 764. Cf. 1 Timothy 5:20.

as irreconcilable with the Thomistic framework.[22] Pope Clement VII (r. 1592–1605) attempted to settle these conflicts by inaugurating the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* but to no avail. Upon its closing on 28 August 1607, no common ground had been reached. The Dominicans and the Jesuits were therefore allowed to continue debating their difference of opinion as long as they refrained from accusing each other of heresy and fundamental mistakes.

Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638) and Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (1581–1643), known as the abbot of Saint-Cyran from the abbey he held in commendam, ignored this papal injunction.[23] In their joint efforts between 1609 and 1616, they approached the question of grace from a stoutly Augustinian perspective, explicitly opposing the Jesuit understanding of grace and thereby reopening the debates. Twenty years later, in 1635, Jansen was appointed Dean of the University of Leuven and consecrated as Bishop of Ypres. When he died three years later, the abbot of Saint-Cyran was back in France where his teachings were causing controversy. He was connected to the Cistercian monasteries of Port-Royal de Paris and Port-Royal de Champs, but it was his understanding of contrition that initially caused conflict.[24] On 15 May 1638, Richelieu had the abbot arrested on suspicions of heresy. He remained imprisoned until 6 February 1643, but this did not settle the controversy. Saint-Cyran had already won strong support among the powerful, including members of the Arnauld family. Antoine Arnauld's older sister, Jacqueline-Marie-Angélique Arnauld (1591–1661) was the abbess of the Cistercian nuns at Port-Royal, while his older brother, Robert Arnauld d'Andilly (1589–1674), had gravitated towards Saint-Cyran since the 1620s. Robert's daughter, Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld d'Andilly (1624–1684) took holy vows at Port-Royal in 1644, and Louis-Isaac Lemaistre de Sacy (1613–1684), the son of Catherine Arnauld (1590–1651) and thereby Antoine's cousin, became another important promoter of what (though initially used as a derogatory term) would eventually come to be known as Jansenism. On the level of dogma, this branch of French spirituality

[22] Paolo Broggio, "Grace", in *A Companion to the Spanish Scholastics*, ed. by Harald E. Braun, Erik de Bom, and Paolo Astorri (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 115–133.

[23] On these early efforts, see Jean Orcibal, *Jansénius d'Ypres (1585–1638)* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1989); Jean Orcibal, *Jean Duvergier de Hauranne. Abbé de Saint-Cyran et son temps (1581–1643)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1948), II, 75–107.

[24] Orcibal, *Jean Duvergier*, I, 477–594.

referred to Jansen's *Augustinus* which was first published in 1640.[25] This work cut open the old wound that Clement VII had attempted to suture: the conflict between the Jesuits and the Dominicans was supplemented by a third alternative—the Jansenist position and its strong promotion of an Augustinian anthropology. With the publication of the monumental *De la fréquente communion*, this position was communicated to a larger public. Arnauld's work explicitly identified itself as critical of the Jesuits and triggered the so-called Dispute concerning Grace (*Querelle de Grâce*) in France. Accordingly, Pétau's criticism and his view on penitence must be seen as part of a larger theological story that began in the late sixteenth century and that would not be concluded until the late eighteenth century.[26] While Arnauld's and Pétau's works specifically constitute a disputation over the historical foundations that bestowed normativity to practices of penitence, the authors were also pitted against each other because their camps, within the context of post-Tridentine Catholicism, supported different theological ideas.

Arnauld's work takes the form of a polemical dialogue with a Jesuit interlocutor who remains anonymous.[27] However, his identity was not difficult to determine. In 1639, Anne de Rohan, the Princesse de Guémené (1604–1685) had experienced a religious awakening and turned away from the world. In this process, she left her Jesuit directors and instead relied upon the advice of Jacqueline-Marie-Angélique Arnauld, Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, and Antoine Arnauld. In addition, she was closely associated with Antoine Singlin (1607–1664) who, during the imprisonment of the abbot of Saint-Cyran, held a position of authority at Port-Royal de Champs. In response to the new company that the Princesse was keeping, the Jesuits Étienne Bauny (1564–1649) and

[25] Cornelius Jansen, *Augustinus, seu Doctrina S. Augustini de humanæ naturæ sanitate, ægritudine, medicina, aduersus Pelagianos et Massilienses*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Jacob Zeger, 1640).

[26] Sylvio Hermann De Franceschi, *La Puissance et la Gloire. L'orthodoxie thomiste au péril du jansénisme (1663–1724): le zénith français de la querelle de la grâce* (Paris: Nolin, 2011).

[27] For this discussion, I refer to the eighteenth-century memoirs of Noël de Castera de Larrière (1735–1802/03). See Noël de Larrière, *Antoine Arnauld, théologien de Port-Royal (1612–1694)*, ed. by Jean Lesaulnier (Paris: Garnier, 2021), 51–79. Cf. Jean Orcibal, *La spiritualité de Saint-Cyran avec ses écrits de piété inédits* (Paris:Vrin, 1962), 275–280; Jean Lesaulnier, "La Fréquente communion d'Antoine Arnauld: Genèse d'une œuvre", *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 44 (1994), 61–81.

Michel Rabardeau (1572–1649) voiced criticism. These critical voices were seconded by Pierre de Sesmaisons (1588–1648) who had been Anne's personal director of conscience.

From his prison cell, Saint-Cyran had addressed an *instruction abrégée* to the Princesse de Guémené: this small text dealt with the use of the sacraments and was disseminated to Madeleine de Souvré, the Marquise de Sablé (1599–1678), who, in turn, shared it with Sesmaisons. Soon after receiving this work, the Jesuit responded and although we no longer know the content of this response, its general contours can be inferred from Arnauld's *De la fréquente communion*. This work was initiated in late 1640 or early 1641 and it outrightly rejected and openly mocked Sesmaisons' teachings.[28] During the following years, the debates between Arnauld and the Jesuits would continue, notably the immediate conflicts with Pétau and Jacques Nouet (1605–1680).[29] These conflicts would also resurface during a later phase, when Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) got involved.[30] The following section will show how Arnauld, in his criticism of Sesmaisons, warns against secrecy. On the one hand, he admits that internal penitence can be accomplished. On the other hand, Arnauld remains sceptical about the understanding that confession, in itself, can be counted as an act of penitence: the secret conversation must manifest itself in subsequent acts of satisfaction. As such, confession remains secret—it stipulates a space of private conversation—but this secrecy must translate into physical manifestations that, by nature, are not secret but visible to other members of the community. Private confession without public satisfaction is ruled out.

Against Secrecy

In the second part of *De la fréquente communion*, Arnauld asks if members of the ancient church, who felt guilty of mortal sins when approaching the altar, were excluded and submitted to a penitential

[28] The writing of this work was a collaborative effort between Arnauld, Saint-Cyran, and other supports of the Jansenist cause. See Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, "Traité de la Pénitence", in Orcibal, *La spiritualité de Saint-Cyran,* 281–389.

[29] Yasuchi Noro, "Injure pour injure: Une polémique presque invisible autour De la fréquente com-munion d'Antoine Arnauld", *Études Épistémè* 38 (2021), n. p.

[30] Sylvio Hermann de Franceschi, "Le Moment Pascalien dans la Querelle de la Grâce", *Revue de Synthèse* 130:4 (2009), 595–635.

regime.[31] Historically, what was considered the proper course of action when the communicant himself felt the guilt of mortal sin? Was this personal experience sufficient ground for not approaching the altar? According to Arnauld, his Jesuit opponent (referring to Sesmaisons, who is not explicitly named) rejected almost every kind of public penitence, claiming that, for instance, during the time of the early church no sustained periods of penitence were required before communion. The evidence that contradicts this claim is, according to Arnauld, clearer than the brightest sun; in fact, it is even stronger than Hercules as the poets imagine him. Rhetorically, Arnauld asks if public penitence would not be the correct course of action in the case of "murders, acts of adultery, acts of fornication, profanities, lies" (*les homicides, les adultères, les fornications, les sacrilèges, les perjures*), and "blasphemies" (*les blasphèmes*).[32] Given that such offences have only escalated in contemporary society, would it not, Arnauld asks, be correct to exclude perpetrators of such sinful actions from the altar and submit them to a regime of penitence? Neglecting such cases, the implicit adversary seems unbelievably ignorant to Arnauld and completely stuck in his theological ways. Thus, the nameless Jesuit invokes Saint Fabiola (d. 400) and her public act of penitence as Jerome (c. 347–420) recounts it in his epitaph for this Roman matron. The implicit opponent in Arnauld's discourse presents this text as an act of public penitence that is undertaken as satisfaction for the grave sin of divorce: it is thus an exceptional case that calls for an exceptional measure. However, the true sin is much more personal and its satisfaction, according to Arnauld, is Saint Fabiola's personal recognition of having acted imprudently.[33] Implicitly, Arnauld deflates the category of extraordinary wrongdoings to which acts of public penitence could be reserved: Saint Fabiola did not engage with sack-clothed penitents and prostrate herself before all of Rome because she had done something extraordinarily wrong—that is, because she had divorced her husband who was (Arnauld is quick to add) a notorious adulterer and fornicator. Instead, the saint undertook this public display because she realised that she had acted imprudently and had made a mistake. Public penitence is not an exception to the rule—it is *the* rule.

[31] Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 238.

[32] Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 239–240.

[33] Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 240–241.

Arnauld proceeds in his line of argument by remarking that reserving public penitence for exceptional cases carries an added danger: if we entertain this notion, the common believer might "pride himself in his sins, although they are substantial because he does not believe them to be among those that should be punished by public penitence".[34] Here, Arnauld writes with vertigo of psychological depth but nevertheless subjects the secrets of the self to a public space of demonstration. The suspicion towards the private space of secret confession is telling. Talking in private cannot stand alone, and the interior experience of contrition must become visible—an emotional state must impact the faculty of the will and cause an action to be performed. However, such demonstrations must not be mistaken for sure signs of virtuousness. Indeed, early modern Augustinianism called such signs into question, and Arnauld's work is not presenting public displays as windows into the soul. In his preparatory work for *De la fréquente communion*, Saint-Cyran thus opens: "the true penitence does not consist in words but in an upright renewal of the heart by grace that, continually, produces the real fruits of penitence, which are the renouncement of the world and sufferings".[35] This interior focus goes hand-in-hand with an insistence upon exterior manifestations: a private and entirely secret penitence is completely rejected because "the church has never allowed anybody, not even the highborn, to dispense with accomplishing public penitence."[36] Thus, Arnauld and Saint-Cyran entertain a position according to which penitence is an entirely interior state—we might recognise this as the state of being penitent—although this interiority must make itself manifest: the appropriate knowledge of sinfulness cannot remain secret but must make itself public; it must turn into an act of doing penitence.

[34] "[S]e flatter dans leur péchés, quoique très-grands, pour ne les croire pas du nombre de ceux que l'on doit châtier par une pénitence publique". Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 239.

[35] "La vrai pénitence ne consiste pas en paroles, mais en [un] renouvellement sincère du cœur par la grâce, qui produit de plus en plus les vrais fruits de pénitence qui sont le renoncement au monde et les souffrances". Orcibal, *La spiritualité de Saint-Cyran,* 281.

[36] "l'Église n'a jamais dispense, non pas même les grands, de faire pénitence publique". Orcibal, *La spiritualité de Saint-Cyran,* 285.

Within the history of Western European privacy, this position seems to keep together what would later become separated: the personal, experiential domain is constrained by the communal.[37] However, Arnauld admits that public satisfaction can be accomplished without words: the public verbalisation of sins, where the sinner professes his sins to the community, is reserved for exceptional sins. In the discussion above, we have seen how public penitence cannot be reserved for exceptional cases—the state of being penitent must be followed by a secret confession of this state and by an act of doing penitence. However, this act need not necessarily be verbal. Arnuald remarks that historically, members of the church have never been universally obligated to perform such public speech-acts.[38] Moreover, the identification of public penitence with a public admission of guilt is not only a mistake, but can also support the misconception that public penitence is exceptional and, as such, should be reserved for the gravest of sins—a postulation which is true for the public admission of guilt but not for public acts of penitence. In support of this claim, Arnauld invokes the words of the bishop of Orléans, Gabriel de l'Aubespine (r. 1604–1630) as well as the Church Fathers Ambrose (c. 339–397) and specifically Tertullian (c. 155–220), who "recognises no other type of penitence than public penitence to lift sinners back up from their falls".[39] The attack on secrecy should therefore not be seen as an

[37] Philosophical and sociological approaches to the history of privacy tend to interpret the eighteenth century as the watershed moment at which the private sphere began to separate itself from the public. This separation was to have been completed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although many historians have questioned its validity, this narrative of separation continues to find support. Thus, Michael McKeon tells us the story about how the tendency towards a conceptual division came to shape modern thought regarding the public and the private: modernity separates public and private from each other, and this marked a change in how the relationship between these categories had traditionally been construed. See Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005). For the potential pitfalls of presupposing the development of such a separation, see Mette Birkedal Bruun, "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy: The Retirement of the Great Condé", in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, 12–60.

[38] Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 242.

[39] "[N]e reconnait point d'autre pénitence que la publique pour relever les pecheurs de leurs chutes". Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion,* 243. For the reception of Tertullian in seventeenth-century France, see Quantin, *Le Catholicisme classique*, 55–57, 84–86, 440–442, 449–451; Jean Jehasse, "Religion Et Politique: Le Tertullien De Nicolas Rigault (1628–1648)", in *Les Peres De L'Eglise Au XVII*e *Siècle*, ed. by Emmanuel Bury and Bernhard Meunier (Pars: Cerf, 1993), 227–235.

unrestricted appeal to openness about sinful behaviour. The Jansenists did not endorse public admission of sins as part of the believer's everyday practice. However, they did maintain a strong relationship between secret sins and acts of penitence: the latter would be public but not necessarily verbal.

Based on Tertullian's *De Paenitentia*, Arnauld thus draws a distinction between confession of the mouth and confession by exterior actions, and this distinction allows him to maintain that confession of sins always requires a public act of satisfaction. The latter cannot be achieved through private conversation *ad auriculam*—satisfaction must be public. However, Arnauld recognises the potentially troublesome nature of verbalising sinful acts in public, although his solution is not to praise the affordance of auricular confession. Instead, he maintains his conviction about a private space where sins are confessed, but he will not entertain the idea of a purely private act of penitence—a theology of private penitence is, for him, an impossibility. We further learn from Arnauld that Tertullian's *De Paenitentia* does not aim "to speak solely about public sins that are not hidden from humans".[40] Rather, its aim is to speak about every kind of mortal sin, and the "the only implication of his discourse is to make plain that he proposes [public] penitence, which he speaks of as a necessary remedy for all mortal sins".[41] This stance seems to limit the space of secret confession and to make smaller the axis of pastoral veridiction. Sins require public penitence, and if they do not meet this requirement, it is because they are lesser sins and simply a salient feature of human nature in its postlapsarian state. Combating these desires of the flesh—important as this struggle is—remains irrelevant to issues of confession. What remains of secret confession is a passage from the secrets of the self to the public sphere of the community:

> "It is enough", states Saint Leo, "to disclose to the priests the content of one's conscience by a secret confession", and consequently it was up to the priest to reduce the sinner to the standing of the penitents, to separate the sinner from the communion of the just, as is done [in separating] the sick from the healthy, prescribing for them the cures appropriate to their

[40] "[D]e parler seulement des péchés publics, qui ne sont pas cachés aux hommes".

[41] "[S]eule suite de son discours fait voir clairement qu'il propose la pénitence, dont il parle, pour remède nécessaire à tous les péchés mortels". Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 244.

> wounds, and chiefly [to prescribe for the penitent] the time that he must remain in the troublesome state of penitence before he is entitled [again] to the joy of participating in the mysteries.[42]

In sum, Arnauld views secret confession as a part of the penitential sequence. The verbal exchange between sinner and priest secures the transition from contrition—a state of being—to satisfaction—a course of action. The secret domain of confession seems entirely circumscribed by the public, and private penitence is a contradiction in terms. Unlike the humanists of the fifteenth century and the Lutherans of the sixteenth, Arnauld and his fellow Jansenists were not satisfied with emphasising the inward nature of penitence. Following the Council of Trent, they recognised the sacramental status of penitence, stressing not simply the pastoral utility but the theological necessity of public acts of satisfaction.[43]

In Defence of Secrecy

Denis Pétau's work on public penitence seeks out its enemy—Arnauld—in his own camp. The Jesuit engages at a historiographical level and attempts to rebut the argument that the early church considered public penitence a universal obligation. As stated above, it is not our aim to reconstruct the sources that Pétau and Arnauld invoke, but rather to tease out their different understandings of secret confession, public penitence, and the relationship between the two. However (and somewhat unsurprisingly), we should mention that Pétau attacks Arnauld's stronghold—that is, Augustine (354–430). Referring to a sermon by the Bishop of Hippo, Pétau mentions the example of a woman who had

[42] "*C'est assez,* dit saint Leon, *de découvrir aux Prêtres le fond de sa conscience par une confession secrète*, et c'était au Prêtre en suite de réduire le pécheur au nombre des pénitents, de le séparer de la communion des justes, comme on fait les malades de ceux qui se portent bien de lui prescrire les remèdes convenables à ses plaies et principalement le temps qu'il devait demeurer dans l'affliction de la pénitence, avant que de prétendre la joie de la participation des mystères". Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion*, 241–242.

[43] It was in this way that Pascal, with venomous irony, opposed the teachings of the Spanish scholastics, specifically Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) who had been quoted by the Jesuit Vincenzo Fillucci (1566–1622) in support of a lax view on penitence. Although this seems to contradict the patristic tradition, the Jesuits (according to Pascal) solve this inconsistency by drawing a sharp distinction between past practices and present practices. As a promoter of this historical distinction, Pascal explicitly refers us to Pétau. See Blaise Pascal, *Les Provinciales, Pensées et opuscules divers* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1999), 426.

denounced her husband's adultery to the bishop. Despite her confession, however, Augustine does not impose upon her a public act of penitence. Instead, he:

> [...] takes care to learn about [the sin] and is content to repeat it in private. It is thus safe to assume that everything, except this correction, was done in secret out of fear of revealing a hidden sin. Likewise, penitence took place in private for fear that the secret be betrayed.[44]

Pétau defends the legitimacy of this secret mode of confession, away from the public gaze, and he views Arnauld's work as compromising this level of secrecy. In this respect, Tertullian is a key reference point because this early Christian author seems to confirm that penitence is not private but public. However, Pétau observes that Arnauld's focus on Tertullian overlooks the fact that, in the fourth and fifth centuries, theologians had neatly distinguished between "two kinds of penitence, one public, and the other private".[45] To put this another way, the historical reconstruction presented by the Jansenist is one-sided in its approach and contradicted by evidence from the later history of the church. Furthermore, Pétau remarks that Arnauld simply rehearses views already stated by the former Bishop of Orléans, who also seems to have chosen Tertullian to deny the validity of secret confession: the early centuries of the church knew only one type of penitence, and the distinction between two types, according to the Bishop of Orléans, was a later invention. Historically, the church recognised "a secret penitence for secret sins",[46] but this was simply developed later than Arnauld and other authors suggested.

In addition to this historiographical critique, Pétau also addresses Tertullian's observations on penitence in greater detail. He argues that Arnauld systematically misrepresents the Tertullian framework. Arnauld, according to Pétau, presents no real arguments and his reasoning is weak.

[44] "[...] garde bien de le découvrir et se contente de le reprendre en particulier. Il est donc a présumer, que tout ainsi que cette correction se faisait en secret, de peur de déceler un péché occulte: tout de même la pénitence se passait en particulier de peur que le secret ne fût trahi". Denis Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique et de la préparation à la communion* (Paris: Gabriel Cramoisy, 1644), 90.

[45] "[D]eux sortes de pénitence, l'une publique, et l'autre particulière". Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique,* 90.

[46] "[U]ne pénitence secrète pour les péchés secrets". Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique,* 122.

Quoting Tertullian's tenth chapter,[47] Pétau states that these formulations have made his opponent believe that public penitence is required even for sins "that are hidden and secret".[48] Proposing an alternative framework for interpreting *De Paenitentia*, Pétau argues that:

> […] secret sins that are committed by thought alone could for good reason be exempted from this transition [into an act of public satisfaction], even if we take this [public satisfaction] on your understanding of it, according to which public penitence would have to be done for secret sins. The author [Tertullian] does not say that this type of penitence, generally, would be done for all [sins] of this nature. Therefore, and to substantiate this, it will suffice to agree with you that some secret sins—but not all of them!—were charged with this public satisfaction. One will answer you that only those sins among the secret [sins] that had been produced in the outside world suffer this pain [of public penitence], but not those that had remained in the interiority of thought without causing an effect.[49]

With further reference to canon law, Tertullian is interpreted as distinguishing between secret sins that are committed in public and secret sins that produce no effect and therefore remain properly secret. The latter kind of sins do not, according to Pétau, require an act of public penitence, and he argues that this is the true sense (*le vrai sens*) of Tertullian's chapters. Regarding the Greek term *ἐξομολόγησις*, Pétau defines this as "public satisfaction" (*satisfaction publique*) and he renders the Greek using the French word *confession*. Moreover, this confession "was not only or primarily oral, but rather in practice, and it consisted of obligations and

[47] Tertullian, *De Paenitentia* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 182.

[48] "[Q]ui sont cachés et secrets". Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique,* 123. Cf. Arnauld, *De la fréquent communion,* 244.

[49] "[…] péchés secrets qui se commettent par la seule pensée peuvent être raisonnablement exceptés de ce passage, encore que nous le prenions selon votre sens, pour dire qu'on faisait pénitence publique pour les péchés secrets. L'auteur ne dit pas qu'on la fît généralement pour tous ceux de cette nature. Il suffira donc pour le justifier de vous accorder que quelques péchés secrets, mais non pas tous, étaient chargés de cette satisfaction publique. On vous répondra que les seuls péchés d'entre les secrets, qui avaient été produits au dehors, payaient cette peine, mais non pas ceux qui étaient demeures dans l'intérieur de la pensée sans passer à l'effet". Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique,* 124.

exterior acts of penitence".[50] It turned out, however, that such confessions in public were "a subject of shame and confusion that turned many away for the fear and terror that they had of this publicising of themselves, as Tertullian calls it".[51] Here, Pétau has distinguished a set of secret sins which, in his interpretation, are not subject to public penitence. His argument, with reference to Tertullian's text, is an argument from absence and with reference to what seems reasonable: he invites us to think that Tertullian would not have thought that sins without manifest effect—sins of the mind—must be publicised for the world to see. Indeed, Pétau insists that public penitence was already controversial at the time of Tertullian. He calls public penitence an act and exercise of cleansing and annihilation (*de ravallement et d'anéantissement*). This kind of penitence is not secret but is known by many—even the public (*mais connu de plusieurs et même public*). Pétau understands secrecy as a necessary space where sins are not published but documented. This documentation of self makes known something that was formerly hidden, and the process of private confession is thus a process of self-knowledge. We might say that as a phase of discovery, the sinner confesses himself to a priest in words, and this secret confession in words constitutes a revelation of thoughts and actions that are wrong. Pétau's estimation is that these revelations need not be public but can remain within the space that penitent and priest share.

Pétau's defence of secrecy dovetails neatly with the Jesuits' promotion of the art of spiritual direction[52]—that is, a personal relationship between a member of the laity and a priest. In conversations between such couples (which often unfolded through letter writing), religious practices were transferred from a communal setting to a personal domain. Shared practices could be reinterpreted in the light of individual tastes and particular circumstances. Of course, spiritual direction had for centuries

[50] "[N]'était pas seulement, ou principalement, de bouche, mais plutôt d'effet, et qui consistait en des devoirs, et en des actions extérieures de pénitence". Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique*, 126.

[51] "[L]e sujet de la honte et de la confusion, qui en détournait plusieurs pour la crainte et l'horreur qu'ils avaient de cette publication d'eux-mêmes, comme l'appelle Tertullien". Pétau, *De la Penitence Publique*, 126. Cf. Tertullian, *De Paenitentia,* 182: "Plerosque tamen hoc opus, ut publicationem sui aut suffugere, aut de die in diem differre praesumo, pudoris magis memores quam salutis".

[52] For more on such Jesuit promotion, see Patrick Goujon, *Les politiques de l'âme. Direction spirituelle et Jésuites français à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019).

been part of monastic communities, and members of the laity—not the least those members who belonged to the upper echelons of society—had sought spiritual advice from prominent members of religious orders. However, in seventeenth-century France, the scope of these practices was extended. Spiritual direction was secularised and made available to the general public.[53] During the 1620s and 1630s, this secularisation had become a permanent fixture of devotional culture in early modern France. In 1631, Jean-Pierre Camus (1584–1652) published *Le Directeur spiritual déinteréssé*, and while this work offered a defence of secular priesthood and the right of priests to govern the souls of their parishioners,[54] it also outlined the potential pitfalls of following the advice of a spiritual director. These worries connected with specific gender expectations and reappeared in works such as Boileau's *Satire X* (1694) and La Bruyère's *Les Charactères* (1687). Indeed, we also find such anxieties articulated in the satirical works of Louis Petit (1615–1693) where, for instance, women are portrayed as especially eager for spiritual direction because they love to engage in conversation. Thus, the art of direction becomes a time-consuming and worldly interaction "where one speaks about the latest news, without ever forgetting the secrecy of the salons".[55] The reservation about secret confession, articulated by Arnauld, resonates with these later suspicions: it questions the validity of this space of private conversation that was increasingly imposing itself on the religious domain.

[53] This is explicitly stated about the works of François de Sales in the preface in Jean-Pierre Camus, *Acheminement à la dévotion civile* (Toulouse: R. Colomiez, 1625), n. p. [22].

[54] Jean-Pierre Camus, *Le Directeur Spirituel desinteressé selon l'Esprit du B. François de Sales, Evesque & Prince de Geneve, Instituteur de l'Ordre de la Visitation Ste-Marie* (Paris: Fiacre Dehors, 1631).

[55] "[O]n parle de nouvelles/Sans jamais oublier le secret des Ruelles". Louis Petit, *Discours satyriques et moraux ou Satyres generales* (Rouen: Richard Lallement, 1683), 107. More literally, the *ruelle* signifies an alley, but in architectural terminology it refers to the space between the bed and the wall which, and, by further extension, this came to be used for the chamber where literary gatherings would take place. The author is playing on all these meanings—that is, gossip from the streets, the intimate sphere of domestic life, and salon culture.

Concluding Remarks

In 1667, Nicolas Pavillion (1597–1677), the Bishop of Alet, issued the *Rituel d'Alet*. This prescriptive text outlined a catechetical programme that Pavillion had created in collaboration with a group of Jansenist theologians. The text addressed the laity and their consciences which should be subjugated to the clergy. This effort—like Arnauld's treatise—was congruent with the ambitions of a learned clergy that sought to recover the 'original' liturgical traditions of the Galican church and to renew French spirituality by returning to its original forms.[56] The *Rituel d'Alet* spiked controversy, and this controversy escalated not least because the text endorsed public penitence. Following the post-Tridentine impetus, this support was formulated by historical reference:

> During the first centuries of the church, the laity would be subjected to public penitence not only for public and scandalous sins, but also for secret sins that were judged definitively to cause the loss of baptismal innocence. Public penitence here refers to a penitence that was carried out before the church that joined her prayers and tears with those of the penitents in order to secure from God the remission of their wrongdoings.[57]

As we have seen, such a historical claim was not uncontested. Early modern societies, unlike medieval societies, seem to have passed a threshold where the model of the ancient church could not be implemented. Jean-Louis Quantin has identified several ambiguities that unfolded across different confessional cultures in the early modern era.[58] On the one hand, confessional teachings had to be integrated into the

[56] See Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le Catholicisme classique*, 493–503; Ellen Weawer, "Liturgy for the Laity: The Jansenist Case for Popular Pariticipation in Worship in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *Studia Liturgica*, 19:1 (1989), 46–59.

[57] "Dans les premiers siècles de l'Église ce n'était pas seulement pour les péchés publics et scandaleux, mais aussi pour des secrets que l'on jugeait faire perdre certainement l'innocence du baptême, que les laïques étaient soumis à la pénitence publique, c'est-á-dire à celle qui se faisait devant l'Église, laquelle joignait ses prières et ses larmes à celles des pénitents pour leur obtenir de Dieu la rémission de leurs crimes". *Ritual Romain du Pape Paul V à l'usage du diocèse d'Alet. Avec les Instructions & les Rubriques en français* (Paris: Charles Savreux, 1667), 163.

[58] Jean-Louis Quantin, "Le rêve de la communauté pure: sur le rigorisme comme phénomène européen", *Francia*: *Forschungen zur Westeuropäischen Geschichte* 31:2 (2004), 1–24.

interior: the imperative of such integration was a direct consequence of the Reformation, and the charting of the internal landscape—symbolised in devotional literature by the heart—intensified during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[59] On the other hand, interior states had to be translated into exterior action. The profound depth of the heart should not eclipse the space of social normativity. Striking the right balance between the secrets of the heart and social mores was, however, not easy. Across confessional divides, devotional practices such as penitence spiked controversy because the relationship between interior integration and exterior manifestation was not given but open to interpretation. The Jesuit position and its affirmation of auricular confession would play a central in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the modern sense of the self owes as much (if not more) to the Jesuit imagination as to Augustinian suspicions.[60] In fact, the rigour proposed by Arnauld seems almost utopian, and a model of communal identity—one where the private is submitted to the public—increasingly lost its validity. Indeed, the semantics of terms such as 'private'—in French, *privé(e)* and *particulier(ère)*—were changing,[61] and Pétau's criticism of Arnauld precisely ascribes a more substantial meaning to the private. Auricular confession safeguarded the sinful secrets of the self. This confidentiality was presented as an instrumental part of the struggle against a will in revolt. For this struggle to be successful, sin had to be analysed on the level of the individual. This idea resurfaced in the nineteenth century when confession of the truth about oneself migrated from the religious domain to penal theories and to medical practices. To mention a specific instance

[59] For more on this interior space in early modern France, see Nicholas D. Paige, *Being Interior: Autobiography and the Contradictions of Modernity in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Benedetta Papasogli, *Le "fond du cœur": figures de l'espace intérieur au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000); Mino Bergamo, *L'anatomia dell'anima* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1991).

[60] Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le Rigorisme Chrétien* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 45–70.

[61] For more on these terms, see Hélène Merlin-Kajman, "'Privé' and 'Particulier' (and Other Words) in Seventeenth-Century France", in *Early Modern Privacy*, ed. by Green et al., 79–104; Hélène Merlin-Kajman, "Le moi dans l'espace social, Métamorphoses du XVIIe siècle", in *Raisons pratiques, L'invention de la société, nominalisme politique et science sociale au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. by Laurance Kaufmann and Jacques Guilhamou (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2003), 23–43; Hélène Merlin-Kajman, "Le public et ses envers, ou l'archaïsme de Furetière", *Littératures classiques* 47 (2003), 345–380; Hélène Merlin-Kajman, *Public et littérature en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994).

of migration, the French psychiatrist François Lauret (1797–1851) would use cold showers to make patients confess that their personal experiences were not real but manifestations of an underlying mental illness.[62] This confession, however, was not understood as a cure. Rather, confession had to be continually secured if madness was to be counteracted. Thus, the truth did not automatically set the self-free from madness. It situated the patient within a medical history that was not clearly organised but collated anything and everything as possible signs of illness—this was a performance of the self as mentally ill.[63] Here, nineteenth-century confession in the asylum seems structurally parallel to Christian confession. In both instances, the self needs to know, as exactly as possible, who he or she is, even though access to this type of knowledge is only possible by telling about oneself to some other person.[64] Nineteenth-century psychiatry transformed the individual into an object of scientific inquiry, but it did so by reproducing ancient ideas about private states, confession, truth, and coercion. To confess oneself—even under the coercion of cold showers—was seen as a statement of fact and thereby as an act of saying something true.[65] In this complex web of practices of medical healing, like in the conquest of Christian souls, verbalising the truth about oneself—putting private states into words—remained the name of the game.

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[62] See, for instance, François Leuret, *Du traitement moral de la folie* (Paris: Baillière, 1840), 197–198.

[63] On this issue, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie. Charcot et l'iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Paris: Macula, 1982).

[64] On this connection between Christian confession and Leuret's procedures, see Michel Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth: Lecture at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, 17 November 1980", *Political Theory* 21:2 (1993), 198–227; Michel Foucault and Richard Sennett, "Sexuality and Solitude", *London Review of Books* 3:9 (1981), 3–7.

[65] See Michel Foucault, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique. Cours au Collège de France, 1973–1974* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2003), 158.

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PART IV

Intimate Conversations

CHAPTER 9

Marital Conversations: Using Privacy to Negotiate Marital Conflicts in Adam Eyre's Diary, 1647–1649

Katharina Simon

Adam Eyre (1614–1661), a yeoman living near the Yorkshire village of Penistone, was caught up in a longstanding marital conflict with his wife Susannah. Being two strong-minded and outspoken characters, the two fought nearly constantly over all sorts of everyday business. Religious matters, the family's finances, Susannah's illnesses, and Adam's penchant for drinking, gambling, and living far beyond his means fuelled their ongoing dispute. They often yelled at each other, cursing and blaming the other for their misery. His diary, published in 1875 under the title *A Dyurnall, or catalogue of all my accions and expenses* which covered the years 1647–1649, accounts for their disputes as well as their attempts to resolve them.[1] While the older works merely cited Adam Eyre as a

[1] The original manuscript is held by the West Yorkshire Archive Service: The diary of Adam Eyre, 1647–1649, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Kirklees, KC312/5/3. The nineteenth-century edition of the Yorkshire Surtees Society was edited by Henry

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reference point, two studieshave analysed the diary in greater detail in an attempt to reconstruct his sociability and his striving for social advancement.[2] Other historianshave used his diary to examine the yeoman's lifestyle or his reading habits.[3] Keith Wrightsonand Bernard Capp have both drawn attention to the diary as a rich source of information about early modern marital life. Wrightson has called the diary's account of the "conjugal negotiation" of the spouses a rarity.[4] Capp has referred to their agreement as an "extraordinary peace treaty" since both parties were willing to compromise in order to maintain domestic peace and thereby improve everyday cohabitation.[5] This study will offer a closer examination of this matter from the perspective of private conversations. It will be argued that Adam successfully tried to keep family, friends, and neighbours at bay in order to pacify their marital conflict in the privacy of their own home. Considering the fact that seventeenth-century family lives and disputes were closely entwined with their social surroundings and that friends and neighbours regularly intervened or mediated in interpersonal conflicts, Adam's attempt at a private settlement seams striking. As a relatively wealthy yeoman and influential member of his local church community, he was often involved in mediating conflicts within the community and his circle of friends. While he accepted mediation for other disputes he was involved in, he opted for a private settlement in his marital conflict. Why did Adam Eyre choose a private negotiation in this matter? What were the possibilities and advantages linked to a private settlement and how did the Eyres make use of these possibilities? In the

James Morehouse. See Adam Eyre "A dyurnall or catalogue of all my accions and expences from the 1st of January 1646–1647, by Adam Eyre", ed. by Henry James Morehouse, in *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Charles Jackson (Surtees Society, LXV, 1875), 1–118, esp. the appendix, 351–357; Andrew Hopper, "Social mobility during the English Revolution: the case of Adam Eyre", *Social History* 38:1 (2013), 26–45.

[2] Karl Westhauser, "Friendship and family in early modern England: the sociability of Adam Eyre and Samuel Pepys", *Journal of Social History* 27:3 (1994), 517–536.

[3] Thomas Lacqueur, "The cultural origins of popular literacy in England, 1500–1850", in Oxford Review of Education, II, 3 (1976), 263 and Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 79–80.

[4] Wrightson, *English Society* (Cambridge: Routledge, 2002), 71.

[5] Bernard Capp, *When gossips meet: Women, family, and neighbourhood in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003), 74.

analysis of private negotiations spaces of privacy, the privilege of privacy and the negotiators' relation to social norms is of particular importance.

Adam Eyre and his Diary

Adam Eyre was born in 1614 into a wealthy Catholic family. His father, Thomas Eyre moved from Derbyshire to Yorkshire and bought a large estate near Penistone,[6] farmed the approximately 22,000 acres of moorland, and developed it into a prosperous estate.[7] The Eyres were wealthy yeomen farmers who owned their land and could sublet land to their tenants. Their family seat, the elegant but remote country house Hazlehead Hall, illustrates their aspiration to the wealth and lifestyle of the landed gentry.[8] Adam turned from the Catholic faith of his ancestors to Puritanism. In his diary, he noted numerous visits to church services and sermons as well as the contemporary concerns of his church in which he was actively involved. His religion also gave him access to the well-established Puritan families of the area. His marriage to Susannah Mathewman in 1640 strengthened his ties with an influential Puritan family in his neighbourhood.[9] Although this marriage enhanced his status within the community, it resulted in a marital conflict that lasted for years.

In his diary, Adam documented his everyday business and activities. Despite the meticulous record of these descriptions, the explicit documentation of marital relations is a rare occurrence.[10] Just like his marriage, his religious devotion was characterised by ups and downs. Whenever his

[6] Hopper, "Social mobility", 28.

[7] "Hazlehead Hall", The Penistone Archive Online, https://penistonearchive.co.uk/hazlehead-hall/, accessed 2 January 2022.

[8] Increases in harvests and the sale of the surplus promoted this development. Yeomen were able to buy up smaller farms and increase their wealth, while at the same time the number of landless farm workers increased. See Craig Muldrew, "The 'Middling Sort': An Emergent Cultural Identity", in *A Social History of England 1500–1750*, ed. by Keith Wrightson (Cambridge: Routledge, 2017), 290–309, and Wrightson, *English Society*, 18–19.

[9] Hopper, *Social mobility*, 28.

[10] As Bernard Capp and Keith Wrightson both highlight in their reflections on Adam Eyre's diary: Bernard Capp, "Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England", in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (London: Macmillan, 1996), 126; Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, 70.

faith was strong, his diary entries recorded long religious reflections and promises to himself and to God to lead a more pious life.[11] In these passages, his diary bears some resemblance to the Puritan self-fashioning found in other diaries that contain stories of religious awakenings, struggles, and endless records of sins.[12] In contrast to these Puritan diaries, however, Adam Eyre's diary is only occasionally written in a sermonising style and is not restricted to religious matters.

On the surviving pages of his diary, Adam did not explain why he kept his journal. Nevertheless, some motives are self-evident. His diary helped him to keep accounts of his everyday business, his financial transactions, and his income and expenditure, a common practice for many early modern diarists.[13] Given that he lent and borrowed goods, animals, and money frequently, this documentation might be explained as an attempt to keep track of all his transactions. He also used his writing to reflect on his marriage and his religious experiences. Bearing in mind that he chose not to share the state of his marriage with his family and friends, he confided many honest descriptions of his marital disputes in his diary, perhaps to share his sorrows or to find solace and clarity of mind in putting them to paper. Irrespective of the motivations behind its composition, Adam Eyre's journal offers us a glance into a space where people had reasons to keep their conversation private: the relationship between spouses. Adam did not confide in his diary incautiously; instead, his self-accounting was guided by social norms and expectations whereby socially undesired actions were blacked out and 'censored'. When the dispute between the couple was especially acute, he noted in his diary that he

[11] One of these religious turning points will be explored later in this article. Which instances caused or initiated his religious turns is not documented in his diary. Since he visited different preachers and congregations, it is possible that his belief was strengthened by certain encounters or inspirational sermons. A correlation with his own failures with regard to his marriage and his financial affairs is also a plausible explanation for his turn towards to religion.

[12] Margo Todd, for example, has examined Puritan diaries with regard to the practice of "self-fashioning". These diaries contained catalogues of sins in which even the smallest transgressions were meticulously and self-critically recorded. Todd interprets these narratives as a Puritan writing and storytelling tradition, which aims at strengthening puritan identity and perseverance in times of religious and political challenges. See Margo Todd, "Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward", *Journal of British Studies* 31:3 (1992), 238, 263–264.

[13] Craig Muldrew, "The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England", *The Historical Journal* 39:4 (1996), 923.

had been tempted by a local woman.[14] The passages retelling the incident contain crossed-out, blackened words, and phrases that can no longer be read. Therefore, his actions and thoughts are lost to the readers, and one can only deduce that this encounter tempted him to contemplate adultery. It is probable that he censored his writings himself. Although it is unclear whether Adam Eyre intended his diary to be read or published, he seemed to have been aware of the fact that there was always a possibility of someone reading it. His wife reading the pages and knowing about his contemplated adultery would have added further fuel to fire. While some early modern diaries were hidden carefully or even written in a secret code in order to prevent outsiders from invading their space of privacy,[15] other diarists chose not to commit all their thoughts and actions to the pages of their diaries.[16] Diaries were not entirely private documents—their levels of privacy varied and shifted from diarist to diarist and, at times, even within the diary itself.

Marital Life and Conflicts

The pages of Adam's diary provide glimpses of everyday married life, at least for the years 1647–1649. During these years, the marriage threatened to dissolve several times. In the summer and autumn of 1647, long-lasting conflicts escalated particularly strongly. Arguments, quarrels, curses, threats, and longer periods of spatial separation run through the entries and testify to a marriage that began to crumble. Adam Eyre's

[14] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 55, as Hopper has shown, who was able to study Eyre's original manuscript in detail—a privilege I was denied by the Covid19 pandemic. Hopper, "Social mobility", 35.

[15] Yorkshire woman Anne Lister's (1791–1840) diary is a well-known example of such a coded diary. While writing her everyday business in plain English, she invented a secret code language to account for her secret meetings and love affairs with women. See Anna Clark, "Anne Lister's Construction of Lesbian Identity", *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7:1 (1996), 23–50.

[16] This circumstance is also influenced by a different concept of individualism and individuality. While the diaries of the sixteenth century served as chronicles of daily life, accounting for the change of season, agricultural and economic aspects, and important personal and social events in sparse sentences, the practice of self-reflection and entrusting one's most intimate emotions to the diary only emerged in the context of the cult of sensibility in the eighteenth century. See Kaspar Von Greyertz, *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit: Individualisierungsweisen in interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (Berlin–Boston: De Greuyter, 2016), 3–4.

annoyed, grumpy, and indifferent voice reveals frustration. At the beginning of the records, Adam and Susannah had already been married for seven years. The marriage remained childless. If this circumstance should have led to quarrels or grudges between the couple, such feelings were not voiced in the diary. Their arguments arose from daily life and close proximity. Being two stubborn, strong-minded characters, their interests clashed constantly.

Financial Matters

A frequent cause of conflict was the family's economic troubles. In 1647, the financial difficulties plaguing the Eyres were particularly severe since Adam Eyre, together with his brother Joseph, had run up heavy debts in order to provide troops and horses for the Parliamentarian army in the English Civil War.[17] Although he petitioned for the "Northerner's List"—a group of former army captains who demanded compensation for their financial expenses during the war[18]—the money was never fully repaid.[19] To a large extent, however, the family's financial difficulties were due to Adam's poor housekeeping and economic management since he consistently lived beyond his means, spent money he did not have, and incurred debts through his lifestyle, including his habits of betting, drinking, and gambling.[20] Susannah did not ask her father for help, nor was she prepared to give her husband money from her private estates.[21] The constant monetary worries and the resulting lack of security in their household put a permanent strain on the relationship.[22] According to the ideal of marriage as a partnership in work and life, both spouses were responsible for financial prosperity and security. Adam Eyre did a poor job of fulfilling his duty to provide for the family and gave his wife plenty

[17] Wrightson, *English Society*, 70.

[18] Hopper, "Social mobility", 37.

[19] Hopper, "Social mobility", 38.

[20] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 84.

[21] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 79.

[22] Wrightson, *English Society*, 70–71.

of reasons to criticise him.[23] With her own security as much at stake as her husband's, Susannah did not give in to her husband in money matters and stood up to him as she did in the case of his drinking and alcoholic excesses.

Adam Eyre's Lifestyle

Despite his Puritan convictions, Adam Eyre's way of life by no means corresponded to the Puritan ideal of a pious man who rejected worldly temptations in order to lead a godly life. In addition to his numerous outings, evening parties, and dinner invitations, Adam could regularly be found at the local pub enjoying the company of his fellow soldiers, drinking and gambling.[24] He noted, for example, that he "[s]pent the whole day drinking with the soldiers and others".[25] That these pleasures also collided with his role as a husband is evident, for Susannah was a thorn in the side of his alcoholic excesses and his late-night drinking bouts. When Adam came home heavily intoxicated, she locked him out, sending him to the yard or stables to sober up and not letting him back into the house until the next morning.[26] "[She] kept ye Yates [gates] shut, and sayd shee would be master of the house for that night".[27] Here, too, Susannah's temperament and strength of will become apparent. While the right to grant or deny access to the house was traditionally attributed to the 'man of the house', Susannah claimed and made use of this right to protect herself from her husband's alcohol-fuelled moods.

[23] Linda Pollock, "Little Commonwealths I: The Household and Family Relationships", in *A Social History of England 1500–1750*, ed. by Keith Wrightson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 67.

[24] Alehouses and drinking in company were an important factor in strengthening the network of local communities. In such contexts, both a sense of belonging and a sense of community were fostered, just as business, money, and community matters were discussed over a pint. See Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England*, Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History 21 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016).

[25] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 53. Westhauser reconstructed Eyre's sociability and its impact on his marriage to Susannah. See Westhauser, "Friendship and family", 517–536.

[26] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 65.

[27] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 54.

She punished him by expelling him from their home and thereby turning it into her space of refuge. The space and remoteness of Hazlehead Hall spared them from turning this into an immediately public affair, noted by their surrounding neighbours.

Quarrelling over Religion

Another point of conflict was religion. Linda Pollock has named financial and religious aspects as the two biggest challenges of marriage which were of particular importance when choosing a partner.[28] Especially among the dissenters,[29] potential spouses were chosen carefully from within Puritan circles.[30] But although Adam Eyre married into a well-respected Puritan family, religious questions were a common cause of conflict in the Eyre household. To Adam's displeasure, Susannah did not share his religious enthusiasm.[31] From time to time, he could convince her to accompany him to church, religious lectures, or sermons. Mostly, however, her poor health was cited as an excuse or pretext to stay at home. That Susannah did not share her husband's religious convictions—at least not to the same extent—is also clear from her outward appearance which Adam repeatedly criticised severely:

> This morne my wife began, after her old manner, to braule [quarrel] and revile [scold] mee for wishing her only to wear such apparell as was decent and comly, and accused mee for treading on her sore foot, with curses and others. Which to my knowledge I touched not; nevertheless, she continued in that extacy til noone.[32]

[28] Pollock, "Little Commonwealths", 65.

[29] The term "dissenters" subsumes different Protestant groups outside the Anglican Church which differed with respect to theology, religious practice, and social and political concepts. See Thomas Hahn-Bruckart, "Dissenter und Nonkonformisten—Phänomene religiöser 'Abweichung' zwischen den britischen Inseln und dem europäischen Kontinent", in *Europäische Geschichte Online (EGO)*, ed. by the Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG) (Mainz: IEG, 2016); Valerie Smith, "Introduction", in *Rational Dissenters in Late Eighteenth-Century England:'An Ardent Desire of Truth'* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2021), 1–20.

[30] Pollock, "Little Commonwealths", 65.

[31] Wrightson, *English Society*, 70.

[32] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 43.

Susannah's dress displeased her husband as it contradicted the strict Puritan requirements for an unadorned wardrobe. Susannah's tone also provoked him as she bickered, scolded, and cursed in response to his demand for moderation. It is obvious that Susannah was by no means a timid wife who bent to her husband's will without resistance. Susannah rejected his accusations, defied her husband, and gave free rein to her emotions. She may have worn the wrong dress, but he had stepped on her aching foot.

Adam's attempt to end this quarrel also testifies to the hot-headed nature of the two spouses, for it reads like a threat in the heat of the moment: "At dinner I told her I purposed never to come in bed with her til shee took more notice of what I formerly had to say to her".[33] Obviously, his resisting wife angered him, so he rather clumsily tried to punish her with a temporary spatial separation and the refusal of his marital duties. However, his attempts to demonstrate his male authority failed and could never lead her into submission.

Susannah was by no means willing to subordinate herself to her husband as was demanded of her in the Puritan understanding of marriage which saw the family as a 'godly household' characterised by a strict hierarchy. The woman had to submit to the authority of her husband. The non-conformist preacher, Edmund Calamy (1600–1666) wrote: "First reform your own families and then you will be better fit to reform the family of God", thereby entrusting families with the task of consolidating the divine social order on a small scale in order to carry it from there into society.[34] This corresponded to the common ideas of the time which understood domestic peace as an important cornerstone of the social order and thus attributed an important part of social peace to peace within the home and in marriage.[35] Conduct books would have suggested the strong hand of the pater families who should exercise his authority, discipline his wife, and restore the rightful order of the house.[36] However, the

[33] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 43.

[34] Quoted in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, "The Protestant idea of marriage in early modern England", in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. by Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 163.

[35] Inken Schmidt-Voges, *Mikropolitiken des Friedens. Semantiken und Praktiken des Hausfriedens im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin–Munich–Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 47.

[36] Schmidt-Voges, *Mikropolitiken*, 47.

Eyres' conflict negotiations show that it was not the power of the father of the house that was applied to restore domestic peace but a compromise on an equal footing. They opted for a private settlement of the affair in order to be able to discuss and solve the matter more flexibly with regard to social norms and gender roles.

Negotiating Peace

The marriage reached its low point before Adam could initiate a resolving discussion. One night in August, his sleeplessness made him reflect on the status of his marriage:

> This night ma wife had a painful night of her foote, which troubled mee so that sleepe went from mee. Wherupon sundry wicked wordly thoughts came in my head, and, namely, a question wheter I should live with my wife or noe, if she continued so wicked as shee is.[37]

Here, it is clear that the prolonged quarrels wore him out and the thought of leaving his wife crossed his mind. He quickly realised that this would be a solution to the conflict, albeit not one that he could reconcile with his religious beliefs. He responded with immediate prayer and Christian night reading: "[W]hereupon I ris and prayd to God to direct mee a right. And after I read some good Counsell […] I prayed God again to direct mee, and so slept til morne quitely, praysed be God".[38] His religious conviction prompted him not to give up on his marriage. The social consequences that a separation would have worried him as well. On 22 December 1647, Adam Eyre made a resolution:

> I am resolved hereafter never to pay for any body in the alehouse, nor never to entangle myself in company so much again, and I pray God give mee grace that, sleighting the things of this life, I may looke up to Him.[39]

That this resolution, despite its appeal to a religious way of life, was probably made primarily for financial considerations is made clear by the beginning of the entry: "This day I rested at home all day, and cast up the

[37] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 53.

[38] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 53.

[39] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 81.

accounts of my expenses for this yere; and I find them to be nere hand 100l. wheras I have not past 30l. per ann. To live on."[40] The decision to spend less money in the alehouse and more time at home can be justified with a religious conversion, but it was motivated to a large extent by his annual economic balance sheet which once again showed Adam Eyre that he was living far beyond his means. That this realisation drove him to religion is, nevertheless, conclusive.

His turn to religion was strengthened by an event in January which finally prompted a decisive attempt to settle the marital conflict. On 1 January 1648, a strong storm hit the Eyres' house, destroying the chimney and nearly endangering Adam's life as falling parts missed him only by inches. To Adam, this was a sign of divine intervention and providence.[41] Since God had spared him, he took this 'act of mercy' as an opportunity to also be merciful to his wife and to finally pacify the long-running conflict between the couple. The historian Keith Wrightson has emphasised that Adam tried to do this not by asserting his authority as husband and head of household, but by proposing a compromise.[42] In his diary, Adam noted:

> This morne I used some words of persuasion to my wife to forbeare to tell mee of what is past, and promised her to become a good husband to her for ye tyme to come, and shee promised mee likwise shee would doe what I wished her in anything, save in setting her hand to papers; and I promised her never to wish her therunto. Now I pray God that both shee and I may leave of all our old and foolish contentions, and joyne together in His service without all fraud, malice, or hypocrisye; and that Hee will for ye same purpose illuminate our understandings with His Holy Spirit.[43]

From the "words of persuasion", it is clear that this attempt to resolve the conflict was a verbal negotiation process in which both spouses summed up their marriage and jointly decided to settle the dispute. In doing so, they invoked the marital ideal of reciprocity together with their Christian convictions and ideals. Just as Adam Eyre promised his wife to be a good husband, she also promised to be a good wife to him and to

[40] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 81.

[41] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 84.

[42] Wrightson, *English Society*, 71.

[43] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 84.

submit to his wishes. They tried to step away from ungodly feelings and behaviours such as malice and hatred and prayed to God to help them keep their promise to each other and to Him. In addition to that, the category of privacy was a crucial element of their mediation process because it facilitated their negotiation at eye-level. By choosing to settle the dispute privately, they could—at least to some extent—step away from the gender roles expected of them by society. Adam did not have to demonstrate his power and authority as the father of the house since there was no one present to doubt his position, virility, and honour. Their private settlement allowed them to bend social norms and expectations. They would take these possibilities of private settlements even further as their dispute continued.

Although both Adam and Susannah called upon God, asking Him to support them in keeping the peace, their quarrels resumed as early as February. When Adam Eyre came home late from a funeral, he responded to his wife's reproaches by breaking her spinning wheel which he contritely repaired the next morning.[44] The fiery temper and hot-headedness of the two spouses could therefore not be eradicated even by their peace treaty. Adam found it equally difficult to keep his resolution to go out and drink less. Time and again, he fell back into old patterns of behaviour. However, his drinking binges were now followed by long penitent diary passages in which he religiously reflected on his actions and vowed to mend his ways.[45] On 11 October 1648, Adam told his wife that she could run the house as she saw fit and assured her that "neither would I medle with her at all".[46] On the one hand, this statement reads like a declaration of surrender, but on the other hand, it also reads like the necessary decision to find a pragmatic solution for their cohabitation that was suitable for everyday life.

Privacy as Privilege

Since it is only Adam's diary that provides us with information on their disputes and their attempts to resolve them, we cannot know for sure that nobody was involved in the mediation process. Susannah's perspective on

44 Eyre, "Dyurnall", 99.

45 Eyre, "Dyurnall", 98, 104.

46 Eyre, "Dyurnall", 111.

the issue is not passed on and there are no surviving records that can shed light on the involvement of other family members, friends, or neighbours. If such involvement took place, Adam chose not to document it in his diary. On the page, he presents the settlement as a private one that was achieved without any interference or mediation. It is quite atypical to assume that Adam and Susannah mediated their marital conflict without any assistance. Due to the close social and spatial proximity, neighbours were often aware of marital conflicts and offered help in mediating and restoring the peace of the house as well as its surrounding community. Even more astonishing is the fact that the marital conflict did not invoke community reaction either in form of unwanted advice, mediation, or gossip.

Historians such as Joachim Eibach and Inken Schmidt-Voges have emphasised the openness of the early modern house and its interconnectedness with its surrounding community.[47] Many rooms of the houses were freely accessible.[48] Due to close spatial and social proximity, what took place behind close walls was neither private nor secret. In these close-knit communities, people heard, saw, and knew nearly everything that went on inside their neighbours' houses, which is why they were central witnesses in conflicts that ended up in court.[49] Servants and apprentices who shared the family's living space shared their daily lives and conflicts as well. Possibilities and spaces for privacy and seclusion slowly emerged from the seventeenth century onwards when working and living spaces were separated. Servants' quarters were transferred from the centre to the basement or the attic. Neighbours and guests were only invited to the

[47] Joachim Eibach, "Das Haus: zwischen öffentlicher Zugänglichkeit und geschützter Privatheit (16.–18. Jahrhundert)", in *Zwischen Gotteshaus und Taverne: öffentliche Räume in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004), 183–206; Joachim Eibach and Inken Schmidt-Voges, eds., *Das Haus in der Geschichte Europas. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin–Munich–Boston: De Gruyter, 2015); Joachim Eibach, "From Open House to Privacy? Domestic Life from the Perspective of Diaries", in *The Routledge History of the Domestic Sphere in Europe: 16th to 19th Century*, ed. by Joachim Eibach and Margareth Lanzinger (London: Routledge, 2020), 347–363.

[48] Joachim Eibach, "Das offene Haus: Kommunikative Praxis im sozialen Nahraum der europäischen Frühen Neuzeit", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 38:4 (2011), 624.

[49] Malcolm Gaskill, "Little Commonwealths II: Communities", in Wrightson, *Social History,* 84–104.

parlour or the dining room.[50] This process was distributed socially and hierarchically, allowing plenty of space and possibilities of retreat for the wealthy but hardly any for the poor. Servants and day labourers had to share narrow rooms or even beds and could often only experience privacy in the outdoors.[51] Nevertheless, most people managed to create spaces or loopholes for privacy, sometimes even with their community's help. However, the possibilities and spaces for this varied according to their gender, age, and status.

A marital conflict that took place over such a long period of time as happened in the case of the Eyres should have been known to their closest social circles. However, even though both spouses came from local Puritan families, family relations or visits do not appear often on the pages of Adam's diary. If there were any attempts at intervention or mediation by family members—something which would have been typical, if other sources are to be believed[52]—Adam did not put them down in writing. Even if the servants and farm workers were most likely aware of the state of the Eyres' marriage, the gossip had either not reached the community or prompted them to act on it—at least there are no indications in Eyre's diary that the domestic conflict was the subject of community gossip. If rumours had been circulating, it would have been likely for the Eyres to react to it. How could Adam and Susannah contain rumours and reject any form of unwanted intrusions into and interventions upon their privacy? How and why could they opt for a private settlement? The Eyres' home Hazlehead Hall, which is located a few miles away from the villages of Thurlstone and Penistone, provided the spatial room to keep neighbours at bay. In contrast to smaller and narrower living quarters, the size and remoteness of their home offered more spaces and options for privacy. Their quarrelling was out of earshot of their neighbours, and even the locking out-and-denying access strategy of Susannah's was probably only visible to the servants. Adam's diary does not document conflicts

[50] Eibach, "Das offene Haus", 626–627.

[51] Mary Thomas Crane, "Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England", *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9:1 (2009), 4–22.

[52] In my dissertation project, I study several diaries, autobiographies, and letters retelling family conflicts. Close family members such as sisters, brothers, and parents were often the first ones who offered themselves as mediators. In some cases, their mediation was felt as an intrusion, whereas others welcomed the support they received from their family.

with servants, but a court case has survived that shows him as a supporting employer who helped servants in need.

The Quarter Sessions held in Pontefract[53] in 1640 list Adam Eyre involved in a "bastardy case". Mary Turner, a young woman from Eyre's parish in Penistone, gave birth to an illegitimate child. James Turton was named as the father.[54] Adam Eyre's name appears in court records because he had offered to pay for the child's maintenance until its father would agree to repay his debts to Eyre. Although it is not explicitly stated in the court records, Eyre's involvement in the case makes it probable that Mary and James were tenants or servants working on his estate. When informed about the pregnancy, Adam chose to support the young woman, lending her money to take care of the child. While many early modern masters dismissed their servants as soon as their illegitimate pregnancy was revealed,[55] Adam tried to mediate and support Mary. Since settling the financial maintenance of mother and child was the main target pursued in these cases, he tried to force James to take financial responsibility.[56] Since rumours about illegitimate pregnancies usually spread rapidly via local gossip, his current servants would, in all likelihood, know about Adam's supporting intervention in the case and might have reconsidered harming a good and supportive employer as well as jeopardising their own position by spreading the word about the Eyres' marriage troubles.

Adam Eyre's actions did not only gain him respect and credit from his tenants and servants but also from the members of his community. Furthermore, he was privileged because of his status within his community. He belonged to an influential and relatively wealthy family, and although being a yeoman he belonged to the middling sort, his actions and social networks show that he acted and aspired to be perceived

[53] Pontefract was a Yorkshire market town east of Wakefield. Why the case was brought forward in Pontefract and not in Wakefield—which is closer to Penistone—is unclear.

[54] Indictment of Adam Eyre from the Quarter Sessions in Pontefract, 1640, West Riding Quarter Session Records, 1637–1914, online access via Ancestry archive.org.https://archive.org/stream/YASRS054/YASRS054_djvu.txt. Since this incident happened six years before his diary starts, Adam's perspective is not documented and we can only use the sparse report of the Quarter Session records to retrace the story.

[55] Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86.

[56] Margaret A. Lyle, "Regionality in the Old Poor Law: The Treatment of Chargeable Bastards from Rural Queries", *The Agricultural Review* 53:2 (2005), 144.

as a country gentleman.[57] He called members of the local gentry his friends, moved in polite society, and was actively engaged in his church community.

As an influential member of his community, Adam was frequently involved in mediation processes that threatened to disturb the community's peace and order. Interpersonal conflicts disturbed the peace of the house and possibly also the peace of the community.[58] Since the community played an elementary role in the functioning of each household by providing mutual help and support, lending and borrowing goods, tools, or money, organising the common lands, and taking care of its members in times of need, conflicts could pose a threat to this well-functioning system of mutuality.[59] According to early modern concepts of order, the house was a cornerstone for a peaceful society. Order and peace of the house could either stabilise or threaten public peace.[60] Thus, domestic peace was not private but a community matter. Conflicts being a constant part of community life, people had to be skilled mediators experienced in different practices of conflict management.[61] Although some conflicts were solved within the household, often friends, family members, or local people of high status—such as churchwardens, ministers, or local gentlemen—acted as mediators.[62] Adam Eyre made use of his social status when he offered help in mediating conflicts within his parish and his circle

[57] Hopper, "Social mobility", 44.

[58] Inken Schmidt-Voges and Katharina Simon, "Managing Conflicts and Making Peace", in *Routledge History of the Domestic Sphere,* 254–268.

[59] Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, eds., *Communities in early modern England: Networks, place, rhetoric,* Politics, Culture and Society in early modern Britain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Muldrew, *The Culture of Reconciliation*, 915–942; Wrightson, *English Society*.

[60] Steve Hindle, "The Keeping of the Public Peace", in *The state and social change in early modern England, c. 1550–1640* (Basingstoke and Hampshire: St. Martin's Press, 2000), ed. by Steve Hindle, 94–115.

[61] Glenn Kumhera, *The Benefits of Peace: The Medieval Mediterranean Ser* (Boston: Brill, 2017); Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounine, eds., *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Taylor & Francis, 2017).

[62] An in-depth analysis of different actors and practices of conflict management within early modern communities is attempted in my dissertation project, linked to the Department of Early Modern History at the Philipps University of Marburg, Germany. Looking at diaries, autobiographies, petitions, church court records, and other sources, I retrace different practices, actors, and strategies of conflict management and their impact on the community's identity, resources, and concepts of peace.

of friends. He also acted as a mediator in numerous community disputes, offering his help in private, business, and church matters.

When conflicts arose between Adam Eyre and his good friend and temporary house resident Edward Mitchell, Adam did not hesitate to enlist the help of his friends and neighbours to mediate in this dispute.[63] The conflict between the Eyres and their house residents broke out over different ideas of cohabitation and was mediated by a couple of friends. So why did Adam accept mediation in the conflict with his friend Mitchell but not with his wife? The fact that they refused to involve other family members, friends, or neighbours in negotiating their conflict most likely indicates the danger it might have posed to the couple's reputation within the community. In contrast to the conflict with Mitchell (who he regarded as entirely in the wrong by violating the 'house rules' and transgressing the Eyres' hospitality), the stakes were higher for the Eyres with regard to their marriage troubles. As a well-respected member of the neighbourhood and a leading member of his church, the fact of their marital dispute becoming a public affair would have dealt a serious blow to the Eyres' reputation.[64] The inclusion of other mediators might have revealed the fact that Adam could not—and did not—dare to always stand up to his strong-willed and often domineering wife and that he had to frequently stomach her numerous insults and curses.

At a time when male honour was decisively defined by his male authority as husband and father, it was dangerous to one's good name to publicly display a lack of male strength, control, and authority towards one's wife.[65] The much-feared defamatory term 'cuckold' primarily pointed at the loss of sexual control over one's wife—for example, by her committing adultery. Closely connected to this, however, was the image of the woman as an 'angry scold' who insulted her husband and thus withdrew from his control before the eyes of the public.[66] Adam could not discipline his wife, and Susannah was not willing to subject herself to his

[63] After the first attempt at mediation had failed, a lawsuit was filed to advance the matter. Ultimately, however, another friend was asked to act as an arbiter and to propose a settlement. See Eyre, 31.

[64] Sibylle Backmann, *Ehrkonzepte in der Frühen Neuzeit. Identitäten und Abgrenzungen* (Berlin and Boston: Akademie Verlag, 2018), 13.

[65] Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London: Routledge, 1999), 131.

[66] Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 104–105.

authority. Thus, both spouses contradicted the gender norms and standards of appropriate behaviour expected by societal conventions. Adam's previous attempts to rebuke his wife through threats of domestic violence failed and triggered similarly resolute forms of resistance in her.

While his status meant that he had a lot to lose if the conflict became known, it also enabled him to negotiate the conflict privately. This opportunity to keep marital conversations private was a privilege granted by his social status and authority. It kept people of his close surroundings from daring to interfere or gossip and offered him space for a private settlement of the dispute. Conflict resolution demanded a certain flexibility with regard to gender norms and expectations. Since these gender roles were crucial to their public reputation, only a private settlement would allow them the space for such a pragmatic and open negotiation.

Possibilities of a Private Settlement

Just as the peace treaty negotiated in private had allowed the Eyres to bend gender roles and expectations by arguing and compromising at surface level, they continued to make use of the possibilities offered by private settlements. When they realised that their negotiated 'peace treaty' could not pacify the conflict permanently, they came up with an original and pragmatic solution. Andrew Hopper, who reconstructed Adam's professional and political ambitions in London in the 1650 s, was able to show that Adam Eyre spent almost the entire decade in the capital.[67] By taking up employment by the Strand in London, he found an excuse to stay away from Yorkshire—and thus from his wife—for long periods of time. They agreed that Adam would live in London and Susannah would run the household in Yorkshire—an arrangement that apparently suited them both. Adam's above-mentioned concession to his wife to run the house as she saw fit and his promise to not "medle with her at all" can be interpreted as a verbalisation of this arrangement of spatial separation.[68] This arrangement allowed Susannah to maintain the appearance of an obedient wife to the outside world, bowing to the will and decision of her husband. Inwardly, their solution was probably as opportune to her as it was to her husband, since in addition to suspending everyday quarrels,

[67] Hopper, "Social mobility", 39–40.

[68] Eyre, "Dyurnall", 111.

his absence also gave her greater freedom and independence in her daily life.

Apart from religious and social reasons, the couple's strained economic situation hindered a court-sanctioned separation from table and bed as the couple's already strained economic situation. Since a permanent separation that would equal to a longstanding solution to their conflicts was unavailable to them, they opted for a strategy that could manage their quarrels temporarily—that is, they practised conflict management.[69]

Adam's new position in London allowed the Eyres to practice an unofficial separation that kept them from jeopardising the family's honour and good name and enabled them to live apart for long periods of time. They created a space to lead their lives separately, and this space of privacy was again a privilege of their status because they could afford to pay for two houses and simultaneously cover all their household expenditures. His enterprises in London helped to explain and justify their spatial separation and gave the arrangement a respectable outward appearance. This pragmatic resolution of their marital conflict was enabled by the privacy of their settlement, their joint decision and agreement, and their social and financial status that allowed for a temporary separation which was unattainable for those less well-off.

The Eyres developed a practice that was suitable for everyday life, one which extended the norms of everyday married life and adapted them for their own needs. This pragmatic approach shows that there were spaces and possibilities in private settlements to flexibly adapt existing norms of marriage and separation to suit one's own needs, as long as these norms were not openly violated. Mediating a conflict successfully included the search for pragmatic and flexible solutions that expanded norms and expectations. If a long-term, sustainable solution to the conflict was not possible, it was necessary to 'manage' the conflict and to reduce damage to a minimum, both for the two spouses and for their social surroundings.

[69] The term *conflict management* is used in political science and in peace and conflict studies in order to distinguish it from conflict resolution. While *conflict resolution* is applied to a sustainable elimination of the causes of conflict, conflict management refers to the temporary handling and containment of a conflict that cannot be pacified completely. See Louis Kreisberg, "The Conflict Resolution Field: Origins, Growth and Differentiation", in *Peacemaking in international conflict: Methods & techniques*, ed. by I. William Zartman (Washington, D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 25–60, and Carmela Lutmar and Benjamin Miller, *Regional peacemaking and conflict management: A comparative approach*, Routledge Global Security Studies (London: Routledge, 2016).

Conclusion

Retracing Adam and Susannah's various attempts to solve their ongoing marriage disputes with regard to the dimension of privacy can help to broaden the perspective on practices of conflict management. Private settlements could offer opportunities to find flexible and pragmatic solutions by adapting, bending, or extending local norms and conventions, both in the communicative process of negotiation as well as in the agreements to solve the conflict. The access to such a private settlement was a privilege. The Eyres' social standing and financial capacities made allowances for—in spite of all financial troubles—private spaces to settle disputes. Their remote home Hazlehead Hall and their possibilities to live in two separate households can be related to Beate Rössler's concept of *local privacy*—a home or a space that offers access to separate spheres and spaces for private conversations.[70] This space for private negotiation and settlement was a privilege enabled by their social status. Local privacy—in the sense of a lack of intrusion or intervention—was available more easily to persons of a higher social status. Rössler approaches privacy in the form of a triad. While local privacy refers to the spaces for privacy, her categories of *informational privacy* and *decisional privacy* relate to the decisions and practices that keep information private. While many early modern conflicts were—either voluntarily or involuntarily—negotiated with the involvement of the household's social surroundings, some were deliberately kept private. The Eyres' attempt to control and keep information about the status of their marriage from family, friends, and neighbours in order to avoid intrusion, gossip, and other forms of social control can be interpreted as a strategy of obtaining informational privacy.[71] This, however, is also closely linked to Rössler's third category of decisional privacy, "an individual subject's scope for action in all his social relations, a space for taking and making decisions in which individual life-projects can be devised, developed and safeguarded".[72] The Eyres made use of this broadened scope for action to negotiate a solution that would suit them both. By bending social norms and gender roles in private, they managed to find a solution that they both agreed upon and that improved their daily lives. Privacy enhanced the scope for flexibility

[70] Beate Rössler, *The Value of Privacy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 18.

[71] Rössler, *The Value of Privacy*, 111.

[72] Rössler, *The Value of Privacy*, 93.

and pragmatism, not only with regard to conflict negotiation, but also to other forms and situations of private conversations—a fact illustrated by this volume.

Although privacy expanded the scope for action and the bending of norms, there were limits to these flexible arrangements. The case of the Eyres shows that neither a diary nor a private home could offer complete shelter or escape from social norms and obligations. Their unofficial separation over long periods of time kept up the pretence of a functioning marriage. By bending norms and customs without breaking or rejecting them entirely, they enhanced their privacy and their resources to improve their daily lives within the given framework. They tried to keep their social surroundings at bay, but early modern houses were open houses. Families and their communities were closely entwined and interconnected. Public expectations and their mechanisms of social control permeated the walls, guided private lives, and remained a point of reference that people's actions and life choices had to measure up to.

A sharp distinction between 'private' and 'public' neither captures early modern living nor the process of private conflict negotiation. On the contrary, early modern privacy can more aptly be conceptualised as a scale or a spectrum that varied and shifted between privacy and publicity. People could create spaces for privacy, practice informational and decisional privacy, and make use of the grey areas of privacy, allowing them to stray from social control and bend social norms and expectations at least to some extent. Private settlements offered more room for flexibility and pragmatism both with regard to the process of negotiation and the negotiated resolution or arrangement. Keeping up appearances, however, could not be disregarded. Therefore, the Eyres' settlement had to keep up the pretence of a functioning marriage in order to keep and protect the family's social, financial, and religious currencies.

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CHAPTER 10

"Unnecessary Conversations": Talking Sex in the Early Modern Polish Village

Tomasz Wiślicz

The Principle of Discretion

Early modern moral norms in the Polish countryside required a fundamental discretion when it came to sexual life—both legal, that is, within marriage and illegal, that is, extra-marital or premarital. This principle of discretion applied above all to actions: no one should ever give the impression of having sex, no matter whether it was marital intercourse or love affairs that violated the declared moral norms.[1] Given the living

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[1] I discuss the functioning of this principle of discretion in more detail in the book entitled *Love in the Fields. Relationships and Marriage in Rural Poland in the Early Modern Age: Social Imagery and Personal Experience* (Warsaw: Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, 2018), http://rcin.org.pl/ihpan/publication/84658. My conclusions were based on an analysis of all surviving rural court registers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from Poland, with the complementary

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conditions in peasant huts at that time where the whole family and sometimes farmhands used to cohabit one room and where it was hardly even possible to have one's own bed, it was naturally difficult to conceal one's sex life perfectly. Therefore, the implementation of the principle of discretion most crucially required an adequate attitude on the part of the social entourage. As formulated by Catherine Beck in her discussion of social coexistence on British navy ships—that is, in conditions even less favourable than an overcrowded peasant hut—privacy was "created through a system of noticing but not taking notice", one in which participants "afforded each other privacy by actively not taking notice of certain behaviours which may cross or disrupt the boundaries".[2] In the early modern Polish countryside, this attitude was exercised through another side of the principle of discretion—which was not to acknowledge others having sex unless it was an act forbidden by law and custom. It should be noted here that there was quite a large gap between the declared and the observed norm in the early modern peasant community. This especially concerned sexual contact between unmarried people, in particular the youth who, despite the prohibitions of the Church and local legal systems, were treated quite leniently—a blind eye was turned as long as there was no scandal.[3]

use of pre-ethnographic descriptions of non-rural observers (nobles, officials, and clergy). I also use these judicial sources in the present study.

[2] Catherine Beck, "Breaching the cabin walls: madness, privacy and care at sea in the eighteenth-century British navy", in *Privacy at Sea: Practices, Spaces, and Communication in Early Modern Maritime History*, ed. by Natacha Klein Käfer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

[3] A considerable number of studies are devoted to the distinctiveness and characteristics of the sexuality of early modern peasantry in several European countries, beginning with the classic books by Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Les amours paysannes, XVIe–XIXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) and Geoffrey Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1979). I would like to draw attention here to a few valuable but less well-known studies since they provide us with interesting insights into this subject on the basis of source material from less well-described regions of Europe, such as Bavaria, Hungary, Estonia, and Finland. See Stefan Breit, *'Leichtfertigkeit' und ländliche Gesellschaft. Voreheliche Sexualität in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: De Gruyter, 1991); István György Tóth, "Peasant sexuality in eighteenth–century Hungary", *Continuity and Change*, 6:1 (1991), 43–58; Merili Metsvahi, "Description of the peasants' sexual behavior in August Wilhelm Hupel's 'Topographical Messages' in the context of the history of the Estonian family", *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 47:3 (2016), 301–323; Hanna Kietäväinen–Sirén, "'The Warm Water in

In addition, the principle of discretion also applied to speech. In the case of illicit premarital relations, sex should never be discussed in public as long as its consequences were not visible to the naked eye—that is, until an (illegitimate) child had been conceived. Only then did the issue become a matter of increased interest to the community, and that interest could be expressed by discussing the resolution of the crisis through marriage or alimony as well as by mocking the lovers.[4]

Regarding marital sex, it had to be surrounded by complete silence. We have virtually no source accounts on this subject, except for extremely standardised pastoral instructions that emphasised the reproductive function of marital sex as well as the modesty and unconditional fidelity in marriage, not to mention the obedience of the wife towards her husband's will (provided that he treated his wife with respect).[5] In fact, there is practically no information about the reality of sexual lives of married couples. The opposite is the case with extra-marital affairs, since peasants were particularly vigilant about marital infidelity and vigorously discussed those who broke the ideal model and betrayed their legal spouses. However, even then, the implicit expectation was that one should not exaggerate when spreading rumours since slander could oblige the gossiper to pay a very heavy price. The village courts punished adulterers severely, but they also punished those who dared to "sow discord between the married couple"[6] with their words.

However, the principle of discretion and refraining from talking about sex was not synonymous with prudishness. It was only later, at the end of the nineteenth century, that prudishness began to shape attitudes to sexuality in the Polish countryside due to the joint efforts of the Catholic Church and bourgeois moralisers. In early modern times, despite this principle of far-reaching discretion, we find evidence that peasants used to

my Heart'—The Meanings of Love among the Finnish Country Population in the Second Half of the 17th Century", *The History of the Family*, 16:1 (2011), 47–61.

[4] Wiślicz, *Love in the Fields*, 49–51.

[5] The most comprehensive of such guidebooks was: Marcin Nowakowski, *Wety duchowne albo rozmowy Księdza perswadującego zgodę małżonkom źle żyjącym, do Kolędy przydane* (Kraków, 1753).

[6] Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (henceforth: AGAD), Zbiór Branickich z Suchej 321/407, 169 [1784].

discuss sex.[7] Those conversations were, of course, conducted in private, intimate settings so that no one could overhear. However, as sexual life was strictly regulated by law and some forms of intimate behaviour were prosecuted by the local judiciary, it was not uncommon for these private conversations to find their way into the interrogation protocols of people accused of transgressing moral norms.

Certainly, when analysing these intimate conversations about sex as they were recorded in court files, we need to consider the context in which they were reported. Most of them are parts of court statements submitted under threat of the punishment that awaited fornicators and adulterers. They are cited to prove one's innocence or at least to diminish one's guilt. They are also intended to be credible and convincing to the members of the village court, which is why they present how things *should* have happened rather than how they really were. Nevertheless, we can assume that those records reflected social imagery and the hierarchy of values, repeated commonly used phrases and arguments, and ultimately may even have reported actual events, although we will never know to what extent.

A distinct problem that we must consider is the issue of the editing of judicial protocols by the court scribe. Although we are not dealing here (as in Montaillou)[8] with the translation of testimonies into minutes, given that both the language of the record and the language used by the interrogated was Polish, we must nonetheless be aware of the fact that the text was edited and possibly censored by the scribe.

Unnecessary Conversations

One particular context in which private conversations about sex in early modern Polish peasant culture becomes visible in court records needs to be highlighted. In many court protocols and sentences in cases of fornication or adultery, we find that one common ground for suspicion of

[7] From the source information which has survived, it seems that peasant discussions about sex generally resembled, in terms of their substance, those held in urban settings at the time. See Julie Hardwick, *Sex in an Old Regime City: Young Workers and Intimacy in France, 1660–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 65–77.

[8] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294–1324* (London: Penguin, 1978). See also Jessie Sherwood, "The Inquisitor as Archivist, or Surprise, Fear, and Ruthless Efficiency in the Archives", *The American Archivist*, 75:1 (2012), 56–80.

involvement in an illicit relationship between a man and a woman was precisely the fact that they talked to each other in situations beyond the control of the community—that is, either somewhere out of sight, one-on-one, or simply in a hushed voice. In the eyes of the commune, such behaviour was suspicious per se.[9] Court records often refer to these exchanges as "unnecessary" (*zbyteczne*), "inappropriate" (*nieprzystojne*), or "frolicky" (*płoche*) conversations.[10] The use of the word "conversation" (*konwersacja*) here is of particular interest. The word comes from the Latin noun *conversatio* (meaning 'conduct, behaviour') which was derived from the verb *converso* (literally 'interact with, pass time with'), but since the sixteenth century its meaning had noticeably changed and had begun to mean primarily 'a talk' (*rozmowa*),[11] especially in upper class and literary language which by that time had begun to undergo a strong Latinisation. In the language used in the village court protocols, however, the word retained (at least partially) its original meaning until the end of the eighteenth century and was used to describe only those conversations that took place out of public knowledge, in private or in secret, and generally still referred to situations giving rise to suspicions about sexual morality.

A similar change in the meaning of the word 'conversation' also took place in French and English at this time. In English, however, the word still retained its ambiguity and, according to Katherine Larson, defined "an individual's interaction with a select community" as well as "encompassed verbal intercourse, social and sexual intimacy".[12] This ambiguity was utilised extensively in high literary culture, but it also found an explicit implementation in law by the post-1670 coining of a new type of proceeding before the common law courts of the King's Bench and

[9] See Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 29–32.

[10] For example, AGAD, Księgi wiejskie, Akta samorządu–sądu wsi Rogi, fol. 446v [1697]; Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv (henceforward: TsDIAUL), 53/1, vol. I, 63 [1708]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*, ed. by Bolesław Ulanowski (Kraków: Nakł. PAU, 1921), Nos. 3937 [1720] and 4726 [1750].

[11] Ewelina Kwapień, "Zmiany znaczeniowe wybranych czasowników mówienia zanikających w dobie nowopolskiej", *Poznańskie Spotkania Językoznawcze*, 32 (2016), 183–208 (205).

[12] Larson, *Early Modern Women*, 23. See also: Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies. Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare's Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 83–86.

Common Pleas—the action for 'criminal conversation'.[13] This was a consequence of the "silent decriminalisation of adultery"[14] in England due to the decline of the ecclesiastical courts which had hitherto ruled on such cases. Since there was no longer a proper tribunal to try adultery, the practice emerged of complaints for so-called criminal conversations. Such a complaint could be brought to a common law court by a betrayed husband against his spouse's lover, although, as Lawrence Stone observes, the offence "was neither criminal nor a conversation in the usual sense of the word".[15] Such lawsuits, albeit notorious, were extremely rare because of the very high costs they entailed, which is why only men from the social elite could afford them.[16] However, as David M. Turner has pointed out, the legal concept of 'criminal conversation' contributed to a general change in the gendered image of masculinity during the eighteenth century.[17]

None of the legal systems functioning in Poland between the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries developed a concept similar to 'criminal conversation'. Instead, adultery and fornication continued to be penalised by both the secular and ecclesiastical courts. The aforementioned instances of 'unnecessary conversation' which appeared in the sentences of rural courts did not develop into a phraseme or any distinct legal term. The word "unnecessary" as well as other parallel designators (e.g. "frolicky", "inappropriate") denoted in such cases merely a moral evaluation of the behaviour in question and indicated above all the importance that local rural communities attached to the preventive control of the sexuality of their members. In this perspective, any conversation conducted beyond the public gaze could give rise to suspicions of a sexual nature. As one village court put it in its sentence in the case of a married woman accused of adultery: "it so happens that […] [she] is fond of going out with various people at night and conversing, thus giving cause

[13] Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England, 1530–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 231–300.

[14] Stone, *Road to Divorce*, 233.

[15] Stone, *Road to Divorce*, 233.

[16] Stone, *Road to Divorce*, 247.

[17] David M. Turner, *Fashioning Adultery. Gender, Sex and Civility in England, 1660–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 202.

to various suspicions and rumours".[18] Therefore, 'unnecessary conversations' were a specific kind of talk in private which evoked suspicions of flirting precisely because it took place *in private*. To be fair, this was probably not without reason since in a peasant community where clear divisions between public and private spheres did not really exist; there were few matters that people considered better discussed in private.

So what do we know about what was perceived as private talks about sex that were held in peasant circles? On the basis of the surviving scraps of these conversations in the records, three types can be distinguished. The first type was a straightforward (perhaps even vulgar from our perspective) invitation to have sex. The testimony of a certain Małgorzata Wiszka, who was visited by a publican from Jasionka called Kazimierz Lech, may serve as an example here:

> I asked him wherefore he had come, he replied: I have come to ask you whether you have repaid my debt or not. I replied to him: indeed I have already paid my debt unto you. He sat on a bench and began to persuade me to allow him to enter [i.e. penetrate] me. [...] At first I resisted but later I did consent.[19]

Women also sometimes sent simple invitations to men to have sex, as in the case of Katarzyna Stopinska who instructed Matyjasz Surówka "to visit her at night":

> She said that she slept alone in a barn and told me to come to a certain place, I came at her command and she took me to the barn and induced me to perform this act, that I had to commit this carnal sin with her four times, although I discussed with her and showed that I was an orphan, but she, not respecting this, did force me to this deed.[20]

[18] *Księga sądowa kresu klimkowskiego 1600–1762*, ed. by Ludwik Łysiak, Starodawne Prawa Polskiego Pomniki, series II, Sect. 2, vol. IV (Wrocław: ZN im. Ossolińskich, 1965), No. 1003 [1692].

[19] "Pytałam się go po co przyszedł, on odpowiedział: przyszedłem się was zapytać czyście wy mnie oddali dług czy nie. Jam mu odpowiedziała: wszakżem ci już dług zapłaciła. On siadł na ławie, i zaczął mie namawiać abym mu się wżyć pozwoliła. [...] Z początku pozbywałam go a potym zezwoliłam". Library of the Ossoliński National Institute in Wrocław (henceforth: BO), MS 6115/III, 139–140 [1793].

[20] "Powiedziała, że sama na brogu lega, i na pewne mi mie[j]sce kazała mi przychodzić, jam na jej rozkaz przychodził, i ona mnie wziąwszy na bróg tedy mnie do tego uczynku przyniewoliła, żem ja z nią tych grzech cielesny cztery razy popełnić musiał, bo lubom

The second type of conversation was persuasion with various arguments and promises or outright bargaining for sex. In the two examples cited above, such arguments and bargaining also probably took place, but the court records only speak of an invitation for sex. So what did the argument look like? First of all, the man tried to convince the woman that she would not become pregnant as a result of the intercourse. In some cases, this was presumably a promise of coitus interruptus, a popular method considered to be contraceptive at that time.[21] For example, a publican from Bytomsko, Sebastian Matrasz, while seducing Katarzyna Kubianka, who resisted 'committing a sin', "he assured her: 'Fear not! There will be nothing to you'".[22] Very similar arguments were used by Józef, the hereditary headman of the village of Słotwiny in the demesne of Muszyna, to Anastazja Malarczykowa: "he seduced her saying to her that he would not act in such a way that there would be an effect".[23] More impertinent was a certain Knapik who, encouraging Zofia Piwowarczonka to have sex, told her "you're already old, there will be no harm for you".[24]

The promise of marriage was regarded as an equally convincing argument. For example, in the demesne of Łąka near Rzeszów in 1794, Jadwiga Wesołowszczanka was being seduced by Szczepan Łyczko who, according to Jadwiga:

> [O]n the Sunday after Christmas, […] returning with my mother from the inn […], he entered my parent's house for supper, and when I went to the stable to feed the cattle, he followed me and tried to talk me into the carnal act with various words, and when I refused, he promised to wed me […].[25]

jej rozmawiał, i ukazował żem ja jest sierota, ale ona na to nic nie respektując przymusiła mnie do tego uczynku", TsDIAUL, 142/1, vol. VI, 22–23 [1703].

21 Cf. Tóth, "Peasant sexuality", 51.

22 "[…] kiedym mu mowiła ze masz żonę. a on odpowiedział: nie bój się nie bedzieć nic", *Acta Nigra Maleficorum Wisniciae (1665–1785). Księga czarna złoczyńców sądu kryminalnego w Wiśniczu (1665–1785)*, ed. by Wacław Uruszczak (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2010), 79 [1722].

23 "[…] 'ją uwodził, że jej tak nie uczyni, aby miał być skutek'", National Archives in Krakow (hencefo: ANK), Akta miasta Muszyny 17 (Dep. 100), 159 [1758].

24 "[…] żeś stara już, ci nic nie będzie", State Archives in Katowice, Branch in Bielsko-Biała, Akta miasta Oświęcimia 526 (Dep. 327), fasc. VIII, fol. 36 [1736].

25 "[…] w niedziele po Bożym Narodzeniu, idąc z moją matką z karczmy […] z[a]szedł do moich rodziców chałupy, i najadłszy się, jak ja wyszła do stajni bydło napasać, poszedł

In fact, it was fairly easy to convince a girl to have sex with the promise of marriage. In rural customs, the commencement of sexual relations signified primarily a readiness to get married, and if a child was conceived, it was necessary to bear the consequences of one's actions.[26]Rural opinion saw nothing wrong with such a manner of establishing future couples, and village authorities seem to have acted as the allies of pregnant women, demanding their lovers to fulfil the marriage vows. Treating marriage as an emergency exit in the event of a 'slip-up' was summed up most cynically by Senko of Czukiew who, while wooing Hasia Tuledzyna, told her, "You're a widow, I'm a bachelor. If I do it, I will take you. If I don't, then too bad".[27]

Occasionally, however, we come across the remains of slightly more romantic conversations. One Gasper Grzybowski, while entertaining in the inn with a certain Marianna Brzanina, took her by the hand and led her through the back door to a secluded place. There "they lay on the manure and he said: 'O, my Molly, my Molly, you are my heart' and she replied 'Just do not press too hard'".[28] In another case, Marcin Łukaszewicz "declared marital friendship" to his lover Regina and "with genuine love did allow himself corporal acts [...] and that during Corpus Christi after the act when she was crying, I petted and caressed her saying that 'as much I loved you, so much I do now'".[29]

za mną, namawiał mnie różnemi słowami na uczynek cielesny, a gdym zezwolić nie chciała, obiecał się ze mną żenić", BO, MS 6115/III, 160–162 [1794].

[26] Daniela Lombardi, "Women's Reputation and Marriage Disputes in Protestant and Catholic Europe, 1500–1800", in *History of Families and Households: Comparative European Dimensions*, ed. by Silvia Sovič, Pat Thane, and Pier Paolo Viazzo (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2016), 119–141 (131–134); Tim Hitchcock, "'Unlawfully begotten on her body'. Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea", in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. by Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 70–86 (80).

[27] " Ty wdowa, jam młodzieniec. Jeśli co zrobię, to cię wezmę, jeśli nie zrobię, przepadło". TsDIAUL, 142/1, vol. I, 397 [second half of the seventeenth century].

[28] "[...] położyli sie na nawozie i mówieł: moja Maryś, moja Maryś, moje serce, i ona mu odpowiedziała: tylko mnie nie przyciskaj". Jagiellonian Library in Krakow (henceforward: BJ), MS 5934, fol. 65 [1733].

[29] "[...] z kochania prawdziwego one pozwalał sobie uczynki cielesne, [...] i to że podczas Bożego Ciała po uczynku, gdy płakała, mitygował i głaskał onę mowiąc, że: ja jako cię kochałem, tak i teraz kocham". State Archives in Toruń, Sądy dominialne dóbr biskupstwa chełmińskiego, vol. 1, 510 [1733].

Finally, the third type of talk was that which contained some witty concept, paradoxical argument, or cutting response. A popular theme here was a perverse reversal of the Church's teaching on sin. One suitor, according to the story of the girl he was courting, "came [to me] once and began to insist that I consent to his approaches, saying that if you do not satisfy my desire, you will commit a sin, for it is not only us simple people who commit such a sin, but also the clergy who do so".[30]Another man persuaded a girl to commit the "carnal act", convincing her that "if she failed to do it for him, her sin would be all the greater because he could die as a result".[31]

Such statements do not seem to have been invented ad hoc. More likely, they were related to the use of some jokes or sayings functioning in peasant society or perhaps even subversive carnival knowledge. In the above cases, the wit was used by men, but it should be stressed that rural society also highly valued this skill in women. When peasants described why they found a given woman attractive, in addition to her beauty and youth, they emphasised that she was "witty in discourse" and "sociable".[32] I will touch upon how such skills were acquired and developed shortly. Here, I must add that a sharp tongue made it easier for women to function in the patriarchal rural society. This can be seen in the testimony concerning a certain Jan Wciesło, accused of committing bestiality with a mare. As he confessed during the interrogation, he "had the urge" to rape a maid in his house, but the maid replied "you have a wife, so go to hell and leave me alone". The reprimand had its effect, because the maid managed to free herself from him and walk off, whereas he "in his passionate lust" went to the barn and committed the "deed" with the mare.[33]

[30] "[…] przyszedł raz i począł mnie w takowych infastować, abym mu powolną być chciała, ukazując mi: jeśli ty memu pragnieniu zadosyć nie uczynisz, grzech będziesz miała, bo to nie tylko my prości, ale to i duchowni taki grzech popełniają", TsDIAUL, 142/1, vol. VI, 22–23 [1703].

[31] "[…] kiedy by to nie uczyniła dla niego, to by większy grzech miała, jak by przez to mógł umrzeć". ANK, Archiwum gospodarcze dóbr Nawojowa 48 (F. 227), fol. [5]v (from the back) [1758].

[32] *Akta w sprawach chłopskich hrabstwa tarnowskiego z połowy XVIII wieku*, ed. by Stanisław Grodziski, Starodawne Prawa Polskiego Pomniki, series II, Sect. 2, vol. VII (Wrocław: ZN im. Ossolińskich, 1970), No. 52 [1756].

[33] BJ, MS 86, fol. 94 [1735].

These examples show that the surviving records of peasant 'talks in private' about sex are really only scraps, fragments, or crumbs. This may indicate that private conversations about sex were genuinely effective in not reaching the public, but it mostly shows that in general, nobody bothered to record them in writing unless they were mentioned in a testimony during a judicial investigation. However, even in such rare cases, the record was limited to just a few words, and these must suffice for us to imagine the details of the conversation and its style.

Folk Ditties with Sexual Themes

However, we can confront these surviving fragments of talking sex with folk ditties (that is, short songs) on sexual themes which were recorded contemporaneously by proto-folklorists, or more precisely by collectors of bawdy rhymes. Several small collections of these texts dating back to the eighteenth century were found and published over half a century ago by Czesław Hernas, a literary and linguistic researcher,[34] but have not yet received much attention from scholars, except for an excellent folkloristic study by Dobrosława Wężowicz–Ziółkowska who compared them with materials collected by the leading Polish ethnographer of the nineteenth century, Oskar Kolberg.[35] However, the eighteenth-century collections are fundamentally different in terms of their motivation and methods of composition from the materials collected—and especially from those published—by Kolberg. Collectors who wrote them down in the pre-Enlightenment period were not motivated by an interest in folk poetry or customs but were instead attracted by the coarse, vulgar humour, and cutting wit of these works which corresponded in some way to the taste of Polish Baroque culture which was eager to explore various extremes. Some of these collections were published at the time in cheap prints, undoubtedly for commercial purposes, which means that they found readers among people who were obviously better educated than their authors (as Polish peasants in the eighteenth century were an essentially illiterate group).

[34] Czesław Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie* (Warsaw: PIW, 1965), 2 Vols.

[35] Dobrosława Wężowicz–Ziółkowska, *Miłość ludowa. Wzory miłości w polskiej pieśni ludowej XVIII–XIX w.* (Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, 1991).

More than a hundred years later, ethnographers encountering these vulgar sexual texts faced completely different problems. First, the very existence of such texts was inconsistent with the vision of 'the people' on which they were just elaborating, and second, the burden of their bourgeois culture rejected such topics and such methods of depiction. As a result, Oskar Kolberg and other ethnographers of the time simply omitted such texts when publishing folklore collections or bowdlerised them. In the case of Kolberg's legacy, however, they fortunately remained in his manuscripts. In fact, the first deliberate collection of such texts since the emergence of professional ethnography was compiled at the end of the nineteenth century by the Polish linguist Jan Baudouin de Courtenay and published anonymously in the periodical *Kryptadia*, a private imprint put out by a group of prominent European ethnographers with similar interests.[36] This collection shows the persistence of fundamental motifs and even the survival of many verses in their entirety although they, as a rule, functioned only in oral circulation. On the other hand, being much more extensive than pre-Enlightenment collections and compiled on the basis of ethnographic research methodology, it shows an additional context for the functioning of this type of literature.

It must be emphasised at this point that the singling out of lyrics with subject matter and language which could best be described as 'obscene' from among the folk collections was a product of ethnographic research; in folk culture itself, they did not constitute a distinct category. It reflected the taste and judgements of nineteenth-century scholars who decided that such songs should be relegated to the margins of folk literature. In addition, the process of the Catholic moralisation of manners in the Polish countryside, which was developing around the same time, also played its part. We can be sure that songs of this type were certainly not marginal to folk culture, at least up to the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, they were in fact the dominant type among the folk songs written down at that time, although such an impression also results from the preferences of the 'pre-ethnographic' collectors who tended to choose such songs.[37]

[36] Jan Niecisław Baudouin de Courtenay, "Chansonettes polonaises pour plupart des environs de Varsovie", *Kryptadia*, vol. III, (Heilbron: Henninger Frères, 1886); "Folklore polonais", *Kryptadia*, vol. V, (Paris: H. Welter, 1898); "Mélanges polonais et russes", *Kryptadia*, vol. VII, (Paris: H. Welter, 1901).

[37] Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie,* vol. I, 141–142, 157–159.

What did such ditties written down in the eighteenth century look like? One such example is:

> Girl, you sleep hard, you sleep hard,
> Give me this hole with which you piss.[38]

This verse, recorded in the first half of the eighteenth century, was actually censored by a communist censor in 1965 and had to be removed from the scholarly edition prepared by Czesław Hernas.

The speaker of the ditty cited above was male, but the female subject was also very popular, such as in this song:

> I don't want the guy
> whom it dangles down,
> he's a foe to my muff,
> I prefer the one,
> Whose thing stands firm,
> he's a friend of my muff.[39]

From the point of view of the categorisation of private conversations about sex presented above, this would belong to the first category: a straightforward invitation to have sex. However, such ditties were intended to be performed in public and—as we might guess—above all in taverns, where people entertained themselves, drank, and danced to the music.

Folk music at that time was usually performed by an ensemble that included a fiddle and a drum and the performers were often already semi-professionals. Researchers believe that in traditional folk dance music, no singing was ever done while the instruments were playing and therefore bands never included singers. Songs were performed when the orchestra stopped playing, and the people attending the party sang short songs to the tune of the piece played earlier or dictated the tune of the next piece to the musicians. Such straightforward songs as that quoted above were rather rare. Nevertheless, as Dobrosława Wężowicz–Ziółkowska's research indicates, sexual themes permeated folklore, usually

[38] "Dziewcyno, twardo spis, twardo spis, / A dajze mi tej dziurecki, co nią scys". The Princes Czartoryski Library in Krakow, MS 783, 540 (transl. by George Szenderowicz).

[39] "Nie chcę tego, / co mu wisi, / nieprzyjaciel moi pisi. / Wolę tego, / co mu stoi, / przyjaciel to pisi moi". Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie*, vol. II, 55.

via metaphor. As a result, the sexual act in folk ditties could be described by various euphemisms, such as work in the fields or farmyard, gathering fruit, various handicrafts (such as blacksmithing), dancing and playing musical instruments, cooking meals, ruining clothes, or injuring the body. However, they were still too coarse and obscene to be included in folklore collections of the nineteenth-century ethnographers.[40]

Performing such lyrics in a public place such as in a tavern could undoubtedly be a kind of comparatively risk-free flirting, because one could always withdraw and declare that the metaphor was overinterpreted. On the other hand, a valued social skill was to respond to a taunt in a similar form—that is, by singing an adequate riposte. Consequently, ad hoc singalong dialogues appeared in the ethnographic (and sometimes historical) records. For example:

> —Tell me this once, where've you got it?
> —By the thigh, you dumb chap,
> Why do you ask?[41]

Yet another example is:

> —Yoo–hoo, my dear,
> You promised, so give me.
> —I promised, so I will,
> As your tail will swell,
> As we get home.[42]

It is probable that it was during these tavern games that both genders developed and practiced the skills of talking about sex with the use of mostly covert metaphors and jokes. At the same time, during these improvised playful discussions, they could refer to or simply apply folk literary

[40] Wężowicz–Ziółkowska, *Miłość ludowa,* 150–162; Jerzy Bartmiński, "Jaś koniki poił" (Uwagi o stylu erotyku ludowego), *Teksty*, 1974:2, 11–24 (19–20). The following verse may serve as an example of such a use of metaphor: 'At our Madge's / Maciek mows the meadow, / Wojtek rakes the hay, / Let them be dragged to hell!' ("U nasy Małgosi / Maciek łąckę kosi, / Wojtek siano grabi, / Niech ich porwą drabi!"), Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie,* vol. II, 73.

[41] "—Powiedz–że mi raz, Kędy ją ty masz?—Wedle uda, chłopie, duda, Cego się pytasz?" Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie*, vol. II, 57.

[42] "—Chajze, moja, chajze, Obiecałaś, dajze.—Obiecałam, to dam, Jak ci stanie ogon, Jak pójdziemy do dom". Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie*, vol. II, 62.

texts from the oral repertoire which were apparently quite popular and durable, since the same ditties were recorded at the beginning of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth centuries (as well as in the middle of the twentieth century, as indicated by later ethnographic research). It can be assumed that these verses—which were listened to in public places such as inns—also provided a useful context for discussing the topics and manners of speaking about sex in private, framing the functions of metaphorical motifs and folk imagery associated with this field while at the same time delineating the boundaries between the private and the public spheres regarding intimate issues.

Of course, these are only assumptions, because—as mentioned earlier—from the conversations about sex held in private among peasants, only small fragments—mostly scraps, in fact—can be found in the records. However, in the aforementioned case of persuading a girl to have sex, threatening that the refusal would lead to the suitor's death because of her, do we not hear an echo of the following ditty recorded in the eighteenth century:

> —I will die, I will die, If you do not give it to me!
> —Do not die, I will give it to you right away.[43]

Singing Songs, Committing Sin

Finally, let us examine in more detail the case of adultery between Jan Klimek and Żołnina (the wife of Marcin Żołna) committed on 15 September 1751. As both parties had spouses, their act was seen as a serious infraction according to law and custom. They were also unlucky enough to be found *in flagranti*—out in the open, somewhere in the bushes—by a group of their village neighbours returning from a fair. Under interrogation, they adopted different defence strategies. Żołnina tried to argue that it had been an isolated incident—actually an impulsive intercourse—and that she had simply succumbed to Jan Klimek's persuasions, protesting that she would not have succumbed had he not invoked the 'religious' argument now familiar to us: reassuring her "that we will confess of this" (meaning that they would approach the sacrament of

[43] "—Umrę, umrę, Jak mi nie dasz!—Nie umieraj, Dam ci zaraz". Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie*, vol. II, 57.

penance with the confidence of absolution after repentance—or, to put it in other words, that the sin was worth penance). Jan Klimek, on the other hand, was willing to put all the responsibility on his mistress who he stressed had been seducing him for a long time. He told the court that he could provide witnesses who had seen that Klimek

> had no peace because of her in the inn, even though he was running away from her, she still followed him, sat next to him, and when she came out of the dance, she sang to him various unnecessary songs, which made others uneasy, and this happened several times.[44]

What we have here is a testimony of the above-described practice of singing sexually explicit songs during breaks in tavern dances. In this case, it was the woman who was the party provoking the man to respond with her songs, but we do not know whether she used any of the rhymes from the commonly known repertoire or whether she made up her own verses. Klimek's testimony suggests that he was unable to respond adequately to her taunts and simply tried to avoid her. This situation caused a scandal in the village.

Eventually, as Klimek further testified, on the fateful day they were caught in the act, Żołnina ambushed him on his way back from the mill and, when he arrived, she started to sing to him and in this way made him "commit a sin". We do not know what she sang to him—perhaps they were the same songs as in the tavern? If so, this would confirm that the content of the publicly performed sexually explicit verses was either transferred to the talks in private or at least transferred their form, which was the singing of (presumably metaphorical) encouragement for sex.

In conclusion, it can be stated that using the concept of private conversations as an analytical category for the examination of early modern peasant societies has allowed us to reformulate to some extent our perception of peasant privacy and to discern distinctive fields and practices for its observance. Although we generally agree that the early modern peasantry enjoyed little privacy owing to living conditions and social organisation,

[44] "[…] on nie miał żadnego [s]pokoju przed nią w karczmie, choć jej uchodził, to wszytko za niem chodziła i podsiadała go, bo wyszedszy z tańca to mu śpiewała różne a niepotrzebne pieśni do zgorszenia drugiem, a było to tego kilka razy". The Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow, MS 7118, 66 [1751].

there is evidence in the surviving sources that talks in private did take place and that they often focused on sex.

The fact that it was sex which was the subject of talk kept from the public was due to the need to maintain the principle of discretion that peasant communities usually applied to such sexual behaviour which did not breach local custom. Only in this way—by maintaining discretion with regard to the behaviour of others, or the rule of 'noticing but not taking notice'—was it possible to find the necessary intimacy in the material conditions of peasant life at that time.

Nevertheless, these indications suggest that the relative absence of talks about sex did not result from the prudishness of peasants, since sexual topics were in fact the subject of popular discourse. Widely known folk songs were performed during tavern entertainments, and using these songs was also a socially acceptable type of flirting. The ensemble of these texts, their topics, and the metaphors used in them undoubtedly trained men and women to talk about sex, to woo, and to reject courtship even in intimate situations. They also created a framework for socially acceptable behaviour, showing the hierarchy of observed moral norms (which were different from the norms declared in compliance with the teachings of the Church). This leads us to presume that in intimate situations; men and women may have talked about sex in the language of folk poetry.

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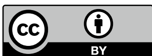

CHAPTER 11

Multimedia Conversations: Love and Lovesickness in Sixteenth-century Italian Single-sheet Prints

Alexandra Kocsis

Early modern single-sheet prints of high quality and intricate content were exchanged and discussed within the circles of erudite acquaintances. As art historian Peter Parshall has emphasised: "by the first decade of the sixteenth century prints had become a means of intimate discourse".[1] A few sources mention prints as objects of lively discussions, like a letter from 1520 by the German humanist Johann Cochlaeus (1479–1552), reporting that he had a lengthy discourse with his humanist friend, Philipp Fürstenberger (1479–1540), on Albrecht Dürer's two prints.[2] Unfortunately, the letter does not provide a description of what was talked about.

[1] Peter Parshall, "Art and the Theater of Knowledge: The Origins of Print Collecting in Northern Europe", *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 2 (1994), 9.

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[2] Hans Rupprich, *Dürer: Schriftlicher Nachlass*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1956), 265.

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This chapter intends to show that, notwithstanding the rarity and the laconic nature of such sources, it is possible to get closer to what was conversed over early modern prints.

Captions printed in many sixteenth-century sheets reveal how the images were framed with ideas and evoke a potential way of conversing with and about the images. Words were often incorporated into pictures in the history of art, and the combination of text and image was not an unusual experience for early modern spectators. Nevertheless, the sixteenth century was an important new phase for combining different media. The appearance and spread of printing made it possible to multiply visual and textual messages in hundreds of identical copies. Facing a wide audience, captions in single-sheet prints contributed to the standardisation of meaning. Inscriptions also accommodated the printed image to the new context and were intended to involve the reader-viewer into the world of the print by offering knowledge, exciting emotions, and provoking dialogue.

Some sixteenth-century single-sheet prints from Rome demonstrate that these paper objects were indeed designed to generate vibrant and intimate conversations—namely, on the popular topics of love and lovesickness. They are all composed of seemingly mythological scenes and Italian vernacular poems informed by Petrarchan poetry and widely circulated thoughts on love. While the images show classical deities or figures in *all'antica* costumes and settings, the explanatory verses interpret the images as visual embodiments of the forces and notions of the soul.

It is unsurprising that this subject appeared in the popular medium of single-sheet prints since it had become the focus of growing theoretical interest from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. Renaissance love theory received a new impetus with the publication of Marsilio Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium* (titled *De Amore*, published in 1484) that gave rise to the literary genre of the treatise on love *(trattato d'amore)*. Leone Ebreo (ca. 1465–after 1521), Mario Equicola (ca. 1470–1525), Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), and Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) can be mentioned as the most famous authors of this new genre. These treatises—usually written in dialogue form and in the vernacular—based their discussion of love on Neoplatonic philosophical

ideas.[3] Pietro Bembo connected this theoretical framework to the poetry of Petrarch (1304–1374) and set the standard for courtly society's attitude towards love for decades.[4] In Bembo's dialogue titled *Gli Asolani* (1505), the figure of Perottino formulated the concept of earthly love as bitter suffering, playing with the similarity of the two words *amore* and *amaro*.[5] In the *Book of the Courtier* (1528), Baldassare Castiglione also expanded on the lovers' sufferings: the figure of Ottaviano Fregoso condemned the continuous lamentation of male lovers while a fictive Pietro Bembo argued that even lovesickness was part of spiritual love because the soul could also suffer from the absence of the beloved's beauty.[6] At the same time, Petrarchism became a fashionable "social game" among the courtiers. After the publication of the first pocket-sized *Canzoniere* (1501), the enjoyment, recitation, composition, and exchanging of Petrarchan poems, imbued by the experience of lovesickness, was part of everyday life for educated sixteenth-century Italians.[7] These ideas, theories, and practices are crucial for understanding the five Roman single-sheet prints that this chapter discusses with a focus on their conversational potential.

The selection of the prints is based on their remarkable connection to Petrarchan poetry which manifests itself under close observation but has not yet been the focus of art historical or literary historical research. Literary historians probably dismissed the verses because they seemed to lack originality and showed the symptoms of the Petrarchan trend

[3] John Charles Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 70; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Under the Mantle of Love: the Mystical Eroticisms of Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno", in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 175.

[4] Donald Allen Beecher, "Quattrocento Views on the Eroticization of the Imagination", in *Eros and Anteros: the Medical Traditions of Love in the Renaissance*, ed. by Donald Allen Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Ottawa: Dovehouse Edition, 1992), 57; Stefano Jossa, "Bembo and Italian Petrarchism", in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, ed. by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 193.

[5] Pietro Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, ed. by Giorgio Dilemmi (Florence: Presso l'Accademia della Crusca, 1991), 19.

[6] Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, ed. by Giulio Preti (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), 22, 380–382.

[7] Jossa, "Bembo and Italian Petrarchism", 195; Deanna Shemek, "Verse", in *Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. by Michael Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 180.

characteristic of the period. The role that Petrarchan tradition played in the history of art has been elaborated upon in previous scholarship.[8] The work of art historian Stephen J. Campbell is especially relevant to the present study. Campbell emphasised the role of Petrarchan lyrics in the emergence of Italian mythological painting and he introduced the term "visualising device" in connection to mythological images from the first decades of the sixteenth century that were installed in the Mantuan *studiolo* of Isabella d'Este (1474–1539).[9] These panel paintings thematised the passions and perturbations of the soul caused by carnal love, lovesickness, and various further aspects of love. In Campbell's interpretation, these images were used during the meditations of their beholders aiming at one's maintenance of mental health, and their handling was also intertwined with humanist ideals about contemplation. In my opinion, the five single-sheet prints in focus here precisely demonstrate these ideas and practices in action within the frame of a multimedia experience. These prints engaged a much wider audience in philosophical, moralistic, and poetic conversations on love and lovesickness than did the *studiolo* paintings. They could have also functioned as catalysts of inner conversations as they encouraged the beholders to reflect on their inner selves.

Before delving into the rich fabric of meanings, the first section introduces the prints as private objects from the perspective of their materiality and possible mode of display. The detailed analysis of the five prints is organised into two parts, discussing separately three smaller prints from two larger sheets. First, I show how Petrarchan texts and ideas were used to psychologise mythological images. Reading pictures and texts against each other, I demonstrate how allegorical images of gods and goddesses combined with poems in the first-person voice could initiate discussion

[8] For the most recent volume of essays on Petrarch and the visual arts, see *Petrarca und die bildenden Künste: Dialoge, Spiegelungen, Transformationen*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Terzoli and Sebastian Schütze (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2021). On the relationship between painted portraits and Petrarchan poetry, see Lina Bolzoni, *Il cuore di cristallo: ragionamenti d'amore, poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2010) and Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style", *The Art Bulletin* 58 (1976), 374–394.

[9] Stephen J. Campbell, "Eros in the Flesh: Petrarchan Desire, the Embodied Eros, and Male Beauty in Italian Art, 1500–1540", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 35 (2005), esp. 632 and Stephen J. Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 20–21.

on the state of mind and heart of the beholder. Second, the examination of more intricate prints on the tragic symptoms of lovesickness reveals how mythological images were transformed into a symbolic repertoire of texts and images in order to guide the audience in contemplating and discussing their philosophical and moral stands in relation to love.

Five Single-sheet Prints from Rome on the Threshold of Public and Private

The five single-sheet prints in question reveal only scarce information about their authors and producers: only two sheets include the engravers' monograms, one contains the date 1542, and there are vague attributions regarding the designers of the images in art historical scholarship.[10] The authors of the Italian poems have not been referred to or identified either. Thus, the prints defy all modern expectations regarding authorship. However, there is one certainty in the history of these artworks: Antonio Salamanca (1478–1562), one of the first professional single-sheet publishers, released impressions from the five plates between 1540 and 1560 in Rome. Salamanca most probably bought three already-used copperplates at the beginning of the 1540s, added his own name, and published new impressions from them—the *Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, and Amor*, the *Allegory of the Two Lovers*, and *The Sailing Amor*.[11] In the

[10] The initials "A.V" inscribed on *The Sailing Amor* refers to Agostino Veneziano. The *Allegory of the Passions* is inscribed with the initials "O.O.V", which have not yet been identified. The *Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, and Amor*, and the *Allegory of the Two Lovers* are usually attributed to the Master of the Die. Since no evidence has yet been found of surviving preparatory drawings for any of the compositions, it is not certain who invented the images. The *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love* is often attributed to Baccio Bandinelli while the earlier prints are usually referred to as images after Raphael's design. The figures in *The Sailing Amor* are indeed connected to Raphael's circles: the birth of Venus in the sea was depicted in Cardinal Bibbiena's *Stuffetta* while the sailing Amor was previously published in an oval format print by Marco Dente. See Adam Bartsch, *Le Peintre-graveur*, 21 vols (Vienna: J.V. Degen, 1802–1821), XIV:179, 189; XV:55, 200–202; Grazia Bernini Pezzini and Stefania Massari, eds., *Raphael Invenit. Stampe di Raffaello nelle Collezioni dell'Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica* (Rome: Ed Quasar, 1985), 258; Patricia Emison, *The Art of Teaching: Sixteenth-Century Allegorical Prints and Drawings* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1986), 42.

[11] About Salamanca's practice of buying and reissuing older copperplates, see David Landau and Peter W. Parshall, *The Renaissance Print: 1470–1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 303; Christopher Witcombe, *Print Publishing in Sixteenth-Century Rome: Growth and Expansion, Rivalry and Murder* (London: Harvey Miller

case of two prints (*Allegory of the Passions* and *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love*), it is not clear whether they were older plates which had been reused or had been produced in cooperation with the publisher.[12] Thanks to Salamanca's strategy of acquiring older copperplates, the five prints from different decades of the sixteenth century came together in one publisher's stock.

The five prints create two groups based on their date and their size. Three sheets measure around 190 × 220 mm (Figs. 11.1–11.3). They are also structured in the same way: thin lines on all four sides frame the images while the eight-line texts are arranged in two stanzas, separately placed in stylised frames below the pictures. Two prints are much larger, measuring 390 × 474 mm and 362 × 259 mm (Figs. 11.4–11.5). In general, they appear similar to the smaller ones since the texts are also set below the images. However, their details are more refined: the longer poems (of twenty-four and fourteen lines) are put on illusionistic *cartellinos*. The decorative cartouches in the *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love* are put in a box-like space, thus adding a sculptural effect to the print (Fig. 11.4). The framed inscription in the *Allegory of the Passions* also plays with the viewer's perception (Fig. 11.5). On the left, it looks like a *cartellino* pasted below the image while on the right, it transforms into a torn piece of paper that suddenly becomes part of the composition since the leg of the main figure casts a shadow on it. As such, the two larger prints are designed to have an illusionistic effect on their beholders.

Alongside these material and visual characteristics, one can speculate about the mode of display. The smaller prints were easier to handle as single leaves while the two larger pieces could work as visual illusions pasted on the wall, as substitutes for more expensive forms of

Publishers, 2008), 71. Illustrations to this chapter show the states of the prints as published by Salamanca in case of the *Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, and Amor* and *The Sailing Amor*. For this later state of the *Allegory of the Two Lovers* bearing Salamanca's name, see Jesús María González de Zárate, *Real Colección de Estampas de San Lorenzo de El Escorial*, vol. 7 (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Ed. Ephialte, 1994), 164.

[12] Although some earlier states of these prints without Salamanca's name are preserved, their style and the date "1542" on the *Allegory of the Passions* seem to indicate a later date of creation. Impressions without the publisher's name are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (inv. nr. 7332) and in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (object nr. RP-P-OB-38.814).

Fig. 11.1 Master of the Die after Raphael (?). 1530–1560. Published by Antonio Salamanca. *Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, and Amor*. Engraving, 190 × 226 mm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Elisha Whittelsey Collection. The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949, acc. nr. 49.97.327

art.[13]However, all the prints could have been pasted in albums and preserved in private libraries since print collection started to become a cultural practice in the sixteenth century. It is likely that prints survived the centuries in this way, just as the impression of the *Allegory of the Passions* (Fig. 11.5)—now preserved in the Rijksmuseum—was part of a recently reconstructed sixteenth-century collector's album from

[13] On the problems of writing the history of displaying prints, see Antony Griffiths, *The Print Before Photography: an Introduction to European Printmaking 1550–1820* (London: The British Museum, 2016), 411–412.

Bamberg.[14] This important piece of evidence shows how far prints could travel after their purchase and also gives an idea about the setting and space of their use. Study rooms and libraries were, on the one hand, private and intimate spaces while also having the potential to accommodate (erudite) discussions.[15]

Pasted in albums or put on the wall, early modern single-sheet prints existed on the threshold of private and public. They were produced in hundreds of identical copies, mostly for an open market and a wide, international audience. Hundreds of beholders faced the same paper object, but every one of them made sense of the image in their own private spaces. In this context, prints worked simultaneously as standardised but personal multimedia experiences and could stimulate intimate self-reflection and learned conversations. In fact, we can have a better sense of their conversational potential by paying detailed attention to their captions.

Gods, Goddesses, and the Perplexed Speaker

The three smaller and presumably earlier prints are not only similar in their size and layout but also in their content and meaning. Gods and goddesses appear in the pictures with their symbolic animals in triumphal chariots or with their attributes in clear and simple compositions. Most importantly, a first-person voice appears in the poetic captions, offering a new interpretation of the images.

The image of *Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, and Amor* (Fig. 11.1) shows a frozen moment of celestial conflict. On the left, Jupiter appears from among the clouds, ready to strike with his thunderbolt, while Apollo has just stopped his four large horses who were pulling the chariot. On the right, Venus is sitting in her cart driven by an eagle, a peacock, Cerberus, and a sea horse while a swan and Cupid appear above. Venus and Cupid seem to lose this moment of the combat: Phoebus Apollo

[14] Joyce Zelen, "The Venetian Print Album of Johann Georg I Zobel von Giebelstadt", *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 63 (2015), 2–51.

[15] On the significance of the study room in the Renaissance, see Dora Thornton, *The Scholar in his Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 120. More recently on the double nature of the *studiolo*, see Leah R. Clark, "Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance *Studiolo*", *Journal of the History of Collections* 25 (2013), 171–184.

takes up more space in the composition, as if he wanted to expel Venus and her entourage from the image. Cupid is already escaping in the background, and the beasts of Venus's chariot spring back from Apollo's huge horses. The figures are dynamic and the composition is full of tension. The image reveals the cause of the conflict for those who are familiar with ancient mythology. The beasts bound to Venus's chariot are not her own symbolic animals but those of the main divinities: Cerberus is associated with Pluto, the seahorse belongs to Neptune, the eagle to Jove, and the peacock to Juno. As highlighted by Adam Bartsch, the subjugated status of the beasts may be understood as the work of the infinite power of the goddess of love.[16]

The vernacular poem accompanying the image first offers important clues to the reader-viewers in order to decipher the scene: it identifies the figures, describes their family relations, and sets up the opposing sides. Then it defines the roles of these gods in the working of the universe. In contrast to the apparently hostile atmosphere in the image, the verse explains how the harmonious interaction of Phoebus Apollo and Venus keeps the universe in motion and bloom. The dynamics of warmth and love are portrayed as positive forces of the visible world since they "perform wonders". Understanding classical deities as allegories of natural forces goes back to a long tradition before the sixteenth century and had gained momentum with Renaissance philosophical thinking.[17] In his commentary on Plato's *Symposium* (1484), Marsilio Ficino also depicts love as a creative force that sets and maintains the universe in motion.[18]

Most of the poem is descriptive and explanatory, but it takes an unexpected turn in the last two lines: the first-person speaker appears and laments about the conflicting nature of the depicted gods. Aiming to serve both deities, he cannot decide which direction to take in life and feels like he has been left with nothing. With this new voice, the battle of the gods is shifted from the outside to the inside, from the celestial world of deities to the soul of the speaker. The continuous struggle of the

[16] Bartsch, *Le Peintre-graveur*, XV:200.

[17] As emphasised by Jean Seznec in *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), esp. 97–103.

[18] Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, trans. by Sears Reynolds Jayne (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1944), 148–153.

conflicting forces is expressed with a line from Petrarch's sonnet 132—"I myself do not know what I wish for myself".[19] This poem is about the bittersweet suffering and the double nature of love that confuses the senses and the intellect. Therefore, the use of its penultimate line might serve as a reference point for the meaning of the whole text. The hesitant speaker in the print is similarly perplexed between Apollo and Venus. At first glance, the text seems to be a didactic interpretation that channels different poetic and philosophical sources into the scheme of comprehension of the picture. However, with the first-person speaker appearing on stage and stepping between the beholder and the image, the poem provides a model to the audience, teaching them to react to the picture by scrutinising one's own relations to the gods and their symbolic realm. The battle of Apollo and Venus, reason and desire, seems to be intentionally undecided, leaving the audience with the poetic image of a self-reflective, perplexed speaker in the face of the combating gods. Thus, the sheet is a witty invitation for the beholder to engage in a similar inner conversation on the subject.

In the *Allegory of the Two Lovers* (Fig. 11.2), the image shows Juno and Venus in their chariots which are drawn by peacocks and doves, respectively, while Cupid flies between them. The power relations are more balanced here, with the real battle happening in the foreground where a peacock attacks two pigeons. The image has been interpreted as an allegory of marriage and love, based on Juno's primary role as the wife of Jupiter and on Venus's notorious reputation as a seductress.[20] However, the poem below the image allows a more nuanced interpretation. In the caption, the first-person speaker is talking about the rivalry between two lovers and the very similar feelings they generate in one's soul. In the last line, the speaker asks for Cupid's help in this difficult situation with questions borrowed from Petrarch's sonnet 268—"What should I do, what do you advise me, Amor?".[21] The monologue peaks with this petition to Cupid: the poetic question concludes the self-reflective part and addresses the child-god who is actually depicted in the picture. The verse thus not

[19] "Ch'io medesmo non so quel ch'io mi voglio". See Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. by Giuseppe Savoca (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2008), 227.

[20] Bartsch, *Le Peintre-graveur*, XV:202.

[21] "Che debbio far. che mi consigli Amore". Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, 422–431.

only gives the beholder a model of thinking about the symbolic meaning of the goddesses but also initiates communication with the image. This can be read as an encouragement to the audience to similarly engage in intimate conversation with the image and to address their own issues to the god of love.

Bartsch assumed that the masculine pronouns used by the speaker to address the two lovers were meant as references to the two allegorical figures of love and marriage (related to the two Italian nouns *matrimonio* and *amore*, both of which are masculine).[22] However, the text talks about

Fig. 11.2 Veneziano, Agostino after Raphael (?). 1530–1560. *Allegory of the Two Lovers*. Engraving, 180 × 222 mm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Elisha Whittelsey Collection. The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949, acc. nr. 49.97.329

[22] Bartsch, *Le Peintre-graveur*, XV:202.

physical characteristics, such as beautiful eyes and sweet faces, and draws a lively picture of the two lovers. The speaker might represent a female voice hesitating between two men and two different life choices. In this case, the goddesses exemplify the two options in front of her, two role models with whom she could identify. A further possibility is that the print addresses a female audience. Art historian Malcolm Bull pointed out that there was presumably a link between the sphere of women and the spread of mythological imagery, which happened first on objects such as wedding chests, birth trays, and trinket boxes.[23] The print presenting a presumably female voice and the image of goddesses fits this hypothesis very well. Moreover, women from the elite sections of early modern society acted as patrons of the arts and they played a crucial role in courtly culture, especially in vernacular literature.[24] Petrarchan poetry was written and read both by male and female audiences. The subject of marriage versus love presented by a perplexed speaker could perfectly serve the purpose of scrutinising one's soul with moral considerations. Notwithstanding the playful tone of the poem, the image seems to take the side of virtue by showing the more powerful peacock chasing two doves. However, the battle of the goddesses is still undecided, so it may have worked not only as a starting point for a meditation on the self, but also as a catalyst to conversations. Dressing up this quite pragmatic problem in ancient forms implied several directions for the discussion depending upon the preferences of the audience. The beholder could respond to the philosophy of Petrarchan love as well as to its moral or literary interpretations, but the personal, first-person voice of the poem framed the discussion as private and intimate.

Venus and Cupid are also protagonists in the third smaller print, this time within a completely changed scenery. While the first print shows the deities in the sky (Fig. 11.1) and the second one offers a glimpse into an earthly landscape (Fig. 11.2), the third sheet depicts a suffering male figure leaning on a tree trunk on the seashore (Fig. 11.3). Venus is

[23] Malcolm Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 39.

[24] On the relation of women and vernacular literature, see Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400–1600* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008). On women's role in literary life, see also Diana Robin, *Publishing Women, Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). On female patronage in Renaissance Italy, see the essays in *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Sheryl E. Reiss and David G. Wilkins (Kirksville, Miss.: Truman State University Press, 2001).

riding on a scallop shell, Cupid is sailing in a small boat fabricated from his own weaponry and clothes, and three *putti* are flying above them in the clouds. The motif of the sailing Cupid can be found in antique mosaics, but this classical image received a completely new interpretation in the print.[25] According to the poetic caption, Cupid used all his tools to build the little bark with which he is sailing in the speaker's humours or body liquids ("this is how Amor, without Tiphys and Jason, became the master in the open sea of my humour"). The man dressed like a mythological figure thus steps on stage as the speaker himself, and the stream running to the sea from behind him can be interpreted as his bodily fluids becoming visible. Thus, the print provides the audience with the medically oriented idea of the melancholic disease of love. Cupid conquering one's body fluids—especially one's blood—and causing melancholy was a popular idea in medical discourse from the medieval period onwards, and it was also addressed by Ficino in his *De Amore* as the problem of earthly love.[26]

The vernacular poem transforms the magnificent seascape into the speaker's inner world. The extent of his pain is visualised and verbalised in the print. With some vocabulary reminiscent of Petrarch, the poem mentions the dangerous gate of death—a reference to the torments that make the lover feel like dying.[27] Moreover, the suffering male figure is depicted in the pose of ancient funerary statues of Eros with his legs crossed and his left hand in front of his chest, under his head, thereby emphasising the speaker's misery.[28] Image and text clearly complete each other: the poem highlights Cupid's mastery while it brings in erudite references from Petrarchan poetry through the theory of bodily fluids to the classical mythological figures of the story of the Argonauts. At the same time, the picture shows the image of the tormented speaker. The first-person voice literally makes the image speak: the tormented lover

[25] For the antique mosaic prototypes, see Charles Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 28.

[26] Ficino interpreted vulgar love as madness caused by black bile or burned blood. See Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 222, 226, 230. See also Beecher, "Quattrocento Views", 53–55.

[27] The phrase "il periglioso varco" or the perilous gate of death is used by Petrarch in sonnet 91. See Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, 159.

[28] The analogy was pointed out by Vladimír Juřen. See Juřen, "Scève et Raphaël", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 56 (1994), 83–87.

Fig. 11.3 Veneziano, Agostino after Raphael(?). 1520–1536. *The Sailing Amor*. Engraving, 191 × 223 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, object nr. RP-P-OB-36.621

presents his suffering in image and text to the audience. This might have provoked the beholder to respond to the object either in a self-reflective or conversational mode.

In the three prints, texts and images complement each other in an efficient way. The first-person voice could make the prints emotionally more accessible and would encourage the audience to analyse their own psychic condition in allegorical and poetic terms.[29] Petrarchan lines were

[29] Based on her analysis of seventeenth-century English literature, Cecile M. Jagodzinski emphasised the role of characters serving as model representations of readers in creating a private experience of the texts. In a similar way, the poems in the prints presented their audiences with a model for the viewer-reader and thus enabled their identification

used not only to accentuate melancholic anxiety but also in order to show the author's familiarity with both fashionable and famous poems as well as mythological references. Thus, conversations could take different turns over the prints and could be both very intimate and truly erudite. All the sheets mediate controversial aspects of love, providing the audience with allegorical means to reflect on the perturbations of their soul, thereby provoking an inner conversation. The intense, emotional monologues of the speakers are aimed at activating the beholders' response to the subject.

As Malcolm Bull has observed, it was one of the biggest challenges of Renaissance artists to give new meanings to mythological stories and to accommodate them to the tastes and views of early modern audiences.[30] In the first two prints, the images do not evoke a specific mythological story but rely on the allegorical understanding of the depicted gods and goddesses. In the third print and in those to be analysed in the following section, *all'antica* images were completely reinterpreted in line with medieval and early modern concepts of lovesickness. The widely known visual language of mythology was used to express new ideas. In this way, the producers of the prints succeeded in differentiating between various levels of meaning and, consequently, different ways of conversation. The verses offered an opportunity for a closer, more intimate reading while the mythological interpretation provided a more standardised set of meanings. In this context, the audiences might have recognised the position of the prints on the threshold of public and private as well as their capacity to engage in both open and confidential conversations.[31] These small prints present the ideas of love and lovesickness in a playful, clever tone and provide their audiences with an elegant, fashionable, multimedia version of the Petrarchan pose. As objects initiating conversations on the topic, either with company or with the self, they could have perfectly played a role in the social game of Petrarchism.

with the speaker. See Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print, Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 10.

[30] Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 7.

[31] In writing about erotic illustrations of the early modern period, Carlo Ginzburg defined the mythological as "a culturally and stylistically elevated code". See Carlo Ginzburg, "Titian, Ovid, and Sixteenth-Century Codes for Erotic Illustration", in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. by John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 73. On the issue of erotic prints and privacy, see also Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. 73–74.

The Horror of Lovesickness

The *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love* and the *Allegory of the Passions* (Figs. 11.4–11.5) elaborate on the suffering of male lovers. The depiction of the effect of love on the self is not affirmative in these prints: Cupid appears as a cunning and cruel force and the positive value of the Petrarchan pose of lovesickness is questioned instead. Both the visual and the textual parts are more complex than in the smaller prints, and greater emphasis is laid on the sensations of the first-person speakers.

The *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love* (Fig. 11.4) includes many allusions to ancient mythology, although the image has not been convincingly

Fig. 11.4 Anonymous engraver after Baccio Bandinelli (?). 1535–1550. *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love*. Engraving, 375 × 470 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, object nr. RP-P-OB-38.814

Fig. 11.5 Monogrammist O.O.V. Published by Antonio Salamanca. 1542. *Allegory of the Passions*. Engraving, 362 × 259 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, object nr. RP-P-OB-38.519

identified as the illustration of a specific story.[32] In the middle of the composition, Cupid is playing dice with a woman in an *all'antica* architectural setting. There are human body parts on the table—hands, eyes, a face, and hearts—next to the dice. A naked child is sitting behind the table and a wounded male body appears next to him, the heads of little *putti* with arrows peeking from inside the wound. Cupid is feeding dogs with a human heart and the animals are standing in his triumphal cart, a chariot of fire with four horses depicted according to Petrarch's description.[33] Around the main characters, there are several figures following their game or engaged in discussion, with two groups of three men and two couples with children arranged on either side. In the foreground, five *putti* torment an unconscious child in a cauldron put on the fire. Smoke coming from Cupid's chariot fills the background, while a horse and another chariot with four horses and a male figure appear in the sky.

The poem in the print is the first-person speaker's lament on the cruelty of Cupid. In the first stanza, the physical symptoms of love are described with contradictions and oxymorons (*affetti contrari*), often applied by Petrarch in his sonnets.[34] After this Petrarchan account of the lover's physical and emotional state, the speaker introduces the story. As he narrates, the horrific symptoms do not, however, stop people from falling in love—something which had happened to his own mother. She had lost her mind in the throes of passion and subsequently lost her child when playing dice with Cupid. The second stanza elaborates upon the situation further. The speaker describes himself as a child sitting on the table

[32] Art historians have tried to trace the mythological story, identifying the figure of the mother variously with Venus, Fortuna, or Medea, although none of their profiles perfectly match the picture and the caption. According to antique textual tradition, Cupid was playing dice with Ganymede before he was asked to make Medea fall in love with Jason so that the Argonauts could succeed in their journey for the Golden Fleece. See Bartsch, *Le Peintre-graveur*, XV:55. Stefania Massari interpreted all the figures as gods and the central female figure as Fortuna. In her explanation, the print was based on Ficino's writings and depicted the allegory of creation with Fortuna and Amor ruling the world in the middle of the composition. Massari did not, however, expand on either the connections between the exact details of Ficino's works and the image, or the Italian text written on the print. See Stefania Massari, *Tra mito e allegoria: immagini a stampa nel '500 e '600* (Rome: Sistemi Informativi, 1989), 270–272.

[33] Francesco Petrarca, *Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli Abbozzi*, ed. by Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1996), 56. In *Gli Asolani*, Pietro Bembo also compared love to fire. See Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, 23.

[34] For example, sonnet 134, in Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, 229.

where the game takes place, and thus, we can identify him with the infant pointing towards himself in the middle of the image. The third stanza lists Cupid's trophies taken from tormented lovers. In the end, the audience is presented with the image of the cruel infant god who "is living on robbery and stealing cries".

Two antique authors, Catullus and Virgil, are mentioned in the second stanza. They are not cited as models for the text and image but as authorities who did not write about such a topic, story, or scene. This may explain why art historians could not find the antique mythological source of the account. As the speaker points out, the horrific story does not have a classical origin—it was the narrative of the early modern age. The classical references are also meant to set up the erudite context: Catullus was a "model for personal poetry" in the Renaissance, and his works were seen as obscene but sentimental and elegant at the same time.[35] Virgil wrote the famous quote *amor vincit omnia* (*Eclogues* 10.69) and was regarded as an authority on love and mythological matters. References to these writers could show the poet's erudition in Latin while also situating the vernacular poem in opposition to the classical literary tradition.[36] Indeed, an episode closest to the meaning and story of the print can be found in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), a vernacular work based partly on antique sources and partly on early modern invention.[37] A similarly cruel Cupid appears here and kills two women who rejected his power, slices their bodies into pieces, and feeds a dragon, a lion, and a wolf with their remains.[38]

The suffering of the dismembered lovers and the pain of the first-person speaker reveal the horrors and the dark side of love in the print. Lovesickness is depicted here as a negative experience, one which is better to avoid. The Petrarchan *affetti contrari* and the agonising state of the

[35] Julia Haig Gasser, *Catullus and his Renaissance Readers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 193–194.

[36] As Patricia Emison has argued, the poetry of Catullus and Virgil was regarded as more positive and was thus in opposition to the meaning of the prints. See Emison, *The Art of Teaching*, 42.

[37] See, for example, Rosemary Trippe, "The 'Hypnerotomachia Poliphili', Image, Text, and Vernacular Poetics", *Renaissance Quarterly* 55:4 (2002), 1223.

[38] Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, The Strife of Love in a Dream*, trans. by Joscelyn Godwin (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 400–408. The story of dismembering as revenge is based on an episode from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. See Andrea Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 143.

hopeless lover serve to horrify the readers.[39] The terrifying effect of image and text may have mediated a moralising pretext through the story of the mother who lost her child through gambling: blaming the mother for the misery of the offspring could remind early modern audiences of Eve and the Original Sin. According to the print, the vicious circle of love started with the mother and continued with the son who inherited the tendency for suffering. The image expresses this idea by showing the different ages of man—from a newborn child to a bearded adult. The ultimate message of the print is that the omnipresent power of Cupid determines one's fate from the moment of birth. This universal story is presented in a remarkably personal tone. The horrifying visual details of torments are matched with a verse that aims at the most powerful psychological effect.

Through a personal account, the speaker acts as the interpreter of the visual symbols and verbalises what is mostly invisible in the picture—the physical sensations and the perturbations of his soul. The passionate voice makes the print relatable while the repeated descriptions of the emotional and physical suffering and horrors make the multimedia experience impressive and provocative. While encouraging the audience to respond to the speakers' gruesome monologue, the print also prompts self-reflection and inner conversation and guides the audience towards a moral resolution.

The *Allegory of the Passions* (Fig. 11.5) shows a similarly terrifying allegory of lovesickness. In a barren landscape with dying trees and cracked soil, the twisted, nude body of the protagonist leans towards a rock while tormented by a snake and a small lioness. Behind him, another male figure is running away in panic, and Cupid is preparing his arrow in the sky. In the distant background, a rock in a phallic shape appears behind lush vegetation and ancient ruins. The main figure is a visual reference to one of the most famous ancient sculptures—the marble *Laocoön*. The painful expression of his face, the twisted pose of his muscular body, and the attacking snake must have been recognised by the audience.[40] However,

[39] Patricia Emison saw this cynical, profane approach as a counter-reaction to the mystical Petrarchan ideas on love. See Emison, *The Art of Teaching*, 42.

[40] The ancient sculpture of the *Laocoön* became a widely known topos of pathos and physical suffering. Leopold D. Ettlinger, "*Exemplum Doloris*: Reflections of the *Laocoon* group", in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in honour of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. by Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 121–126.

if any doubts persisted, the sonnet of fourteen lines below the composition makes a clear reference to the sculpture. The very first line states that the image depicted is not the horrific example of the *Laocoön*. One encounters here the same strategy as in the previously examined print. There, the poetry of Catullus and Virgil were counted as counterpoints of the depiction while in this case, the verse draws attention to a pictorial tradition that is completely reinterpreted. Furthermore, the first stanza is essentially a list of what the image is *not* about. The second line is an allusion to Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* where famous figures (e.g. Caesar) are conquered by Cupid.[41] Petrarch himself is also mentioned: as the poem declares, the male nude is not the Tuscan who was tormented by cruel Love. On the one hand, these visual and literary allusions to famous stories build the erudite context of the print, conversing with different strains of knowledge and tradition. On the other hand, however, these lines also read like answers to the guesses of the audience about the subject of the multimedia object. With these strategies, the text effectively engages the audience in a dialogue with the print, preparing for the inner conversation which will happen during the deciphering of the riddle.

The real subject of the print is revealed in the second stanza. Here, the speaker explains that the image symbolises his own suffering, "the living temple of all the deep pain [that] clearly demonstrates my bitter life". The savage beasts symbolise the torments of sensual desires to which he had fallen prey. In the third stanza, he laments about all his miseries which have been caused by love. A typical symptom of Petrarchan lovesickness, the lover's melancholy, is described as caused by the absence of the beloved which generates further impulses of desire. The last stanza emphasises that the image is an example of love's cruelty, explaining once again how the protagonist is condemned by Cupid to bear the torments of the beasts. He is in absolute despair, "dying alive".

Lovesickness is expressed in Petrarchan poetic language: four lines in the third and fourth stanzas allude to sonnets from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (sonnets 179, 6, 310).[42] In this, the print is similar to the smaller sheets with gods and goddesses. However, this image of the tormented lover is rather ambiguous. One option is to understand the image and text as

[41] Petrarca, *Trionfi*, 74.

[42] Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, IX, 286, 488.

a satirical presentation of the Petrarchan model of mental suffering. The closest example to the print's iconography is a painted panel—the *Allegory of Passions* by Correggio (1489?–1534) (Fig. 11.6), created around 1528 for the *studiolo* of Isabella d'Este that has been mentioned in the introduction.[43] The screaming faces of the central printed and painted figures are especially similar, and the motif of the tormenting snakes is also common in the two works. According to Campbell's interpretation, Correggio's picture depicts the mental pain of someone who falls prey to his own emotions and psychic perturbations. The figure of the satyr-Laocoön, himself more like a beast than a human being, adds a parodic overtone.[44] The print differs from the painting since the athletic, young protagonist does not belong to the mythological world of beasts. Nevertheless, he is presented in the passionate poetic caption as a victim of Cupid and his own desires and, in this, is similar to the figure of the satyr.

This print reveals a terrifying moral example against the emotional and sensual excesses of the soul, just as had been presented by the *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love*. In the *Allegory of the Passions*, this meaning is supported by the escaping figure who is looking directly at the audience outside of the image, trying to make eye contact.[45] While in the other prints, the vernacular text and the speaker provided the beholder with a model of behaviour, in this case, the image includes a strong advice for the audience: beware of Cupid and escape the excesses of the soul. Conversation could happen in more than just words over this print—the audience was captivated not only emotionally by the speaker of the poem, but also visually by the escaping figure. Thus, the print could engage the audience in a truly multisensory conversation.

The visual connection with one of the *studiolo* paintings is an important argument for the print's role in self-reflection. However, it is important to point out that the painting and the print represent a different level of

[43] For the details of dating, see Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 222.

[44] Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 233–234.

[45] Alessia Alberti assumed that it is the male lover of the protagonist who turns his back to the viewer and flees in the background. In my opinion, since the figure's expression shows horror and panic, he is reacting to what is happening to the protagonist rather than escaping his love. Moreover, the tormenting lioness may refer to heterosexual love. See Alessia Alberti, "Stampe (Sogno)", in *D'après Michelangelo*, ed. by Alessia Alberti, Alessandro Rovetta, Claudio Salsi, and Michelangelo Buonarrotti (Venice: Marsilio, 2015), 201.

Fig. 11.6 Correggio. 1528. *Allegory of the Passions*, Painting on canvas, 148 × 88 cm. Département des arts graphiques, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. nr. 5927

privacy. The paintings of the *studiolo* were personally commissioned by the elite owner while the prints were intended for a wider audience, both socially and geographically. The private experience of the print had to be regulated and guided by a framework of ideas. The audience purchased the object and could not influence its content. For instance, the openness of the image was limited by the captions of the two larger prints which included strong moral tones. This is an important feature to bear in mind when we talk about private conversations regarding the prints. While all the objects analysed here are aimed at provoking response and self-reflection, this inner conversation of the audience is not only enabled and encouraged but also limited and regulated by the captions.

Turning now to the audience, it is interesting to note how the moral warning was understood. It has already been mentioned that an impression of the *Allegory of the Passions* was reconstructed as part of a collector's album. The context in which the print was placed may provide some evidence about its reception, at least in the eye of a northern collector. The print was included among mythological images and placed directly before the images of Hercules's heroic fights.[46] This arrangement may imply that the owner thought of the allegorical print as parallel to the stories of Hercules. The beasts of sensual desires might have been regarded as similar to the monsters that the ancient hero had to defeat—an interpretation which was consistent with theoretical works on love. Pietro Bembo compared the suffering lover to the heroes tormented by the Furies.[47] The owner of the album might have attempted to express that struggling with the beasts of desire is a heroic battle similar to the labours of Hercules by arranging these topics next to each other. Unlike the smaller prints, the gruesome images and texts of the larger prints analysed here no longer embody a game. Rather, they are didactic—one may even call them heroic—objects with moral messages, intended to initiate more serious conversations with the self.

Conclusion: Private Conversations with the Self

Combining new ideas and ancient forms, the five prints present a special early modern iconography of love. The differences between them also reflect the changes in Renaissance love theory. Three smaller prints are witty, playful, and less dramatic. They offer a glimpse into the never-ending battle of the forces of the soul, presenting perplexity rather than extreme suffering. In contrast, two larger prints provide the audience with a horrifying image of love that implies a strong moral warning. While the smaller sheets present Petrarchan ideals, the larger prints question and argue against this model by showing the horrific consequences of desire. The differences can not only be explained by the dates of the prints, but also coincide with the difference in their size. Larger sheets were more likely to be pasted on the wall and thus more openly displayed in the houses of their owners. Depicting the excesses of the soul in a

[46] Zelen, "The Venetian Print Album", 34.

[47] Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, 23.

negative way, these prints could function as devices of conversation while remaining on the safer side of a controversial topic. On the other hand, the handling of the smaller sheets might have guaranteed more privacy. Their content was also more in line with their materiality, presenting the concerns of lovers in a more open-ended and intimate way for both male and female audiences. While this hypothesis is based on the close analysis of the selected prints, we must keep in mind that the use of prints must also have varied according to the material and intellectual circumstances of their users.

All the five prints presented in this chapter include a subtle play of intertextual and visual references, constantly balancing between teaching and touching the audience. The emotional involvement of the beholder is just as important as the exhibition of erudition. These frameworks serve to stabilise the prints on the threshold of private and public in order to fulfil their self-reflective and conversational potential at the same time. Using the widely known traditions of mythology and Petrarchan poetry, the prints offered a complex but approachable language for their audiences to talk about intimate ideas. In the guise of artistic and literary imagery, the owners and their guests could enjoy conversations on the confidential issues of love and lovesickness.

Discussions could happen in and over the prints in various directions: the texts are in conversation with the images and with the beholders but also encourage communication between the image and the audience. The prints could have an important social role by publicising personal stories and by making sense of the intimate matters of love and lovesickness. They taught the audience by their dramatic effect, and with the help of a range of traditions and theories, they conventionalised the image of spiritual suffering. They initiated discourse on and with ancient and modern poetry as well as antique visual sources. Through words and images, the prints engaged their audience in truly multisensory conversations. The captions gave a completely new meaning to the images: they guided the reader-viewers from the outside to the inside, from the world of mythology to the soul of the poetic speaker. Revealing the speaker's inner world, the verses offered a model of self-reflection and urged their audiences to join the discussion and scrutinise the notions of their own soul. The personal voice of the Italian poems gave an opportunity for the reader-viewers to identify themselves with the allegorical meaning and to reflect on the images at a deeper level. While three prints (Figs. 11.3–11.5) present the voice of male lovers in image and text, one sheet

(Fig. 11.1) is neutral in its viewpoint (although the allusion to Petrarchan poetry might imply a male speaker). Another sheet (Fig. 11.2) allows the peculiar hypothesis of identifying a sixteenth-century print intended for a female audience albeit being a male creation.

The combination of an image and the first-person voice was a traditional mode of communication in prints, especially in religious sheets.[48] However, the five prints analysed in this chapter reinterpreted the tradition of the "speaking image". The first-person speakers achieved an ambiguous position in relation to the audience and the depiction: they describe and interpret the images from an outside point of view, even though the prints visualise their inner selves. In the *Allegory of the Cruelty of Love*, the speaker, even though he appears in the image as a child, sets himself outside the image with the use of the past tense. Similarly, in the *Allegory of the Passions*, although the speaker talks about the picture as the symbolic image of his suffering and emotions, he does not address the viewer from within the image; he does not speak as the figure depicted but explains its symbolism. Through this intermediate position, the poems advance a self-reflective attitude towards one's inner world, feelings, emotions, hesitations, and suffering.

There was a great demand for the topic of love and lovesickness. The popularity of the prints is clear from the presumably high number of impressions. Some plates were already used when bought by the publisher, indicating that hundreds—or perhaps even more than a thousand—of impressions were printed from the plates.[49] The conversational potential of the prints proves their place in daily life. This chapter has demonstrated how they could be used to guide self-analysis or talk about the perturbations of one's soul. The audience had to be erudite in order to decipher the stories, references, and meanings in both text and image and to evoke popular theories and recognise widely used poses. Even if

[48] For the analysis of a few sixteenth-century Italian examples, see Alexandra Kocsis, "Speaking Images and Speaking to the Images: Inscriptions in Religious Prints Published by Antonio Lafreri", in *The Reception of the Printed Image in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. by Grażyna Jurkowlaniec and Magdalena Herman (New York–London: Routledge, 2020), 172–192.

[49] Michael Bury estimated around 1,000 impressions from a plate—even more if retouched. See Michael Bury, *The Print in Italy: 1550–1620* (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 47. Antony Griffiths calculated 2,000–4,000 impressions of "finely engraved plates" depending on retouch. See Griffiths, *The Print Before Photography*, 50.

they contemplated the sheets on their own, they conversed with a range of traditions and practices.

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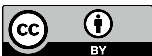

PART V

Epilogue

CHAPTER 12

Towards Further Studies of Private Conversations

Mette Birkedal Bruun, Johannes Ljungberg, and Natacha Klein Käfer

This volume demonstrates a variety of ways of tracing private conversations in sources from early modern Europe. Private conversations turn up in journals and diaries (Reinburg, Péter, and Simon), annotations (Bardenheuer), court records (Horsley and Wiślicz), songs (Wiślicz), fiction (Benison), and theological treatises (Nørgaard). Sometimes they may be envisioned based on circumstantial evidence (Kaminska and Kocsis). Each of these genres abides by its own set of standardised norms and—occasionally—editorial processes. Aimed at different audiences and

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purposes, their representation of private conversations ranges from quasi-naturalistic renderings (Reinburg and Simon) to the more-or-less stylised formats of the grand didactic tradition of the dialogue (Benison), the prescriptive tone of religious manuals (Nørgaard), or the formulaic structures of court records, representing both the defence as well as the prosecution (Horsley and Wiślicz).

Different reasons, locations, and expectations connected to private conversations provide glimpses of people's daily life, and the role played by conversation. People had several reasons to talk in private. Across this volume, we encounter private conversations concerning conflictual matters among family members or business partners (Reinburg, Péter, and Simon), issues that were religiously or politically controversial (Reinburg and Horsley), sexual matters (Wiślicz), social questions (Kaminska), consolation (Bardenheuer), and issues that could potentially cause shame, conflict, or loss of reputation if conducted in public (Péter and Simon). The conversations examined in this volume also contain particularly poignant reprimands directed at particular parishioners (Bardenheuer), moral issues fit for self-reflection (Kocsis), as well as thoughts and deeds appropriate for confession (Nørgaard).

These conversations take us to a wide array of locations. Privacy for conversations was sought outdoors, for instance, in forests, fields, and cemeteries. Often, interlocutors talked while doing other things, such as working in fields and forests (Bardenheuer), dining and drinking (Péter and Reinburg), or walking (Reinburg). Domestic space offered some protection from the prying ears of communities or authorities, although boundaries were porous, even in the residential house of a merchant family (Péter). These settings underline the privilege of having a space for privacy outside the town with a certain size and number of rooms (Simon). Yet another kind of space—outhouses such as barns or stables—could offer shelter for private conversations as well as activities (Wiślicz). A separate room in an inn might also demarcate a space providing some degree of privacy (Benison). Privacy within a conversation could be further protected and controlled through dissimulation (Benison), just as privacy could be created by consciously withholding particular information from particular people, such as the village pastor (Bardenheuer). Arguably, the most private *locus* examined in this volume is the mind or the heart—the site of contrition as opposed to public confession in the theological debate of penitence (Nørgaard).

Some of the chapters unfold divergent expectations of what a private conversation should be like. Social expectations were mirrored in many instructional texts on the art of conversation, and some of these guidelines take flesh when recounted in everyday situations, by a domestic authority (Péter), by a street-smart merchant (Benison), or by clergymen of different confessions (Bardenheuer and Nørgaard).

Private Conversations as a Danger—and as a Useful Tool

As several chapters show, the nature of the topics generally treated in private conversations meant that such conversations were often challenged or at least viewed with suspicion. Several chapters indicate that the privacy that shielded early modern private conversations was frail and vulnerable to several forms of threats. Sometimes, their content was conveyed to third parties by interlocutors (Horsley); sometimes, privacy was breached through eavesdropping, by the voices of the speakers, or when other people entered the place of conversation (Péter). In other instances, speakers might themselves cross over from a private to a public space, bringing with them traces of the conversation—such as when complaints communicated in private were announced on the street (Péter). Sometimes, such a change of space was part of a greater structure, such as when the confessional act conducted in private resulted in public penitence (Nørgaard).

The social fabric of early modern society brought together private persons on the one hand and communities on the other (Simon). In this entanglement, matters related to norms, obligations, and reputation led to inescapable connections between individuals and their social contexts. However, as Wiślicz notes, when it comes to early modern norms, there is a marked difference between legal and religious theory on the one hand and everyday practice on the other. The chapters also show how privacy could be offered by a household or a community through actual initiative or by 'turning a blind eye'.

Times of crises seem to offer sources that are particularly fruitful for detecting modes of private conversations. Such crises could be related to major societal shifts, such as escalating religious wars (Reinburg) or increasing investigations of illicit texts (Horsley). Crises covered by this volume also include more mundane matters, such as familial disputes (Simon) or health concerns related to the affliction of melancholy

(Bardenheuer). Conversations were the driving forces of both conflicts and conflict management. Some of the case studies allow us to follow the process whereby the subject of conversations that were meant to remain private leaked from a smaller network of speakers to a broader web of people (Horsley and Bardenheuer). In the course of these different kinds of crises, private conversations were initiated or altered, a fact which allows us to follow conversations as they were changing form. Admonitions were conveyed not only from people of authority (Péter, Bardenheuer, and Nørgaard) but also via agreements negotiated in parallel to the official system, such as oaths within communities (Horsley), a 'peace testimony' between spouses (Simon), or circumscribed arrangements where language served to create social room for private conversations. Poetic phrases (Reinburg), jokes (Wiślicz), and songs (Wiślicz) were used to talk about sensitive matters. In some cases, the people studied in these chapters managed to solve crises by talking in private (Péter, Benison, and Simon), whereas in other cases they either failed to do so (Bardenheuer) or chose the path of silence (Reinburg and Benison).

Despite the dark clouds of suspicion surrounding private conversations, the chapters also show a more accommodating view of private conversations. When we comb our sources to find mentions of everyday conversations, we find diarists signalling that they had been talking in private (Reinburg and Péter), the lustful references to private conversations in tavern songs (Wiślicz), the intimate rooms or prints that supported private conversations (Kaminska and Kocsis), and the preference for private confession and contrition of the heart instead of public shaming advocated by some speakers in religious debate (Nørgaard). The example of the community around Jean Fontanier reveals to what extent private conversations were key to the creation and future dissemination of intellectual production (Horsley). Many things were gained in such conversations: reflection, intellectual exchange, close friendship, and avoidance of involuntary exposure to a wider community. These values of private conversations were much desired, and they form a blunt contrast to how early modern authorities generally declared activities undertaken in private as a threat to society. Furthermore, while it is often stressed that chattering and gossiping were disliked in early modern society, it should also be taken into account that the inability to conduct a conversation—be it public or private—was considered equally problematic, and a well-functioning private life—including peaceful private conversations—was deemed a sign of status and social solidity (Péter).

Thus, although research on early modern notions of privacy tends to stress the overall suspicion of authorities towards activities in private, this volume brings to the fore the many ways in which privacy was desired in everyday life. This wish for privacy in certain everyday instances had to be negotiated and reiterated through people's interactions, but the contributions demonstrate that, in contrast to official positions which deemed privacy as a threat to the social order, people assessed the valence of private conversations depending on their daily needs. Seen from the broader perspective of early modern notions of privacy, conversations appear as situations in which such positively valued notions can be traced.

Private Conversations as a Form of Boundary Drawing

The privacy surrounding the conversations studied in this volume is secured by way of multiple forms of boundary drawing. The remoteness of a house may offer seclusion from neighbours and the wider community (Simon), a walk may take interlocutors away from crammed spaces (Reinburg), a domestic location may offer some protection because the owner might to some extent control who has access (Horsley), and a particular room within a public space—such as an inn—can be set up for private usage (Benison). The tacit or explicit limitation of a circle of interlocutors may also create a boundary, creating variant situations where the community is either so wide as to exclude only one person (Bardenheuer) or where it involves the fairly delineated social unit of the household (Péter) or a married couple (Simon). Finally, the material confines of the journal may protect a conversation among generations (Péter).

The sources studied in these chapters distinguish private conversations from other forms of communication. Private conversation is thus described as being something vastly different from private writing or writing that is made publicly available through clandestine and open publishing (Horsley). It is also distinguished from conversations carried out in public or the public declaration made before, for instance, a court (Horsley). The private conversation *in casu* with the pastor could be considered a breach of village loyalties and thus be defined by parishioners in distinction to conversations taking place within the community while, as Bardenheuer shows, the pastor might view the private conversations as a crucial element in his pastoral care that differed from the conversations in the consistory or from public admonitions. Private conversation

between a couple in conflict is distinguished from the invitation into conflict by an outside mediator (Simon). The formalised private conversation related to confession is identified as something different from inner contrition on the one hand and public penitence on the other (Nørgaard). Kocsis separates the private conversations that could transpire in front of a print hanging on the wall of a *studiolo* from the even more intimate exchanges that spectators might have had while bending over a smaller print. Finally, Wiślicz reminds us that sexually charged private conversation is at once distinct from and semantically aligned with the ditties sung in public.

In these ways, we can study private conversations in order to discover how social boundaries functioned in early modern society—to see, that is, how people talking in private shaped boundaries and how private conversations taking place within formal and informal networks gave the historical agents different degrees of agency.

Private Conversations—by Terminology and by Circumstances

Private conversations were defined in different ways. Most of the conversations studied in this volume are defined as private by their circumstances rather than any direct identification with the word 'private' or with related terms. As Benison and Péter show, sometimes it is relevant to look at early modern terminologies related to privacy and the private and consider forms of overlap between early modern words deriving from the Latin *privatus* and their meanings as well as factors affording conditions that we would see as a form of privacy. Péter thus turns, among other sources, to Roman law as a provider of terminologies related to private and public.

Wiślicz astutely argues that the terminology regarding conversation (a term that might denote both talk and conduct) is of interest because it underlines the connection between private conversation and private, *in casu* illicit, sexual conduct. This insight points to the generally significant point that often private conversation is considered not simply an exchange of words, but also a meeting of minds, opinions, and interests that might readily lead to action.

Bardenheuer's case features an explicit distinction between 'public' (the term employed is *publicus*) and 'private' (*privatus*) conversations pertaining to his pastoral work where the latter denotes individual conversations with his parishioners. Further, the theological treatises studied by

Nørgaard contain terminology related to such distinctions—that is, the Latin *privatus* or *secretus* or the French *particulier* and *secret* which were deployed to describe inner or personal contrition.

However, there are many instances beyond terminology which do not always lend themselves to categorisation as private or public. The case studies demonstrate how 'private' and 'public' are not stable and objective categories, neither empirically, nor analytically. They also show how the way in which a situation comes to be considered as private or public tells us something about how private conversations were both conducted and conceptualised. Several contributions to this volume prompt a critical (re)consideration of the perspectives from which such definitions are formulated. For example, the explicit definitions of public and private documents in Bardenheuer's chapter are the pastor's, but obviously not those of the parishioners who sought each other for conversations shielded from the pastor. It is also important to take notice of the agent who allows something to become private rather than public. For example, Simon discusses that servants in the household of the struggling couple probably heard the couple fighting but let them keep this private. Generally, as stated by Simon, the relationship between public and private is not an either/or construct but one which inhabits a spectrum, and several forms of material, culturally codified, or implicit forms of boundary drawing created the privacy needed for conversations to be protected from unwanted listeners.

Thus, early modern private conversations do not always appear in binary opposition to public exchanges. They are to be found on a spectrum where a singular conversation could move along a scale, shifting gears from general talk to something more private depending upon the interlocutors and the circumstances. Studying how and why such scales switched—both at the micro and macro levels—will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions for privacy in these societies.

Towards Further Studies

As individuals living in the age of information, we are constantly aware of technological eavesdropping on our private conversations. We tend to lose a sense of who could be privy to our online communication—from companies to governments or hackers—even when messages are meant only for a few people. The fear that third parties listen in on private

conversations may appear to be a peculiarly contemporary concern, but it has long historical roots. People of the past were also concerned that unintended audiences might get a hold of what they chose to talk about in private. Understanding how people dealt with the challenges of their time and navigated their need for privacy in the early modern period, at a time when the notion was mostly seen as suspicious and threatening to social order, can be revealing of the human need to select who they want to communicate with and how such an interaction can take place in order to protect the exchange.

There is certainly a need for further studies that follow private conversations within a broader array of sources, why not through periods of crises and their aftermaths, in order to tell us more about the implications of talking in private in early modern Europe. Furthermore, research on private conversations from other contexts and periods can expand how the need for talking in private was transformed, reinvented, or formulated as a response to other social circumstances. The lens of this volume is directed on early modern Europe, but the approaches and findings will hopefully also contribute to broader conversations on what it means to talk in private.

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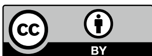

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