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**REFASHIONING
THE SELF IN
RICHARD BROME'S THEATRE**

L-LIN/10 - Letteratura inglese

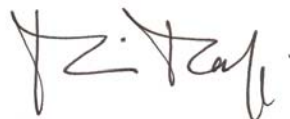
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PREFACE

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Writing about Richard Brome has been a challenge from many points of view since he represented for centuries what Robert Frost called “the road not taken.”¹ Numerous scholars decided to privilege different paths so that this ‘critical road’ was ‘less travelled by.’ Actually, according to a cursory search of the MLA *International Bibliography*, the entries concerning Brome in its index of books, chapters, articles, and dissertations between 1884 and 2010 are only ninety-two. On the other hand, a similar research about Shakespeare returns 36,464 entries, “2,573 entries on Jonson, 1,785 entries on Christopher Marlowe, and 773 entries on Thomas Middleton.”²

Even the scholars who chose to go on this journey took Brome into consideration only for his historic interest more than for an intrinsic one: the playwright was undeservedly and simplistically labeled as a minor writer in Ben Jonson’s shadow, and suffered from the general prejudice against the Caroline period, conceived as a forgettable age of transition prior to the Restoration.

This work lies in the field of a general revaluation of Brome and of his historical period which began in the 1980s after Martin Butler’s seminal book *Theatre and Crisis* (1984).³ Its global resonance led the way to a new wave of interest which started from the Anglo-American scholarship and spread all over the world through new studies on Brome (like the works of Julie Sanders and Matthew Steggle in England or Athena Efstathiou-Lavabre in France, to name just a few) and the staging of some of his plays such as *The City Wit* and *The Antipodes* which took the dramatist from London to Australia passing through Santa Cruz.⁴ In 2010, Brome’s plays had a worldwide diffusion owing to the project at Royal Holloway (University of London),⁵ the first online critical edition of his works since the last of 1873. Professor Richard Allen Cave guided a panel of international scholars in

¹ Robert Frost, *Collected Poems, Prose & Plays*, (eds) Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson, New York: Literary Classics of the United States, c1995.

² Brett D. Hirsch, “Bringing Richard Brome Online,” *Early Theatre*, Vol. 13.1, 2010, pp. 137-153, p. 138.

³ Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

⁴ Actually *The Antipodes* had some modern performances at the Globe Theatre (2000), Santa Cruz (2005) and Ballarat, Australia (2008).

⁵ *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 10 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4. I will be describing the features of the edition later in the chapter (pp. 23-24).

the editing of the whole *corpus* of Brome's plays paving the way to a real rebirth of Richard Brome as a man of theatre.

My work is an Italian attempt to answer T. S. Eliot's claim that "Brome deserves to be more read than he is, and first to be more accessible than he is."⁶ Actually, despite the vivacity of recent studies and the freshness of the new approaches, as well as the charm of 'new' plays on stage, the critical revolution started in the 1980s in Britain and America seems to have involved Italian criticism only very marginally since no relevant monographic studies have been devoted to Brome. Moreover, the dominant approach in Italian criticism is still based mainly on traditional interpretations so that the playwright was given a restricted space in hand-books and in the histories of British Theatre in Italian.⁷ Anna Anzi⁸ and Daniela Guardamagna seem to mark the importance of Brome as a Caroline playwright, yet their critical attention was devoted to his major plays such as *A Jovial Crew* and *The Antipodes* which belong to the end of his dramatic production. The exception is the Italian scholar Anton Ranieri-Parra who made an Italian translation of *A Mad Couple Well Matched* in 2003 and wrote a monographic introductory study on Brome which explores the main aspects of his literary production without giving a new critical contribution.⁹

Therefore, working on Brome here in Italy has been like penetrating into an unknown region and taking the road 'less travelled' but what I found was both rewarding and fascinating and, as Frost would say, 'that has made all the difference.'

⁶ Thomas S. Eliot, (1920) *The Sacred Wood, Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, London: Methuen, 1983, p. 21.

⁷ In Franco Marengo's *Storia della civiltà letteraria inglese*, only a three-page section is devoted to John Ford and Richard Brome. See Franco Marengo (ed), *Storia della civiltà letteraria inglese*, vol. *Il teatro del primo Seicento*, Torino: Utet, 1996, pp. 804-806.

⁸ Anna Anzi, *Storia del teatro inglese dalle origini al 1660*, Torino: Einaudi, 1997; Anna Anzi, Daniela Guardamagna, *Il teatro Giacomiano e Carolino*, Roma: Carocci, 2002.

⁹ I will be discussing his contribution later in the chapter (pp. 23-24).

⁹ See the stage history (pp. 16-18).

CHAPTER 1

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE SPACE

1.1

Fashion, refashion and Brome

The title of the dissertation “Refashioning the Self in Richard Brome’s Theatre” immediately suggests the critical perspective through the reference to Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), a milestone in the history of criticism and a programmatic book of “New Historicism.”¹⁰ It revolves around the concept of ‘fashion,’ a verb provided with a variety of meanings: firstly, shaping *ex novo*, “to give fashion or shape to; to form, mould (either a material or immaterial object)” (OED 1; 1611 - Bible *Job* xxxi.15 “Did not one fashion vs in the wombe?”); secondly, “transforming or modifying something already existent” (OED 4; 1601 - Shakespeare *Julius Caesar* II.i.220 “Send him but hither, and Ile fashion him;” finally, “counterfeiting” (4b; 1599 - Shakespeare *Hen. V*, I.ii.14 “God forbid. That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading.”) As Greenblatt noticed, in the 16th century the verb ‘fashion’ came “into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of the self”¹¹ according to a set of social standards: “a manipulable, artful process”¹² which involves a code of behaviour, a way of dressing, speaking and relating to other people.

Greenblatt selected six writers who manifested, each in a different way, peculiar aspects of self-fashioning, a particular sensitivity to the construction of identity owing to the experience of a profound personal mobility: Thomas More, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, William Tyndale, Edmund Spenser and Thomas Wyatt. Surprisingly, he does not include Jonson in his list. The gap represented by the significant and strange absence of Ben Jonson has been filled in by the collection of essays edited by Julie Sanders

¹⁰ New Historicism is a critical movement which developed in the 1980s through the work of the scholar Stephen Greenblatt and gained global influence in the 1990s. The methods of interpretation proposed by New Historicism are practiced by a large number of critics all over the world such as Catherine Gallagher, Jean E. Howard, and Stephen Orgel, to name only a few. The movement has also its own journal, *Representations*, published by the University of California Press.

¹¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

entitled *Refashioning Ben Jonson*.¹³ Far from blaming Greenblatt for his choice, the scholar considers this absence intriguing and deserving further comments so that she deliberately decided to “subject Jonson’s literary career to a historicized and self-consciously post-New Historicism reading.”¹⁴ Sanders chose the term ‘refashioning’ meaning “the readjustment of the critical lens and the reinvigoration of debate on and around the figure of Ben Jonson.”¹⁵ Therefore, her aim is to reshape the identity of the Jonsonian canon more than focusing on the process leading to the building up of an identity.

As for me, in my dissertation I intend to subject Brome to a similar reading to the one adopted by Sanders for Jonson but using the word refashioning in the sense meant by Greenblatt’s. What I see in Brome is the same sensitivity to the formation of identity discussed by Greenblatt as well as the personal experience of social mobility. Differently from Sanders, I do not aim to refashion Brome’s canon but to see how the idea of identity is shaped continually, that is re-fashioned: actually, the addition of the prefix *re-* reinforces the idea of the dynamism in the continual renegotiations of human social and gender relations which make the identity adapt to new contexts and situations. “Identity is a mask to be fashioned and manipulated”¹⁶ like in the case of Brainworm in Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour* who reshapes his identity to spy on his master’s son so that the enjoyment of his disguise is also the enjoyment of self-creation:¹⁷ “I cannot chose but laugh, to see myself translated thus, from a poor creature to creator” (II, 2, 1-2).¹⁸ I conceive refashioning as a means of achieving one’s own ends also independently from the social position through a continual role playing in which people adopt self-conscious urban roles¹⁹ at all levels of the social ladder: the citizen, the courtier, the widow but also the prostitute, the soldier or the doctor are all parts which can be played on the stage of life.

Furthermore, I chose the New Historicist method of interpretation since I found it more effective than a semiotic, psychoanalytical or a gender studies approach and more suitable to my idea of research and analysis. Firstly, open to miscellaneous methodological

¹³ Julie Sanders (ed), *Refashioning Ben Jonson*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

¹⁴ Sanders, 1998, p. 1.

¹⁵ Sanders, 1998, p. 2.

¹⁶ Greenblatt, 1980, p. 157.

¹⁷ Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, Anne-Julia Zwierlein, *Plotting Early Modern London*, London: Ashgate, 2004, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Ben Jonson’s Plays*, London and New York: Everyman Library Edition, Dent, 1919, last reprinted, 1966.

¹⁹ Theodore B. Leinwand, *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy 1603-1613*, Madison Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, p. 9.

hints, New Historicism represents a clever combination of different schools of thought mediated by the philosophy of Michel Foucault²⁰ and the interpretative anthropology of Clifford Geertz.²¹ This originated a complex interpretative praxis which has proved to be versatile, pragmatic and adaptable to different contexts. Secondly, it took again numerous aspects which have been neglected to a certain extent by previous criticism such as politics, economy, religion, and social and class dynamics, which have a marked impact on the literary text pointing out that it is the historical context of the work which provides it with much of its meaning. Finally, the pioneering studies of Foucault on space provided New Historicism with a multifocal approach, not only in the analysis of the works in their historical context, but also in terms of space. The philosopher discusses the relationship between space and power and develops a dynamic conception of space as made up of different social agents so that a place results as a complex social construction.

Following this approach, my work aims to offer a contribution to critical studies related to two main aspects: on the one hand, to arouse some curiosity towards Brome from scholars, practitioners, actors, directors as well as students, theatre-goers and readers and stimulate them to read, translate and stage the plays of a man whom I consider a ‘new’ and worthwhile English playwright, owing to his ability at writing for the theatre, his mastery of plotting and his being topical. His *corpus* is deeply concerned with the problems of his time but the issues he addresses (such as money in all its declensions – business, usury, profits, bribes –, preoccupation with gender relations, the integration of foreigners and outsiders, to name but a few themes) are so up-to-date to be re-proposed nowadays arousing the interest of a contemporary audience, as it has happened in the past few years for the new staging of *The Antipodes*, *A Jovial Crew* and *The City Wit*.²² What will emerge is that his sixteen extant plays represent a significant step in the evolution of English drama, one of the missing links between Elizabethan and Restoration drama, much more than a mere “road between the worlds of Jonson and Congreve.”²³

On the other hand, it aims to investigate London, the city that more than any other in England fed the imagination of the writers, and looking at it from the perspective of

²⁰ Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was a famous French philosopher, historian and sociologist whose theories contributed to the development of the studies on space.

²¹ Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) was an American anthropologist. His works were influential not only for New Historicists but also for historians, humanists, ecologists and geographers.

²² See the stage history of the plays (pp. 16-18).

²³ Richard Kaufmann, *Richard Brome, Caroline Playwright*, New York: Columbia UP, 1961, p. 7.

Richard Brome that, as we will see, is peculiar and surprisingly interesting, though different from the more investigated points of view of Shakespeare's or Jonson's. Reading his plays is a fascinating journey to discover London and its inhabitants during which the audience can walk in Fleet Street, do the shopping at the Royal Exchange or at Cheapside, eat at the Devil Tavern or visit Covent Garden. All Brome's works actually show a particular interest in space through the variety of settings proposed: West-Saxon England in *The Queen's Exchange*, Lancashire in *The Late Lancashire Witches*, the countryside in *A Jovial Crew*, as well as famous London locations, till the apotheosis in *The Antipodes* with the turned upside-down world of Anti-London, which is at the same time the inverted image and a precise representation of the city.

In my analysis, I explore a series of city comedies which take well-known London places such as taverns, squares or streets as their setting analyzing how the stories address some of the most pressing issues of the day through the vehicle of space. In representing the urban space in the Caroline age, the stage focused on the social, economic and political aspects of city life since London functions as the arena where urban problems are re-negotiated and urban social relations are regulated, and the playwrights often used space as a vehicle through which addressing many topical issues and commenting on their national politics.

What Martin Butler says about Jonson is true for Brome as well: "his drama is deeply invested in the rhythms, meanings and structures of the metropolis, and his works are imbued with and shaped by urban topographies: the urban experience was the single most determining factor of his career."²⁴ Brome's plays provide a vividly dynamic photograph of London society: in each play the dramatist transforms an urban place into a setting for a particular story and a specific kind of social interaction: a gentleman and a host, a debtor and a creditor, a prostitute and a client or a merchant and an alien. Any human identity is localized in a specific place and cannot be set aside from the spatial dimension: actually, the features of a place are part of the event so implying that any space suggests a different kind of story and that the action depends on the place where it occurs.

Moreover, I will deal with the idea of space combining different approaches showing how the geographical idea of place is turned into a social place and investigating

²⁴ Martin Butler, "Jonson's London and its Theatres" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, (eds) Richard Harp, Stanley Stewart, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000, p.15.

the bilateral relationship between space and identity. “Literature rather than social science surveys provides us with the detailed and finely shaded information on how human individuals perceive their worlds.”²⁵ Those who want to be part of a place and of its social dynamics are involved in a process of identification with the space, both collective and individual, objective and subjective, creating with it a relation that Yi-Tuan called *topophilia*, that is love for space. Therefore, they refashion their selves by changing manners, language and clothes according to their aims: on the one hand, there are the citizens who attend the court and try to conceal their social origins upon their arrival; on the other, the countrymen and women coming to London in search of better opportunities. At the same time, as Henri Lefebvre²⁶ claims, each society produces and reproduces its own space according to familiar, social, political, economic, urbanistic hierarchies and dynamics and according to how space is perceived, conceived and experienced (“le perçu, le conçu, le vécu.”²⁷) Therefore, it is a particular mixture of social relations which concurs to define the uniqueness of a place and, in the specific case of Brome’s London, to refashion single urban sites in a period in which London was rapidly changing.

I will now provide some biographical details, a chart illustrating the plays in chronological order and according to the genre, and the history of previous criticism on Brome. This will contribute to answer some important questions concerning the identity of Brome and the reasons of the neglect towards him.

²⁵ Yi-Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

²⁶ Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a French philosopher, sociologist and urbanist.

²⁷ Henry Lefebvre, (1974) *La production de l'espace*, Paris: Anthropos, 2000, p. 49.

1.2

Poor he came into the world and poor went out²⁸



Richard Brome, *Five New Playes*, 1653

As for his place of ‘birth,’ we do not know exactly where ‘to place’ Brome with certainty. His life is shrouded in mystery as for his family and education.²⁹ While all scholars seem to agree to consider Brome a Londoner, Catherine Shaw suggests a country origin: “the skill with which he handles country dialects might suggest that, although he certainly knew the city well, he was not originally a Londoner”³⁰ but this sounds more like a guesswork than concrete evidence.

Brome’s birth probably occurred around 1590 as two facts seem to confirm: as to the former, in two law cases dating around 1638 a Richard Brome is described as around fifty years old. As to the latter, according to the records of marriages for Richard Brome, at least five of the Bromes who got married between 1613 and 1645 could have reasonably been born in 1590. Yet, archival references also show that between 1575 and 1595 about thirteen men named Richard Brome were baptized in England, thus making his birth still an enigma.

What is certain is his relationship with Ben Jonson: he was part of a sort of restricted club of literary men, a group of young playwrights attracted by Jonson’s charismatic personality, who was a master, a model, a friend. Beside Brome, Joe Lee Davis³¹ lists ten playwrights in this group: William Cartwright, William Cavendish, Sir William Davenant, Henry Glapthorne, Peter Hausted, Thomas Killigrew, Shackerley

²⁸ From the prefatory verses to the octavo of 1659 written by Alexander Brome, editor of Brome’s posthumous work.

²⁹ Colley Cibber affirms with certainty that Brome went to Eton (See Clarence E. Andrews, (1913) *Richard Brome: A Study of His Life and Works*, New York: Archon, 1972, p. 4) but this did not find any confirmation. According to records, the playwright attended neither of the universities.

³⁰ Catherine Shaw, *Richard Brome*, Boston: Twayne, 1980, p. 18.

³¹ Joe Lee Davis, *The Sons of Ben: Jonsonian Comedy in Caroline England*, Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1967.

Marmion, Jasper Mayne, Thomas Nabbes and Thomas Randolph, who were well acquainted with Brome, as the complimentary lines they wrote to each other testify.³²

The first official reference to Brome and Jonson's relationship is in the Induction of *Bartholomew Fair* in October 31st 1614, where Brome is identified as 'Jonson's man':

Gentlemen, have a little patience, they are e'en upon coming, instantly. He that should begin the *Play*, Master *Little-wit*, the *Proctor*, has a stitch new fallen in his black silk Stocking; 'twill be drawn up ere you can tell twenty. He plays one o' the *Arches* that dwells about the *Hospital*, and he has a very pretty part. But for the whole *Play*, will you ha' the truth on't? (I am looking, lest the *Poet* hear me, or his Man, Master *Broom*, behind the *Arras*) it is like to be a very conceited scurvy one, in plain *English*. When't comes to the *Fair* once, you were e'en as good go to *Virginia*, for anything there is of *Smithfield*.³³ (6-9)

It is worth commenting that Brome is mentioned by Jonson as "behind the arras," a reference that both suggests his role in the background, far from the limelight, and increases the mystery around a playwright who seems to have been hidden for a long time in the shadow of Jonson. For Alwin Thaler,³⁴ the reference to Brome implies that the playwright was an actor, like Shakespeare, Jonson and Heywood at the beginning of their careers, and that he was "behind the arras" since he was acting a small part in the comedy. In 1628, a Richard Brome is mentioned in the list of actors of a company under the patronage of Elizabeth of Bohemia, the sister of Charles I; yet, there are no references to him in the subsequent documents concerning this company or others which identify him as an actor so that the mystery is not cleared up.

What is interesting from my point of view is that *Bartholomew Fair*, the play that first makes reference to Brome, is a topographical comedy,³⁵ a genre in which the playwright proved all his mastery a few years later with works like *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and *The Sparagus Garden*. I am inclined to believe that he developed his interest for places, topography and buildings thanks to his belonging to the circle of Jonson and his status of

³² Andrews, p. 22; Butler, 1984, p. 187.

³³ Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, (ed) Gordon Campbell: Oxford, Oxford UP, 1995.

³⁴ Alwin Thaler, "Was Richard Brome and actor?," in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Feb., 1921, pp. 88-91.

³⁵ A topographical play is a play entitled with the name of parks, streets or places like Shirley's *Hyde Park*, Barry's *Ram Alley*, and Nabbes's *Covent Garden*.

‘son of Ben,’ and took *Bartholomew Fair*³⁶ as a technical lesson, learning how to bring the contemporary life of a specific place on stage. Actually, Jonson showed a particular interest in this subgenre of the city comedy and surrounded himself with competent acquaintances and friends who shared his passion for space. Firstly, he attended the prestigious Westminster School under the direction of William Camden, the most famous topographer, antiquarian and historian, who became his mentor throughout all his career.³⁷ Secondly, it is stimulating to remember Jonson’s complicatedly ambivalent relationship with the architect Inigo Jones, whose spirit seems to be brought alive in the puppeteer and toy salesman Lanthorn Leatherhead in *Bartholomew Fair*. There is also a surprisingly bizarre coincidence, intentional or not, seeing that the setting of this topographical comedy is Smithfield, which is also the place of birth of the satirized architect. Jones is present in Brome’s plays through his works, such as Covent Garden Piazza in the eponymous play or Whitehall in *The City Wit* and satirized in many plays such as *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and *The Court Beggar*.

Nevertheless, it is still problematic to define the nature of the relation between Brome and Jonson: probably at first Brome worked as a man-servant, then gradually, he enjoyed an influential career in terms of personal recognition at the end of the 1620s, even surpassing his master in some occasions. In 1631, for instance, he incurred in the barbs of Jonson when the remarkable success of his lost play *The Love-Sick Maid*, acted with extraordinary applause, made Jonson’s disappointment about the failure of his *New Inn* much more bitter:

No doubt a mouldy Tale like Pericles, and stale
 As the Shrieve’s crusts, and nasty as his fish,
 Scraps out of every Dish,
 Throwne forth and rak’t into the common Tub,
 May keepe up the Play Club: *Brooms sweepings doe as well*
 There, as his Masters meale: for who the relish of these guests will fit,
 Needs set them but the Almes-basket of wit.³⁸

³⁶ Richard H. Perkinson defines this play as unique as “few comedies utilize locale quite so extensively as *Bartholomew Fair* [...] capitalizing the place’s frequently questionable reputation,” in “Topographical Comedy in the Seventeenth Century,” *ELH*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Dec., 1936, pp. 270-290, p. 272.

³⁷ In an epigram Jonson celebrates Camden’s role in his education and in the development of topography in England. Camden was famous for *Britannia* (1586) a county-by-county topographical survey of Great Britain and Ireland in which he combined geography, historical sources (also taken from the classical culture) and antiquarianism.

³⁸ In *Quintus Horatius Flaccus: His Art of Poetry Englished by Ben: Jonson. With Other Workes of the Author*, London: J. Okes, 1640, p. 136.

After a few years, Jonson repented and his apology took the form of a poem which accompanied one of Brome most successful plays, *The Northern Lass*, printed in 1632. These lines are particularly relevant since they illuminate some aspects of the relation between Brome and Jonson from the perspective of one of the people concerned.

I had you for a servant, once, *Dick Brome*;
and you perform'd a Servants parts,
now, you are got into a nearer room,
of fellowship, professing my old Arts.
And you do doe them well, with good applause,
which you have justly gained from the Stage,
by observation of those Comick Lawes
which I, your master, first did teach the Age.
You learn't it well, and for it serv'd your time
A Prentice-ship: which few do now adays.³⁹

Jonson marks the evolution of the relationship with his pupil, who started as a servant, then fellow and finally apprentice after learning the “comick lawes” from his master “by observation.” If in a sense Jonson apologizes for his earlier attack, at the same time he praises himself as a master taking credit for the abilities acquired by Brome as a playwright and for his success.

Actually, not only did he arouse the admiration of his public and his colleagues, but also of the actors, as it is clear in the epilogue of *The Court Beggar*.

And let me tell you he has made pretty merry jigs that ha' pleased a many. As
(le'me see) th' *Antipodes*, and - oh I shall never forget! *Tom Hoyden o' Tanton
Deane*. He'll bring him hither very shortly in a new Motion, and in a new pair
o' slops and new netherstocks as brisk as a body-louse in a new pasture.⁴⁰

In this extract, two plays are alluded to: *The Sparagus Garden* through the reference to one of its most striking characters, the naïve countryman Tom Hoyden, and *The Antipodes*. Brome himself claimed that these works earned £1,000 each between 1635-38.⁴¹ Actually, the dramatist succeeded in winning over a demanding audience, who were used to seeing on stage plays by Shakespeare, Fletcher and Webster among others, and gained a similar

³⁹ Richard Brome, *Dramatic Works*, 3 [IX].

⁴⁰ R. Brome, *The Court Beggar*, Modern Text, edited by M. O' Connor, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, prologue 1144.

⁴¹ Steggle, 2004, p. 67.

prestige and respect as Jonson. These plays were both written for the audience of the Salisbury Court, the private playhouse which played the most important role in Brome's career.



Board marking the ancient site of the Salisbury Court Playhouse.

The Salisbury Court Playhouse was the last theatre to be built before the Puritan closing of the theatres in 1642. Its theatrical life covers exactly the period of Brome's activity as a playwright so that the theatre died with the end of Brome's career. It was built in 1629, in a building which was originally a barn, by Richard Gunnell, a veteran actor and the manager of the Fortune, and William Blagrave, deputy to Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels.

Despite the lack of extant illustrations or descriptions of the interior of the Salisbury Court, it was possible to deduce some of its features. In 1979 David Stevens examined a series of plays of the repertory performed at the Salisbury Court, deriving important details about the staging in the playhouse. On a geometrically shaped stage with tapered front, there were two entry doors placed at the rear of the stage, flanking a curtained discovery space, which constituted the third entry through the hangings, "an important element of pre-Commonwealth staging."⁴² It was useful in plays like *The City Wit*, when the stage directions in Act III reads "*Crazy at the hangings.*" Moreover, there was an acting area above, as it is proved by Brome's *The Antipodes* where Joyless, Letoy, and Diana appear above while observing and commenting on the action before re-entering on stage.

⁴² David, Stevens, "The Staging of Plays at the Salisbury Court Theatre, 1630-1642," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Dec., 1979, pp. 511-525, p. 516.



Frontispiece to William Alabaster's *Roxana*, 1632. Particular of the stage of the Salisbury Court.

Brome's himself furnishes interesting information about the theatrical conditions of the Salisbury Court in the Praeludium to the *Careless Sheperdess*, written for the Salisbury Court in the late 1630s. It consists in a conversation among four characters, a courtier, a man of the Inn of Court, a London citizen called Thrift and a country gentleman. Among the numerous aspects, Brome casts lights on the price of admission. The citizen Thrift, claiming that the Salisbury Court Theatre is not a place for him, says: "I'll go to th' Bull, or Fortune, and there see / a play for two pence, with a jig to boot."

As Alexander Leggatt points out, "his decision is not for a particular play or a particular actor, but for a particular type of playhouse, where his tastes and his budget⁴³ will be accommodated."⁴⁴ The Salisbury Court, like other private theatres such as Phoenix and Blackfriars, attracted a wealthy audience with refined tastes, and was a meeting place where to discuss political, religious and social issues.

During the 1630s, various companies worked there, the King's Revels Company (1630–31 and 1633–36), Prince Charles's Men (1631–33), and Queen Henrietta's Men (1637–42) and around 1635, Richard Heton became manager of the theatre, exactly when Brome was offered one of the two contracts by the Salisbury Court. According to the former contract, Brome agreed "for the terme of three years [...] with his best Art and Industry [to] write everye yeare three plays and deliver them to the company of players there acting for the time being."⁴⁵ In return, Brome was promised fifteen shillings a week, and an extra day's profit for every new work (from a play of his choosing within ten days after the play opened). As Eleanor Collins remarks, this is particularly relevant since it "provides valuable insight into the conditions under which Brome worked and wrote, and

⁴³ It is worth considering that the cheapest seats at playhouses like Phoenix and Blackfriars cost double the most expensive places at the Globe.

⁴⁴ Alexander Leggatt, *Jacobean Public Theatre*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 9.

⁴⁵ For a full transcript and a detailed discussion, see Ann Haaker, 'The Plague, The Theatre, and the Poet,' *Renaissance Drama* n.s.1, 1968, pp. 283-306.

offers a substantiated model of management and playwriting in the theatres.”⁴⁶ Interestingly, even though by 1638 Brome had failed to produce the nine promised plays (he had delivered just four), the manager of the theatre, Richard Heton, renewed the contract, raising the pay to twenty shillings a week and demanding three plays a year for seven years, beside the prohibition to put any of his play into print without his permission. This proves how successful and requested Brome was at that time, so that later on he broke the relation with the theatre and turned to the rival company of William Beeston.⁴⁷

There seems to be a parallelism between the end of the playhouse and the conclusion of Brome’s career as a playwright: after September 1642, when the theatres were closed by the Puritans, Brome had to abandon the space of the stage and rebuilt a new position as a poet. He contributed to an allegorical entertainment called *Time’s Distractions* dated around 1642-1643,⁴⁸ in 1647; then, he wrote an elegy on Fletcher to the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio and, two years later, edited *Lachrymae Musarum*, a collection of elegies on Lord Henry Hastings. Between 1642-47, the Salisbury Court was used for other purposes and sporadically for secret theatrical performances; at the beginning of 1649, the authorities raided the theatre and a few months later destroyed the interior of the playhouse. After 1649, Brome did not give any original contributions to English drama and his last work is the preface to the printed version of *A Jovial Crew* in 1652, a few months before dying. Finally, the self-made playwright found his ‘final place’ at the charitable hospital Charterhouse⁴⁹ where he died on 24th September 1652.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Eleanor Clare Collins, “Richard Brome and the Salisbury Court Contract,” *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, p. 1. See also Eleanor Collins, “Richard Brome’s Contract and the Relationship of Dramatist to Company in the Early Modern Period,” *Early Theatre*, Volume 10, Issue 2, 2007 Article 7, pp. 116-128; David Stevens, “The Staging of Plays at the Salisbury Court Theatre, 1630-1642,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Dec., 1979, pp. 511-525.

⁴⁷ The dissatisfaction with the Salisbury Court is proved by the fact that Brome had already tried to give one of his plays, *The Antipodes*, to the Beeston Boys in 1638.

⁴⁸ See John Cutts, “The anonymous masque-like entertainment in Egerton MS. 1994, and Richard Brome,” *Comparative Drama* I, 1968, pp. 277-87; Diane W. Strommer (ed), *Time’s Distractions*, College Station: Texas A & M UP, 1979.

⁴⁹ With archival references, Eleanor Lowe suggests that Brome spent his final years in Charterhouse Hospital. He was admitted on Lady Day (25th March) in 1650 and died 24 September 1652. See Eleanor Lowe, “Confirmation of Richard Brome’s Final Years in Charterhouse Hospital,” in *N&Q*, Dec. 2007, pp. 416-418, and Robert C. Evans, “Richard Brome’s Death,” *N&Q*, ccxxxiv, 1989, p. 351, London Metropolitan Archives, microfilm reel X76/1 (fo. 30r).

⁵⁰ By 1653 he was dead because his editor Alexander Brome (with no familiar connection) in his prose preface to Brome’s *Five New Playes* published in 1653 said him to be dead.

1.3

The *corpus*

The *corpus* of Brome's works cover three decades under the reign of Charles I, from *The Northern Lass* in 1629 to *Lachrymae Musarum* in 1649: for his own admission, in *Lachrymae Musarum* Brome affirms that his artistic streak is comic rather than tragic since he wrote only two tragicomedies and no tragedies.

Away, my muse, or bid me hence from thee:
No subject for thy help, nor work for me,
This story yields. For, by the dictates, I
Never spilt Ink, except in Comedie;
Which in the thronged theatres did appear
all Mirth and Laughter.⁵¹

However, his production, which was very varied and rich in shades, included poetry⁵² and plays belonging to different genres.⁵³ In particular, Brome dealt with the city comedy in its different subgenres: marriage, topographical, satirical so proving the vogue of the comedy at that time.

The city comedy⁵⁴ acquires the status of Renaissance subgenre owing to Brian Gibbon's work *Jacobean City Comedy*. In his words, the city comedy was established by Ben Jonson and was a combination of inherited traditions: the morality play, the Roman comedy by Plautus and Terence, the satire and the complaint, and the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*. It had a limited historical vogue, from 1585 to 1630, according to Alexander

⁵¹ Richard Brome (ed), *Lachrymae Musarum: The Tears of the Muses*, London: Thomas Newcomb, 1649, pp. 74-75.

⁵² As for the non-dramatic production, I do not mention all the commendatory verses and songs. For further information about this, see Clarence Edward Andrews, (1913) *Richard Brome: a Study of His Life and Works*, New York: Archon, 1972.

⁵³ In some cases it is difficult to ascribe some plays to a precise genre, as for *The Antipodes* and *A Jovial Crew*.

⁵⁴ For studies on the city comedy, see Lionel C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1937, 1951; Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973, Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, London: Methuen, 1980; Susan Wells, "Jacobean City Comedy and the Ideology of the City," *ELH*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Spring 1981, pp. 37-60; Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, Anne-Julia Zwierlein, *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, London: Ashgate, 2004.

Leggatt, with a particular profusion in the first decade of the 17th century.⁵⁵ Leggatt⁵⁶ singled out sixty plays belonging to this genre which had widely recognized conventions as to subject and characters, as well as an urban setting, and a strong satiric design. The plots revolve around three main issues, money, marriage and possessions, and among the *dramatis personae* of these city comedies there are pickpockets, cozeners, gullible London gentry members, merchants, gallants and women (chaste maids, widows, whores and wives). In his work, Leggatt uses the term ‘citizen comedy’ as a synonym for city comedy, but actually, as both Andrew Gurr and Douglas Bruster⁵⁷ suggest, it is useful to distinguish between city comedy as plays set in London and citizen comedy for those which target citizens, even if this distinction is problematic since the two labels are not broad enough “to cover the variety of plays that qualify as tests of product or social target identity.”⁵⁸ Therefore, I applied the broader term of city comedy to all Brome’s comedies set in London and dealing with city life. The works are put in chronological order which scholars reconstructed thanks to internal references, title pages, stationary register and documents.

PLAY	Date	Station Regist.	Print	Stage history	Company	Theatre	Genre	Setting
<i>A Fault in Friendship</i>	1623	1623	-----	-----	Prince’s	Red Bull? ⁵⁹	LOST	-----
<i>The New Academy</i>	1636	1640	1659	-----	-----	-----	City Comedy	London* ⁶⁰
<i>The City Wit</i>	1629?	-----	1659	1630 4 perform. 1637-1693 18/2/1992 31/3/2007 13/12/2007	Children of the King’s Revels (?)	Salisbury Court(?) Vanbrugh Ballarat (Australia) Royal Holloway (London)	City Comedy	London*
<i>The Love-sick Maid</i>	1629	1653		-----	King’s	At Court	LOST	-----

⁵⁵ Works such as Jonson’s *Volpone*, Marston’s *Dutch Courtezan* and Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term*, which were written between 1604 and 1606, represent the main phase in the development of the genre.

⁵⁶ Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.

⁵⁷ Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992, pp. 29-32.

⁵⁸ Andrew Gurr, “Within the compass of the city walls’: Allegiances in Plays for and about the City,” in *Plotting Early Modern London*, (eds) D. Mehl, A. Stock and A. Zwierlein, p. 111.

⁵⁹ Andrews, p. 36.

⁶⁰ The plays with an asterisk provide examples of place realism, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

<i>PLAY</i>	Date	Station Regist.	Print	Stage history	Company	Theatre	Genre	Setting
<i>The Love-sick Court</i>	1629? 1638?	1640	1659	1638	Queen Henrietta Matia's Men	Salisbury Court (?)	City Comedy	Thessaly
<i>The Northern Lass</i>	1629	1632	1632	58 perform. 1629-1738 23/11/2008	King's men	Globe Globe Education	Marriage comedy	London
<i>The Queen's Exchange</i>	1634	1634	1657	-----	Prince	Red Bull	Tragi- comedy	West-Saxon England
<i>The Weeding of Covent Garden</i>	1632	1640	1659	1632 1641 14/11/1999		Shakespeare's Globe	Topographical comedy London	
<i>The Novella</i>	1632	-----	1659	1632	The King's Men	Blackfriars	Comedy	Venice
<i>The Late Lancashire Witches</i>	1634	1634	1634	1634 21/8/2001	The King's Men	Globe Globe Educational Centre	Comedy	Lancashire London
<i>The Apprentice's Prize</i>	1634?	1654	-----	-----	-----	-----	LOST	
<i>Life and Death of Sir Martin Skink</i>	1634?	1654	-----	-----	-----	-----	LOST	
<i>The Queen and Concubine</i>	1635	-----	1659	1635	The King's Revels	Salisbury Court	Tragicomedy	Sicily
<i>The Sparagus Garden</i>	1635	1640	1640	1635	King's Revels	Salisbury Court	Topographical Comedy	London*
<i>The English Moor</i>	1637	1641	1659	-----	Queen Henrietta's men	Salisbury Court	City Comedy	London*
<i>The Demoiselle</i>	1637- 8	1638	1653	-----	Queen Henrietta's Men	Salisbury Court	City Comedy	London*
<i>The Antipodes</i>	1638	1640	1640	1638 26/8/1661 12/8/2000 18/3/2004 15/9/2005 April 2008	Queen Henrietta's Men King's Company	Salisbury Court Shakespeare Globe Royal Holloway Santa Cruz Ballarat (Australia)	Anti-London drama ⁶¹ a comedy of political life ⁶²	Anti- London

⁶¹ Steggle, 2004, p. 109.

⁶² Butler, 1984, p. 214.

<i>PLAY</i>	Date	Station Regist.	Print	Stage history	Company	Theatre	Genre	Setting
<i>The Florentine Friend</i>	1638						LOST	
<i>A Mad Couple Well Matched</i>	1639	-----	1653	1639 6/10/2006	The Beeston's Boys	Cockpit Shakespeare Institute	City Comedy	London*
<i>The Court Beggar</i>	1640	-----	1653	1632	The Beeston's Boy	Cockpit Theatre	Satirical city Comedy	London
<i>A Jovial Crew</i>	1642	1651	1652	1642 139 perform. 1661-1819 14/2/1991 13/4/1992 22/4/1993	King's Company National Theatre Swan Theatre Pit	Cockpit Theatre	City Comedy	Countryside
<i>Wit in a Madness</i>	-----	1640	-----				LOST	
<i>Christianetta</i>	-----	1649	-----	-----	-----	-----	LOST	
<i>The Jewish Gentleman</i>	-----	1640	-----	-----	-----	-----	LOST	

1.4

The lost plays

The chart includes not only the extant works but also the lost ones which will be commented through the evidence we have of their existence. On 4th August 1649, an entry in the Stationers' Register mentions two lost plays:

Entered for Crooke six Plays vis^t. *Christianetta*. *The Jewish gentleman*. A new academy or Exchange. The love sick Co^{rt}. The Covent Garden. And the English Moore or mock Marriage by M^r Rich: Broome.

In Abraham Hill's list,⁶³ the play *Christianetta* appears as a collaboration with George Chapman, but there is no evidence, whereas nothing is known about *The Jewish Gentleman* apart from its title. Another entry on 8th April 1654 concerns *The Apprentice's Prize* and *Sir*

⁶³ Joseph Quincy Adams, "Hill's List of Early Plays in Manuscript," Library 4th Ser. XX, 1939, p. 39.

Martin Skink. The two plays can be reasonably regarded as a further collaboration between Brome and Thomas Heywood beside *The Late Lancashire Witches*.

The transcript of the office book of the Master of the Revels Sir Henry Herbert for *A Fault in Friendship* (2 October 1623) reads as follows: “A new comedy by Young Johnson and Broome.” Actually it is still difficult to identify the authors precisely since a Ben Jonson junior never existed and young Jonson could stand either for another playwright called Johnson and nicknamed ‘young’ as a distinction from the more famous Ben or for “Young, Johnson and Brome” since Young and Johnson were the names of actors that went on to collaborate with Brome later. The only certainty is that it was a collaboration. *Wit in a Madness* was registered on 19th February 1639-40 with two very successful plays, *The Antipodes* and *The Sparagus Garden*, so that we could conclude that it was equally appreciated.

1.5

Critical reception

From the chart we get information about the publication of Brome’s plays and their stage history, which gives us a glimpse of his dramatic fortune. Only five plays were published singularly in his lifetime *The Northern Lass* (1632), *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634), *The Sparagus Garden* (1642), *The Antipodes* (1642) and *A Jovial Crew* (1652), whereas *The Queen’s Exchange* was published in 1656 after his death. The first collection, *Five New Plays*, was printed in 1653 for Humphrey Moseley, Rich Marriot and Thomas Dring.⁶⁴ Four years later, in 1659, another *Five New Plays* was printed by A. Crook at the Green Dragon in Saint Paul’s Churchyard and for Henry Brome (with no relation with Richard Brome) at the Gunn in Ivy-Lane.⁶⁵ As for the stage history, among the most appreciated stand: *The Northern Lass* (1629), performed fifty-eight times between 1629 and 1738, and then again in 2008 at the Globe; *A Jovial Crew*, staged 139 times between 1661 and 1819 and also in the 1990s. Many of his plays benefited of revivals under the form of real performances and readings such as *The City Wit*, *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, *The Late Witches of Lancashire*, *A*

⁶⁴ In octavo format, it contained *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, *The Court Beggar*, *The City Wit*, *The Novella* and *The Demoiselle*.

⁶⁵ In the collection, there were *The English Moor*, *The Love-Sick Court*, *The New Academy*, *The Queen and Concubine* and *The Weeding of Covent Garden*.

Mad Couple Well Matched and *The Antipodes*. What emerges is that Brome's popularity overcame the Puritan closing of the theatres in 1642, influencing drama in the following centuries through reprints, adaptations,⁶⁶ revivals⁶⁷ after the Restoration and in the 18th century. Paulina Kewes⁶⁸ notices that in the repertoire of c. 1710 the only significantly constant presence on stage are Shakespeare, Jonson, Fletcher and Brome. In the 17th century, after the Restoration, Brome benefited from general appreciation: in 1660, in Baker's *Chronicle of England*, he was cited between Shirley and Massinger⁶⁹ and again in 1669, in Edward Phillips's *Tractatus de carmine dramatico poetarum veterum*⁷⁰ he was numbered among the most excellent poets.

Why was a writer, whose fame overcame the closing of the theatres, neglected and then forgotten? We can find an answer in Edward Phillips's words, who provided the first example of criticism on Brome in his *Theatrum Poetarum*, with an appreciation of him as Jonson's servant and pupil, thus implying a natural inferiority compared to the master and starting a long-lasting critical approach towards him in terms of social status:

Richard Brome, a servant to Ben Jonson; a Servant suitable to such a Master, and who, what with his faithful service and the sympathy of his genius, was thought worthy his particular commendation in Verse; whatever instructions he might have from his Master Johnson, he certainly by his own natural parts improved to a great height, and at last became not many parasanges inferior to him in fame by divers noted Comedies.⁷¹

Despite the appreciation of Brome's natural talent and the progress he made throughout his career, Phillips's interpretation follows a social perspective more than an artistic one by stressing the social position of the playwright more than his literary value. Paradoxically,

⁶⁶ Aphra Behn's *The Debauchee* (1677) is an adaptation of *A Mad Couple Well Matched*.

⁶⁷ The most successful plays were revived: *The Antipodes*, *The City Wit*, *The Northern Lass*, (with thirteen separate production between 1708 and 1738) and *A Jovial Crew*.

⁶⁸ Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660-1710*, Oxford: Oxford UP, p. 222.

⁶⁹ "Poetry was never more resplendent, nor never more graced; wherein *Johnson, Sylvester, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Shirley, Broom, Massinger, Cartwright, Randolph, Cleaveland, Quarles, Carew, Davenant*, and *Suckling*, not only far excel their own Countrymen, but the whole world beside."

⁷⁰ "Hos autem tanquam duces Itineris plurimi saltem oemulati sunt, inter quos praeter Shirleium (proximum a supra memorato Triumviratu) Suclingium, Randolphium, Davenantium & Carturitium quorum drama Compendiosa Enumeratio Poetarum supra mentio facta est, enumerandi Veniunt Ric. Bromeus, Tho. Heivodus, Henricus Glaphthorius, Philippus Massingerus, Geor. Chapmannius."

⁷¹ It contains a smattering of biography, criticism, and bibliography, uneven, poorly organized, and often inaccurate.

the low social status that made Brome inferior at his times is one of the factors that contribute to a new rise of interest towards him in modern times. Yet, as Steggle claims, “surprisingly little is known about servant-authored writing in Renaissance England, despite the fact that servants represented a huge and now almost entirely extinct social phenomenon, and that discourses of service of one sort of another permeated early modern literature of all sorts.”⁷²

For centuries Brome’s low origins and his relationship with Jonson constituted the starting point for any readings of his works, which prevented him from having full recognition as a playwright. In 1691 it was the dramatic biographer and critic Gerard Langbaine who started identifying Brome’s specific merits as for plotting and forging characters. In *Account of the English Dramatick Poet*, he stressed Brome’s natural gifts despite his inferior birth and poor education, still marking the distance from Jonson: “he studied Men and Humors more than books: and his genius affecting comedy, his province was more observation than study [...] he was so excellent and imitator of his master, that he might truly pass for an original.”⁷³ Nothing can be said about Brome’s birth, education or background except that his life was poor and unprivileged and his unique point of reference was Jonson.

Yet, his relation with Jonson proved self-defeating and rebounded on him: he was neglected and labeled as ‘Jonson’s man’ and a minor poet who lived in the decadent phase of the Elizabethan age.⁷⁴ The 19th century saw two opposite tendencies: on the one hand, Swinburne’s extravagant high estimate of Brome:

In the dramatic literature of any country but ours the name of Richard Brome would be eminent and famous: being but an Englishman, he is naturally regarded by critics and historians after the order of Hallam as too ineffably inferior for mention or comparison with such celebrities as Regnard or Goldoni. That such a character as Justice Clack is worthy of Molière in his broader and happier moods of humour could hardly seem questionable even to the dullest of such dullards if his creator had but ‘taken the trouble to be born’ in France, in Italy, or in any; country but their own. As it is, I cannot suppose it possible that English readers will ever give him a

⁷² Steggle, 2004, p.9.

⁷³ *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets* (1691), or, *Some Observations and Remarks on the Lives and Writings, of All Those that have Publish’d either Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies, Pastorals, Masques, Interludes, Farces, or Opera’s in the English Tongue*, Oxford: L[eonard] L[ichfield] for Gorge West & Henry Clements, 1691.

⁷⁴ Herbert F. Allen, *A Study of the Comedies of Richard Brome, Especially as a Representative of Dramatic Decadence*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1912.

place beside the least of those inferior humorists who had the good fortune or the good sense to be born outside the borders of England.⁷⁵

On the other J. Addington Symond, whose vitriolic review accompanied the three-volume edition of Brome's dramatic works of 1873.⁷⁶ Symond's contemptuous words mark him as a 'flunkey,' leading the way to a sociologic interpretation of Brome as a playwright holding a low social position and consequently artistically inferior.

It is possible that some ingenious student may discover pearls in what is certainly the rubbish heap of Brome's plays. [...] His view of the world is that of a groom, rather than of a gentleman; and the scenes and characters which he depicts are drawn from the experiences of a flunkey. All the coarse and groom and seamy side of human life is shown to us with a prosaic ruthlessness.⁷⁷

All the attempts to investigate Brome's works till the 1980s are negatively influenced by precedent studies on his biography which are superficially limited to his poor origins⁷⁸ and his relations with Jonson. This point of view is represented by the American scholar Herbert Allen (1912) who chose an emblematic title, *A Study of the Comedies of Richard Brome, Especially as a Representative of Dramatic Decadence*, revealing his attitude. He limited his analysis to Brome's poor education and birth and labelled him as a 'son of Ben' without genius, undeserving much literary consideration. A similar attitude is to be found in Andrews, who cited Symonds's comments in the fly-leaf of his monograph marking how little criticism had changed in forty years. Brome "stands out as figure of real importance in the tribe of Caroline imitators, being prominent only because most of the important writers were dead or had ceased producing."⁷⁹ Still recognizing Brome's ability at plotting, this critic considered him as the most conscious imitator of Jonson so that he devoted part of his

⁷⁵ Algernon Swinburne, *Contemporaries of Shakespeare. The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, (eds) Sir Edmund Gosse, C. B. and Thomas James Wise. vol. 12 (Prose Works vol. 2), London: Heinemann, 1926, pp. 125-368.

⁷⁶ The collection of the Brome's plays is by John Pearson and contains fifteen comedies, with the exception of *The Late Lancashire Witches*. It is a literal reprint of previous editions but with slight inaccuracy.

⁷⁷ J. A. Symonds, "Review of *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*," *Academy* 5, 21 March 1874, pp.304-5.

⁷⁸ In "A List of Dramatic Authors," Colley Cibber tries to nobilitate Brome by saying that he was amanuensis to Ben Jonson and studied at Eton, but there is no evidence. In "A List of Dramatic Authors and their Works" in Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian*, 4th edn, 2 vols, London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1756.

⁷⁹ Andrews, pp. 46-7.

critical work to sources and influences more than to the investigation of Brome's merits and qualities.

The beginning of the critical revolution took place in 1966, when the most significant of the monographs, Ralph Kaufmann's *Richard Brome*, was published. Differently from the scholars before him, in his reading Brome becomes a conservative writer "genuinely and deeply concerned with the values of the older 'Tudor Culture' which is being subverted under his eyes."⁸⁰ According to Kaufmann,⁸¹ Brome was able to assume a relevant place within the 'tribe' of the Sons of Ben and to develop his own individuality as a comedy writer among the Caroline authors. He was less repetitive than Shirley, more versatile than Fletcher in comic invention, could write Dekkeresque and shared with Jonson a spiritual affinity as for moral values, stubbornness and loyalty. Despite the appreciation of his abilities and a more balanced image of the playwright, for Kaufmann he still follows Jonson in "his intention and techniques"⁸² and the scholar's view was overshadowed by what he calls "the ugly probability that Brome was of mean origin."⁸³

A further step in criticism is represented by Catherine Shaw who, in her short study in 1980, sees Brome as "the most brilliant son of Ben Jonson"⁸⁴ whose plays were characterized by "fine theatricality" and "swiftness of movement and diversity in comic pacing,"⁸⁵ so emphasizing his dramaturgic abilities at plotting and staging.

Unfortunately, the readings of Allen and Andrews seem to have been taken up by Anton Ranieri Parra, who wrote the only Italian monograph devoted to Brome. Taking no heed of the critical revolution introduced by Butler in 1984, in 1999 Parra adds little new and original to Brome criticism and mistakenly and superficially describes the dramatist as a 'dimidiate Ben Jonson' ('half Ben Jonson'). Parra claims that as Plautus was considered as a 'dimidiate Menander', (meaning that the Roman playwright was much inferior to the Greek comic playwright Menander) so was Richard Brome compared to Jonson. Besides being an inappropriate comparison, in actual fact the Italian critic makes a mistake since 'dimidiate Menander' is a nickname given by Julius Caesar to the Latin playwright Terence, not to Plautus. If Parra's attempt to make Brome accessible in Italy only worked in part, his

⁸⁰ Kaufmann, p. 3.

⁸¹ Kaufmann, p. 35.

⁸² Kaufmann, p. 9.

⁸³ Kaufmann, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Shaw, p. 33.

⁸⁵ Shaw, p. 148.

translation into Italian of *A Mad Couple Well Matched* must be appreciated. The idea of translating a play from an unknown playwright is worthwhile since it arouses curiosity regarding Brome and stands as an example for Italian translators and directors. Yet, it is a pity that it is too baroque and artificial to be used in a performance so that the translator has failed in his purpose.

The turning point is Martin Butler's seminal work *Theatre and Crisis* in which the drama of the Caroline period is investigated as "engaged in debating serious and pressing issues"⁸⁶ and reflecting the political concerns of 1632-42. The theatre was politically meaningful, the arena for the discussion of affairs and for the opposition under the reign of Charles I. For Butler, Brome's works represented a strong response to the changes around him, dealing with problematic issues of the contemporary political life in a complex, ironic, shrewd and subversive way.

The study paves the way for scholars such as Ira Clark, Julie Sanders and many others, among whom stands out Matthew Steggle, whose *Richard Brome: Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* provides outstandingly good readings of Brome's plays and offers a valuable contribution to scholarship as well as a theoretical frame of reference. Following Butler's wake, Steggle illuminates Brome's *corpus* both giving the appropriate stress to the relationship between the playwright and Jonson and to his bonds of friendship with key dramatists and poets and improving the traditional approach on place-realism in Brome's plays, reinvestigating "the dynamic possibilities of space and place, and the ways in which geography can be contested and manipulated."⁸⁷ This approach has recently culminated in the *Online Edition of the Collected Plays of Richard Brome*, edited by an international panel of scholars (Michael Leslie, Julie Sanders, Matthew Steggle, to mention just a few) guided by Richard Allen Cave as general editor and project manager. The project, which is the first complete edition since 1873,⁸⁸ includes the original alongside with annotated modern texts

⁸⁶ Butler, 1984, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Steggle, 2004, p. 9.

⁸⁸ It is also important to notice that only some plays have been given a critical edition before 2010. Among them the first is *The Antipodes* in 1967 and 2000; *A Jovial Crew* in 1968; *A Mad Couple Well Matched* in 1979; *The Late Lancashire Witches* in 1979 and 2000; *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and *The Sparagus Garden* in 1980; *The Northern Lass* in 1980; *The English Moor* in 1983; *The City Wit* in 2004 by Katherine Wilkinson and *The Queen's Exchange* in 2005 by Richard Wood. They are both available online on the iEMLS section of the online journal *Early Modern Literary Studies*, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/ieMLS/resources.html>. Moreover, some plays have been edited as unpublished dissertations: A. E. R. Jenkins, 'The English Moor, or The Mock-Marriage, by Richard Brome, edited from the manuscript in the library of Lichfield Cathedral', BLitt thesis (Oxford University, 1941). Giles R. Floyd, 'A Critical Edition of Brome's "A Jovial Crew"', PhD thesis (University of

of the sixteen extant plays, essays on topical aspects of Brome's theatres not explored in the texts, a glossary, a detailed and exhaustive bibliography and video clips of sequences of plays selected by the editors and performed by professional actors from the RSC alumni list. This provides multiple opportunities: on the one hand, to share insights with other scholars and to find connections among the plays; on the other, to see Brome's works as performed more than only as authorial texts so that the process of the exploration of the text is shared by editors and actors, academics and theatre practitioners. As Richard Cave and Eleonor Lowe claim in the general introduction of the edition, they have two main objectives:

to appeal to a range of potential readers: literary scholars, theatre historians, theatre goers and above all theatre practitioners, actors and directors (no hierarchy is intended in this listing);
to produce an edition that may answer the varying needs of this range of readers and, perhaps more importantly, to arouse sufficient interest and excitement in Brome's dramaturgy to begin to promote new stagings of his plays. (All but a few have been absent too long from the repertoire of our theatres; working together on the edition actors and scholars alike quickly developed a profound respect for Brome's artistry, for the integrity of his comic vision, his politics and his theatrical expertise).

This project finally gives fuller recognition of Brome's theatrical importance as well as providing impetus for further investigation in the study and on stage. As Brett D. Hirsch claims in his review to the online edition, "*Brome Online* is an outstanding and monumental accomplishment, sporting scholarship of the highest caliber, innovative collaborations between textual editors and theatre practitioners, and editions and scholarly apparatus that will certainly stimulate research and promote renewed interest in seeing Brome's plays performed. The project sets a very high standard not only for future electronic editions of

Iowa, 1943); Leroy L. Panek, 'A Critical Old-Spelling Edition of Richard Brome's "*The Sparagus Garden*"', PhD thesis (Kent State University, 1968); Paul J. Matte III, 'Richard Brome's "*The City Wit*": A Critical Edition', PhD thesis (Arizona State University, 1976); Burnam MacLeod, 'Richard Brome's "*The Love-Sick Court*": A Critical Edition', PhD thesis (University of Missouri-Columbia, 1977).

Renaissance drama, but for print editions. That the project is made freely available online is nothing short of a gift to scholarship and the community at large.”⁸⁹

1.6

My Space: methods

Actually, there are still divers aspects which deserve to be investigated more in detail and even fascinating fields of research connected to him that are totally unexplored. I decided to investigate in the area of place realism in Brome’s city comedies, that is a realistic use of space through the setting of some scenes of a play in specific urban locations. Therefore, the first phase of my research consisted in the selection of the plays sharing common elements of place realism. This technique in Brome’s plays has been discussed since 1942, in Theodore Miles’s seminal work “Place-realism in a Group of Caroline plays.”⁹⁰ The scholar identified a compact group of six comedies characterized by place-realism, performed between 1631 and 1635. Their authors are Marmion, Shirley, Nabbes and Brome. The latter contributed with two plays, *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and *The Sparagus Garden*. According to Miles’s approach, the photographic realism which characterized Brome’s plays ”been introduced for its intrinsic appeal rather than for its effectiveness as setting.”⁹¹ Therefore, the artistic value of this technique in Brome’s hands in not regarded as high since the photography of the location is not sharp.⁹² Matthew Steggle disagrees with this view reconsidering the real importance of place realism as a key feature in Caroline drama and re-investigating the concept of ‘place’ in geographical, social and political terms. Moreover, he demonstrates that the concept of ‘place-realism’ is to be applied to other plays that include a London setting, beside those traditionally recognized as belonging to this genre. His list, which includes *The City Wit*, *The New Academy*, *The Demoiselle*, *The English Moor*, and *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, seem to form a coherent group:

⁸⁹ Hirsch, p. 152,

⁹⁰ Theodore Miles, “Place-realism in a Group of Caroline plays,” *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 72, Oct., 1942.

⁹¹ Miles, p. 431.

⁹² Miles, p. 433.

“the action revolves around sex and money, disguises and mistaken identity, and the London setting is a very prominent element.”⁹³

Among Brome’s plays, I selected those which set key scenes in known and recognizable places: *The City Wit* (The Presence Chamber in Whitehall Palace), *The Weeding of Covent Garden* (The estate of Covent Garden), *The Sparagus Garden* (the eponymous pleasure garden), *The English Moor* (The Devil Tavern), *The Demoiselle* (the Temple Walks) and *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (Ram Alley in the Temple Walks). Differently from Steggle, I excluded *The New Academy* since it provides a kind of ‘place realism,’ different from the other plays. “While *The New Academy* is certainly one of the plays within the ‘place realism’ group, its use of specific locations is somewhat different from a work such as *The Weeding of the Covent Garden*. [...] The specific location of the New Exchange is probably there to emphasize the intersection of polite manners, amorous relationships, and marriage with the world of commerce, of different kinds of goods being traded in order to acquire others.”⁹⁴ In my opinion, the setting only amplifies the themes of the play which would not change its meaning if set somewhere else, even though the New Exchange is very effective in the dynamics of the play.

On the other hand, as for the other plays I selected, not only wouldn’t these stories make sense in another urban milieu, but also in a spot of London different from the one chosen by Brome. The use of place realism varies by degrees, from one scene in *The City Wit* to two entire Acts in *The Demoiselle*, even if the importance of the setting does not change: the location is not replaceable since it is the story which revolves around the place (even if for a short scene) and both the characters and the audience are affected it. “All these locations are imbued with affective connotations, charged with emotional and mythical meanings; the localized stories, images and memories associated with place provide meaningful cultural and historical bearings for [...] communities.”⁹⁵

Let us analyze each case in turn: *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, as a topographical comedy, is built around the place after which it is entitled. Its plot revolves around the development of the estate of Covent Garden so that its square becomes the real centre of the story. *The Sparagus Garden* as well is deeply concerned with the location it is named after.

⁹³ Steggle, 2004, p. 5.

⁹⁴ R. Brome, *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, Modern Text, edited by Michael Leslie, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, intro p. 10.

⁹⁵ Liam Kennedy, *Urban Space and Representation*, London: Pluto Press, 2000, p. 6.

Among all the pleasure gardens of London, Brome chose this one owing to its history and its main produce, the asparagus, which is provided with strong sexual implications. In *The City Wit* Brome puts on stage the Presence Chamber of Whitehall using the palace as a powerful metaphor of the monarch. An anonymous palace of London would not be as effective as the royal palace in order to stage the court. As for *The English Moor*, even though taverns were numerous in London and Brome had a wide range of choice, the Devil Tavern is the only one which can reflect the dichotomic and oxymoronic symbolism of the play owing to its name, history and its clientele, besides being a literary homage to Ben Jonson, its most famous frequenter. In *The Demoiselle*, the setting of the Temple Walks, which emerges as the place where law and crime coexist, is used as a vehicle to discuss the issue of justice and reflect on the political situation. Finally, in *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, the first scene set in Ram Alley is consistent with the lack of any kind of law in the moral, sexual or legal field. Moreover, the location recalls Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* with which this play shares many similarities.

The second phase of my research consisted in the analysis of each urban space according to three main perspectives: historical/geographical, social and theatrical. Firstly, I analyzed its history, its position in London, and the development of its function within the city in search of its social and political meaning. As for historical sources, I take into consideration the antiquarian John Stow, whose *Survey of London* is a necessary point of reference, the City Council *Survey of London*, Hibbert's *London Encyclopedia*, Roy Porter's *London: A Social History*, and Sugden's *Topographical Dictionary*, to name but a few. I displayed the different settings on maps in order to visualize clearly not only the position of the places within the city but also the itineraries of the characters while moving to one location to the other. I chose to use the Agas Map, probably drawn up written in the 1630s.⁹⁶

As Peter Whitfield claims, "the date is fortunate, for the 1630s saw the beginning of the end of the growth of building outside the city walls, so that the Agas Map [...] is the last glimpse of old London before the westward growth really began."⁹⁷ The metropolis was becoming so populous that in the 17th century it was the largest city in Europe and

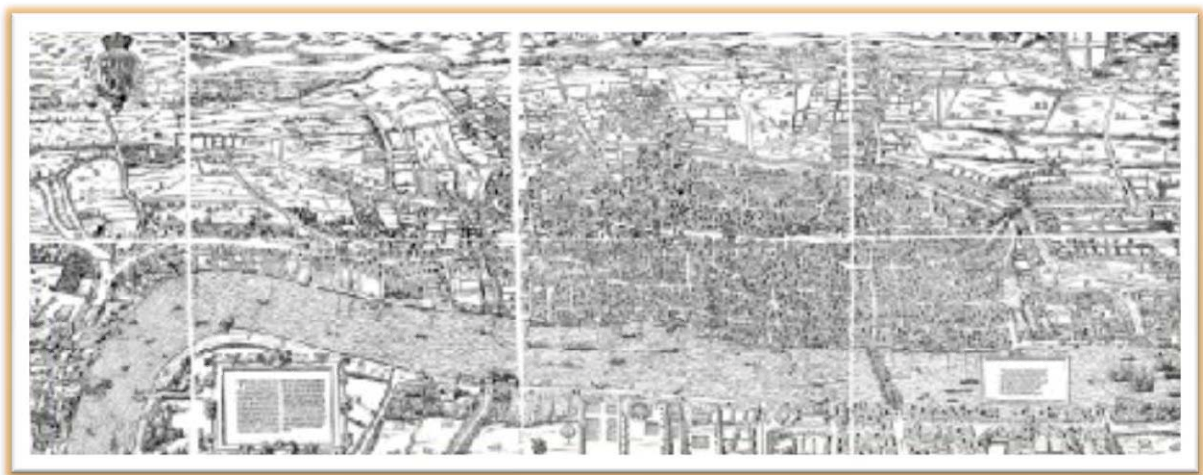
⁹⁶ It is a very important exemplar since it is a valuable copy of the lost Copperplate map, the prototype of all

⁹⁷ Peter Whitfield, *London: A Life in Maps*, London: The British Library, 2006, pp. 38-39.

emerging as a financial capital. London worked as a catalyst of activity, not a passive reflector of society, a “crowded, confusing maze of streets, business houses and brothels, law courts and inns.”⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the map does not include Covent Garden, completed by 1639, so in this case I chose to use specific maps of the location and the engravings of Wenceslaus Hollar, which provide us with precious information about London and contribute to a clearer definition of the complex social geography of the city.

Henry Peacham pointed out that the population of London was a mixture of different kinds of inhabitants: “noble and simple, rich and poor, young and old, from all places and countries, either for pleasure [...] or for profit, as lawyers to terms, countrymen and women to Smithfield and the markets; or for necessity, [...] and some others, all manner of employment.”⁹⁹ London works as a pole of attraction, a crossroads of religious, linguistic, political, cultural experiences, in a national and European context: not only pure Londoners, but also people from the country who speak dialect and strangers from Italy, France and Holland.

What I am going to focus on is the representation of foreigners and their relationship with a foreign land, that is London: the Dutch Martha and Tom Hoyden, the countryman from Somerset in *The Sparagus Garden*, the Cornish knight Sir Amphilus in *The Demoiselle*, or Timsy from Norfolk evoked in *The English Moor*. At that time, the word ‘foreign’ had a wider meaning than today since it was applied to “a person born in a foreign country: one from abroad or of another nation; an alien” (1.a) but also “one of another county, parish, not a member of any particular guild” (2). As Jean Howard notices “early modern London was full of this kind of foreigner: those born outside the city and not members of its guilds but who worked in and around the metropolis. [...] as a result of the high degree of migration to the city, it was inevitable that established citizens would have



encounters with new abroad.”¹⁰⁰ Each foreign character, from the countryside or from other countries, has a clear characterization as for manners, language, clothes are concerned, that isolates them in a sense from the other characters and mark their distance.

Therefore, the polarity Englishness-otherness has strong spatial implications and, using Gaston Bachelard’s words, I see it as an opposition between ‘dehors’ and ‘dedans,’ a metaphorical contrast between those who are inside the London Walls and those outside and that finally takes the dialectic form of ‘ici’ and ‘là,’ here and there.¹⁰¹ This can be seen in the social dynamics which are established between the city and the court (*The City Wit*) and the city and the country (*The Sparagus Garden*, *The English Moor*, *The Demoiselle*, *The Northern Lass*) in which each character perceives his space as ‘ici’ and the other as ‘là.’ Yet, if for the citizen and the countryman ‘là’ (respectively the court and the city) represents the pole of attraction, for the courtier and the citizen, city and countryside represent ‘là’ conceived as inferior from any point of view. Brome explores these dynamics in numerous plays besides those already mentioned, yet in these plays so strongly characterized by place realism their impact on the stories seems to be greater and disruptive and to make the picture of London more vivid and realistic.

Finally, space is analyzed as theatrical space considering two main aspects: on the one hand, the configuration of the theatres where the plays were staged, focusing in particular on the Salisbury Court Playhouse to see how the playwright comes to terms with the space at his disposal. On the other hand, how each urban location is evoked and staged in the fictional world of the theatre.

Using the selected sequences of the plays recorded during the workshops at Royal Holloway within the Brome’s project, I explore the rich potentiality of the plays: the performances help to conceptualize the space and allow to define the movements of the characters in the theatrical space, but also in the place where the scene is set.

On the one hand, I discuss how the different spots of the city can be staged and how to make the audience aware of the setting. On the other hand, I take into consideration the different performances of those plays which have been staged in the past few years, such as *The City Wit* or *The Antipodes* in order to see how space is used and interpreted by each director and the actors in different countries.

¹⁰⁰ Jean Howard, *Theatre of a City*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰¹ Gaston Bachelard, (1957) *La Poétique de l’espace*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961, p. 192.

In the last phase, I grouped the plays around three main issues: kingship, food and law. Chapter II focuses on the representation of kingship through the Presence Chamber in Whitehall staged in *The City Wit*. In this play Brome puts on scene the court life in the location which is the most powerful metaphor of royal power and authority, both rendering the place intelligible for those unfamiliar with it and making fun of the complex royal etiquette. Chapter III is a journey in the world of the eating and drinking establishments with the investigation of three plays. If in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* Brome puts on stage two well-known taverns (The Goat Tavern and the Paris Tavern) in the fashionable milieu of Covent Garden, in *The English Moor* the playwright stages both an anonymous inn and the Devil Tavern, famous for the attendance of artists and writers among whom Ben Jonson. Finally, I investigated a form of eating establishment that represents the evolution of the tavern, a pleasure garden called Sparagus Garden. Chapter IV is a journey to discover the different ‘faces’ of the English legal system with the analysis of *The Demoiselle* and *A Mad Couple Well Matched*¹⁰² both set in the Temple Walks, a place full of resonances and political implications.

Each location represents a different kind of space and a specific function, as the chart remarks:

	<i>The City Wit</i>	<i>The Weeding of Covent Garden</i>			<i>The Sparagus Garden</i>	<i>The English Moor</i>		<i>The Demoiselle</i>	<i>A Mad Couple Well Matched</i>
	Presence Chamber Whitehall	Covent Garden Piazza	Goat Tavern	Paris Tavern	Sparagus Garden	Devil Tavern	Inn	Temple Walks	Ram Alley
Outdoor		X						X	
Indoor	X		X	X		X	X		X
Out/indoor					X				
Public		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Private	X								X
Access	On invitation	Free	Free	Free	Free ¹⁰³	Free	Free	Free	On invitation ¹⁰⁴
Frequenterers	Selected	All classes	All classes	All classes	All classes (mainly high)	All classes	All classes	All classes	Selected

¹⁰² The ‘place realism’ concerns Ram Alley, a notorious street within the Temple Walks.

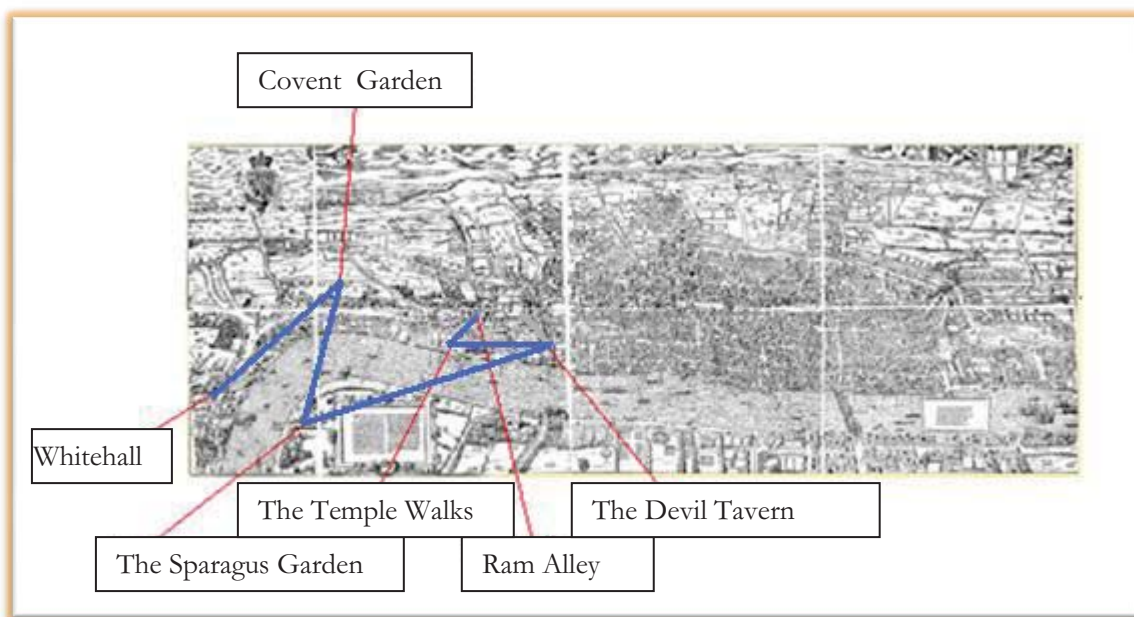
¹⁰³ The access is free but limited since it depends on the frequenterers’ means.

¹⁰⁴ Being the location the private house of the protagonist of the play, the access is based on his invitation.

The variety of settings allows to investigate multiple relationships of characters with space and their perceptions of it on an individual and collective level, but also according to different parameters such as social class and gender. Indoor public spaces, such as the eating establishments, prevail giving the possibility to stage many different social classes even if there are some limitations due to the price of the meal to be paid so that the lower classes are excluded. These restrictions are more marked in the expensive Sparagus Garden that, being a high class location, is mainly frequented by rich merchants, knights, courtiers and gallants.

On the other hand, in the scenes in the open air, like The Temple Walks or the Covent Garden Piazza, the social contrast is sharper since the place can be shared by all the social classes, from the beggar to the courtier, from the impoverished gentleman to the rich citizen. It is worth noticing that there are only two private locations which offer a contrasting vision of the private dimension of space: the Presence Chamber, where the king used to receive his guests, and Careless's hovel in the disreputable Ram Alley.

In the map I marked the position of each location that I am going to analyze so to give an idea of the itinerary I follow. This is a journey through space and time following the course of the Thames in early modern London: it starts from Whitehall, the symbol of royal power and authority, around 1629, in the first years of King Charles's reign and ends in Ram Alley, the hotbed of crime, ten years later. It is significant to notice that the journey starts in the west and ends in the east, at the dawn of the civil war which represented the beginning of a new form of government without the monarchy till 1660.



CHAPTER 2

STAGING THE PRESENCE WITHOUT A PRESENCE

Since the very beginning of his career, Brome proves his ability as a playwright with *The City Wit* (1629-32), an entertaining and politically audacious city comedy, an early example of “accomplished and theatrically intelligent writing”¹⁰⁵ and of strategic use of space. By its title,¹⁰⁶ the play appears to focus both on the concept of wit and on city life: it revolves around the world of trade, a microcosm where all the characters attempt to establish business relations in order to reach the status of ‘city wit.’¹⁰⁷ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word ‘wit’¹⁰⁸ had a variety of meanings in the Caroline period, ranging from “great mental acumen, cleverness, wisdom, quickness of intellect or liveliness of fancy, capacity of apt expression to talent for saying brilliant or sparkling things.”

Brome seems to use what Martin Butler calls the Middletonian¹⁰⁹ brand of wit consisting in the characters’ “capacity to swindle,”¹¹⁰ that is achieving social recognition, even trampling on feelings and moral values, and taking advantage of other people. This is the dramatic universe in which Brome develops the plot of the play.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Brome, *The City Wit*, ed. by E. Schafer, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, introduction 1.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Schafer emphasizes that the titles of numerous plays of the period contain the word ‘wit.’ She mentions *Wit at Several Weapons*; Brome’s own lost play *Wit in a Madness*; Middleton’s *No Wit No Help Like a Woman’s*; Glapthorne’s *Wit in a Constable*; Shirley’s *The Witty Fair One*; Fletcher’s *Wit Without Money*. I add Davenant’s *The Wits* (1636) and Greene’s *Groats-Worth of Wit*, which Jane Wilkinson considers among the main sources of the play in “A Source for *The City Wit*”, *N&Q*, 52, June 2005, pp. 230-232. See E. Schafer, 2010, introduction 3.

¹⁰⁷ In the prologue, Sarpego claims to be “the city wit” of the title (“I, that bear its title”), Pyannet tells Crasy “note my wit” (III, 2, 429), to cite just a few among the numerous examples.

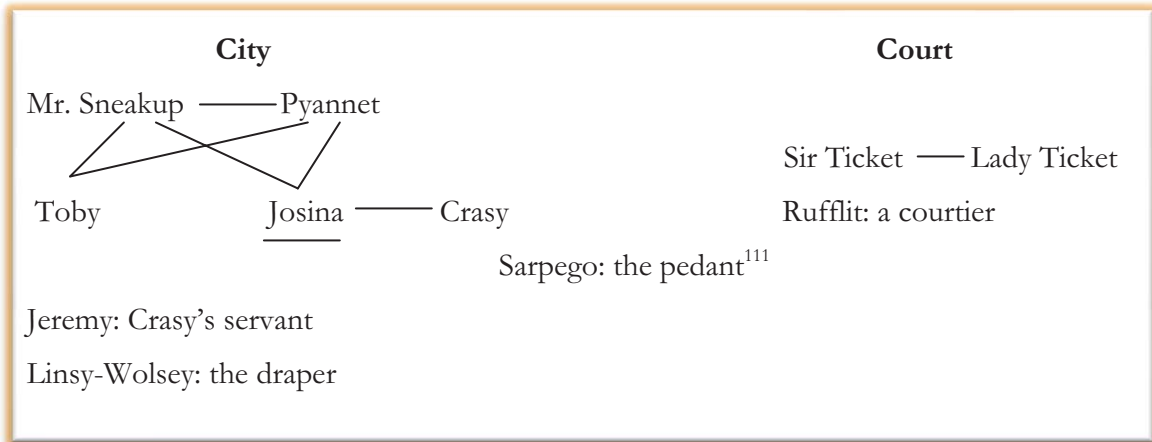
¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, as for the word ‘wit,’ the OED quotes Brome twice, for *The Court Beggar* and *The Northern Lass*, without mentioning *The City Wit* where the word is repeated extremely often.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Middleton (1580-1627) was a Jacobean playwright. Among his most famous works, *Michaelmas Term* (1604), *The Roaring Girl* (1611), *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), *A Game at Chess* (1624). Stylistic analysis suggests that *Timon of Athens* (which has many connections with Brome’s *The City Wit*) may have been written by Middleton in collaboration with Shakespeare. See Brian Vickers, “*Timon of Athens* with Thomas Middleton” in *Shakespeare Co-Author*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 244-291.

¹¹⁰ Butler, 1984, p. 159.

2.1

The plot



The protagonist is the bankrupt jeweller Crasy who has lost all his money after being defrauded by his creditors who refuse to pay him back. He recovers his lost fortune owing to a series of tricks and disguises through which he robs his former friends, that is his family, his wife Josina, the courtiers, the pedant Sarpego and the draper Linsy-Wolsey. The jeweller succeeds in his objective also thanks to his apprentice Jeremy, disguised as widow Tryman, and the servant boy Crack, with whom he revives the Jonsonian triumvirate of Subtle, Doll and Face in *The Alchemist*:

Then let us be friends, and most friendly agree.
 The pimp and the punk and the doctor are three,
 That cannot but thrive, when united they be.
 The pimp brings in custom, the punk she gets treasure,
 Of which the physician is sure of his measure. (III, I, speech 396)¹¹²

2.2

Critical approaches

The play has been deeply investigated as for its sources and intertextual references are concerned.¹¹³ *The City Wit* is the first dramatic descendant of *Timon of Athens*¹¹⁴ and what

¹¹¹ The pedant's position in the chart corresponds to his position in between, since the character is a social climber.

¹¹² All the references to *The City Wit* relate to R. Brome, *The City Wit*, Modern Text, edited by E. Schafer, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

Lucullus says about Timon is also valid for Crasy, the protagonist of the play: “Every man has his fault, and honesty is his” (III, 1, 29-30). The bankrupt jeweller Crasy, akin to Timon, is a formerly generous but now penurious hero confronted with ingratitude.¹¹⁵

As early as the prologue Brome acknowledges his debt towards his master but also suggests Jonson’s approval of the play: “*The author says has passed with good applause / in former times. For it was written, when / it bore just judgement, and the seal of Ben.*” Besides the “indenture tripartite” of *The Alchemist*, the borrowings are multiple: the fake-illness and the will trick to trap legacy hunters come from *Volpone*, whereas the situation of a man disguised as a woman and concealing his identity till the end of the play is from *Epicoene*, to cite just a few examples. Therefore, not only the influence of his master Ben Jonson, but also the one of Robert Greene, William Shakespeare, John Webster, Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker. The impressive list of influences indubitably has prejudiced Brome as a dramatist, questioning the originality and the literary value of his work, instead of marking his talent for putting “new spin on old scenarios.”¹¹⁶ Actually, far from being a servile imitator or a plagiarist, Brome shows a remarkable ability at recombining existing comic devices, characters, speeches, episodes and lines of plots. Clarence Andrews praises his dexterity in plotting¹¹⁷ in this play: “Brome’s good points in plotting are his careful exposition in the first act, his attention to motives in the greater number of his plays, and the preparation he never fails to give for any important turn in the plot, except, of course, when he aims at complete surprise. *The City Wit* illustrates these qualities very well.”¹¹⁸

¹¹³ As for the impressive gallery of sources for the play and verbal echoes, see Andrews, pp. 81-98, Kathleen McLuskie, “Caroline Professionals: Brome and Shirley,” in *The Revels History of Drama in English, 1613-1660*, (eds) Philip Edwards, Gerald Eades Bentley and Lois Potter, London: Methuen, 1981, 237-248; Richard Cave, “The Playwriting Sons of Ben: Nathan Field and Richard Brome,” in *Jonsonians: Living Traditions*, (ed) Brian Woolland, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, pp. 69-91; Richard Brome, *The City Wit*, (ed) Katherine Wilkinson, online at [http:// extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/renplays/citywit.htm](http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/renplays/citywit.htm), accessed May 2008, introduction, Katherine Wilkinson, 2005, pp. 230-232, Richard Cave, “Endings in Renaissance Comedy: Ben Jonson and Richard Brome” in *Practising Equity, Addressing Law: Equity in Law and Literature*, (ed) Daniela Carpi, Heidelberg, Winter 2008, pp. 263-283; Schafer, 2010, introduction p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Several scholars mention this connection between the plays: Andrews, p. 103. G. Wilson Knight states that also in *A Jovial Crew* Brome covers much of the story of Timon. In G. Wilson Knight, *Shakespeare and Religion: Essays of Forty Years*, New York: Routledge, 1967, p. 212; Anthony David Nuttal, *Timon of Athens*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p. XV; Richard Cave, 2003, p. 88.

¹¹⁵ G. W. Knight, p. 211.

¹¹⁶ Schafer, 2010, introduction 33.

¹¹⁷ As for this aspect, also C. V. Wedgwood: “Take away the impossible intrigues and the ingenious entanglements, and a whole society with its petty pleasures and preoccupations starts into life from the pages of these comedies.” In *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan*, (ed) J. H. Plumb, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955, pp. 109-137, p. 135.

¹¹⁸ Andrews, p. 61.

Till the 1980s, beside the interest in the construction and sources of the play, another critical approach is in moral terms so that the comedy has been considered “within the tradition of the moralities”¹¹⁹ and Crasy has become “the instructor of sound moral principles” demonstrating “that honesty and fair dealing are not the product of weakness but of an attitude superior to mere skill in achieving economic success which [...] is merely a kind of virtuosity in deception.”¹²⁰

A new wave of criticism arises after Martin Butler’s innovative reading of Brome as an oppositional playwright. Even though in his *Theatre and Crisis: 1632-1642* Butler does not analyze *The City Wit*, his view of Brome leads the way to an interpretation of the comedy in terms of sociopolitics so that scholars like Ira Clark, Matthew Steggle and Elizabeth Schafer have investigated the intense critic of Charles I and his court in the play. In particular, they have discussed the importance of the setting and the scene evoking the Presence Chamber considering the evident political parodical overtones and the impact of Brome’s political discourse.

Following this trend of criticism, I am going to discuss *The City Wit* as Brome’s first attempt at a strategic use of space, considering both the concrete space of London where the play is set and the fictional space of the stage in order to grasp the theatrical strengths of this play which has to be read with performance in mind.¹²¹ Moreover, this social satire shows the playwright exploring the possibility of a reformulation of the concept of place in terms of social and gender relations, both among the characters and spatially speaking. Two aspects stand out: on the one hand, the impact of space on the characters’ behavioral attitude and on the construction of their interrelations. This influence makes them adapt to the rules of each milieu, or refashion themselves, in order to be accepted socially and granted the privileges of the place. On the other, it is the particular mixture of relations which concurs to define the uniqueness of a place so that its features change according to the people who frequent it.

Moreover, I am going to point out how Brome succeeds in finding a way of talking about the monarch, the royal politics and the dishonesty institutionalized within the system

¹¹⁹ Shaw, pp. 62-63.

¹²⁰ Kaufmann, p. 52.

¹²¹ Schafer, 2010, introduction, p. 1.

by staging the Presence Chamber¹²² in absence of the king. *The City Wit* stands out as an *unicum*, since Act III, scene 4 is explicitly set in the Presence Chamber inside Whitehall, where nobody before him had dared to set a play. Actually, in Renaissance and Caroline drama, playwrights had often commented on court life by using a historical or geographically remote court as a setting, as in Shakespeare's and Ford's tragedies,¹²³ whereas Brome puts the contemporary English court on stage in a city comedy. Although there is no mention of the name of the palace involved or of "the royal person whose messenger Crasy pretends to be, it none the less strongly implies that the palace is Whitehall and the royal is Charles."¹²⁴

Finally, the play paves the way for further debates over gender identity as its subtitle, *The woman wears the breeches*, shows: Brome discusses the transgression of limits between genders through the comic device of cross-dressing, by putting on stage a man pretending to be a whore (disguised as a rich widow) and a man-like woman, Pyannet who dominates within her family unit and even dares to impersonate the King himself. This practice, which can be considered as a form of refashioning the self, calls into questions the 'place' of women and emphasizes the instability of the sex gender system¹²⁵ since it "threatened a normative social order based upon strict principles of hierarchy, of which women's subordination to man was a chief instance."¹²⁶ The construction of gender relations is strongly implicated in the conceptualizing of space within the city, which was the arena where the class and gender struggle in early modern England took place and fundamental cultural, social and political changes were enacted.

¹²² The Presence Chamber was the room where the sovereign used to receive guests.

¹²³ Examples of this device are Shakespeare's historical and Roman Plays; as for Ford, *The Broken Heart* (1627) set in Ancient Greece at the court of the King of Laconia and Perkin Warbeck (1629-34) in which the eponymous character claims to be Richard IV.

¹²⁴ Steggle, 2004, p.28.

¹²⁵ As for the concept of sex-gender system, see Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, (ed) Rayna R. Reiter, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975, pp. 157-210.

¹²⁶ Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 39, n. 4, Winter 1988, pp. 418-440, p. 418.

2.3

Social dynamics and spatial interaction

In the 17th century, English society, far from being an immutable caste system, was characterized by a marked social mobility owing to massive migration towards the city and the new forms of individual acquisitions (such as the purchase of titles or lands). Since rank was determined also according to the possession of money, the idea of advancement involved all the classes in a constant longing for power: “the countryman’s eye is upon the citizen; the citizen’s is upon the gentleman; the gentleman’s is upon the nobleman.”¹²⁷ In *The City Wit* Brome clearly mirrors this order of society emphasizing the various manifestations of social interaction conceived in terms of *do ut des*: all the relationships are based on the idea of exchange so that people become thus both consumers and consumed,¹²⁸ subjects and objects of economic transactions.

The playwright dramatizes the social dynamics in their two dimensions: on the one hand, on the horizontal axis, he puts on stage those who wish to stand well in their grade within their own class. On the other, according to the vertical lines of hierarchy, he presents both the traditionally established positions of dominance or subordination assigned by status and gender and the continuous ascendance of social climbers who play a decisive role in the dynamic court-city.

The playwright stages the court and the city, which constitute the two poles of interaction, as a dynamically open system of exchange of goods (money, jewels, or sexual favors). This dualism does not take the form of an irreconcilable dichotomy as the court and the city are not perceived “as two distinct sets but two interestingly intermixable layers.”¹²⁹ Their interaction enables the investigation of a wide range of social classes and jobs: tradesmen, courtiers, prostitutes, ladies, social climbers and the King himself, even though his presence is only alluded as being offstage. The typology of the interaction varies with the circumstances of its occurrence, and with the rank and gender of the people

¹²⁷ E. Misselden, *Free Trade, or the Means to make Trade flourish* (1622), p. 12, also quoted by Lionel C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1937, 1951, p. 108.

¹²⁸ See Karen Newman, “Women and Commodification in Jonson’s *Epicoene*,” *ELH*, Vol. 56, n.3, 1989, pp. 503-518, p. 506.

¹²⁹ Steggle, 2004, p. 31.

involved so that each point of view takes part in staging the ever-shifting social geometry of power.¹³⁰

The ever-growing tensions between the court and the city have become embedded in urban topography so that the London setting of the play clearly reflects the opposition between these two poles of the interaction of the citizen-courtier dynamic: the mercantile world (represented by Crasy's and Linsy-Wolsey's house) and the court (the Presence Chamber and Sir Ticket's house).

	THE COURT		THE CITY											
	The Presence Chamber	Sir Ticket's House	Crasy's house									Linsy-Wolsey's house		
	III, 4	IV, 2	I,1	I,2	II,1	II,2	II,3	III,2	IV, 1	IV,3	V,1	III,1	III,3	IV,4
CITIZENS														
Crasy (11)	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	
Sarpego (9)	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x		
Josina (7)			x	x		x			x	x	x	x		
Pyannet (6)		x	x					x	x		x	x		
Linsy-Wolsey (6)				x			x				x	x	x	x
Mr. Sneakup (5)	x	x	x					x			x			
COURTIERS														
Ruffit (8)	x	x	x	x			x		x		x	x		
Toby (8)	x	x	x	x	x		x				x	x		
Lady Ticket (3)		x	x								x			
Sir Ticket (7)	x		x	x			x		x		x	x		
LOWER CLASS														
Jeremy (3+2)			x	x							x			
Tryman (3+2)											x	x	x	
Crack (7)						x	x		x		x	x	x	x
Bridget (5)			x			x		x	x		x			
Isabell (1)												x		
Jone (1)												x		

The chart summarizes the interaction of the characters among themselves and the different places, pointing out not only the relevance of any single character but also how gender and class limits regulate the admittance to a place. The restricted number of people in the court scenes (six characters in the Presence scene and at Ticket's house) reflects the hierarchical-elitarian principles governing a space whose access depends on rank or on invitation.

On the contrary, all the characters are granted free access to the urban space so that the scenes within the citizen milieu are much more crowded. Kim Durban,¹³¹ who directed

¹³⁰ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p. 3.

a production of *The City Wit* in 2007 in Australia, affirms that “Richard Brome [...] is not afraid to fill the stage with many characters, and wittily play them off against each other, using asides frequently to release the dramatic pressure. [...] the challenge is to stage the group-takeover as mob action, whilst keeping their individual contributions crisp.”¹³²

In I, 1 at Crasy’s house, the jeweller confronts all his debtors in front of his family and servants (eleven out of sixteen characters are mentioned). Commenting on it, Durban describes it as “an artfully composed scene that is fiendishly difficult to stage. It uses a device that Brome repeats throughout the play - the scene starts with intimacy, swells to accommodate a crowd and ends with a just one character, Crasy’s wife, Josina. This scenic structure, requiring the stage to fill and empty with a flow and ebbing of characters, continues throughout the play.”¹³³ This happens also later, in III, 1 when courtiers and citizens rush to widow Tryman’s bedside at Linsy-Wolsey’s house (twelve characters). Finally, the city becomes the space where the *dénouement* in Act V can take place in front of fourteen characters.

Beside the main character Crasy, whose presence is due both to the plot and to his disguise ability, only Sarpego is on stage almost as assiduously as him. Moreover, the pedant and Toby are the sole characters who attend all the four settings: as social climbers, they embody the idea of vertical mobility, since they know their way around the different social milieu and are adaptable to the places as far as their behaviour, attitude and language are concerned. Obviously, the courtiers’ higher status allows them to attend most of the setting and to take part in the key moments of the play, such as the scene in the Presence Chamber and the reading of Tryman’s will in III, 1.

Instead, the interaction of some characters is reduced to the milieu they belong to because of social restrictions: beside the servants Isabell and Jone, whose role is circumscribed, also Crack and Bridget are prevented from any kind of social advancement. Crack’s fear of prison casts him in a marginal role, whereas Bridget’s single attempt at a social rise is frustrated by Sarpego who breaks his promise to marry her. Thus, the two

¹³¹ Kim Durban staged *The City Wit* in Ballarat, Australia, with a company of graduating acting students. In order to delight her audience and emphasize the connections between the city comedy and contemporary times, she chose to set the play in the 1970s. I am going to make reference to this and other productions of the play so to clarify important theatrical aspects of the performance.

¹³² Kim Durban, “Upside down at the bottom of the world: taking Richard Brome to the Antipodes,” *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, pp. 14, 16.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

servants can only strengthen their position in the lower class through their own marriage. Class and gender boundaries limit Jeremy as well. He is neglected by the courtier world as a male servant, yet awakens interest as the attractively rich Tryman. Nevertheless, the widow's interaction with the courtiers only occurs when they enter her citizen space, since she is neither invited nor allowed to go to court.

Among the women, the most relevant role is played by Josina, who is involved in seven scenes in two citizen settings. Her interaction is limited to her own social milieu as she is not allowed to leave the citizen sphere owing to gender restrictions and her downscale marriage with the decayed tradesman Crasy. Gender restrictions are less effective for Lady Ticket and Pyannet. Benefiting of more freedom thanks to her husband's courtly status, the former can take part in the scenes within the citizen sphere. The latter, on the contrary, by mastering the space and its rules, dares to invade a place which is above her socially (in fact she goes to Ticket's house to punish her husband for his presumed infidelity) claiming her hegemonic role within her family unit.

Now it is worth focusing separately on the city and the court to consider what kind of people usually frequent each space, the rules which govern it, and the dominant values in order to clarify the mechanism of their interaction.

2.4

The citizen world

Within the microcosm of the citizen world, Crasy stands as a negative *exemplum*: he is perceived as the anti-tradesman, a traitor to his own social class, having broken its implicit ethical code by lending money without taking interest. This form of money lending contrasts with the common practice of the time which recognized taking interest as being legal: it was such a widespread praxis that, proverbially, anybody who lends his money for nothing was counted as a fool¹³⁴ and “he that has lost his credit is dead to the world.”¹³⁵

Furthermore, the word ‘citizen’ assumes a negative connotation since citizenship is used in the play as a synonym for silliness: “Crasy (in disguise): O that Crasy was ever a silly

¹³⁴ William Harrison, (1577) *Description Of Elizabethan England*, London: Paperback, 2004, p. 206.

¹³⁵ Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs found in English Literature and the Dictionaries of the Period*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.

fellow. Pyannet: A very citizen, a very citizen” (IV, 1, speech 560). This attitude is shared by the courtiers like Sir Ticket who refuses to give the jeweller his money back: “dost take me for a citizen, that thou thinkest I’ll keep my day?” (I, 1, speech 100). Crasy “is the first exercise by Brome in strategic inversion, where generosity is equated with folly and wit with sly cunning.”¹³⁶ He has actually overturned the usual picture of the debtor beholden to his creditor so that now it is the jeweller who is victim of the net of credit, losing both his money and his reputation. Crasy naively conceives trade as the *locus* of integrity and honesty, where compromises are not to be made:

I must take nimble hold upon occasion, or lie forever in the bankrupt ditch, where no man lends a hand to draw one out. I will leap over it, or fall bravely in’t, scorning the Bridge of Baseness, Composition, which doth infect a city like the Plague, and teach men knavery, that were never born to’t: whereby the rope-deserving rascal gains purple and furs, trappings and golden chains. (I, 1, speech 23)

Crasy feels at a crossroads: being a ruined jeweller for all his life lying “in the bankrupt ditch” or react, but avoiding the help offered by the metaphorical “bridge of composition,” which means making compromises. Crasy’s concrete words have a marked visual impact on the audience if we consider the ditch and the bridge as two real places: the bankrupt ditch Crasy is referring to could be the Hole, in the debtors prison of Wood Street Counter,¹³⁷ whereas the bridge may be a real bridge like Rialto in *The Merchant of Venice* which evokes the world of economic exchanges and corruption, so despised by the honest jeweller.

Crasy’s most powerful opponent is his mother-in-law Pyannet, spokeswoman of a wider public who denounces the uselessness of honesty for his family and the common good since honest tradesman is “synonima for a fool” (I, 2, speech 103):

Honest man! Who the Devil wish’d thee to be an honest man? [...] What should the City do with honesty when ‘tis enough to undo a whole corporation? Why are your wares gumm’d; your shops dark; your prices writ in strange characters? What, for honesty? Honesty? (I, 1, speech 44)

¹³⁶ Cave, 2003, p. 88.

¹³⁷ See Walter Thornbury, “Cheapside: Northern tributaries: Wood Street,” *Old and New London: Volume 1*, 1878, pp. 364-374, <http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/report.aspx?Compid=45050>; Theodore B. Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986, p. 43.

Honest and its noun are repeated forty-four times by different characters throughout the whole comedy and they recur twenty-three times alone in the very first scene so that the concept of honesty becomes the *leitmotiv* of the play. This deceptively straightforward adjective shows different hidden aspects of Crasy's personality. Many of the definitions in the OED sound ironic when referred to the jeweller: "Free from disgrace or reproach" (a.1b) or "holding an honorable position; respectable" (a.1a). Moreover, the adjective can also have negative social implications: William Epton states that "honest carried an obscure social insult as a hint of stupidity"¹³⁸ and Simon Daines, in his *Orthoepia Anglicana* (1640), affirms that gentlemen of quality addressed their social inferiors by calling them 'honest.'

On the other hand, the draper Linsy-Wolsey is the prototype of the thrifty wheeler-dealer. While Crasy lends money *gratis*, he grants loans on such high interest rates that he could be taken as a usurer. Actually, Catherine Shaw¹³⁹ identifies an example of usury in his behaviour: "Linsey-Wolsey had secured from Crasie a jewel worth sixty pounds to be repaid on the draper's wedding day. In the meantime he has sold the jewel for thirty pounds. Now, because of his financial straits, Crasie is willing to settle for twenty. Linsey-Wolsey's offer is reprehensible and is tantamount to usury, a practice particularly deplored by Brome:"¹⁴⁰

If twenty pounds will pleasure you, upon good security I will procure it you.
A hundred if you please, do you mark, Mr. Crasy? On good security.
Otherwise you must pardon me, Mr. Crasy. I am a poor tradesman, Mr.
Crasy; keep both a linen and a woollen drapers shop, Mr. Crasy, according to
my name, Mr. Crasy, and would be loth to lend my money, Mr. Crasy, to be
laughed at among my neighbours, Mr. Crasy, as you are, Mr. Crasy. And so
fare you well, Mr. Crasy. (I, 2, speech 123)

The comic opposition Crasy – Linsy-Wolsey has significant implications if compared to the one in *The Merchant of Venice* in which the honest eponymous merchant Antonio who lends money without taking interest ("I neither lend nor borrow / By taking nor by giving of excess." I, 3, speeches 58-9)¹⁴¹ is opposed to the cruel Shylock. In a parody of the

¹³⁸ William Epton, *The Structure of Complex Words*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1951, p. 219, 222n.

¹³⁹ Shaw, p. 66.

¹⁴⁰ The satire of usury plays a major part also in *The English Moor* and in *The Demoiselle* (1638).

¹⁴¹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, (ed) John Russel Brown, London: Routledge, "Arden Edition", 1955.

Shakespearean dark comedy, Linsy-Wolsey is a sort of comic usurer victim of love¹⁴² who applies the Jew's logic to goods and people:

She's gone, she's gone: was ever man so cheated? Threescore pounds for a ring; and the ring gone too for which I paid it. A months diet and lodging, besides the charge of physic and attendance. (IV, 4, speech 737)

Actually, the widow's escape is described from the same pragmatic economic perspective used by Shylock when he talks about Jessica's flight:

Why, there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so: and I know not what's spent in the search: why, thou loss upon loss! (III, 1, 76-84)

Laura C. Stevenson suggests that the principal sin of the Jacobean usurer is not greed but ambition so that he is reshaped into the figure of the 'social climber'¹⁴³ who wishes to purchase a higher status with his money: this is true of Linsy-Wolsey, whose ambition is to climb the social ladder, since his beloved widow Tryman claims to marry nobody but a gentleman. Therefore, he asks Toby, Josina's brother, who has been recently bought a place at court, to be taught how to become a perfect courtier:¹⁴⁴

Toby: Nay, I told you; would you but give your mind to it, you would be a gentleman quickly. [...]

L-W: Methinks I love the name of a gentleman a great deal better than I did.

T: But could you find in your heart to lend a gentleman a score of angels, Mr. Wolsey, on his word?

L-W: Uhm...It is not gone so far upon me yet.

T: Oh, but it must though, I know it. A citizen can never be a gentleman till he has lent all, or almost all his money to gentlemen. What a while it was 'ere the rich joiner's son was a gentleman? When I myself was a gentleman first,

¹⁴² In this scene Linsy-Wolsey, after planning to marry Tryman, has just discovered that she has fled with a large sum of money.

¹⁴³ See Laura C. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984, pp. 98-105.

¹⁴⁴ Brome stages a similar episode in *The Sparagus Garden* where the naïve Hoyden from the countryside is taught how to be a gentleman by Moneylacks. This scene is going to be analyzed in chapter III as for the town-versus-country dynamic.

my money did so burn in my pockets, that it cost me all that ever I had, or could borrow, or steal from my mother.

L-W: But Mr. Toby, a man may be a country gentleman, and keep his money, may he not? [...]

T: I'll tell you in a brief character was taught me. Speak nothing that you mean, perform nothing that you promise, pay nothing that you owe, flatter all above you, scorn all beneath you, deprave all in private, praise all in public; keep no truth in your mouth, no faith in your heart; no health in your bones, no friendship in your mind, no modesty in your eyes, no religion in your conscience; but especially, no money in your purse. [...]

L-W: I thank you, Sir, for your courtly and gentlemanlike instructions, and wish you grace to follow them: I have seen too fearful an example lately in my neighbour, Crasy, whose steps I list not trace; nor lend my money to be laugh'd at among my neighbours. Fare you well, Sir. (II, 3, speeches 244-46)

This scene marks once again the contrast between the court and the city: in spite of Toby's attempt to confuse Linsy-Wolsey with a false character, the shrewd Linsy-Wolsey does not fall into his trap but he looks for a compromise between the prevalent court behaviour and his mercantile citizen mentality in order to become a parsimonious gentleman, not following Crasy's ruinous example.

Also Sarpego asks Toby for help in order to attend the court, since his education and manners make him feel worthy of being his grace's tutor: "My *nuper alumnus!* Come, present me to the Grace of Greatness. I am ready; behold I am approach'd according to thy entreats, to approve thy praise, and mine own perfection. Set on: his Grace shall see that we can speak true Latin, and construe Ludovicus Vives:¹⁴⁵ go, set on" (III, 1, speech 498). Sarpego's erudition and learned way of speaking have to compensate for his lack of nobility so that he uses his refined Latin¹⁴⁶ as a weapon to assert himself, confuse, offend and curse his interlocutors. Nevertheless, he often utilizes unnecessary Latin words just to show off: "sent you not a *nuntius*, or a messenger for me, intimating, that it was his Grace instant desire to entertain me as his instructor?;" or "has she receiv'd *aliquid novi*, news from court?;" The more he tries to seem cultivated, the more laughable he is. Much comedy actually springs from his blunders which reveal his superficial knowledge as in the following phrase: "From henceforth *Erit Fluvius Deucalionis*. The world shall flow with

¹⁴⁵ Juan Ludovicus Vives was a sixteenth century Spanish philosopher known for a text book for the study of Latin entitled *Exercitatio Linguae Latinae*.

¹⁴⁶ His Latin is very refined, rich in quotation from Roman authors such as Ovid (*In nova fert Animus, ecce noster ubi esset Amor*), Cicero (*abiit, evasit, erupit*), Virgil (*Nil nisi carmina desunt*) crammed with references to mythology, philosophy, classical history and rhetoric.

dunces; *regnabitque*, and it shall rain *Dogmata Polla Sophon*,¹⁴⁷ dogs and polecats, and so forth.” The two phrases highlight that his skills are not as admirable as he claims, since he translates the words according to the sound so that “regnabit” (he will reign) sounds like rain and the Greek words “dogmata” (thoughts) and “polla” (a lot of) recall dogs and polecats. As a consequence, the connection between rain and dogs (in the old saying it’s raining cats and dogs) is immediate.

2.5

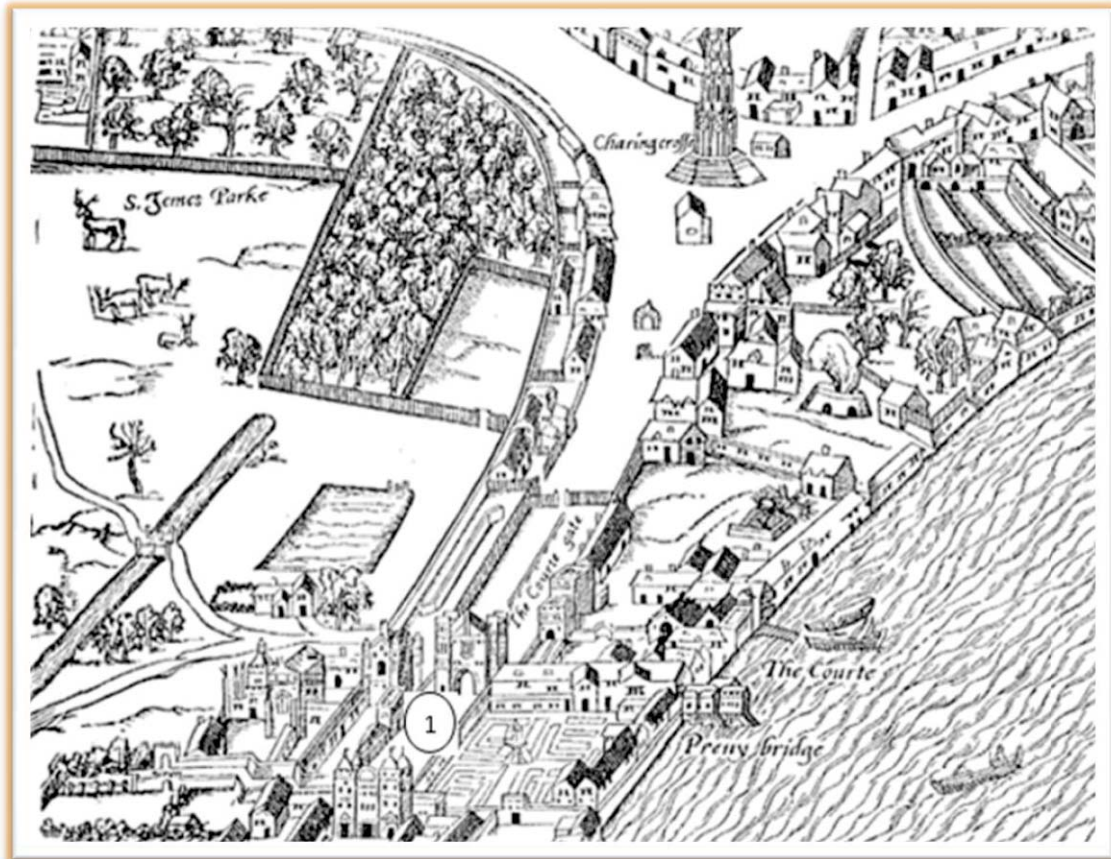
Life at Court

If in the play the citizen Crasy represents honesty and generosity, the characters who belong to the world of the court mark the increasing dominance of the economic motive in every sphere of human life and suggest that the power of money can buy everything: love, sex, friendship and respect. As the courtier Rufflit states in a passage which is reminiscent of *Timon of Athens*,¹⁴⁸ cheating other people in order to gain money is not only legitimate, but also part of the natural and correct order:

All things rob one another: churches poule the people, princes pill the church; minions draw from princes, mistresses suck minions, and the pox undoes mistresses; physicians plagues their patients; orators their clients; courtiers their suitors, and the Devil all. The water robs the earth, earth chokes the water: fire burns air, air still consumes the fires. Since elements themselves do rob each other, and *Phoebe* for her light doth rob her Brother, what ist in man, one man to rob another? (IV, 1, speech 620)

¹⁴⁷ “From now there will Deucalion’s Flood. The world will flow with dunces; He will reign and it will rain, many thoughts of the wise, dogs and polecats, and so forth” (The translation is mine).

¹⁴⁸ See William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, (ed) H. J. Oliver London; New York: Routledge, 1994 (IV, 3, 438ff).



1- Whitehall

The dramatist provides a vivid picture of the courtly world through its inhabitants, staging the contrast between new and old nobility and the different types of courtiers: the bachelor, the married male and the female courtier. Rufflit, the bachelor, exemplifies the perfect courtier:

a thing that but once in three months has money in his purse: a creature made up of promise and protestation: a thing that fouls other men's napkins: touseth other men's sheets, flatters all he fears, contemns all he needs not, serves all that serve him, and undoes all that trust him. (I, 2, speech 114)

According to his own definition, a courtier is an unscrupulous man who uses his superior status to tyrannize others, mainly citizens like Crasy: "Dost ask me money, as I am a gallant of fashion, I do thee courtesy: I beat thee not" (I, 2, speech 114). In particular, Rufflit finds Crasy unworthy of his money and of such an attractive wife: therefore, he tries

to deprive the jeweller of them both by seducing Josina, to “win her, use her, suck her purse, recover my own, gain hers, and laugh at the poor cuckold her husband” (IV, 1, speech 632). Moreover, he also embodies the *cliché* of the fortune hunter who wants to prove himself through winning widow Tryman and lay hands on her wealth:

Ticket: A widow! What is she? Or of whence?

Rufflit: A lusty young wench, they say: a Cornish girl, able to wrestle down stronger chins than any of ours.

Ticket: But how is she purs'd, Jack? Is she strong that way?

Rufflit: Pretty well for a younger brother; worth seven or eight thousand pounds.

Ticket: How man!

Rufflit: You are a married man, and cannot rival me; I would not else be so open to you.

Ticket: I swear I'll help thee all I can. How did'st find her out?

Rufflit: I have intelligence that never fails me, she came to town neither but very lately and lodg'd at Mr. Linsy-Wolsey's. (II, 3, speeches 219-226)

Sir Ticket, the married courtier, shares Rufflit's contemptuous attitude; his arrogance arises from the idea of mediocrity always associated with citizens according to which being a “mere citizen” (V, 1, speech 842) is an affront, an inferior status requiring special laws: “I wonder that there is not a solemn statute made, that no citizen should marry a handsome woman” (V, 1, speech 838). His marital status does not allow him to marry widow Tryman, but it does not prevent him from courting Josina:

Ticket and Rufflit court Josina.

Ticket: By the service I owe you sweet Mistress 'tis unfeigned. My wife desires to see you.

Rufflit: As I can best witness; and fears you enjoy not the liberty of a woman, since your husband's departure. Your brother having promis'd too to conduct you to court.

Toby: It is confess'd, and I will do it.

Ticket: Where the best entertainment a poor Lady's chamber can afford shall expect you.

Josina: I shall embrace it. (III, 1, speeches 335-59)

Through Josina, Brome hints at the negative model of woman at court, the courtesan. Women were often considered as a way of social advancement, both a means to improve their spouses' status and a source of income for the whole family. Even Toby encouraged Crasy to take his wife to court to solve his financial difficulties:

If you come to the court, now my mother and my father have bought me an office there, so you will bring my sister with you, I will make the best show of you that I can. It may chance to set you up again, brother; 'tis many an honest mans fortune, to rise by a good wife. (I, 2, speech 110)

However, Josina would be suitable for this task since she strongly desires to learn how “to do things courtly, to dance courtly” (IV, 1, speech 561), which implicitly carries a double, sexualized meaning¹⁴⁹ and pursues both the courtiers Rufflit and sir Ticket in order to attend the court. Nevertheless, Crasy does not want to exploit her natural attitude for gain but, once again, prefers morality to personal income, promising himself to “keep her flesh chaste, though against her will” (II, 2, speech 202).

In addition to courtesans, the court was also attended by women like Lady Ticket, who gives a stereotyped image of the female courtier, characterized by affected elegance and a superficially hypocritical approach. She provides an example of typical noble foibles such as the popular habit of holding animals, especially exotic ones, in high esteem. Therefore, Pyannet shows a particular interest towards her animals only to win the lady's respect: “And, I pray you Madam, how does your monkey, your parrot, and parakeets? I pray you commend me to 'em, and to all your little ones. Fare you well, sweet creature” (I, 1, 65). Despite using a mannered way of speaking throughout almost the whole play, the lady loses her habitual aristocratic posture during the verbal squabble with Pyannet in IV, 2, which takes the form of a class struggle:¹⁵⁰

Pyannet: Art thou there, daughter of an intelligencer, and strumpet to a bearward?

Lady Ticket: Now Beauty bless me, was not thy mother a notorious tripe-wife, and thy father a profest hare-finder? Gip you flirt.

Pyannet: How now Madame Tiffany! Will none but my cock serve to tread you? Give me my jewels thou harlot. [...]

Lady Ticket: Go to; you know how in private you commended your horse-keeper to me.

Pyannet: Well: and didst not thou in as much privacy counsel me to contemn my husband, and use an Italian trick that thou wouldst teach me? [...]

Lady Ticket: Out you bauble; you trifle; you burden smock'd sweaty sluttery, that couldst love a fellow that wore worsted stockings footed, and fed in cooks shops. (IV, 2, speeches 687, 689)

¹⁴⁹ Howard, 2007, p. 198.

¹⁵⁰ In her production, Kim Durban staged this “most spectacular altercation [...] like a bullfight, with each circling the stage and then pouncing upon her victim” so that the audience was provided with a visual metaphor for the verbal build-up. Durban, p. 17.

The two women's violent behaviour trivialize the space of the court which loses its specific connotation. Following their dialogue, the audience is metaphorically taken away from the court and put in the middle of a noisy marketplace. Pyannet and Lady Ticket quarrel at the same level, sharing a similar register so that it is impossible to distinguish the lady from the citizen: only the admission of their own errors and the recognition of an old close friendship put an end to this heated row, giving back to the location its original identity.

Pyannet: I humbly beseech you sweet Madam, that my earnest and hearty sorrow may procure remission for my inconsiderate and causeless invectives. Let my confession seem satisfactory, and my contrition win indulgency to my forgetful delinquency. I pray you let us kiss and be friends.

Lady Ticket: Alas sweet friend, you and I have been inward a great while, and for us to fall out, and bare one another's secrets... (IV, 2, speech 780)

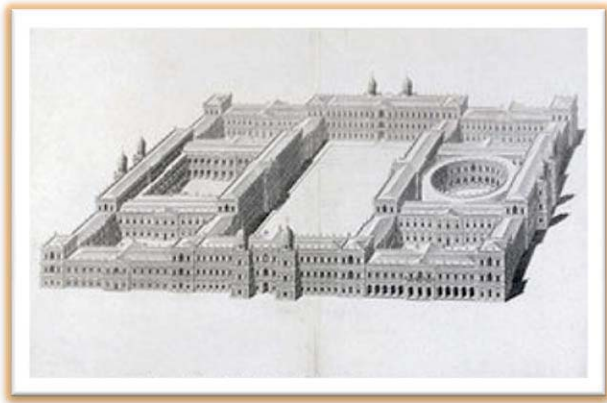
2.6

The Presence Scene:¹⁵¹ an example of spatial interaction

Interestingly, despite being excluded from the Court, Pyannet shows a thorough knowledge of Whitehall,¹⁵² of its etiquette and of the royal ritual.

¹⁵¹ It was the room where a monarch or other great person receives guests, ambassadors, distinguished foreign visitors, or assemblies. "Out of the Great Chamber opens the Presence Chamber, which gives admittance to the private apartment of the sovereign, and out of this again the Privy Chamber. [...] The Presence Chamber and the Privy Chamber were the essential elements of the scheme, and had to be contrived, no matter how humbly the Court was lodged. The Presence Chamber seems to have been open to any one who was entitled to appear at Court", E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1923, p.14.

¹⁵² As for more detailed studies on Whitehall Palace, see: "Whitehall Palace: Buildings," *Survey of London: volume 13: St Margaret, Westminster, part II: Whitehall I*, 1930, pp. 41-115, URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>; Simon Thurley, *Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments, 1240-1698*, New York: Yale, 2000; *The London Encyclopaedia*, (eds) Ben Weinreb, Christopher Hibbert, London: Macmillan, 1983; Simon Thurley, *Whitehall Palace: The Official Illustrated History* (Official Illustrated Histories of the Royal Palaces of London), London: Paperback, 2008; Simon Thurley, *The Lost Palace of Whitehall*, London: Paperback, RIBA Heinz Gallery, 1998; Edgar Sheppard, (1902) *The Old Royal Palace of Whitehall*, London: Paperback, 2009.



Whitehall Palace. A drawing by Inigo Jones (1638)

At that time, Whitehall was the largest royal palace in Europe containing some 2,000 rooms and covering “twenty-three acres compared with Versailles’ seven and a half, the Escorial’s eight and a half, and Hampton Court’s modest six.”¹⁵³

Its topographic description is given by Pyannet, while teaching her husband how to master that alien environment space and how to behave. Before reaching the Presence Chamber, Mr. Sneakup has to pass through a succession of outer rooms since “the protocols of speech in the early modern court were made visible as protocols of space.”¹⁵⁴

Pyannet: Now mark. I will instruct you: when you come at the Court gate, you may neither knock nor piss. Do you mark? You go through the Hall cover’d; through the great Chamber cover’d; through the Presence bare; through the Lobby cover’d; through the Privy Chamber bare; through the Privy Lobby cover’d; to the Prince bare.

Sneakup: I’ll do’t, I warrant you. Let me see. At the Court gate neither knock nor make water. May not a man break wind?

Pyannet: Umh. Yes, but (like the Exchequer payment¹⁵⁵), somewhat abated. (III, 2, speeches 435-7)

John Astington underlines the accuracy in Pyannet’s description, though her instructions outline a fantasticated version of a visit to Whitehall¹⁵⁶ since the place was not accessible to a character like Sneakup in real life, owing to the strict rules and rigid measures of security which protected the monarch. Inside Whitehall there were four sorts of spaces: courts, galleries, large ceremonial chambers, and smaller rooms, each having its own social functions. The rooms “progressed from larger, more public space to smaller, private, and

¹⁵³ Simon Thurley, 1998.

¹⁵⁴ Bruce R. Smith, “The Soundscapes of Early Modern England,” (ed) Mark M. Smith, *Hearing History: A Reader*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004, p. 103.

¹⁵⁵ Steggle takes this reference as a “sly remark about Charles’s budgetary difficulties in the Exchequer in the years after 1628”, Steggle, 2004, p. 29.

¹⁵⁶ John Astington, *English Court Theatre: 1558-1647*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, p. 38

increasingly secure and inaccessible chambers.”¹⁵⁷ The Great Chamber, or Guard Chamber, was the first and largest room; the following chamber “was occupied partly by members of the royal guard, armed, and dressed in a fashion similar to their modern descendants, the Yeoman of the Guard” in order to mark “the boundary of a restricted and privileged area”¹⁵⁸ and beyond this lay the Presence. Finally, the royal private apartments with the Privy Lobby, which was a private passage used as an ante-room, and the Privy Chamber.

In the following sequence, Pyannet pretends to be the King in a sort of rehearsal of Sneakup’s visit to the palace. Like in a play-within-the play, she makes him play his part, the jeweller Crasy, with particular attention to words, movements and gestures. This enables Brome to create a parody of the increasing codification and ritualisation of the court etiquette. Actually the King “tried to make the court a microcosm of the kingdoms to be – and ordered and virtuous commonwealth under his paternal rule.”¹⁵⁹ A fine example of this strict code of behaviour is the reference to the use of triple bowing at mealtimes introduced by Charles I (“my three legs” in the text).

Pyannet: Suppose me the Prince. Come in, and present yourself. Here sits the Prince. There enters the jeweller. Make your honours. Let me see you do it handsomely.

Sneakup: Yes, now I come in, make my three legs

Pyannet: Kneel.

Sneakup: Yes, and say ...

Pyannet: What?

Sneakup: Nay, that I know not.

Pyannet: [As CRASY]. An’t please your Grace, I have certain jewels to present to your liking.

Sneakup: [As CRASY]. An’t please your Grace, I have certain jewels to present to your liking.

Pyannet:[As the Prince]. Is this Crasy, that had wont to serve me with jewels? [As Holywater]. It is that honest man, so please your Highness. [As PYANNET] (That’s for Master Holywater, the by-flatterer, to speak.) [As the Prince]. You are a cuckoldly knave, sirrah, and have often abused me with false and deceitful stones.

Sneakup: [As CRASY]. My stones are right,¹⁶⁰ so please your Excellence. (III, speeches 443-452)

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Michael B. Young, *Charles I*, London: Macmillan, 1997, p. 81.

¹⁶⁰ According to Elizabeth Schafer the expression “my stones are right” can have two meanings: “the jewels that I am selling are good ones” and “my testicles are functioning, I am able to father children”, thus increasing the sexual overtones of the scenes at court. Schafer, 2010, n452.



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677), *Palatium Regis prope Londinium, vulgo Whitehall*. (Mid seventeenth century)

It is difficult for a modern audience to realize how audacious staging the Presence Chamber¹⁶¹ was as well as letting a woman¹⁶² play the part of the King. This is far more subversive than Falstaff's parody of Henry IV in *1 Henry IV* in the common room of the Boar's Head Tavern (II, 4) because more than anyone else Brome gets close to put the king on stage in the Presence Chamber where the "throne represented the majesty of the monarch even in his absence."¹⁶³ Moreover, as Catherine Wilkinson remarks, "a woman who pretends to be the monarch encourages comparisons with the king that suggest something about his masculinity, particularly as he is being portrayed by a shrewish woman whose own gender identity is an issue of the play. There are other references made in the play that could be read as being derogatory about Charles and his appearance."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Actually, in a production of *The City Wit* at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2007, anything to do with the Presence was cut "as the jokes here were considered something a contemporary student audience would not be able to access." Schafer, 2010, introduction, p. 52. By contrast, in the Australian version it was turned into "a club indicated by the silken ropes needed to control a crowd. An orange sculpture, vaguely phallic in shape, was wheeled from place to place, used by various characters to hide behind, and in the denouement, hid Crasy himself behind a secret door." Durban, p. 13.

¹⁶² It's worth considering that in the production of *The City Wit* at Royal Holloway, Pyannet was dressed as Margaret Thatcher. Moreover, Michael Billington (*Guardian* 20 February 1992), reviewing the 1991 RADA performance of the play directed by Gordon McDougall, claimed that "*The City Wit* was treated as the *Serious Money* of its day," making a comparison with Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money. A City Comedy* (1987), a play about the stock market in England in the 1980s while Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister.

¹⁶³ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1996, p. 213

¹⁶⁴ Wilkinson, 2004, introduction.

The scene in the Presence Chamber is particularly significant since the way each character interacts with the space clearly reflects his social status. Six of the characters are involved in this scene, Sarpego, Crasy, Mr. Sneakup, Toby, Rufflit and Sir Ticket, who are part of a complex dynamic of interaction. The scene is opened and closed by Sarpego who believes he has been invited to court by his pupil Toby. Only by saying “this is the Presence,” he creates the atmosphere of the court so that the audience has the impression to be inside the Chamber with him.

This is the Presence. I am much amaz'd, or stupefied, that Mr. Tobias Sneakup, my *quondam* pupil, attends not my conduct! Ha! So instant was his Grace, his importunity to enjoy me, that although I purchased the loan of clothes, yet I had not vacation, nor indeed variety to shift my shirt. (III, 4, speech 481)

His interaction with the place involves also the appropriate apparel: Sarpego enters in gorgeous clothes¹⁶⁵ in order to try to compensate for the lack of nobility with clothing and language: “to appear the more perfect courtier at the first dash, I will say that though my outside were glorious, yet of purpose I left my inside lousy” (III, 4, speech 483). In fact, he is wearing a dirty undershirt suggesting that there is something dirty at the core of the court and that appearance can be deceptive.

Once he gets in, he immediately recognizes Mr. Sneakup who has to personate Crasy and is dressed like a citizen. Even before entering the palace, he feels awkward, out of place, jeopardizing a profitable interaction with a place he is frightened of. After a while, Crasy, in disguise as a royal messenger, comes in pretending to be looking for Mr. Crasy and his jewels. The stage direction “*Crasy at the hangings*” (“hangings” is “an infrequently used alternative for the curtain or arras that hung just in front of the tiring house wall”¹⁶⁶) actually suggests Crasy’s attempt to conceal himself and the possibility to spy on other people without being noticed. He dominates the space since he knows where he can hide himself, whereas all his fellow townsmen are venturing into an unknown place.

¹⁶⁵ For Durban “Enter Sarpego in gorgeous apparel” was “a delicious invitation to a costume designer.” She collaborated with designer John Bennett who made richly allusive costume like Pyannet’s who was dressed as a Versace diva. K. Durban, p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, p. 110.

As a consequence, when the stage direction reads “*Enter Crasy in haste,*” the character has been on stage for a long time, though unnoticed by the other characters. This creates a comic situation since the audience is aware that the real jeweller is on stage, though in disguise.

With his convincing disguise as a court messenger, Crasy is able to cheat Sneakup so to be given the jewels (“You know me; give me the jewels. [...] But betwixt us both we’ll make a shift to cheat him. Stay you here. I will return instantly,” III, 4, speech 403) and Sarpego at the same time: “O Mr. Sarpego! Your pupil will come and conduct you presently” (III, 4, speech 496). Obviously, Crasy avoids meeting both the courtiers and Toby, who stay in their own territory and have a more detailed knowledge of the place.

As soon as the courtiers arrive, the fraud against Sneakup and Sarpego is unveiled, and they both have to leave the chamber. By virtue of his status, Mr. Sneakup finds refuge at court in Lady Ticket’s chamber in order to elude his wife’s anger after the loss of the jewels:

Toby: Father, heaven pardon me: for sure I have a great desire to call you cockscomb. I sent no man; nor is there any so styled as Holywater about the Court. [...]

Sneakup: Son, I am not so very a fool, but I perceive I am made a stark ass. Oh son, thy father is cozen’d; and thy mother will beat me indeed, unless your charity conceal me in the Court here, till her fury be over.

Ticket: He shall stay at my wife’s chamber. (III, 4, speeches 513-518)

Instead, when Sarpego realizes that he has not been invited, he is in a sense driven out of the Presence Chamber since his own presence is now unwarranted: “*Sic transit gloria mundi.* The learned is cony-caught; and the lover of Helicon is laugh’d at. The last six-pence of my fortune is spent; and I will go cry in private” (III, 4, speech 523). He works as a sort of *trait d’union* between the courtly world and the city and, possibly, his living in-between enables him to attend both but not to be wholly part of either.

2.7

The geography of the play

Beside the spatial opposition between court and city, space is given prominence through the numerous references to real places known or habitually frequented by the

characters. Elizabeth Schafer argues that “Brome may throw in a few real place names but he does not worry about creating much of a sense of London. [...] Apart from Josina’s speech in 1.1 [CW 1.1.speech 91], which is working to characterize Josina rather than evoke the city, there are only a couple of standard references to Bridewell, Clerkenwell etc. and nothing like the sense of a location that permeates, for example, *The Weeding of Covent Garden*.”¹⁶⁷

On the contrary, like Darryl Grantley, I am inclined to believe that in the play “the City is strongly realized in allusions”¹⁶⁸ since they cover many different areas of the city. All the hints at places, besides those mentioned by Josina in Act I, 1, show the different functions of space in relation to the identity of the single character within the social system or of a group. I identified three principal functions: firstly, a main function in which the topography of the place concurs to reflect the personality of the character; secondly, an evocative one when space conveys a further meaning independently from the geographical position of the place; finally, when space shapes a new identity.

The first function tends to emphasize the relationship between identity and the place within the milieu as far as its position, history and social use are concerned. Josina’s references to space both evoke a female microcosm, and allude to some traits of her personality. As soon as Crasy leaves, Josina starts a quest for a lover and sends her maid Bridget to contact some friends of hers in places in the Old City, the commercial part of London:

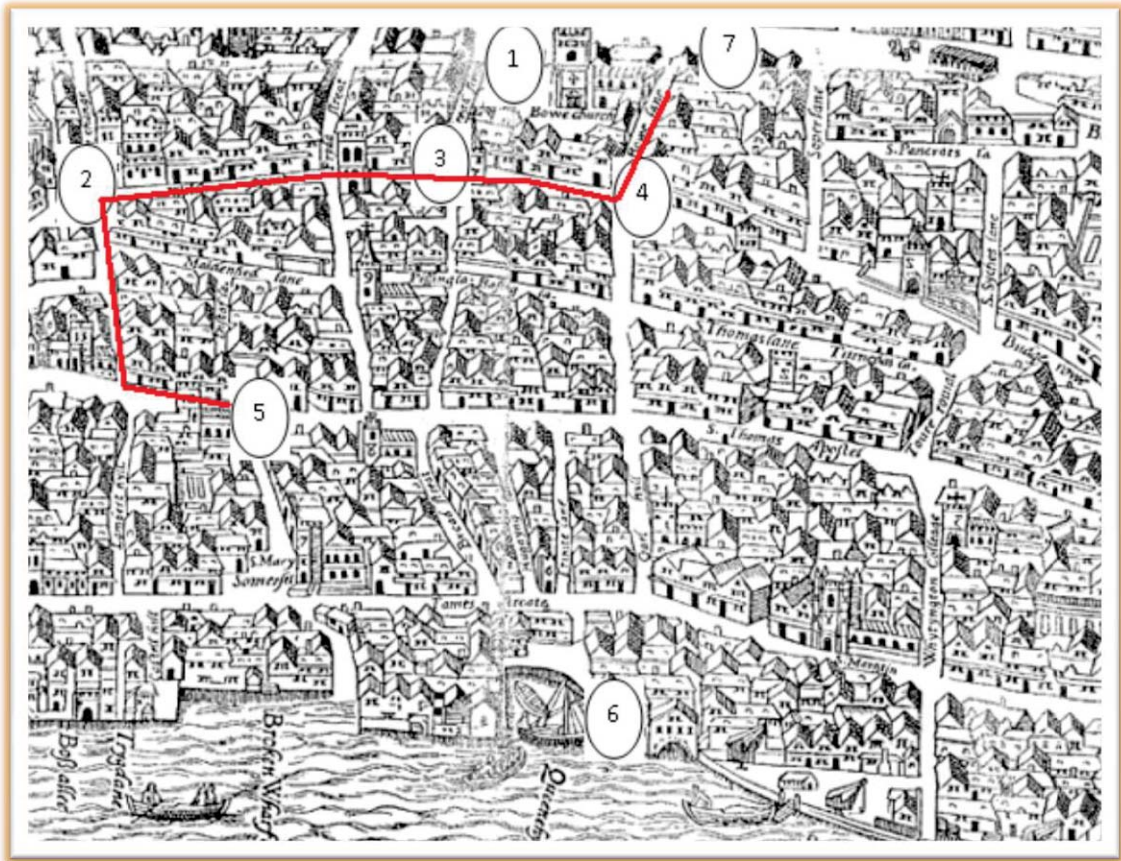
Go your ways to Mistress Parmisan, the cheesemongers wife in *Old Fishstreet*, and commend me to her; and entreat her to pray Mistress Collifloore the herb-woman in the *Old Change*, that she will desire Mistress Piccadell in *Bow-lane* in any hand to beseech the good old dry nurse mother.¹⁶⁹ (I, 1, speech 91)¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Schafer, 2010, introduction, n11165.

¹⁶⁸ Darryl Grantley, *London in Early Modern Drama: Representing the Built Environment*, Basingstoke and London: Palgrave, 2008, pp. 160-1.

¹⁶⁹ The italics are mine.

¹⁷⁰ In red the itinerary suggested by Josina



- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1- St. Mary le Bow | 2- Old Change | 3- Bread Street | 4- Bow Lane |
| 5- Old Fish Street | 6- Queenhithe (port) | 7- Cheapside | |

Her allusions to the citizen space demonstrate her membership to the middle class, and seem to prove the existence of a widespread trade, a sort of sub-economy among women, whose names refer to their professions, like Mistress Parmisan or Mistress Collifloore. This may indicate the changing place of women of this class, like widows of merchants who reach new positions of economic power or workers in their husbands' shops who are, *de facto*, full partners in the family business, though not holding 'official' positions.

The names of the places also hint at the issues traditionally associated with women, such as shopping, fashion and sex. Josina looks for a herb-woman at the Old Change,¹⁷¹ where drapers' shops were located during Brome's time. Then, her quest stops at Bow

¹⁷¹ Old Change, also known as the Old Exchange after 1566, when the new Royal Exchange was opened, was a street in London running south from the west end of Cheapside to Knighttrider Street. It was so called since the King's Exchange for bullion and for the changing of foreign coins. It occurs also in Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, Act III, scene 3. Hammonds says: "there is a wench keeps shopping in the old change."

Lane¹⁷² which provides access from the port of Queenhithe to the enormous market of Cheapside. Being a popular shopping street, the name of the woman, mistress Piccadell, appears to be strictly connected to the idea of trade, as a piccadill was a decorative edging of cut work or vandyking, especially on a collar, sleeve, or ruff (OED, n. 1). Cheapside,¹⁷³ the market *par excellence*, is later evoked ironically as the place where Linsy-Wolsey is said to be going shopping to buy some fabric for the widow: “among the mercers so troubled, as if all the satin in Cheapside were not enough” (III, 3, speech 460).

The most relevant reference is to Old Fishstreet,¹⁷⁴ called after a fish market operating since the Middle Ages. Its name is an example of the London habit of naming streets after craftsmen or the produce that used to be sold there. The same is for streets like Honey Lane, Bread Street, Leather Lane, Beer Lane, Shoe Lane or Butcher Row. What is relevant is that Josina’s search for a lover starts in a place with strong sexual implications seeing the connections between fishmongers and prostitution, as in *Hamlet* (“Excellent well. You are a fishmonger” II, 2, 174).¹⁷⁵ Her reference thus could imply a free moral conduct and the habit of attending this kind of place. A similar conjecture is for Crasy:

Well Dol, that thou saist is thy name though I had forgotten thee, I protest.
About London-wall was it (saist thou?). Well, I cannot but highly commend
thy wisdom in this, that so well hast mended thy election. (III, 3, speech 456)

¹⁷² Bow Lane runs north-south between Cheapside and Old Fish Street in the ward of Cordwainer Street. The name is due to the church of St. Mary-le-Bow which was built on the south-west corner of Bow Lane and Cheapside and originally was St. Mary de Arcubus, then St. Mary-le-Bow by about 1270. This is the description of Bow Lane given by the 16th century historian John Stow: “[T]his street beginneth by West Cheape, and Saint Marie Bow church is the head thereof on the west side, and it runneth downe south through that part which of later time was called Hosier Lane, now Bow Lane, and then by the west end of Aldmary Chrch, to the new builded houses, in place of Ormond house, and so to Garlicke hill, or hith, to Saint Iames Church. The vpper part of this street towards Cheape was called Hosiar Lane of hosiars dwelling there in place of Shoomakers: but now those hosiers being worne out by men of other trades (as the Hosiers had worne out the Shoomakers) the same is called Bow lane of Bow Church. The church was the first built on arches of stone, therefore it was called of Saint Mary de Arcubus, or le Bow.” John Stow, (1598) *A Survey of London* (2vls), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908, Vol I, p. 81.

¹⁷³ In Medieval times it was known as ‘Westcheap,’ as the opposite to Eastcheap. It was open at dawn in winter and at six o’clock in summer and for half an hour before the close there was the ringing of a bell to warn the shoppers. Since the Tudor Period, gradually movable stalls were replaced by permanent shops with houses above them, inhabited by rich merchants. In the same area, there were the halls of the city livery companies, developed from the primitive guilds such as Goldsmiths, Saddlers, Grocers, Haberdashers.

¹⁷³ “At the upper end of new fishstreete, is a lane turning towards S. Michael lane, and is called Crooked Lane, of the croked windings thereof,” vol. I, p. 216.

¹⁷⁴ Walter Thornbury, “Fishmongers’ Hall and Fish Street Hill, *Old and New London: Volume 2*, 1878, pp. 1-8. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45070>

¹⁷⁵ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, (eds) Richard Andrews and Rex Gibson, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2005.

When Tryman declares to have met Crasy before at the London Wall,¹⁷⁶ she alludes to an illicit sexual relationship with Crasy. The jeweller admits that he must have had sex with Tryman but he does not remember anything about it. This can imply that he used to have sex with prostitutes and that he had too numerous sexual partners to remember all in detail. When the audience realizes that Tryman actually is Jeremy in disguise, this episode becomes much funnier in retrospect. Place reflects the psychological identity of a character also in the case of Crack, Jeremy's brother: most of the references connected to Crack hint at crime or at lower class places. Firstly, Crack is introduced as "one of the true blue boys of the hospital" (III, 1, speech 391). In fact, blue was a colour commonly used for servants, tradesmen and boys attending charity school, in this context, probably the Charterhouse school near Clerkenwell, where Tryman claims to be from. Secondly, Crack is threatened to



The Prospect of Bridewell, from John Strype's *An Accurate Edition of Stow's Survey of London*, 1720.

be sent to Bridewell,¹⁷⁷ and every time the prison is mentioned it is always in regard to him. Despite being his most frightening fear, he has never been there, whereas the widow seems to have a special connection with the well-known prison for prostitutes:

"and was never half a day journey from Bridewell in her life" (II, 2, speech 217). Interestingly, the name Bridewell originally refers to Saint Bridget (Bride is a form of Bridget) and the well near there, as if Crack's obsession for that place were personified by

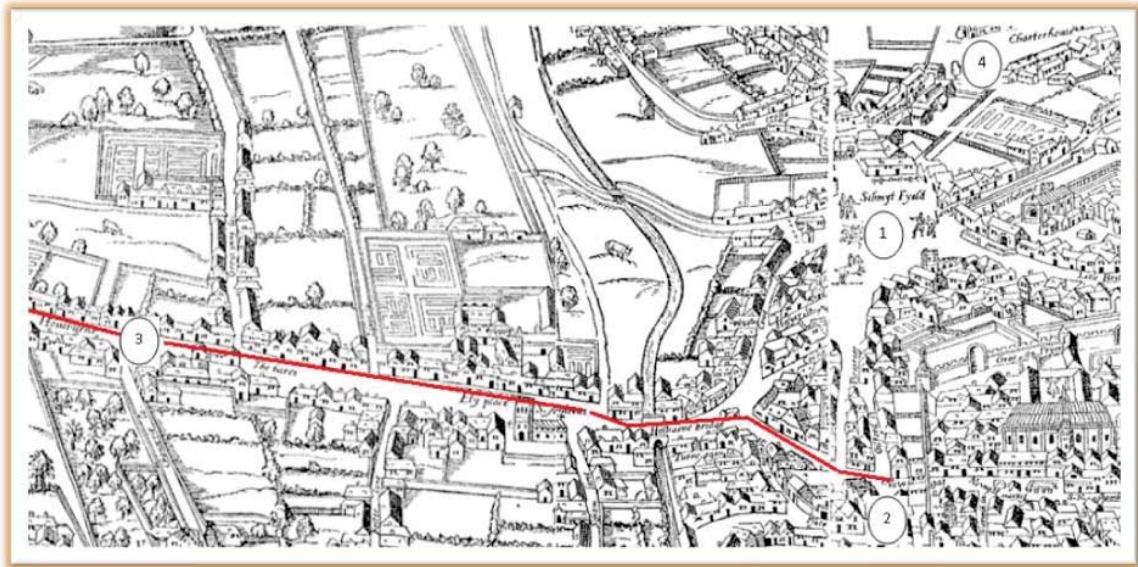
¹⁷⁶ This was once London's main rubbish disposal site and was notorious for its appalling odour; its name, according to the 16th century historian John Stow, was derived "from that in old time, when the same lay open, much filth (conveyed forth of the City) especially dead dogges were there laid or cast." The moat was finally covered over and filled in at the end of the 16th century, becoming the present street.

¹⁷⁷ Bridewell was situated between St. Paul's and The Temple and once it was a Norman fortified palace; the kings have been lodged as well as the court till Henry IX there. It was rebuilt in 1522 by Henry VIII as a beautiful house purposely for the entertainment and the accommodation of the Emperor Charles V when he came to London. In 1553 it was given by Edward VI to be a workhouse for the poor and idle people of the city and wanted it to be called the king's hospital or house of correction. Then it became a prison for vagabonds and prostitutes.

his love Bridget, Josina's chambermaid. Later, his preoccupation with prisons reemerges while talking to Crasy:

Crasy: Thou art a brave lad, and in the high way of preferment.

Crack: Not the high Holborn way, I hope Sir. (III, 1, speeches 397-398)



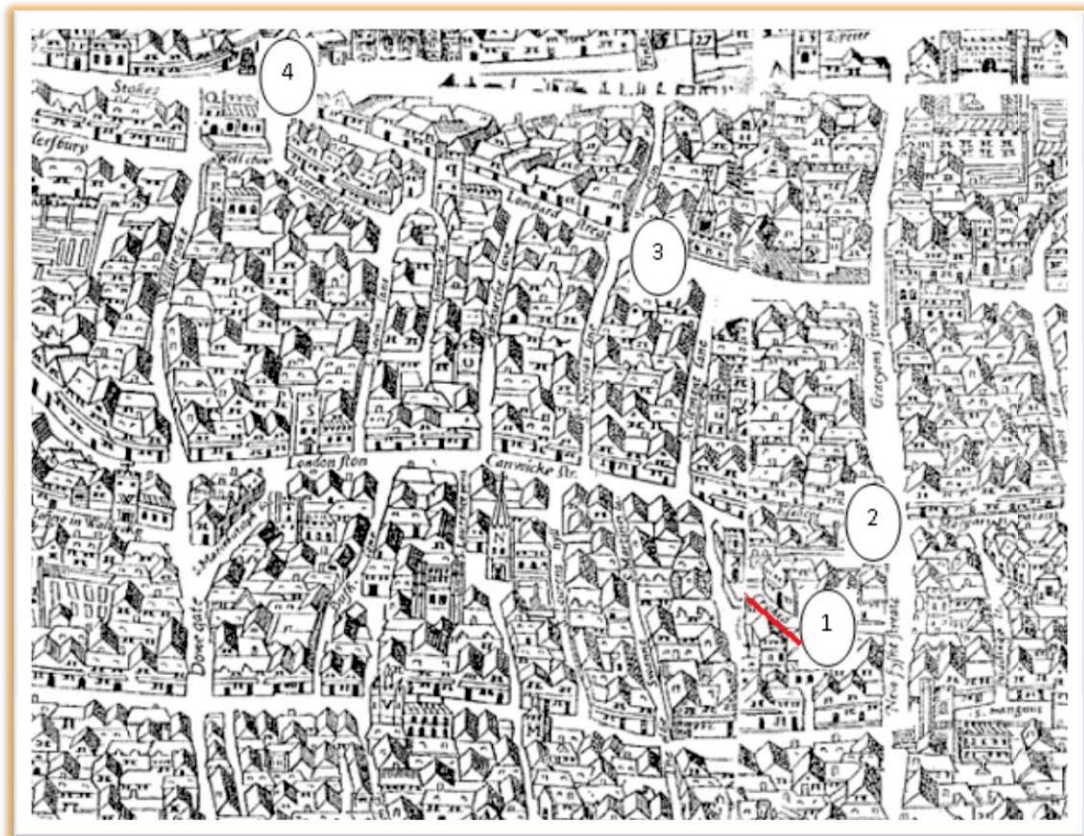
1- Smithfield 2- Newgate 3- Holborn 4- Charterhouse

His sense of guilt makes him misinterpret Crasy's praise so that the only possible high way for him is Holborn Way, the road prisoners used to take from Newgate to their execution at Tyburn tree.

Another function of place reference is evocative, when the citation conveys a further meaning independently from use and geographic collocation of the place. Before the wedding between Tryman and Toby, Crack sings an hymeneal song much to the shock of all those present:

Crack: [sings] Was wont to be still the old song /At high nuptial feasts
Where the merry merry guests /With joy and good wishes did throng:
But to this new wedding new notes do I bring, /To rail at thee Hymen,
while sadly I sing. / Fie o Hymen, fie o Hymen, fie o Hymen,
What hands, and what hearts dost thou knit?/ A widow that's poor,
And a very very whore, / To an heir that wants nothing but wit.
Yet thus far, O Hymen, thy answer is made, When his means are spent,
they may live by her trade. (V, 1, speech 914)

The song is justified by Linsy Wolsey as “a song [...] made by a couple that were lately married in Crooked Lane” (V, 1, speech 916). The reference to this existing place near Eastcheap on the one hand reinforces the suitability of this song for such an occasion, but on the other it conveys a double meaning as ‘crooked’ evokes dishonesty and tricks so to cast a shadow on their marriage.



1- Crooked Lane¹⁷⁸ 2- Eastcheap 3- Lombard Street 4- Royal Exchange

Finally, space can be used by the characters to reshape a personality, like Tryman, who builds up a new identity and a past life through the references to real places and their cultural elements. The character seems to have a multiple identity since Jeremy plays the part of the prostitute Tryman disguised as a wealthy young widow. As a widow, she becomes immediately the target of some fortune hunters, a financial and sexual prey,

¹⁷⁸ The name of the location in the map is underlined in red.

hunted for her money.¹⁷⁹ Only Crasy knows that she is actually a prostitute since they are in league:

Tryman: What think you of the sick widow? Has she done her part hitherto?

Crasy: Beyond my expectation! Better than I for a doctor.

Tryman: You are right. And I am even the same for a widow as you for a doctor. Do not I know you? Yes good Mr. Crasy. I dare trust you, because you must trust me. Therefore know that I, the rich widow, am no better than a lady that must live by what I bear about me. The vulgar translation you know, but let them speak their pleasure, I have no lands, and since I am born, must be kept, I may make the best of my own, and if one member maintain the whole body what's that to anyone? (III, 1, speeches 385-7)



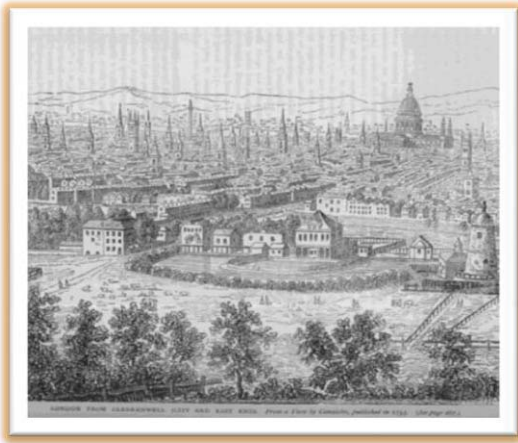
1- Clerkenwell

2- Charterhouse

Crack says that Tryman the prostitute is from Clerkenwell, a northern district of London, home of the Charterhouse where Brome spent his last years. The place reifies the two opposite aspects of the character: the respectable image of the widow, represented by the fashionable houses, and the dishonorable one of the prostitute, by the brothels and the

¹⁷⁹ As for the *cliché* of the haunted widow, see Ira Clark, “The widow hunt on the Tudor-Stuart stage”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 41:2, Spring 2001, pp. 399-416.

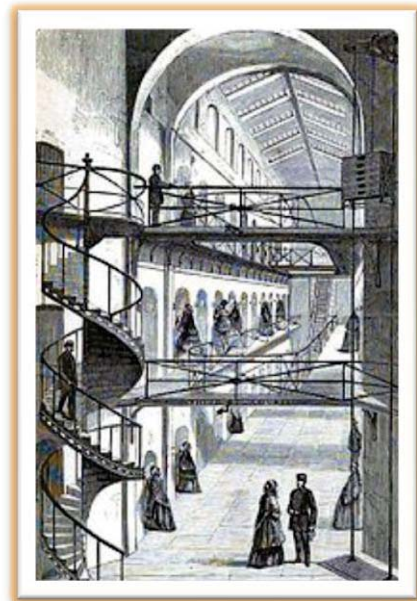
prisons. Clerkenwell, which took its name from the Clerks' Well in Farringdon Lane, was known as an elegant residential area.



In 1620 Clerkenwell had been a fashionable country village, despite the smell of the brewery and the noise of the forge in St. John Street. Aristocrats and rich City magnates, who travelled by coach to their counting-houses each day, both lived there in pleasant harmony.

As the century progressed, [...] Clerkenwell's aristocratic residents, including at one time the Earls of Essex, Carlisle and Ailesbury, abandoned its now displeasing atmosphere for more attractive places to the west. Also, there was a feeling amongst the well-born that it was somehow degrading to live too close to tradesmen, however rich.¹⁸⁰

Nevertheless, the area had also a well established reputation for burglary and was a notorious centre of prostitution; it was the site of Clerkenwell Bridewell, a prison built in 1616 as an overflow for Bridewell; later in the century, a new prison was built there to relieve Newgate.¹⁸¹ Tryman pretends to be an ill rich Cornish widow and manages to convince the courtiers and the citizens to a greater extent during the reading of her will:



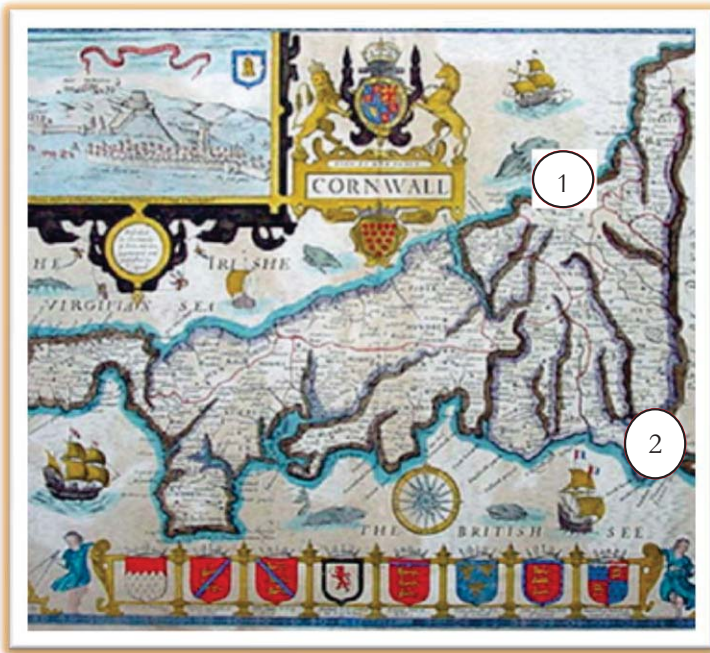
Interior of Clerkenwell Bridewell

¹⁸⁰ Christopher Hibbert, *London: The Biography of a City*, London: Penguin Books, 1969, p. 61.

¹⁸¹ For further details, see *The London Encyclopaedia*, (eds) Ben Weinreb, Christopher Hibbert, London: Macmillan, 1983.

I, Jane Tryman of Knockers Hole, in the County of Cornwall, widow, sick in body, but whole in mind, and of perfect memory, do make my last will and testament, in manner and form following. (III, 1, speech 368)

Knockers Hole¹⁸² is a real place, at St. Germans, near Plymouth in Cornwall, but, beside the geographical relevance, the name provides also a joke: among the possible meanings of knockers¹⁸³ there is “person of striking appearance” (OED 1.c), whereas a common usage of hole was ‘orifice,’ often in the vulgar sense of genital organs. Combining the genitive form of the former and orifice, the joke is quite evident. Tryman thus comes from a place which means orifice of an attractive person. All the details about the legacies to her assumed family members concur to give consistency to her characters since the names of her heirs are coherent with her Cornish origin: many Cornish surnames and names of places have the prefixes ‘tre-,’ ‘pol-’ or ‘pen-,’¹⁸⁴ as the old saying quoted by Tilley (T479) testifies: “By Tre, Pol and Pen you shall ye know all Cornishmen.”



‘Tis forty shillings. Item to my nephew, Sir Marmaduke Trevaughan of St. Miniver,¹⁸⁵ one thousand pounds in gold. Item to my nephew Mr. Francis Trepton, one thousand pounds in gold. Item to my kinsman, Sir Stephen Leggleden, I do forgive two thousand pounds, for which his lands are mortgaged to me. [...] Item to my niece Barbara Tredrite five hundred pounds; my second basin and ewer, a dozen of silver dishes, and four dozen of silver spoons. (III, 1, speeches 375, 378)

¹⁸² The location is marked by n. 2 in the map.

¹⁸³ There is also a connection to Cornish mythology: there is a widespread tradition of mine spirits, called Knockers in Cornwall. They inhabited the deepest parts of the mine, and could sometimes be heard knocking and working their own lodes in the darkness. The Knockers generally kept to their own company and were thought to be benevolent, helping the tin miners by knocking to indicate where a rich batch of ore could be found and showing themselves only to those that they favoured. Strange tricks were often played on those who offended them.

¹⁸⁴ They have a deep geographical importance since in Cornish ‘tre’ means settlement, ‘pol’ is a lake or well, and ‘pen’ is a hill.

¹⁸⁵ St. Miniver is marked by n. 1 in the map.

Actually, one of Tryman's nephews is called Sir Marmaduke Trevaughan of St. Miniver (a coastal town in north Cornwall); another one is Master Francis Trepton; the niece is Barbara Tredrite. According to Schafer, tread could also suggest a joke as the word is used for the copulation of birds (OED, v.8. a, b). Later, the same pun recurs in Pyannet's words: "How now Madame Tiffany! Will none but my cock serve to tread you? Give me my jewels thou harlot" (IV, 2, speech 672). Therefore, the name combines the idea of the character's Cornish origin and a sexual connotation which is suitable for Tryman as a prostitute.

2.8

Refashioning and disguising identity

Brome addresses the issue of mistaken identity through the comic device of cross-dressing and disguise: the former implies wearing specific items of clothing belonging to the opposite sex, like Jeremy, a man in women's clothing; the latter, wearing different clothes as a disguise to conceal one's own identity, as in Crasy's case, who can roleplay with great ability.

While cross-dressing tangibly threatens the breakdown of the social hierarchy by bringing into question the traditional gender roles, the disguise challenges the stability and immutability of the social ladder, since the jeweller's convincing disguises enable him to change his place within society, showing how class distinctions can be fragile when rules of apparel are so decisive.¹⁸⁶ It is worth considering how the playwright continually implicates his audience in the awareness of the characters' real identity. The audience is aware of Crasy's multiple identities, but knows Tryman only as a prostitute masquerading as a rich widow, even if the majority must have known all along that Tryman was actually a man. Jeremy's disguise as Tryman in a sense builds up a new system of values and undermines the bases of the society by modifying women's subordinate role within the hierarchy. The ideology of male predominance seems to collapse, since the apprentice is able to outwit his 'enemies,' male citizens and courtiers (in a superior social position than his) only as a

¹⁸⁶ "It is well known that the state used to regulate dress in early modern England, especially within the citizen milieu in order to keep people in their social places to which they were born." See Wilfred Hooper, "The Tudor Sumptuary Laws" in *English Historical Review* XXX, 1915, pp. 433-449.

woman. Furthermore, this disguise is doubly confusing, since Mistress Tryman is actually a prostitute masquerading as a respectable Cornish widow.

The climax of identity in confusion is reached in Act V when all the characters, gathered at Crasy's house to celebrate Tryman and Toby's wedding, take part in the masque and Tryman (who is a prostitute masquerading as a widow) is asked to play the role of the whore Lady Luxury:

Tryman: I pray you what is Lady Luxury? A woman regenerative?

Toby: A whore, wife.

Sarpego: In sincerity, not much better than a courtesan: a kind of open creature.

Tryman: And do you think me fit to represent an open creature? Saving your modesties, a whore. Can I play the strumpet, think ye?

Josina: Trust me, Sister, as long as it is done in private, in ones own house, and for some few selected gentlemen's pleasure; methinks the part is not altogether the displeasing'st. (V, 1, speeches 885-9)

Apart from the widow, who turns out to be a man, none of the women in the play stand out as a positive example and Tryman's too credible performance of the strumpet leads to the conclusion that women are all whores: "it can be no disgrace to figure out the part: for she that cannot play the strumpet, if she would, can claim no great honour to be chaste" (V, 1, speech 891). Jeremy's disguise as a prostitute has multiple aims: on the one hand, to get rich and humiliate courtiers and citizens (managing to make Toby marry a whore); on the other, to show the dangers of women's excessive independence by giving Pyannet, the woman 'who wears the breeches' metaphorically, a moral teaching about the respect of gender hierarchy:

Tryman: I will, and freely do; only the condition I would have made is this, that if you intend longer to be master of your husband, now that you have seen how well it became me, you will henceforward do as I do ...look you, wear breeches. (V, 1, speech 955)

Women like Pyannet, who were guilty of female dominance, were disciplined at that time through rituals such as charivaris or skimmingtons, or rough ridings.¹⁸⁷ "Similarly," Jean

¹⁸⁷ See David Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England," in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, (eds) Antony Fletcher and John Stevenson, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985; Barbara Babcock (ed), *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, Ithaka, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1978.

Howard reports, “women who talked too much, who were ‘scold,’ were put upon a cucking stool and dunked in water to stop the incontinence of the mouth.”¹⁸⁸ Mr. Sneakup is a victim of the mannish woman Pyannet and of her “old disease, the Tongue-ague, whose fit is now got up to such a height the Devil cannot lay it” (I, 1, speech 32). Nevertheless, the inversion of the gender hierarchy is also due to Sneakup’s inability to dominate within his family unit: his verbal contribution is reduced to thirty-two short lines, since he is not allowed to talk in front of other people. When he dares to say “good Madam” to Lady Ticket, he is violently reproached by her (“Uds so! There’s a trick! You must talk, must you? And your wife in presence must you? As if I could not have said good Madam. Good Madam! Do you see how it becomes you?,” I, 1, speech 57) and the same occurs in III, 2:

Sneakup: Indeed, and’t shall please your Worship, it is...
 Pyannet: It is! What is it? You will be speaking, will you? And your wife in presence, will you? You show your bringing up. (III, 2, speeches 411-412)

At the end, although Pyannet asks for mercy, Sneakup fails once again in asserting his pre-eminence within his own family since he is not able to express his own feelings:

Pyannet: And for the cure that he has wrought on me,
 I will applaud his wit, and bless the light
 It gave me to discover my foul error:
 Which by his demonstration show’d so monstrous,
 That I must loath myself, till I be purg’d.
 Sir, by your fair forgiveness, which I kneel for ... [kneels]
 Sneakup: “Heaven make me thankful: wife I have no words to show how I
 rejoice: rise, let me kiss thee...”. (V, 1, speech 905)

The other form of cross-dressing is represented by Crasy’s disguises. Owing to his competence in different fields such as trade, law, religion, medicine, literature and dancing, and to his knowledge of social conventions and codes, he is able to refashion his self so to be adaptable to any situation. In all his disguises, Crasy can shift according to the interlocutors, wearing the appropriate clothing and giving the characters he is playing a convincingly suitable psychology, manner and way of walking. Brome must have learnt Jonson’s lesson in this field. In *The Alchemist*, already mentioned as for its connections with the play, “Face, Subtle and Dol change roles and identities with a wonderfully slick

¹⁸⁸ Howard, 1988, p. 426.

precision.”¹⁸⁹ Actually Face, who shares the name with Crasy’s servant Jeremy, has a particular talent for acting: “Each assumption of the role, each transformation is total, involving not only change of costume and perhaps make up or wig but significantly too convincing change of voice and idiom.”¹⁹⁰ The example of Brainworm in *Every Man in his Humour* has been very instructive for Brome as well. When Old Knowell finds out that his servant Brainworm has gone through different disguises throughout the play, he comments:

Knowell: Is it possible! or that thou should’st disguise thy language so as I should not know thee?

Brainworm: O, Sir, this has been the day of my *metamorphosis!* It is not that shape alone that I have run through to day. (V, 1, 147-150)¹⁹¹

Moreover, Brainworm’s first disguise in the play is a bogus soldier, like Crasy who takes revenge on Sarpego as a lame ex-soldier: at first he flatters him by calling him “Belov’d of Phoebus, Minion of the Muses, dear Water Bailiff of Helicon” and then ridicules the pedant with epithets such as “fragrant-phrased master” or “Maecenas,” while obliging him to give over all his money at the same time:

Crasy: Now, dear Mecaenas, let me implore a purse to enclose these monies in... nay if you impart not with a cheerful forehead, Sir.

Flourishes sword again.

Sarpego: *Vae misero mihi!* Sweet purse adieu. *Iterum iterumque vale.* (II, 1, speeches 154-5)

In the jeweller’s second disguise there is an evident improvement as he creates an identity more fully articulated with a proper name and a past life. Moreover, the higher number of people he sets out to deceive increases the level of difficulty. He introduces himself as Doctor Pulse-Feel: “a poor doctor of physic, that wears three-pile velvet in his cap; has paid a quarters rent of his house afore-hand; and, as meanly as he stands here, was made doctor beyond the seas. I vow – as I am right worshipful – the taking of my degree

¹⁸⁹ Richard A. Cave, *Ben Jonson*, London: Macmillan, 1991, p. 83.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ben Jonson’s Plays*, London and New York: Everyman Library Edition, Dent, 1919, last reprinted, 1966.

cost me twelve French crowns, and five and thirty pounds of salt butter in upper Germany” (III, 1, speech 301). Later in the play, he boasts his competence at Linsy-Wolsey’s house, pretending to cure the widow with a diagnosis that postulated the Jonsonian theory of humours

Dangerous enough Sir. For she is sicker in mind than in body. For I find most plainly the effects of a deep melancholy, fall’n through her distemper of passion upon her liver; much disordering, and withal wasting the vitals, leaving scarce matter for physic to work on. So that her mind receiving the first hurt, must receive the first cure. (III, 1, speech 300)

and finally gives a therapy: “I’ll lay all my skill to a mess of Tewkesbury mustard, she sneezes thrice within these three hours...” (III, 1, speech 293).

In the following scene, Crasy plays the most elaborated part, the court messenger Holywater, “a gentleman of place, a courtier of office” (III, 2, speech 412). His disguise is so effective that he manages to convince Sarpego to go to the Court since that is his place: “you are like to possess a Prince’s ear; you may be in place, where you may scorn your foes; countenance your friends; cherish virtue, control vice, and despise fortune: yes sure shall you Sir” (III, 1, speech 417). Once at court, he is so believable and at ease that he can easily cheat Sneakup and get the jewels from him.

In his last disguise, Crasy is a talented dancer, Master Footwell: “Ha! Tricks of twenty: your traverses, slidings, fallings back, jumps, closings, openings, shorts, turns, pacings, gracings... As for... Corantoes, levoltoes, jigs, measures, pavaues, brawls, galliards, or canaries, I speak it not swellingly, but I subscribe to no man” (IV, 1, speech 554); also he is appreciated as he teaches how “to do all things courtly.” He is so effective that even Crack does not recognize him:

Crack: Who would you speak with, Sir?
Crasy: With thy sister. Dost thou not know me, Jeffrey? Where is she?
Look better on me.
Crack: O, is it you, Sir? Hang me if I knew you in this habit, though I was set here on purpose to watch for you. (IV, 1, speeches 525-527)

Finally, when Crasy takes his mask off, revealing his real identity, he claims to be willing to forgive all his abusers, no longer unscrupulous, vindictive and angry:

Yes, yes, yes, we are friends. [...]
Let us make this a merry night.
Think of no losses, Sirs, you shall have none;
My honest care being but to keep mine own.
What, by my slights, I got more than my due,
I timely will restore again to you. (V, 1, speech 978)

At the end of the play, Crasy restores himself to his old prosperity and Pyannet admits the monstrosity of a woman ‘who wears the breeches’ and asks for mercy though it is uncertain whether his or hers is a permanent condition or not. The debate about the open ending of the play has taken different directions: in the version staged at Royal Holloway, Crasy has not learnt yet whom he can rely on so that, at the end, like in the first scene, he is left on stage with nothing, while Jeremy and Crack stare at him in astonishment that someone could be so stupid twice.¹⁹² Shaw and Wilkinson naïvely find a moral in it because Crasy teaches “a lesson in the responsibilities of love, friendship, and brotherhood”¹⁹³ showing that “other approaches, like honesty through the use of wit, can win.”¹⁹⁴ But Crasy wins only by using the same means as his abusers so that he is “wealthy but profoundly melancholy,”¹⁹⁵ while the audience “stand enlightened, but aware that the consequence for [Crasy] was an enervating disillusion.”¹⁹⁶ Unlike Timon, Crasy does not have the same misanthropic reaction towards the whole world, he does not reject the society he belongs to but he still wants to be part of it, though with a worldly-wise attitude.¹⁹⁷ Therefore Sarpego’s proclamation “tempora mutantur. The town’s ours again” sounds as a celebration of the restoration of the *status quo* with its traditional social and gender order, with which the ‘new’ Crasy has to decide whether to strike a balance or not.

¹⁹² Schafer, 2010, introduction, p. 52.

¹⁹³ Shaw, p. 63.

¹⁹⁴ Wilkinson, 2004, introduction.

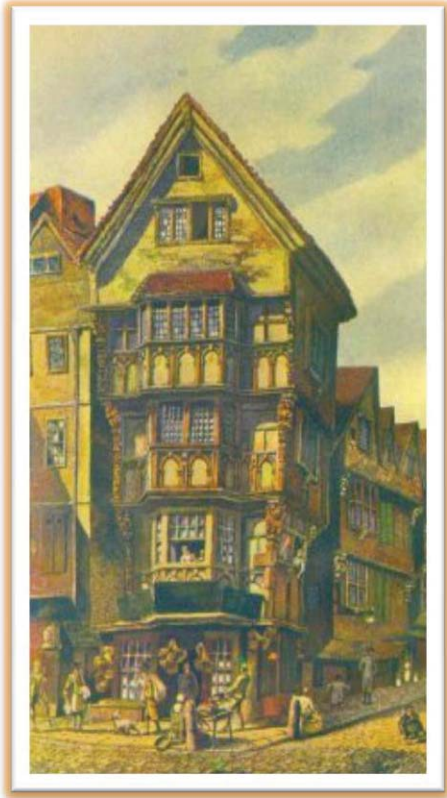
¹⁹⁵ Cave, 2008, p. 277.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ The adverb “timely” used by Crasy in his final speech could imply that he has actually learnt something from his experience because he promises to give back to money only “in good time,” after a period of probation.

CHAPTER 3

EATING AND DRINKING IN EARLY MODERN LONDON



King's Head Tavern, Fleet Street

The taverns could tell us the stories of generations of clients: from the Canterbury pilgrims who set off from the Tabard Inn, to foreign travellers with business in the city; from common Londoners who used to spend merry hours in good company, to well-known writers whose works were inspired by their attendance there. From Chaucer, through Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Heywood, Pepys, Goldsmith, Dickens down to-day, the tavern is a recurrent motive in literature since, according to Thomas Burke, is the finest focal point for observation of men and manners.¹⁹⁸

The tavern was a place of popular sociability, a “social stage and a necessary meeting-place, a forum for conversation,”¹⁹⁹ and the main alternative centre of social interaction to the church: as a gathering place providing food and drink,²⁰⁰ its convivial atmosphere encouraged gossip and rumour, the circulation of news and the rendezvous of politicians and traders. “It is everybody’s place, [...] the man of ten-thousand a year, both of them within ear-shot of the tap-room labourers of twenty-five shillings a week; and in

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Burke, *The English Inn*, London: Longmans and Co, 1930, p. 29.

¹⁹⁹ Yves Marie Bercé, *Revolt and Revolution in early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence*, translated by Joseph Bergin, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1987, p. 86.

²⁰⁰ Taverns were also places where the people too poor to dine there could have their food heated up.

the bar the nobleman ceases to be a nobleman and the peasant ceases to be a peasant.”²⁰¹
Each tavern had also its specific clientele, as the playwright Thomas Heywood²⁰² claims:

The Gentry to the King’s Head, the nobles to the Crown,
The Knights unto the Golden Fleece, and to the Plough the Clown.
The churchman to the Mitre, the shepherd to the Star,
The gardener hies him to the Eose, to the Drum the man of war;
To the Feathers, ladies you; the Globe the seaman doth not scorn;
The usurer to the Devil²⁰³, and the townsman to the Horn.
The huntsman to the White Hart, to the Ship the merchants go,
But you who do the Muses love, the sign called River Po.
The banquerout to the World’s End, the fool to the Fortune Pie,
Unto the Mouth the oyster- wife, the fiddler to the Pie.
The punk unto the Cockatrice, the Drunkard to the Vine,
The beggar to the Bush, then meet, and with Duke Humphrey dine.

Yet, taverns quickly developed an ill repute for other activities such as gambling (dice, card games), petty crimes, prostitution, violence and theft, which were very frequent especially after a session of drinking.

In Brome’s plays, places supplying food and drink like taverns are elevated to the status of social stages and when he employs them as settings of scenes (like in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, *The English Moor* and *The Sparagus Garden*), they are provided with a specific function in the dynamics of the plots. Each location portrays a peculiar social interaction and geography of the place, enabling the playwright to address both social and political issues and investigate different areas of London. My analysis of Brome’s use of eating and drinking establishments as setting takes into account the two taverns where the playwright sets most of *The Weeding of Covent Garden* (the Goat Tavern and the Paris Tavern); second, it explores the function of the famous Devil Tavern and the anonymous inn staged in the *English Moor*; finally, it examines a pleasure garden, the Sparagus Garden in the eponymous play, as an example of the evolution of a new species of resort.

²⁰¹ Burke, p. VII.

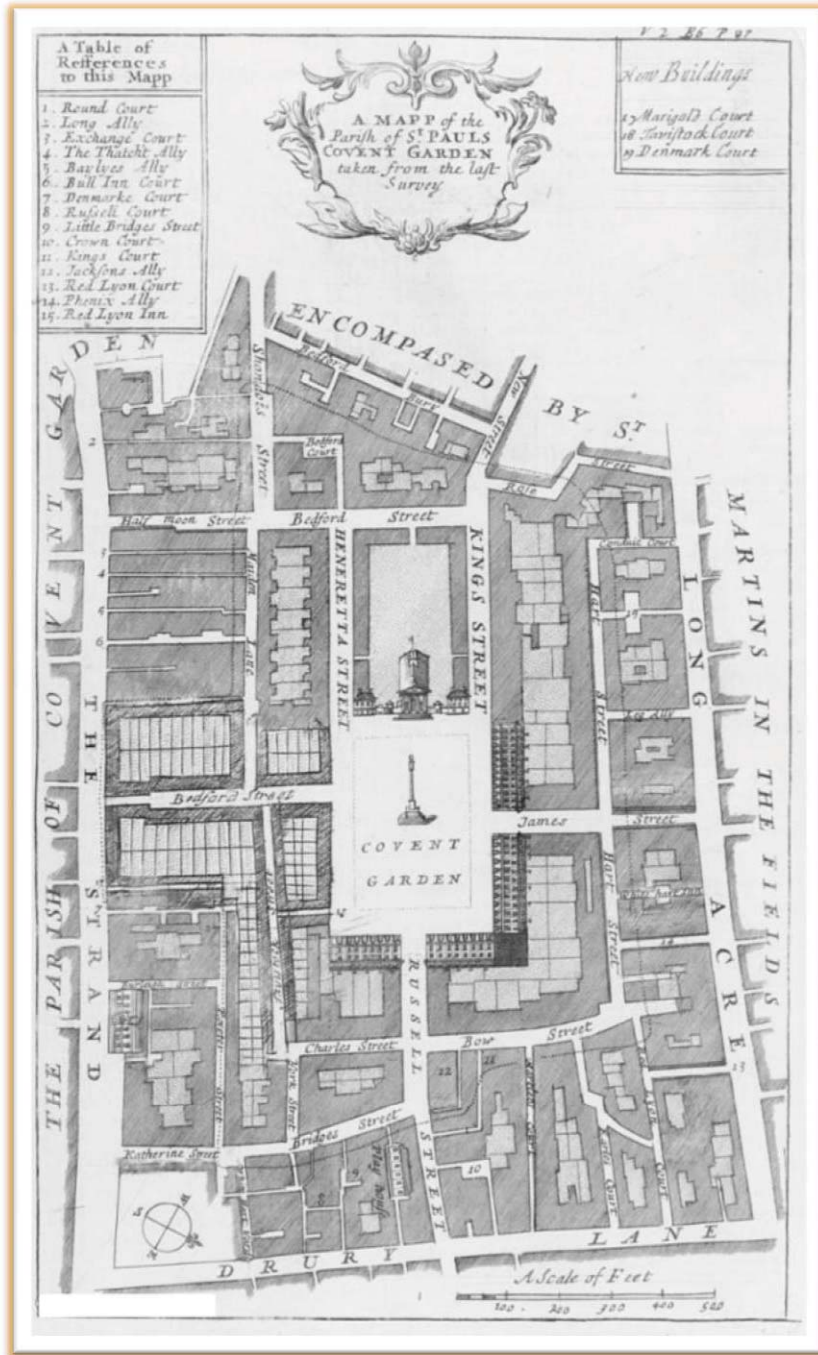
²⁰² Thomas Heywood, *The Rape of Lucrece*, II, 5, mentioned in Jacob Larwood, John Camden Hotten, *English Inn Signs, Being a Revised and Modernized Version of History of Signboards*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1951.

²⁰³ The connection between the usurer and the Devil Tavern is significant since in *The English Moor* where Brome stages this tavern, the main character is the usurer Quicksands.

3.1

The different faces of Covent Garden

The Weeding of Covent Garden is the first of two plays²⁰⁴ featuring the contemporary development of the estate of Covent Garden and staging significant aspects of this place.



²⁰⁴ The other is Nabbes's *Covent Garden* (1632).

The location as a whole stands as the focus of the play since the entire story takes place within the milieu of Covent Garden, from the opening scene in the central Piazza designed in his classical but revolutionary way by Inigo Jones, to Act V in the Paris Tavern in Queen Henrietta Street. Therefore it is necessary to outline a brief history of Covent Garden to show that the location and its development are an integral part of the play and the key to its interpretation.

Covent Garden was a large area of roughly twenty acres of undeveloped open land (used as pasturage since Henry VIII's reign) in Westminster, between Drury Lane and St. Martin's Lane. Since 1540, the ground was part of the possessions of John Russell, the first Earl of Bedford. The turning point occurred in February 1630/31, when Francis Russell, the fourth Earl of Bedford (1587-1641),²⁰⁵ was granted the licence²⁰⁶ to develop Covent Garden, notwithstanding the strict building proclamations of 1625 and 1630 construction was supposed to take place only on existing foundations, and Inigo Jones was commissioned to turn Covent Garden into an architecturally innovative residential square.

Nevertheless, the absence of Jones's name from the estate records suggests that his involvement was not by reason of a commission from the Earl but perhaps one of the conditions of the grant of the licence from the King, who wished to embellish his city. The other unavoidable condition was the building of a new church to relieve the nearby overcrowded parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, as it had petitioned some years before.

As Dianne Duggan claims, "Jones was not only the architect of the whole project, but along with Charles I was the driving force behind the design. Bedford, while patron of the development, can be shown to have played only a restricted role in the architecture of the Piazza and church."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ As for studies on Bedford's role in the development of Covent Garden see Conrad Russell, "Russell, Francis, fourth earl of Bedford (bap. 1587, d. 1641)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24307>, R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987 and Dianne Duggan, "The Fourth Side of the Covent Garden Piazza," *The British Art Journal* 3, 2002, pp. 53-65; "The Architectural Patronage of the 4th Earl of Bedford, 1587-1641," University of London doctoral dissertation, 2002; and "The Prosecution of the Earl of Bedford," *London Topographical Record XXIX*, (ed) Ann Loreille Saunders, 2006, pp. 1-21.

²⁰⁶ On 10 January 1631 the king instructed the Attorney General, Sir Robert Heath, to "prepare a licence to Francis Earl of Bedford, to build upon the premises called Covent Garden and Long Acre, with a pardon to the Earl, and such persons as he shall name, for offences committed against the proclamations for restraint of building upon new foundation," in *Calendar of State Papers* vol. CLXXXII, p. 479.

²⁰⁷ Dianne Duggan, "London the Ring, Covent Garden the Jewell of That Ring': New Light on Covent Garden" in *Architectural History*, Vol. 43, 2000, pp. 140-161, p. 143.

Inigo Jones's project consisted of an enormous Italianate piazza with St. Paul's Church on the west side and three sides of terraced houses overlooked inwards on to an open courtyard, according to the continental style. What is most innovative is the combination of a foreign architectural form with the local *habitus* so that the space seems to have three main coexisting 'souls:' firstly, a Catholic-continental spirit due to Jones's numerous visits to Italy with Lord Arundel, where he studied the buildings of architects like Palladio, Serlio and Scamozzi and admired numerous Italian Piazzas in Turin, Venice, Florence, Rome, Genoa, and Livorno, the principal prototype for his own piazza. Second, a French identity connected with his trips to France (the Place Royale, now Place des Vosges, and Place Dauphine, both in Paris) and to the collaboration between Jones and the Huguenot Isaac de Caus,²⁰⁸ acting as his executants architect.²⁰⁹ Finally, a Puritan spirit embodied by the Church of Saint Paul, the first church to be built in London after the Reformation, whose "uncompromisingly primitivist style encoded a militant Protestant ideology."²¹⁰ The total cost of the project, around £5000,²¹¹ and the economic restrictions of the Earl may have affected the architecture of the church so that the building was devoid of any elaborate embellishments characterizing Continental Catholic places of worship.

"The entire Covent Garden area, leased to various builders, was built on and occupied during the 1630s:"²¹² the general distribution of the streets was planned by July 1631, the church was erected between July 1631 and 1634 and the portico houses around the piazza were completed between 1634 and 1638. Between 1634 and 1636 the streets surrounding the area were not identified by name, like Queen Henrietta Street which was known as "the east street on the south side of the church." By 1637, some of them were named so to celebrate the client (Russell Street and Bedford Street) and the major ones were devoted to the highest offices of the state, King Charles and Queen Henrietta and to their heir James, born in 1633, in order to arouse royal favour (Charles Street, Queen Henrietta Street and James Street).

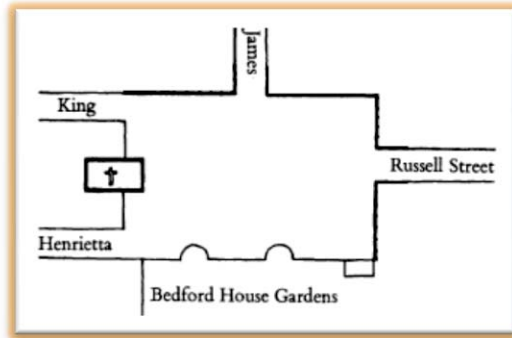
²⁰⁸ Duggan also cites some notes written in French in the margin of the plans of Covent Garden concerning conduits and waterworks to prove his involvement in the project.

²⁰⁹ See Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies, 1995, pp. 298-99.

²¹⁰ Steggle, 2004, p. 47.

²¹¹ In 2010 this would be the equivalent of £445,800.00 (National Archive currency converter).

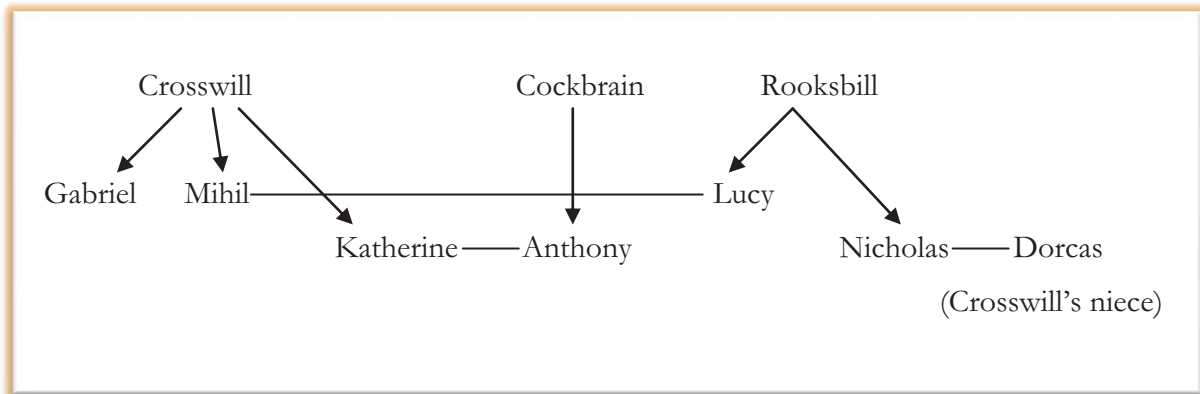
²¹² Arthur Channing Downs, Jr., "Inigo Jones's Covent Garden: The First Seventy-Five Years," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Mar., 1967, pp. 8-33.



From 1632, the population of Covent Garden increased considerably owing to wealthy tenants ready to pay up to £150 a year for a stylish house around the piazza. Nevertheless, in the adjoining streets, the Earl of Bedford permitted the construction of many hundreds of low cost houses whose inhabitants were of mean and obscure condition, thus debasing the milieu in a sense. Also numerous taverns and inns were established, whose development and use were not controlled and contrary to the terms of the original licence.

3.1.1

The plot



The country gentleman Crosswill has three children: the puritanical Gabriel, Mihil, who pretends to be studying law while living a dissolute life, and Katherine. The builder Rooksbill has a daughter, Lucy, who is secretly in love with Mihil, and a son, Nicholas, who seduced and then abandoned Gabriel's cousin Dorcas. Finally, the Justice of the Peace Cockbrain, whose interference in the planned marriage between his son Anthony and

Katherine leads his male child to join the Brotherhood of the Blade and the Baton²¹³ in disguise to cross his father. The play ends with three intermarriages and the banishment of the Brotherhood and of the low-class characters of the story from Covent Garden.

3.1.2

Critical approaches

Till recent times, many scholars have considered the framework as a mere “device of location”²¹⁴ and a way of celebrating or advertising a locality through a comedy:²¹⁵ Catherine Shaw discussed it as a social satire,²¹⁶ and Richard Perkinson as an example of topographical comedy²¹⁷ and of the vogue of ‘place realism’²¹⁸ identified by Theodore Miles for the use of a particular location as setting and meeting ground for the characters.

Instead, a new wave of criticism, which has led to a re-evaluation of the function of the setting, has arisen with Kaufmann and Butler who have drawn attention to the numerous references to several political issues which characterized the years 1632-33 when the play was being composed, such as Royal Proclamations concerning monopolies, price-fixing, uncontrolled urban development, infringement of civic building laws, and local abuses concerning the Russell Estate of Covent Garden. The Calendar of State²¹⁹ especially mentions this location with regard to the regulation of the number of taverns and alehouses within the milieu, which are reduced respectively from eight to two and from fifteen to four,²²⁰ and to the limitation of the charged prices of the reckoning.²²¹ All these allusions converge on a specific politico-social point, the growing economic paternalism of

²¹³ The brotherhood is a sort of secret society composed by hooligans, an organization that operates within the estate of Covent Garden and whose activities are concealed from the non-members. It is provided with rules for the membership, secret rituals and personal bonds between its members, as we will see in the scene of Clotpoll’s admission in Act III, 1.

²¹⁴ Shaw, p. 76.

²¹⁵ Perkinson, p. 279.

²¹⁶ Shaw, p. 75.

²¹⁷ Perkinson, “Topographical Comedy in the Seventeenth Century,” *ELH*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Dec., 1936, pp. 270-290.

²¹⁸ Theodore Miles, “Place-realism in a Group of Caroline plays,” *Review of English Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 72 Oct., 1942, pp. 428-440.

²¹⁹ Papers (vol. CCXLIII, p. 144).

²²⁰ 13/10/1633 no extra permission to keep any tavern or alehouse *Calendar of State Papers*, vol. CCXLVIII, p. 266.

²²¹ 12/02/1633-34 It fixed prices for poultry, eggs, butter and victuals in general in taverns.

the Stuart Government.²²² Actually, the action is based on three parallel relationships between fathers and children (but also its parody in the low-life plot between Captain Driblow and his ‘sons’ in the Brotherhood). The plot thus dramatizes the relationship between Charles I and his subjects, between authority and individual freedom: “Brome too perceives what is at stake if the fiat of Charles’s single will is capable of restricting so radically the freedom of many, and his treatment of the issue probes insistently into the justification (and the implications) of the authority by which Charles does the acts.”²²³ Steggle combines Butler’s approach with a strong sense of space that he investigates “the play national relevance through the consideration of its use of location,”²²⁴ and focuses in particular on the tavern scenes.

As the chart indicates, much of the action takes places within two taverns, The Goat and the Paris Tavern which played prominent role in the life of Covent Garden. I will focus on the social interaction within the taverns in order to clarify the function of the two locations, delineate the peculiar social dynamics established within and the influence of each place on the attitudes of their miscellaneous clients so to show how they react when entering an unknown space or a familiar one.

3.1.3

The place within the play

The five acts of the play are all set in different spots of Covent Garden, both private and public, mainly indoors.

	Covent Garden Piazza	Dorcas’s House	Mihil’s Lodgings	Rooksbill’s House	The Goat Tavern	The Paris Tavern
I, 1	X					
I, 2		X				
II, 1			X			
II, 2					X	
III, 1					X	

²²² Kaufmann, p. 74.

²²³ Butler, 1984, p. 152.

²²⁴ Steggle, 2004, p. 46.

	Covent Garden Piazza	Dorcas's House	Mihil's Lodgings	Rooksbill's House	The Goat Tavern	The Paris Tavern
III, 2				X		
IV, 1					X	
IV, 2						X
V, 1				X		
V, 2				X		
V, 3						X

At the beginning of the play, Brome makes us enter in the new estate of Covent Garden under construction, giving a detailed description of the landscape and buildings “in terms of the minutest exactness and contemporaneity,”²²⁵ which is crucial for the creation of a fictional geography for the audience that have to believe to be in Covent Garden Piazza during its building:



W. Hollar, ca. 1644, *Covent Garden*, Courtauld Institute, University of London.

Cockbrain: Aye, marry, sir! This is something like! These appear like buildings! Here's architecture expressed indeed! It is a most sightly situation, and fit for gentry and nobility.

²²⁵ Miles, p. 432.

Rooksbill: When it is all finished, doubtless it will be handsome.

Cockbrain: It will be glorious! [...] Master Rooksbill: I like your row of houses most incomparably. Your money never shone so on your counting-boards as in those structures.

Rooksbill: I have piled up a leash of thousand pounds in walls and windows there. (I, 1, speeches 4-7)²²⁶

IN PERFORMANCE

The scene was widely investigated during the workshops at Royal Holloway: the audience have to imagine themselves in Covent Garden during its building. The actor playing Rooksbill achieved this sense of place by looking around himself intensely while evoking the estate in words with a veil of anxiety. Owing to his capitalistic ethos, he sees the place as a risky investment in which he has sunk a fortune.

On the other hand, the Justice of the Peace Cockbrain is more inclined to see the place from a moral and class-conscious perspective, as “fit from gentry and nobility.” Covent Garden appears as a place which needs weeding of unwelcome characters such as prostitutes, a roaring gang known as the Brotherhood of the Blade and the Baton, defined by the Justice of the Peace Cockbrain as “a parcel of those venomous weeds, that rankly pester this fair Garden-Plot” (III, 1, speech 495), as he says at the beginning of the play while talking to Rooksbill:

Cockbrain: It will all come again with large increase. And better is your money thus let out on red and white, than upon black and white, I say. You cannot think how I am taken with that row! How even and straight they are! And so are all indeed. The surveyor, what e’er he was, has manifested himself the master of his great art. How he has wedded strength to beauty; state to uniformity; commodiousness with perspicuity! All, all as ’t should be! Rooksbill: If all were as well tenanted and inhabited by worthy persons.

Cockbrain: Phew; that will follow. [...] Do we not soil or dung our lands, before we sow or plant anything that’s good in ’em? And do not weeds creep up first in all gardens? And why not then in this? Which never was a garden until now; and which will be the garden of gardens, I foresee ’t. And for the weeds in it, let me alone for the weeding of them out. (I, 1, speeches 8-10)

The speech recalls the Shakespearean imagery of the “unweeded garden that grows to seed” in *Hamlet*’s soliloquy which compares the violation of order within the kingdom

²²⁶ All the references from *The Weeding of Covent Garden* are from R. Brome, *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, Modern Text, edited by Michael Leslie, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

with the dissolution of the order in nature. Then, the metaphor of the district of Covent Garden as the garden and Cockbrain as its gardener which is essential in the Garden scene (III, 4) in *Richard II*, in which the enemies of the king are compared to dangerous seeds uprooted by Bolingbroke that threaten the King and need weeding. Actually Cockbrain's aim is to cleanse the fashionable and prestigious place in order to bring the inhabitants in line with the prestige of the new architecture:

What new plantation was ever peopled with the better sort at first? Nay, commonly the lewdest blades and naughty-packs are either necessitated to 'em, or else do prove the most forward venturers. Is not lime and hair the first in all your foundations? (I, 1, speech 10)

Then, Cockbrain employs the word 'plantation' whose applications are numerous: from 'the action of planting seeds or plants in the ground' (OED 2.a) or 'a cultivated bed or cluster of growing plants of any kind' (3.a) which are consistent with the context, to 'farming management' (3.c). Moreover, the term also defined 'a settlement in a dominated country' (4.c), like the colonies in North America (Virginia and New England) which attracted thousands of people: political and religious dissenters escaping persecution like the Puritans, communities from the densely populated eastern England, hard-working people seeking occupation in order to be eventually given land or be able to buy it. Colonies were also inhabited by members of the gentry or of eminent English families like Carter, Fairfax or Harrison from western and southern England and prisoners on penal service or indentured labour. The comparison between Covent Garden and a colony thus conveys the idea of adventure, speculation and entrepreneurship over the development of the district.²²⁷

²²⁷ The word 'plantation' recurs throughout Brome's *corpus* in other works like *The Sparagus Garden*, *The Antipodes*, *The Lovesick Court* and *The Demoiselle*, carrying other contemporary resonances and meanings. Interestingly, all these works were written in or soon after the 1630s when the issues on the agenda were the problem of Ireland and the plantation on the island. The establishment of plantations had started under Henry VIII but had an acceleration under the Stuarts. In 1632, Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Stratford, was sent to Ireland as Lord Deputy of Ireland to plan a full scale plantation of Connacht, depriving the Catholic landowners of more than a half of their estates and giving birth to communities with a strong British Protestant identity.

In order to clarify Brome's use of place realism in the area of tavern life, it is worth sketching the history of the multifaceted universe of public dining²²⁸ in early modern England, exploring the different eating and drinking places evoked in Brome's plays, starting from the alehouse, passing through the inn, the ordinary till the tavern.

3.1.4

Once upon a time there were the taverns

The concept of public house, or 'pub,' is indebted to the Roman *taberna*, a place advertised by displaying vine leaves outside the door (forerunner of the tavern sign and then pub) where food and wine were served. In England, there was a wide range of eating and drinking houses named after the services they provided and the most common, which evolved into the modern pub, was the alehouse, which used to sell ale. The beginning of the alehouses dates back to 1200: they often consisted in a building, though some were no more than a cellar and were the most inferior of the drinking institutions and densely concentrated in rural parishes and in the poorest areas of the towns. According to Peter Clark, a major authority in the field of the history of alehouses, they played a relevant role in the economic wellbeing of the country since they "provided an invaluable lifeline for the poor, helping them to survive the worst harvest years, when otherwise they might have starved"²²⁹ under the difficult living condition of the Tudor and Stuart periods. Moreover, ale was one of the few drinks available to the poor in this period, since water was often contaminated and noxious.

²²⁸ For the evolution of the eating establishments see: H. B. H. Beaufoy, J. H. Burn, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the London Traders, Tavern and Coffee-House Tokens Current in the Seventeenth Century*, London: Printed for the use of the members of the Corporation of the City of London, 1853; Albert Edward Richardson, Harold Donaldson Eberlein, *The English Inn, Past and Present*, London: Batsford, 1925.; Henry C. Shelley, *Inns and Taverns of Old London, setting forth the Historical and Literary Associations of those Ancient Hostelries*, Boston: L. C. Page & Company, 1928; Beat A. Kümin, B. Ann Tlusty, *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe*, Aldershot, Hants, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002; Steven Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature: England's Altered State*, Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000; Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*, New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers UP, 1982; Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996; Martha Carlin, "What say you to a piece of beef and mustard?: The Evolution of Public Dining in Medieval and Tudor London," San Marino: *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 71, 2008.

²²⁹ P. Clark, *The English Alehouse - A Social History 1200-1800*, London, New York: Longman, 1983, p. 137.

A new form of eating house, the inn, appeared as a development of the alehouse:²³⁰ the word inn, of Saxon origin, meant at first ‘bedroom’ and then it came to mean a suite of rooms. The first references to innkeeping as an occupation occur in the 1180s, and to London innkeepers in the 1280. Originally run by monks and located along the roads linking the major urban centres or within towns, they offered food, accommodation for travellers, and stabling for their horses. “A guest would find an earthen floor, sometimes paved with stone slabs, and occasionally covered with rushes, although this was a luxury provided only in places where rushes were easily available; such inns that London possessed at that time would certainly not have had them. The guests slept in dormitories, shared by both sexes.”²³¹

Their massive spread was proportional to the expansion in trade which determined a considerable increase in the traffic of goods and people. In addition, there were the many religious pilgrims coming from all over England and Continental Europe to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Beckett, murdered 29 December 1170 in Canterbury Cathedral, or the tomb of Edward II in Gloucester Cathedral since 1327. The pilgrimages continued for at least two centuries so that when Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales* in 1388, the commercial inns were a permanent feature of English life.

The Tudor period saw the creation of two forms of eating: the establishment of the ordinary and the tavern. The ordinary offered a fixed price meal, an ordinary, but soon the word soon also came to identify the establishment which offered it. Its origin lies in the price regulations which aimed to provide the urban poor with affordable meals. In 1562, the ordinary was a fourpenny meal consisting of soup or stew, boiled meat and one roast, served with adequate bread and beer or ale. There was also the possibility of an eight penny meal for gentlemen and “other honest personages that will have better fare.”²³² The significance of this institution is underscored in Dekker’s²³³ *The Guls Horn-Booke* (1609) in

²³⁰ John Wittich, *Discovering London’s Inns and Taverns*, Princes Risborough: Shire Publication Ltd, 1996, p. 6.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Peter Brears, “The Food Guilds of York,” in Eileen White (ed), *The Provision of Food from Roman Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, Totnes: Devon, 2000, p. 96.

²³³ From Middleton and Dekker’s play *The Roaring Girl* (1611) we learn the menu of a London ordinary, when a gentleman gives his servant three halfpence to eat at an ordinary.

which he dedicates an entire chapter to illustrate “How a young Gallant should behave himselfe in an Ordinary.”²³⁴

Unlikely, the tavern worked as a cross between the alehouse and the inn: it was the urban equivalent of a country inn, but providing rooms and serving food and ale. The Swiss traveller Thomas Platter visiting England in 1599 reported that “a great many inns, taverns, and beer gardens scattered about the city, where much amusement maybe had with eating, drinking, fiddling, and the rest. And what is particularly curious is that the women as well as the men, in fact more often than they, will frequent the taverns or ale-houses for enjoyment.”²³⁵ The differences between taverns and other establishments have become blurred with the passing of time. “The fundamental difference between the tavern and the alehouse was that the former was a place for leisure and pleasure, whereas the latter was a place of necessity. In the alehouse, the poor found shelter and relief from their plight spending the little money they had, to sustain themselves. Taverns on the other hand, catered to the professional classes by offering better food, drink, and many other comforts which they could afford.”²³⁶ By the end of the 18th century, the taverns were gradually abandoned in favour of the gentlemen’s club. Among the thousands of taverns, some were destroyed, closed or turned into private houses, thus sinking into oblivion. Others are still celebrated with tokens in their original sites, and gained enduring fame in the annals of literature owing to the references in illustrious works: the Dagger,²³⁷ for instance, is mentioned in Jonson’s *The Alchemist*, or the Cock,²³⁸ the favourite haunt of lawyers and law

²³⁴ Moreover, in *The Demoiselle*, whose subtitle is *The New Ordinary*, Brome stages a fictional ordinary acknowledging the ordinary as a permanent feature of English life. Brome references to the ordinary in many of his plays such as *The City Wit*, *The Antipodes*, *The English Moor*, *The Northern Lass*, *The New Academy* and *The Sparagus Garden*. In the same period, the playwright William Cartwright wrote a play entitled *The Ordinary* (1635).

²³⁵ Thomas Platter, *Thomas Platter’s Travels in England 1599*, (ed) Clare Williams, London: Cape, p. 170.

²³⁶ Bernard Capp, *Gender and the Culture of the English Alehouse in Late Stuart England*, (eds) A. Korhonen and K. Lowe, *The Trouble with Ribs: Women, Men and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Collegium, Vol. 2, 2007; e-publication.

²³⁷ “Subtle. Who is it, Dol? Dol. A fine young quodling. Face. O, My lawyer’s clerk, I lighted on last night, In Holborn, at the Dagger. He would have (I told you of him) a familiar, To rifle with at horses, and win cups. Dol. O, let him in” (I, 1, speeches 189-196). *Ben Jonson’s Plays*, London and New York: Everyman Library Edition, Dent, 1919, last reprinted, 1966.

²³⁸ The Cock is a tavern at n. 201 Fleet Street.

students memorialized in Tennyson's *Will Waterproof Lyrical Monologue*,²³⁹ whereas the Boar's Head in Eastcheap is used as a setting in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

The attendance of famous writers also contributed to the long-lasting notoriety of numerous taverns: the Queen's Arms near St. Paul's Churchyard was associated with Samuel Johnson and the actor David Garrick, the White Hart in Southwark, mentioned by Dickens in *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, was the headquarters of the rebellious Jack Cade in 1450 under the reign of Henry VI.

As Henry C. Shelley²⁴⁰ remarks, the Mermaid in Friday Street, in Cheapside (east of St. Paul Cathedral), was the gathering place of the Friday Street Club²⁴¹ also known as the Mermaid Club, first begun by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603. This group of *beaux esprits* numbered Jonson, Shakespeare, the 'twin stars' Beaumont and Fletcher and Donne.



John Faed (1819-1902) *Shakespeare and his Friends at the Mermaid Tavern*

Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.”²⁴² This tavern, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London, was praised by Ben Jonson in *Inviting a Friend to Supper*,²⁴³ by Beaumont in *Mr Francis Beaumont's Letter to*

One traditional story regarding Jonson tells of his evenings at the Mermaid tavern. The antiquary Thomas Fuller reports: “Many were the wit-combats between him [Shakespeare] and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great gallion, and an English man of War; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; Solid, but Slow in his performances.

²³⁹ “O plump head-waiter at The Cock, / To which I most resort, / How goes the time? ‘Tis five o'clock. / Go fetch a pint of port: / But let it not be such as that / You set before chance-comers, / But such whose / father-grape grew fat / On Lusitanian summers” (lines 1-8).

²⁴⁰ Shelley, pp. 28-29.

²⁴¹ The group used to meet on the first Friday of each month.

²⁴² Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, London: 4 pt. I. G. W. L., and W. G., 1662, p.126.

²⁴³ “But that, which most doth take my *Muse*, and mee, is a pure cup of rich *Canary*-wine, which is the *Mermaids*, now, but shall be mine: Of which had Horace, or Anacreon tasted, their lives, as doe their lines, till

Ben Jonson.²⁴⁴ Later, it was also celebrated by the Romantic poet John Keats in *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*: “Souls of poets dead and gone, / What Elysium have ye known, Happy fields or mossy tavern, / Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?” (1-4).

Among the many houses frequented by Jonson, whose experience of taverns was not second to anyone, must be numbered the Windmill, the Swan, the Sun, the Dog, the Three Tuns²⁴⁵ and the Devil Tavern²⁴⁶ in Fleet Street, where he founded the Apollo Club, which became the official meeting place of the ‘sons of Ben.’ Thus, his ‘literary son’ Brome was provided with a deep knowledge of this world and was able to draw on the taverns²⁴⁷ and tavern life of his own time for details and incidents, as in the staging of the two taverns of Covent Garden.

now had lasted. *Tabacco, Nectar, or the Thespian spring, are all but Luthers beere, to this I sing.*” (H. J. C. Grierson and G. Bullough (eds), *The Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Vers.*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934, pp. 155-156.

²⁴⁴ “The sun, which doth the greatest comfort bring to absent friends (because the self same thing they know they see, however absent), is here our best hay-maker (forgive me this, it is our country style); in this warm shine I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine. [...] What things have we seen done at the Mermaid! Heard words that have been so nimble and so full of subtle flame, as if that everyone from whence they came had meant to put his whole wit in a jest, and had resolved to live a fool the rest of his dull life.” J. William Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson (eds) *Poetry of the English Renaissance 1509-1660*, New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1941, pp. 539-540.

²⁴⁵ The Three Tuns of the Guildhall Yard, which is mentioned by Robert Herrick in *An Ode to Ben Jonson* among Jonson’s favourite taverns: “Ah Ben! / Say how or when / Shall we thy guests / Meet at those lyric feasts / Made at the Sun, / The Dog, the Triple Tun? / Where we such clusters had, / As made us nobly wild, not mad.”

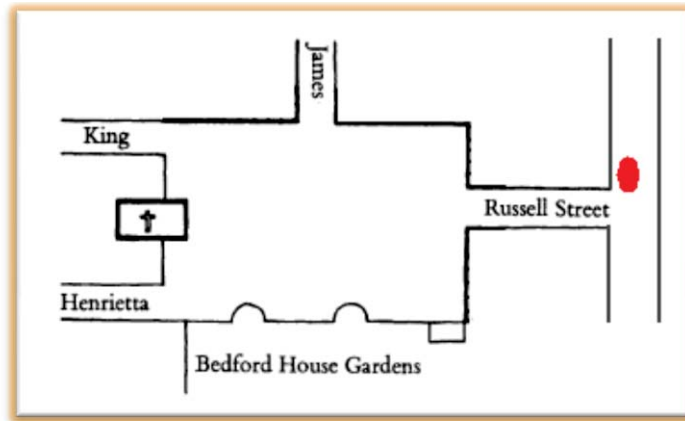
²⁴⁶ The tavern will be discussed in detail in this chapter, in the section devoted to *The English Moor* (III.3).

²⁴⁷ The Mitre tavern, near the Devil Tavern, is evoked in *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634): this tavern at 39 Fleet Street had strong connections with Shakespeare and Jonson himself who mentions it in his *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1599) when Puntarvolo exclaims: “Carlo shall bespeak supper at the Mitre against we come back; where we will meet, and dimple our cheeks with laughter.” (Act IV, 6) In *The English Moor*, Brome alludes to Southwark, whose borough was well-known for ages for its taverns and inns as well as for its thriving sex trade, as Stow testifies: “From thence towards London Bridge, on the same side, be many fair inns for receipt of travellers, by these signs: the Spurre, Christopher, Bull, Queen’s Head, Tabard, George, Hart, King’s Head.” In particular, he hints at the Stillyard, the Bridgefoot Bear (also referenced in *The Northern Lass*), the Tuns, the Cats and the Squirrels: “He saw her yesterday at the Stillyard with such a gallant, sousing their dried tongues / In Rhenish Then a fourth / Says he knows all her haunts and meetings / At Bridgefoot Bear, the Tuns, the Cats, the Squirrels (IV, 2, speech 606). The Bear at the Bridge-Foot, whose name derives from the popular sport of bear-baiting, was one of the most ancient according to a poem of 1691 which states: “we came to the Bear, which we soon understood, was the first house in Southwark built after the flood.”

3.1.5

Inside the Goat Tavern

Three scenes throughout the play (II, 2; III, 1; IV, 1) take place within the Goat Capricorn Tavern,²⁴⁸ a well-known tavern at the north-west corner of Russell Street and Bow Street.



According to John Strype, the former was “a broad street well inhabited by tradesmen,” whereas the latter was a “resort unto by gentry for lodgings.”²⁴⁹ According to archival evidence, the Goat Tavern was in activity in May 1632 and was kept by William Clifton between 1633-34. It probably closed down with many other taverns of the area during the following year when the authorities attempted to reduce the number of licensed taverns in Covent Garden.

In the play, the Goat Tavern is frequented by a wide variety of people, such as prostitutes, citizens, servants, fashionable society gentlemen, hooligans, honest tradesmen since the place seems to welcome anybody independently of social class, granting everyone the space they need, even contemporaneously. “The sense of society as intractably hierarchical”²⁵⁰ is banished from the tavern: it is everybody’s place, “the man of ten-thousand a year, both of them within ear-shot of the tap-room labourers of twenty-five

²⁴⁸ The tavern is marked in the map by the red spot.

²⁴⁹ John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, 6 vols in 2, London: A. Churchill, 1720, Book 6, chapter 6.

²⁵⁰ M. Leslie, Introduction to *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-, p. 63.

shillings a week; and in the bar the nobleman ceases to be a nobleman and the peasant ceases to be a peasant.”²⁵¹

In II, 2 and III, 1 two different groups are unknowingly having dinner at this tavern simultaneously. These scenes allow Brome to display the characteristics for which the location is known as well as the manners of the people who frequent it. In one room, the gentleman Crosswill, recently arrived from the country, and his children Katherine and Gabriel are dining with their new lordtenant, the builder Rooksbill and his daughter Lucy in order to celebrate Crosswill’s purchase of a new house in the fashionable Covent Garden district. In the meantime, in another room, the Brotherhood of the Blade with Anthony, the builder’s son, Nicholas, the Justice of Peace Cockbrain’s and Mihil, Crosswill’s son, get together as usual. Mihil works as a go-between since he joins both groups but, at the same time, he has to prevent them from meeting, promising his friends: “well, I’ll up to ‘em again before be missed, and when they part, I am for you again” (III, 1, speech 468).

What emerges clearly is the geography of the space, with an overview of the diverse private rooms of the building, in all likelihood historically real rooms of the Goat: “show up into the Phoenix. Is the Cheque empty? [...] a pottle of Canary²⁵² to the Dolphin, score. [...] Half a dozen of clean pipes and a candle of the Elephant [...] Carry up a Jordan for the Maidenhead, and a quart of white muscardine for the Blue Boar” (II, 2, speeches 383-390). Both the groups are initially on the first floor but Crosswill obtains better treatment by giving a couple of shillings to the drawer of the tavern and can move to a fairer and more private room on the upper floor where their “meat is ready to go up, and all in readiness” (II, 2, speech 418). Moreover, going to the upper floor suggests symbolism of ascent and superiority.

The spatial organization of the tavern played a decisive role mainly as it relates to gender and privacy: what is paradoxical is that some clients expected the tavern to provide them with full privacy so that hosts started offering smaller rooms, often upstairs (like the one where the Brotherhood meets), for mixed all-male but also all-female groups. Honest women, like Katherine and Lucy in this scene, accompanied by their husbands or fathers, were welcome in taverns: “ordinary women everywhere would visit the alehouse regularly,

²⁵¹ Burke, p. VII.

²⁵² The canary, which is also Ben Jonson’s favourite wine, is also served in the Devil Tavern scene in *The English Moor*.

or send their servants or even children, to fetch drink for family consumption at home. [...] A group of women, on their way back from market, would encounter few difficulties.”²⁵³ For a woman unaccompanied, the reception was linked to a number of variables such as her reputation, behaviour, clothes worn and reason for her stay.

The two scenes show a double opposition between parents and children as far as the perception of space is concerned: Crosswill’s enthusiasm opposed to his children’s criticism; Rooksbill’s contempt in contrast with his son Nicholas’s regular attendance. Actually, while Crosswill feels at ease in the tavern, his children criticize his choice of eating place in what they consider as a ‘bug-nest.’ Their opinion is based on hearsay if we remember that none of these young people have ever entered the tavern. Rooksbill, as well, shows little appreciation for such a disreputable location so that this vexed country gentleman does not miss the chance to remind the disdainful builder that his son Nicholas is a habitual tavern haunter, one who “sucks no other air than that of taverns, taphouses, brothels and such like” (III, 1, speech 337).

This proves that the perception of place is never objective but has to be accounted for by references to age, social status, family relationships or gender of every single character. What is more, the character’s perception and understanding of the place is modifiable according to new circumstances, as in the case of Crosswill, as we will see later in the play. If in Act II the tavern is a place where one can “entertain a friend and feed” himself (II, 2, speech 335), in Act IV the tavern where he finds his son Mihil with his friends is a place “not fit for a gentleman of quality” (IV, 2, speech 981).

The scenes in the tavern capture much of the bustling atmosphere of tavern life with its energy and chaos and its typical variety of noises offstage and onstage (from above and below) such pots thrown and clinking of drinking vessels, bell ringing and knocking at the door, but also insults, aggressive orders, cries and tavern songs, as emerges in the following extract. As we will see, the space of the Goat Tavern is not evoked through verbal allusions to the place, but through the cries and noises of the people who work there or frequent it:

Vintner: [*Calling to Goat tavern servers offstage*] Where are you? *Rings the bell* Show up into the Phoenix. Is the Checque empty?
Crosswill: Hoyday, here’s a din.
Drawer: A pottle of Canary to the Dolphin, score. [DRAWER exits]

²⁵³ Capp, p. 124.

Vintner: You're welcome, gentlemen. [*Calling to Goat Tavern servers offstage*]
 Take up the lilly-pot. Knock[*ing heard offstage*]
 [DRAWER enters]
 Drawer: [*Calling offstage*] Half a dozen of clean pipes and a candle for the
 Elephant. They take their own tobacco. [*Noise heard from offstage of pots being
 thrown and clinking of drinking vessels*]
 Vintner: Whose room do they foul, sirrah? [*Calling offstage*] Harry!
 Harry? [*Sound of*] bell [*being rung offstage*]
 [*Sound of fiddlers tuning in a room below*]
 [*Sound of knocking from above, and of a pot being thrown*]
 [*Voice heard offstage from below:*] Why boys, drawer, rogues, take up!
 [*Drawer*] [*Heard offstage*] By and by, by and by!
 [*Voice heard from*] above: Wine, tobacco!
 Crosswill: What variety of noises is here? And all excellent ill sounds.
 [*Voice heard from*] above: *Call up the fiddlers, sirrah.* (II, 2, speeches 383-393)

As for the stage directions, Michael Leslie²⁵⁴ observes that “this episode in the Goat Tavern is exhilarating in its evocation of noise, activity, and chaos; and interpreting the manuscript clearly challenged the compositor.” The image of the compositor is in keep with the musical tone of the scene: each character is like a musical instrument who has to play his part at the right moment and with the suitable tone and intention. For instance, the vintner has shift tone while addressing the gentlemen and then drawers of the tavern: from calm cordiality to angry shouts, while, in the background the ‘choir’ of drawers and boys answers him back: actually the result is a sort of score made up of words, stage directions suggesting sounds and noises overlapping in a series of counterpoints so to create a specific ‘soundscape’²⁵⁵ which is a fundamental part of the identity of the tavern space. The soundscape consists of environmental sounds concurring to make the acoustic life of a community unique. As Barry Truax notes, “the inseparability of every sound from its context makes it valuable source of usable information about the current state of the environment [...] in terms of community, sounds not only reflect its complete social and geographical context, but also reinforce community identity and cohesion.”²⁵⁶

Particular sounds might have different associations for different people according to rank, gender or origin so that these are not always appreciated by the clients of the tavern. If the background noises can be one of the main attractions and a way of obtaining

²⁵⁴ Leslie, 2010, n380.

²⁵⁵ The word was coined by the Canadian R. Murray Schafer in 1969. As for the concept of ‘soundscape,’ see also Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: attending to the O-Factor*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

²⁵⁶ Barry Truax, *Acoustic communication*, Norwood, N. J: Ablex Pub. Corp., c1984., p. 10.

privacy and avoiding being overheard in private conversation, for the Puritan Gabriel these are like the “cymbals of Satan,” “the song of the serpent,” “a malefic incantation to roar out loud to,” to which he reacts by humming a psalm tune and singing a few words of a hymn beginning with “how happy”²⁵⁷ (II, 2, speeches 383-88, 391-93).

In the following scene (Act III, 1), Brome shows another group of habitual tavern goers, the Brotherhood of the Blade and the Baton, while holding one of their usual meetings. The captain of the Philoblatici soon reveals that dinner is also an occasion to talk business: “Go, sirrah, make your reckoning for our dinner. Leave us this wine, and come when we call you” (III, 1, speech 420). On the agenda, the order has to discuss the admittance of a new member, the simple Clotpoll. His surname which means both “thick or wooden head” (OED 1) and “blockhead, dolt” (the same meaning is also to be found in *The Northern Lass*: “As I bade you, Clotpoll?,” I, 2, speech 114) reflects his easy minded and simpleton nature. Moreover, his name, Mun, shows another aspect of the personality of the character: beside being the diminutive of Edmund, it also appropriately used to define “a member of a particular street gang alleged to have been active in London in the second or third quarter of the 17th century” (OED).

During Clotpoll’s initiation, Captain Driblow expounds the strict rules of the Brotherhood:

The Articles that you depose unto are these: to be true and faithful unto the whole Fraternity of the Blade and the Battoon, and to every member thereof. [...] That at no time, wittingly or ignorantly, drunk or sober, you reveal or make discovery of the Brother, or a member of the Brotherhood, of his lodging, haunts, or by-walks, to any creditor, officer, sutler or suchlike dangerous or suspicious person. [...] That your purse and weapon, to the utmost of your strength, be on all occasions drawn to the assistance or defence of a Brother or Brother’s friend be it he, be it she. [...] The rest of your duties for brevity’s sake you shall find specified in that copy of your Order. Kiss the book. (III, 1, speeches 430, 432, 436, 444)

²⁵⁷ Many hymns begin with “how happy.” Among the numerous possibilities those more appropriate to the context. Psalm 1: “How happy is the man who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path of sinners, or join a group of mockers!”; or Psalm 119 “How happy are those whose way is blameless, who live according to the law of the Lord!”

Yet, the naïve Clotpoll unconsciously breaks twice the principal rule of the Brotherhood (“That at no time, wittingly or ignorantly, drunk or sober, you reveal or make discovery of the Brother, or a member of the Brotherhood, of his lodging, haunts, or by-walks, to any creditor, officer, sutler, or suchlike dangerous or suspicious person,” III, 1, speech 432): firstly, by disclosing information about Captain Driblow’s lodging in Bloomsbury (III, 1, speech 572) in the presence of the spy Cockbrain, secondly by accompanying the Justice of the Peace, the arch-enemy of the Fraternity, to the tavern room where they are used to gathering in Act IV.

Later on, the Brotherhood is joined by Cookbrain in disguise, who wants to spy on its members in order to “hoist them up” (III, 1, speech 495) and drive them all away from Covent Garden. He introduces himself as a harmless tavern singer, one who “can sing extempore upon any theme that your fancy or the present occasion shall administer” (III, 1, speech 506). He is immediately rejected by the group, struck, kicked, jeered at and insulted without being recognized as the Justice of Peace, neither by his son Anthony. If the situation is amusing for many aspects, the latent gratuitous violence of the characters starts to unsettle and discomfort.

The place has also strong economic and capitalistic implications and allows Brome to treat the topical issue of high bills in dining establishments. When the group is to leave the tavern, Captain Driblow is given the bill of forty shillings and three pence and refuses to pay for it. What is interesting is how each character copes with this issue since they represent different points of view in the economic system: the drawer, the master, who is the owner of the tavern, and the clients, whose relationship with money varies according to their social position, and in this case, also according to their role in the brotherhood. Actually, Clotpoll, as a new follower, is immediately ordered to pay the bill for the whole Brotherhood, whereas the other characters express their view on the sum: if the captain finds the bill “very reasonable” just because, as leader of the group, he is not expected to pay it, the mean gentleman Nicholas asks for a discount (“Forty shillings and three pence. You’ll bate the three pence, will you not?,” III, 1, speech 578) expressing his customary unwillingness to pay the full sum. Anthony, by contrast, revealing a citizen-like attitude, wishes to see the itemized bill before letting Clotpoll pay it, and complains about its excessive amount:

Bread and beer, one shilling four pence. I do not think we four could eat three pence of bread and, for my part, I drank but two glasses of beer. [...] Nay, an't be at the bar, it stands for law. Well, wine five shillings nine pence, I think we had no less. A shoulder of mutton stuffed with oysters, eight shillings, that cost your master very near ten groats; a brace of partridge, five shillings; a couple of cocks, four shillings six pence; a dozen of larks, twenty pence; anchovies, six shillings. I swear, but a saucer full! (III, 1, speeches 583, 589)

Actually, as Kaufmann²⁵⁸ has shown, the price of the larks is doubled and two cocks should have cost one shilling instead of four, to cite just a few. In turn, the drawer justifies the exorbitant price replying that his “master sits at dear rent” (III, 1, speech 579).

Nicholas and Anthony decide to take advantage financially of Clotpoll's gullible credulity so that they receive from him the full sum for the meal pretending to pay it, whereas they disappear leaving Clotpoll broke and unable to pay it so that he is obliged to borrow a coin from Cockbrain and leave his sword and coat to the drawer a pawn:

Clotpoll: Where be my Brothers, Drawer?
Drawer: Gone, sir, and have sent me to you for the reckoning.
Clotpoll: I protest, you jest, do you not? I gave 'em the full sum, and all the money I had, I protest, I swear, I vow. [*Aside*] Now they are not here, I may make bold with their words. They have my money, I am sure.
Drawer: If you have no money, pray leave a pawn, sir.
Clotpoll: Take him there, put him in a cage, and let him sing it out.
Drawer: We know him not, sir.
Clotpoll: No? He said he had the favour of the house to sing to gentlemen.
Cockbrain: [*Aside*] I fear I shall be discovered. [*Aloud*] Sir, I can give your worship credit for a piece till you come to your lodging. [*COCKBRAIN gives CLOTPOLL a coin*]
Clotpoll: 'Protest, thou art generous; nay, I know where to find 'em; and thou shalt go with me to 'em, we will not part now, we'll shown 'em. I vow, I'll leave my sword for tother piece. [*CLOTPOLL offers his sword as surety; DRAWER refuses to accept it*]
Drawer: Your sword will not serve, sir, I doubt.
Clotpoll: Take my coat too; [*CLOTPOLL offers both his sword and his coat; DRAWER accepts them*] a friend and a battoon is better than a coat and a sword at all times. (III, 1, speeches 609-619)

Act IV is made up of two scenes set in taverns, one of which is again within the Goat Tavern. The former scene “is full of a turbulent energy, with more and more characters arriving on the stage to participate in or observe the chaos and violence of the

²⁵⁸ Kaufmann, p. 71 (note 9).

lives of the prostitutes.”²⁵⁹ Brome portrays two prostitutes,²⁶⁰ Betty and Francisca, on stage armed with swords drawn. This creates a comic, exciting and disconcerting situation, “in its transgression of stock gender roles.”²⁶¹ Actually, they are in search of a masculine type of duel between them for one of their clients so that they have locked the doors of the tavern in order not to be interrupted. Not only do they overturn the usual picture of gender roles, but also modify the space of the tavern dividing it into two parts (women’s space inside and men’s one outside), thus both creating a new situation and influencing the social interaction of the place. They prevent Nicholas and Anthony from coming on stage so that their voices can only be heard from offstage while attempting to force the door:

Nicholas: (*Within*) Why, Betty, Frank, you mankind carrions you! I vow, open the door! Will you both kill one another, and cozen the hangman of his fees?

Betty: Thou hadst been better have bit off the dugs of thy dam, thou pin-buttock jade, thou, than have snapped a bit of mine from me.

Francisca: Here’s that shall stay your stomach better than the bit you snarl for. Thou greedy brach, thou.

Nicholas: (*Within*) Why, wenches, are ye wild? Break open the doors. (IV, 1, speeches 702-05)

Once entered the tavern, Nicholas informs them that the client they were quarrelling over has been badmouthing them, saying that they are “both poor whores, not poor alone, but foul infectious harlots and that he wears your marks hopeless to claw them off. With constant purpose never to see you more, unless to greet [their] bumping buttocks with revengeful feet” (IV, 1, speech 715). As soon as the citizen enters, attention is turned to him so that he becomes the target of the prostitutes.

IN PERFORMANCE

During the workshop, the scene was played with different tones, from farce to serious drama since this attack can potentially contain many aspects. Under the eyes of

²⁵⁹ Leslie, 2010, note Act IV, 1.

²⁶⁰ “Taverns were places where casual prostitutes might drop in, but there were also prostitutes who were regulars. Prostitutes sometimes had special arrangements with tavern employees to steer customers their way for a share of profits,” in Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.

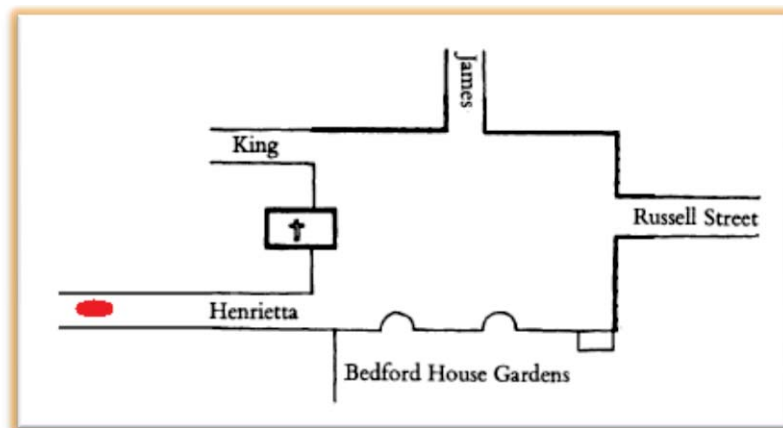
²⁶¹ Leslie, 2010, notes associated with video CG_4_2.

Clotpoll, Anthony, Nicholas and Cockbrain incognito, the prostitutes start beating their client so violently that only the intervention of the disguised Justice of Peace can protect him from the women' fury. Yet, his false beard²⁶² and wig come off arousing a violent reaction from Nicholas who takes him for a disguised villain, and urges his fellows to hang him without examination “for doing the state so good service” (IV, 1, speech 774). Yet, Cockbrain is recognized and saved by his own son Anthony who, without revealing his discovery, encourages his friends to leave as soon as possible since the tavern is no longer a safe place: “but let's away, and quickly – our stay is dangerous” (IV, 1, speech 771).

3.1.6

Inside the Paris Tavern

Act IV, scene 2 is set in a new different location, the Paris Tavern,²⁶³ where two scenes of the play take place. Kept by the Frenchman Robert Brasseiur or Brewer between 1633 and 1643, the tavern happened to be at No. 14 Henrietta Street, in an area with a fast growing French protestant group.



The location is anticipated in III, 1, when Mihil invites his friends to the Paris tavern: “You must all presently to the Paris Tavern. [...] Master Mihil bade me tell you so”

²⁶² Brome uses the device of prosthetic beards in such plays as *The Court Beggar*, *The Love-Sick Court* and *The Demoiselle*, and it is a behaviour repeatedly linked to *The Weeding of Covent Garden*. See also E. Rycroft, “The deployment of artificial and natural beards in the plays of Richard Brome,” *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

²⁶³ The tavern is marked in the map by a red spot.

(III, 1, speeches 548, 550) and in III, 2 when Crosswill's servant Belt, in search of his master's son, has difficulties in finding it: "I beat all the rest of the bushes in this forest of fools and madmen and cannot find 'em, I, where ever they be" (III, 2, speech 695).

Actually, Belt cannot find it since the tavern, being unlicensed, is devoid of the bush-sign, the typical visual sign used by the hosts to identify and advertize their produce: "Here's no bush at this door, but good wine rides post upon, I mean, the sign-post" (IV, 2, speech 786). Braithwaithe in his *Laws of Drinking* (1617) explicitly says that "the trade of the ivy-bush" came to mean running a public house. From this habit probably arose the proverb "good wine needs no bush", that is if the wine was good, the tavern would become known without any help from the projecting bush.

Brome chooses to display his satire of the Puritanism inside an unlicensed tavern with prostitutes, dark spots and a conniving drawer, a place which mostly should mark the dichotomy between Gabriel's strict morality and the notorious habits of tavern haunters. Yet, this binary is gradually nullified by the time he gets more and more drunk. Actually, a place of excesses in drinking, gambling and sex is the arena where his two extreme polarities emerge. At first, he shows a scrupulously rigorous observance of laws and moral codes due to his Puritanism which had totally transformed him, as Dorcas remarks seeing him after a long time: "How came my cousin Gabriel thus translated, out of gay clothes, long hair, and lofty spirit, stout and brave action, manly carriage, into so strict a reformation? Where is the martial humour he was wont so to affect?" (IV, 2, speech 851). At this stage the tavern is still a devilish temptation for him, a place full of tricks, like women: "Women! Pray, brother, let's avoid the place, let us fly it. What should we do with women in a tavern?" (IV, 2, speech 811).

Kaufmann goes further by identifying Gabriel's religious fanaticism with a form of madness, "a crime against moderation and self-control."²⁶⁴ By degrees, Gabriel is affected by a progressive loss of control owing to the effects of wine which makes him reconsider the function of taverns praising their utility since "holy men have gone to taverns and made good use of 'em upon their peregrinations" (IV, 2, speech 797). Much comedy springs from the puns on brethren and brothers when Gabriel identifies the hooligans followers of the Brotherhood (who call themselves 'brothers' due to their common membership to

²⁶⁴ Kaufmann, p. 85.

the secret fraternity) with the Puritan Brethrens and takes the prostitutes for irreprehensible Puritan matrons. This comic misunderstanding, combined with the effects of wine, leads him to have a violent reaction, both verbally and physically, which works as a sort of parody of the real violence perpetrated by Mihil and Nicholas against the citizen or by the prostitutes against their client. When he perceives that Nicholas has outraged his beloved and virtuous Dorcas by calling her Dammy, he draws his sword creating a grotesque atmosphere:

Nicholas: Yes, in their tribe. But I thought he had been too holy for them.

But Dammy –

Gabriel: O, fearfully profane!

Nicholas: You said you had a story to relate, of dire misfortune, and of unquoth hearing. I come to hear your story. What stop you your ears at, sir?

Gabriel: I dare not speak it but in thy reproof. Thou swearest G O D, D A M N thee, as I take it.

Nicholas: I vow thou liest, I called her Dammy, because her name is Damyris.

Gabriel: I say thou liest, her name is Dorcas, which was the name of an holy woman [*GABRIEL draws his sword*]

Nicholas: Shall we have things and things? I vow! [*NICHOLAS*] draw[*s his sword*]

Clotpoll: And I protest! [*CLOTPOLL*] draw[*s his sword*]

Mihil: [*Aside*] This will spoil all. [*Aloud*] Brother, I pray forbear.

Gabriel: I may not forbear, I am moved for to smite him; yea, with often stripes to smite him; my zealous wrath is kindled, and he shall fly before me.

(IV, 2, speeches 887-896)

Crosswill's sudden arrival, which temporarily interrupts the scene, is anticipated by the drawer who promptly announces his entrance: "sir, there's an old angry gentleman below, that asks for you, and by all description for that mortified gentleman. And will by all means press into your room here," (IV, 2, speech 959) so that, by the time he enters, the company has already put the blind drunk Gabriel asleep on a bed in another room. Despite Crosswill's fury at finding his son in a notorious tavern, not "fit for the son of a gentleman of quality"(IV, 2, speech 981) instead that while studying law, as he had promised, Mihil manages to manipulate him so that not only Crosswill pays the reckoning for the whole group but is also driven away, letting the company free to sup together: "there was no way to get this money and be rid of him, but to offer him my service. He would have driven me

out before him else. But come, let's see my brother that went to sleep in so warlike a passion. I hope he'll wake in a better" (IV, 2, speech 1005).

Religion is evoked again in the Paris Tavern in Act V, 3, where all the characters converge for the conclusion of the play. Within the rooms of this unlicensed tavern, three weddings take place: Nicholas marries Dorcas, though reluctantly, Mihil Lucy and Anthony Katherine. As we have noticed in the previous tavern scenes, Brome never stages a religious space but addresses his anti-puritanical satire through the vehicle of the tavern space, one of the most hateful places for Puritans and, as Michael Leslie remarks as for the three weddings, "there are no surrounding and supporting structures of ecclesiastical architecture, sacred space, ritual, liturgy, or formal clothing, nothing that either we or Brome's contemporaries would think typical of such events: Crosswill commands the Parson simply to say the bits of the marriage service that he can remember, since there is not even a book available."²⁶⁵ Interestingly, the only book on stage in the play is the one providing the rules of the Brotherhood, which is kissed during the Clotpoll's initiation as if it were a Bible so that the tavern is, in a sense, made a sacred space by the presence of the fraternity.

In the meantime, Gabriel, brought on stage on a bed with two prostitutes, wakes up readopting his pre-Puritan character and showing an unexpected enthusiasm for militia performances and turns himself into the paladin of Covent Garden under the eyes of a perplex Crosswill:

Gabriel: A still march now. So, I have lost a great many of my men. But courage yet, you poor remainder of my scattered troops. Stand. Qui va la? An ambuscade of the enemy. Alarm! Lieutenant, charge in with your shot. Now, gentlemen, for the honour of Covent Garden, make a stand with your pikes; in to the short sword; well fought, take prisoners. Sound a retreat now. Fair, fair i' th' coming off. So, 'twas bravely performed. [...]
Crosswill: Is't possible it is thou? Art thou run mad as far as hell the tother way now? (V, 3, speeches 1165, 1169)

The *coup de théâtre* is represented by Cockbrain's arrival, the moral guardian of Covent Garden, with the members of the watch, which is a threaten for all the presents and the host himself: "O tarry, gentlemen, we are all undone else. If you make not your peace

²⁶⁵ Leslie, 2010, introduction, p. 64.

before you stir, both you and I must suffer. [...] There's no escaping forth. And gentlemen, it will but breed more scandal on my house, and the whole plantation here, if now you make rebellious uproar. Yield your weapons, and welcome justice but like subjects new, and peace will follow" (V, 3, speeches 1187, 1192).

Covent Garden, far from being as lawless as the citizen claims ("Well, sir, I hope this quarter will not be always lawless Well, sir," IV, 2, speech 732), is only lacking of order and authority, but, actually, is full of laws that people seem not to respect such as the regulation of the number of taverns, the Royal building Proclamations which should limit the uncontrolled urban sprawl, or the limits of prices in taverns, to cite just a few. As Martin Butler has remarked,²⁶⁶ all the characters reveal a deep commitment to a particular code of laws: the law of money and trade, the Royal Proclamations which constitute the framework of the story, the rules of the Brotherhood in opposition to Gabriel's Puritanical moral code which decrees the lawfulness of other people's actions, Mihil's concept of law as a means of circumventing and disorienting people. Finally, the law of the tavern where hosts are able to reckon higher bills unlawfully since "all's law, I tell you, all's law in taverns" (III, 2, speech 591).

After the general *anagnorisis*, all the masks are put down and the characters reveal their real identity and inner objectives: Anthony greets his father by removing his disguise, Gabriel admits his Puritanism was a pretence to aggravate his father and Dorcas reappears after a long absence. The only low-class characters who really takes advantage of the situation is the prostitute Marge, who receives some money from Mihil to buy "a license to sell ale, tobacco, and strong-water" (V, 3, speech 1092) in Codpiece-Row, in Whitechapel, whose notorious fame was connected to the numerous brothels. The play thus ends with the reconciliations between fathers and children and the banishment of both the members of the Brotherhood and the prostitutes, who avoid being arrested owing to the citizen accepting a bribe to drop all the charged against them.

What emerges is that the choice of Covent Garden as setting is highly strategic: on the one hand, it allowed Brome to present a cross-section of London society gathering in a single place all its variety, from the prostitutes to the landlord. On the other hand, the playwright was able to discuss topical issues connected to the controversial contemporary

²⁶⁶ Butler, 1984, p. 157.

development of the Russell Estate such as property speculation, price rise and legality. Covent Garden mirrors a society under pressure and in transition, questioning, after the dismissal of those who were supposed to “pester or [...] vilify this ground,” if actually “nobility doth shine Fair Covent Garden” (V, epilogue, speech 1250).

3.2

The English Moor:

The devil looks ten times worse with a white face

While in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* Brome sets the play in two well-known contemporary taverns in the milieu of Covent Garden, the Goat Tavern and the Paris Tavern, five years later, in his city comedy *The English Moor*, he exploits this device again with other aims and results. He puts on stage the celebrated Devil Tavern in Fleet Street (Act III) and an unknown inn whose name and location are never mentioned (Act V). Both of them are examples of strategic use of space, and play a crucial, but radically different, role in the development of the plot: the former acquires a more symbolic meaning in the dynamics of the play, whereas the latter, working as a device where the characters can gather, provides the basis for the resolution of the plot.

3.2.1

Critical approaches

Till recent times, the setting of *The English Moor* has not aroused much interest and the Devil Tavern has been investigated for its history, its position in the city and its well-known habitual frequenters (Ben Jonson, Evelyn, Swift, Steele, Pepys) but never in relation with Brome. The studies on this tavern cover a period between the end of the 19th century and the mid 1950s and offer two main perspectives: on the one hand, from a historical one, the Devil Tavern is mentioned among the most “immortal taverns of Fleet Street”²⁶⁷ in the 17th century, like in Henry C. Shelley’s *Inns and Taverns of Old London*, which goes over the

²⁶⁷ Shelley, p. 48.

history of inns and taverns from the Middle Ages till their evolution into coffee houses, and in J. H. Burn's *Descriptive Catalogue of the London Traders, Taverns and Coffee-House Tokens*.

²⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Devil Tavern has been taken into consideration by Percy Simpson,²⁶⁹ Kathryn Anderson McEuen²⁷⁰ and John Buxton²⁷¹ only for its connection with Jonson and his literary circle.

It is worthwhile noting that almost all scholars who have discussed *The English Moor* allude to the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street only as a setting of one scene of the play without analyzing it in detail and do not even mention the anonymous inn staged in Act V. Neither Kaufmann and Shaw, who have written monographs on Brome, mention the location. The former sees it as an anti-usury play owing to the centrality of the usurer Quicksands and compares it to *The Demoiselle*, whereas the latter focuses on the three levels of plot which constitute the story. From 1980s, Kim Hall²⁷² and Anthony Berthelmy²⁷³ have chosen a different path from previous approaches, discussing the play within the wider context of works on blackness in early modern England and reflecting on the concept of race.²⁷⁴ In accordance with this view, Virginia Mason Vaughan,²⁷⁵ Athena Efthathiou-Lavabre,²⁷⁶ and Farah Karim-Cooper explore the play for its meta-theatrical qualities and the theatrical representations of black beauty through cosmetics.

²⁶⁸ H. B. H. Beaufoy, J. H. Burn, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the London Traders, Tavern and Coffee-House Tokens Current in the Seventeenth Century*, London: Printed for the use of the members of the Corporation of the City of London, 1853.

²⁶⁹ Percy Simpson, "Ben Jonson and the Devil Tavern" in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Jul., 1939, pp. 367-373;

²⁷⁰ Kathryn Anderson McEuen, *Classical Influence upon the Tribe of Ben, a Study of Classical Elements in the Non-Dramatic Poetry of Ben Jonson and His Circle*, Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1939.

²⁷¹ John Buxton, "The Poets' Hall Called Apollo" in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan., 1953), pp. 52-54.

²⁷² Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994.

²⁷³ Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne*, Louisiana: LSU Press, 1987, pp. 140-3.

²⁷⁴ For an overview of current approaches to race in early modern literature, see Joyce Green MacDonald, *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002, Mary Floyd-Wilson, "Moors, Race, and the Study of English Renaissance Literature: A Brief Retrospective," *Literature Compass* 3.5, 2006.

²⁷⁵ Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

²⁷⁶ "Dans cette comédie aux multiples déguisements et métamorphoses, la mise en scène du noir et blanc revêtu galement une dimension théâtrale et métathéâtrale," Athéna Efthathiou-Lavabre, "Beauté noire et Théâtre dans *The English Moor, or the Mock-Marriage* de Richard Brome", in (eds) Line Cottagnies, Tony Gheeraert, Gisèle Venet, *La Beauté et ses monstres dans l'Europe baroque 16e-18e siècles*, Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2003, pp. 217-29, p. 218

The influential reading of Matthew Steggle²⁷⁷ opens up further possibilities of analysis combining all the issues discussed by previous criticism, with a marked concern for the racial implications from a 20th century perspective and the concept of space. He examines how Brome stages disability (in the form of the changeling Timsy, the disable son of the main character, the usurer Quicksands's) and race bearing directly on the emerging community of black residents in London, whose presence is documented by the pioneering studies of Imtiaz H. Habib.²⁷⁸ As for space, not only does he examine in detail the scene at the Devil Tavern as a further example of place realism (like in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and in *The City Wit*) considering its history, token and specific features, but he also presents London “as the middle link in an economic and trading chain that runs from the linen industries of East Anglia, out past Venice into an ill-defined but potent idea of Barbary.”²⁷⁹

Following the lead of Steggle, I will show the strategic function of the Devil Tavern and of the unknown inn (which has been neglected by all scholars apart from Steggle who mentions it *en passant* as only for the function of its host²⁸⁰) and I will discuss how the main issues of the play are developed through the setting, investigating in terms of space the multiple meanings of the opposition black and white, which is at the basis of the story. I conceive this binary as a contrast between Englishness and otherness as the oxymoronic title of the play suggests: actually, I see the black and white opposition in terms of race since “the binarism of black and white might be called the originary language of racial difference in English culture.”²⁸¹ I will develop my view of space as an opposition between the space of ‘white Englishness’ and the one of ‘black otherness,’²⁸² with all the resonances and implications in terms of gender, race, otherness, theatrical techniques, cosmetics and sexual politics that this strong dichotomy is rich in.

²⁷⁷ Matthew Steggle, introduction to *The English Moor* in *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4; Steggle, 2004.

²⁷⁸ Imtiaz H. Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677*, imprints of the invisible, Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate, 2008.

²⁷⁹ Steggle, 2004, pp. 123, 130.

²⁸⁰ Steggle, 2010, note associated to Act V.

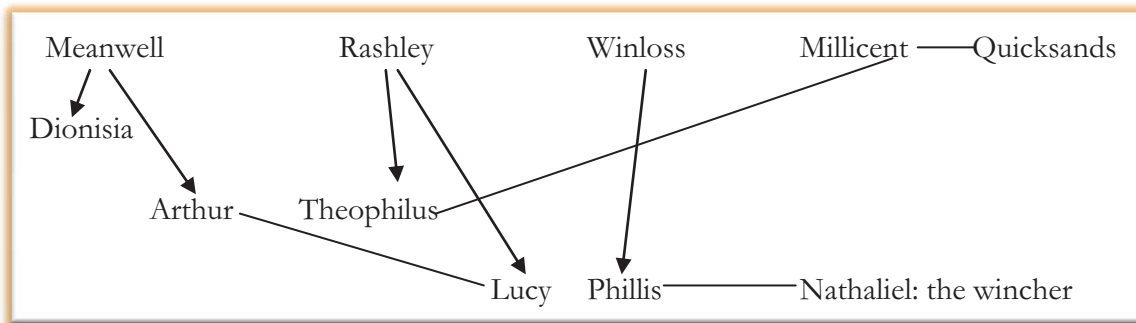
²⁸¹ Hall, p. 2.

²⁸² It is interesting to mark that the same phrase “quaint device” it is used in the stage direction of *The Tempest* (III, 3, speech 52) to describe the vanishing of Ariel’s banquet in a play deeply concerned with alterity in which a character, the savage Caliban, is called by his master “thing of darkness.”

3.2.2

The plot

A brief summary of the play is needed owing to its complexity and the multiple levels of plot.



Before the beginning of the play, the gentlemen Meanwell and Rashley quarrel and disappear, seemingly having killed each other. This creates a feud between the children belonging to the two families, respectively, Dionisia and Arthur, and Lucy and Theophilus (even if actually Arthur and Lucy are in love). Theophilus is in love (and loved in return) with Millicent, who has been obliged to marry the old usurer Quicksands. At the same time, a group of friends of Theophilus and enemies to the usurer want to take revenge on Quicksands, who has lent them money, by making him a cuckold. Among them, there is the womanizer Nathaniel who has seduced and abandoned Phillis, the daughter of the impoverished gentleman Winloss. In order to avoid being cuckolded, Quicksands pretends that Millicent has died and that he has remarried a black slave, who actually is the young woman in disguise. During a chaotic evening at Quicksands's house, Nathaniel seduces a black woman whom the usurer supposes to be his wife so that he immediately demands a divorce from her. Only when Nathaniel proposes to the blackamoor, the woman turns out to be Phillis, to much bewilderment on everyone's part. By a "domino progression [...] Arthur and Lucy, Millicent and Theophilus, and Nathaniel and Phillis are brought to the altar" and with the return of Meanwell and Rashley, back from France after rescuing Winloss, Phillis's father, from incarceration there, "the virtuous are rewarded and those

who engaged in folly are brought to a sense of their own faults for the final scene of harmony and forgiveness.”²⁸³

The dualism which emerges in the plot is reflected in one of the locations chosen by Brome as setting: the Devil Tavern. The dramatist plays on the ordinary full name of the tavern, the tavern of the Devil and St. Dunstan which, owing to its double reference to the devil and a saint, contributes to reinforce the dichotomy that constitutes the play. The history of the Devil Tavern will help to clarify its iconographical value, its function, and its contribution to the symbolism of *The English Moor*.

3.2.3

The History Of The Devil Tavern

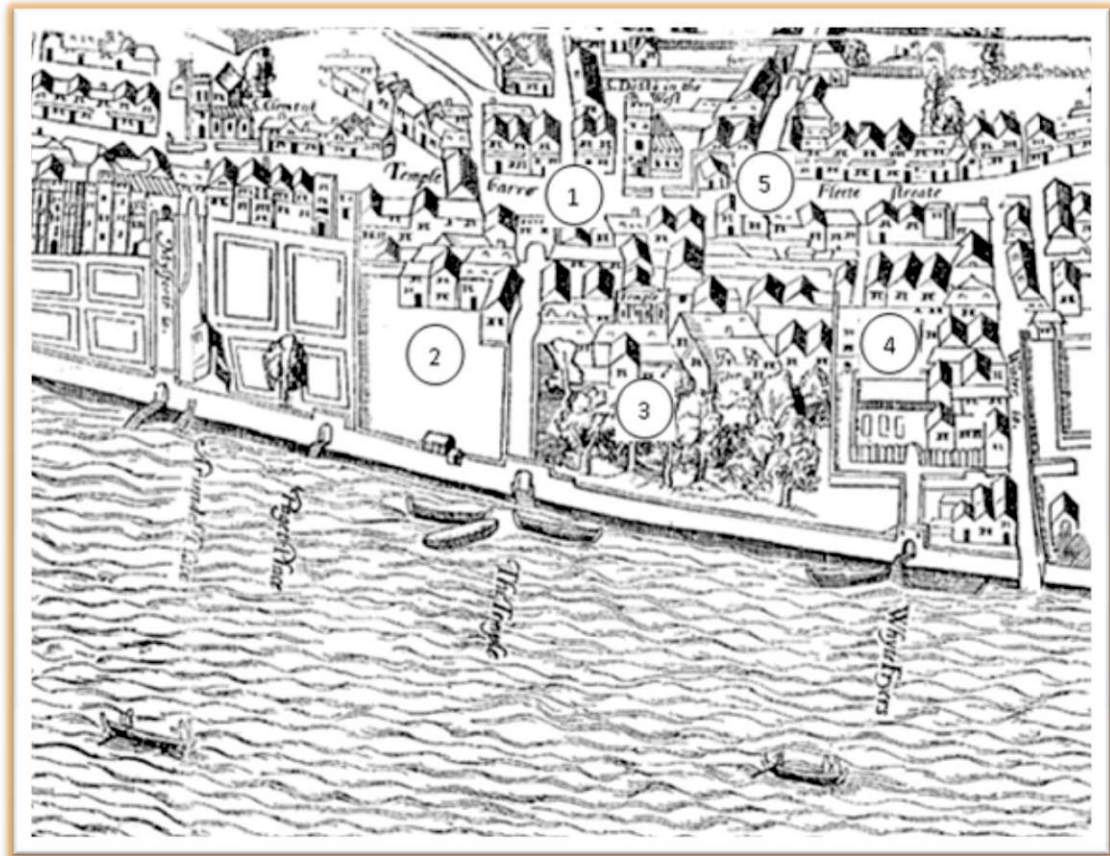
The tavern of the Devil and St. Dunstan at no. 2, Fleet Street, was one of the leading and oldest of Temple Bar. Mentioned for the first time in 1563 in an interlude called Jackie Jugeler as a house of old reputation,²⁸⁴ the tavern is named after the legend of the 10th century saint Dunstan. While he was working at his forge, the devil tried to tempt him in the disguise of a beautiful woman. Dunstan pulled the devil by the nose with pincers so that he regained his original shape.²⁸⁵ Till 1627, the hostelry was kept by Simon Wadlow, mentioned in Jonson’s *Staple News* where there is also a hint at the Apollo Room: “dine in Apollo, with Pecunia / At brave Duke Wadloe’s.” After his death, the business was carried on by his wife for three years and later by his son John till December 1660.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Shaw, p. 53.

²⁸⁴ When the characters is asked where his master and he lived, he replies: “at the Devyllyf you lust, I cannot tell!”

²⁸⁵ Dr Jortin affirms that “the devils used often to appear to the monks in the figure of Ethiopian boys or men; thence probably the painters learned to make the Devil black” in *Prelate of St. Dunstan’s-in-the-East* (1751). Interestingly, while painting Millicent, Quicksands speaks of the beauty of an ‘Ethiopian face’ compared to a white one. Cited also in Burn, pp. 103-5.

²⁸⁶ On the 22nd April 1661, the day before Charles II’s coronation, Pepys claims that “Wadlow, the vintner at the Devil in Fleet street, did lead a fine company of soldiers, all young comely men, in white doublets” and, in 1666, he was wealthy enough to rebuild the Sun Tavern near the Royal Exchange.



- 1- Temple Bar 2- Middle Temple 3- Inner Temple 4- Whitefriars
 5- Fleet Street

As Matthew Steggle has pointed out, the location works as a literary homage to Jonson who had passed away in 1637, when the play was being written. Firstly, there is a remarkable profusion of references to his works such as the *Masque of Blackness* (1605), as for the blackface make-up used to disguise Millicent, *Epicoene*²⁸⁷ (1609), *The Devil is an Ass* (1616) and *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621). Furthermore, the history of the Devil Tavern is intertwined with the fame of Jonson, one of its most renowned and assiduous goers. His attendance must have started by 1616 since he claimed to be drinking “bad wine at the Devil” while writing *The Devil is an Ass* and many of his major works seem to have been inspired by the gatherings there. The place was Jonson’s ‘reign’ so that the admittance used to be regarded as an honour which meant the membership in the selected tribe of the Sons of Ben. Under his aegis, the club of his adopted artistic sons (“the learned and witty, the

²⁸⁷ In Richard Brome, *The English Moore; or The Mock-Marriage*, (ed) Sara Jayne Steen, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983. In the introduction, Steen draws an exhaustive comparison with *Epicoene*.

jovial and gay, the generous and honest, compose our free state”) used to hold their meetings in a large upper room called Apollo Room. Innkeepers had a habit of giving special names to the rooms in their taverns but, in this case, the mythological name is due to Jonson who takes inspiration from Plutarch’s *Life of Lucullus*²⁸⁸ (Ch. XLI). According to the story, Pompey and Cicero manage to get themselves invited to dinner at Lucullus’s house. Actually, they were eager to know what kind of meal Lucullus was used to eating alone, since he was famous for his lavish banqueting. They prevent him from informing his servants that there are some guests. Yet, Lucullus outwits them by ordering his servants to prepare the Apollo Room. Each room of his house was associated with a precise expense for dinner, and the Apollo, being one of the costliest (fifty-thousand drachmas), was used for special occasions: therefore Lucullus’s servants know what they had to serve and Pompey and Cicero experience a pantagruelic meal.



Poet Thomas Randolph (1605 - 1635) is introduced to Ben Jonson (seated foreground) and to the Ben’s sons at the Devil Tavern. Around 1630.

The room was also known as ‘the Oracle of Apollo,’ a title which seems appropriate for the tribe of ‘Ben’s sons’ owing to Apollo’s patronage of artists and musicians, and his oracular powers. This provided their gatherings with an esoteric connotation and made Jonson a sort of new Delphic Pythia. Interestingly, while, according

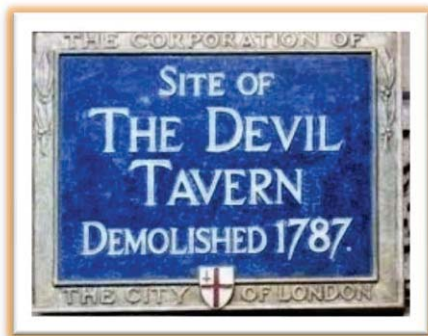
²⁸⁸ Plutarch (c. 50 – 120 A.D.) is a Greek biographer, essayist and historian. He is known for the *Parallel Lives*, in which he pairs the biographies of Romans and Greeks, comparing and contrasting their lives. Lucullus (c. 118-57 B.C.), who is paired with the Athenian politician Kimon, is a Roman politician whose fame for his lavish banquets led to the coinage of the word ‘lucullan’ meaning ‘luxurious.’

to mythology, Pythia used to fall in a trance induced by vapours, the playwright seemed to have a passion for incense, as Henry Shelley reminds: “Incense was an essential if Jonson was to be kept in good humour. Many anecdotes testify to that fact.”²⁸⁹

The bust of the Greek and Roman god of poetry welcomed the guests who were entering the room and the board²⁹⁰ over it read:

Welcome all who lead or follow
To the Oracle of Apollo - Here he speaks
out of his pottle, or the tripos, his tower bottle: all his answers are divine,
truth itself doth bow in wine. Hang up all the poor hop-drinkers, cries old
Sam, the king of skinkers; he the half of life abuses, that sits watering with
the Muses. Those dull girls no good can mean us; wine it is the milk of
Venus, and the poet's horse accounted: ply it, and you all are mounted.
Cheers the brains, makes wit the quicker. Pays all debts, cures all diseases,
and at once three senses pleases. Welcome all who lead or follow, to the
Oracle of Apollo.

Inside the room, over the chimney, Jonson put his own code of laws, his *Leges Conviviales* concerning etiquette at the tavern written in Latin and inspired by Horace and Martial,²⁹¹ still existing only in the English translation of Alexander Brome, one of Ben's poetical sons. His laws concern many aspects of the gatherings, from food and drink, to the admittance.



Even after Jonson's death, in 1637, the Devil Tavern remained “a place sacred to mirth tempered with discretion,”²⁹² where generations of London ‘wits’ like Pepys, Evelyn, Steele, Swift, Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson used to gather and was regarded as a prestigious location so that in 1746 the Royal Society

anniversary was held there. In 1771, the tavern was accidentally set on fire, yet, not seriously but it fell into disuse. Finally, the site, demolished in 1787, is now occupied by Child's Place, built by the eminent banker Child in 1788.

²⁸⁹ Shelley, p. 51.

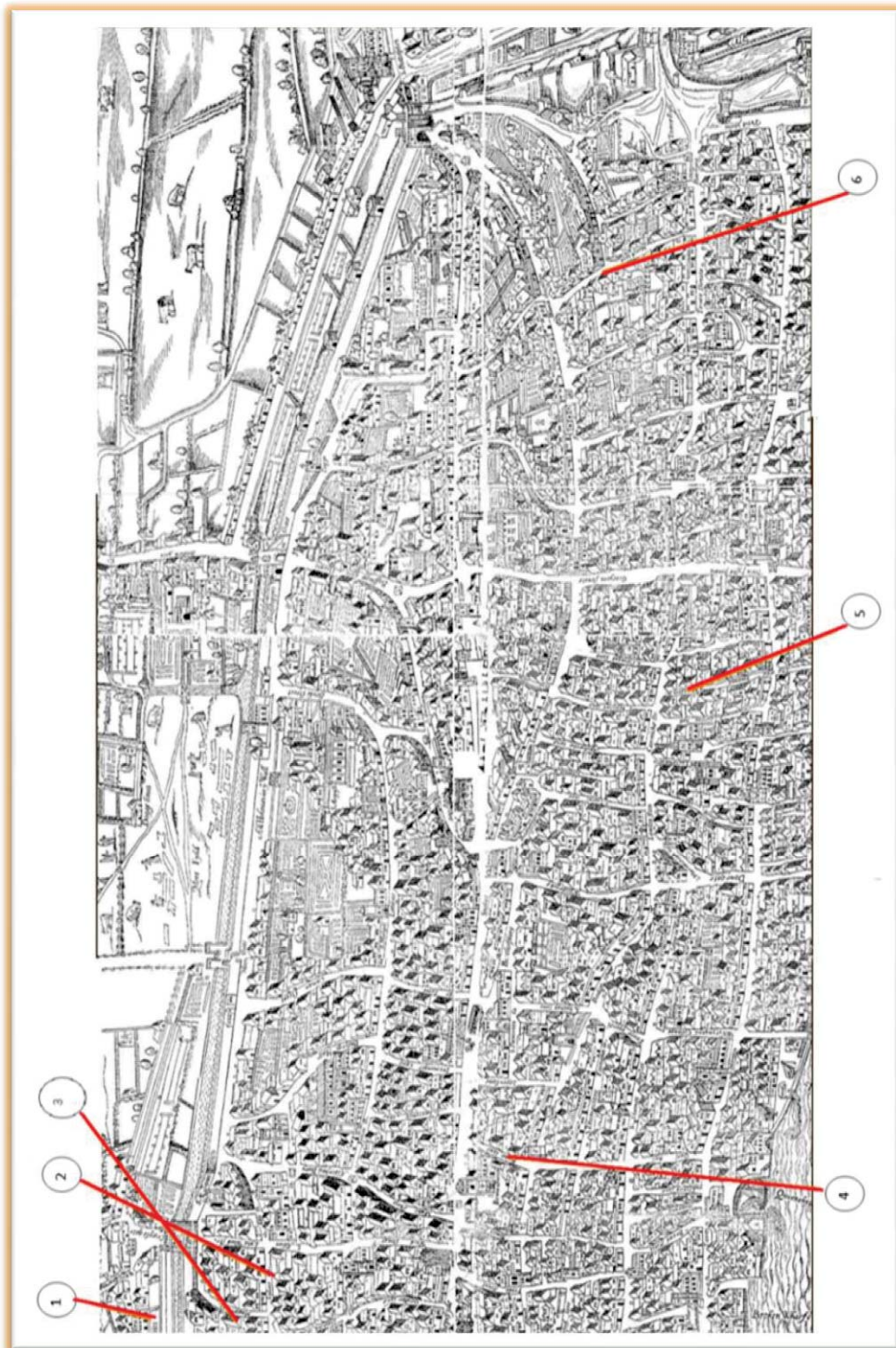
²⁹⁰ The bust is still conserved at the bank of Messrs Child and co., now occupying the site of the tavern.

²⁹¹ Joshua Scodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton UP, 2002. Horace (65 B.C. - 8 B.C.) was a Roman poet under Augustus, famous for his *Odes*, *Satires*, *Epistles* and *Ars Poetica* which was first translated into English by Ben Jonson. Martial (41 A.D. - 104 A.D.) was known for his *Epigrams* in which he satirized Roman city life.

²⁹² Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, vol. 2.

3.2.4

The place within the play



1- Cripplegate
5- St. Martin

2- Silver Street
6- Mark Lane

3- Muggle Street

4- Bow Lane

The play is much concerned with space and is thick with London place-names and references connected to the world of law, like the Lyon's Inn (an Inn of Chancery) and trade like Mark Lane²⁹³ where the usurer is from (a corruption of Mart Lane, derived from the market held there in the reign of Edward I),²⁹⁴ St. Martin's (III, 3, speech 571, a disreputable area of London, near Eastcheap, known for the shops selling low-quality goods), Bow Lane (III, 3, speech 462, a street running through Cheapside, the same mentioned by Josina in *The City Wit*²⁹⁵), Muggle Street (III, 1, speech 453, a London street running south from St Giles Cripplegate to Silver Street) and taverns like the Stylliard, the Bridgefoot Bear, the Tuns, the Cats, and the Squirrels which contribute to create a realistic atmosphere. All the story takes place in the London milieu, mainly in domestic interior locations such as Rashley's and Quicksands's house, which is the most used. What emerges is the significant choice of staging also two indoor public places, a very famous one and one completely unknown.

	Meanwell's House	Rashley's House	Quicksands's House	Devil Tavern	Anonymous Inn	London Street
I, 1	X					
I, 2						X
I, 3			X			
II, 1		X				
II, 2			X			
II, 3	X					
III, 1			X			
III, 2				X		
III, 3		X				
IV, 1		X				
IV, 2			X			

²⁹³ The reference is to be found in Richard Brome, *The English Moore; or The Mock-Marriage*, (ed) Sara Jayne Steen, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983, 3.2.15-16, where the equivalent speech in Steggle's version lacks the reference to Mark Lane.

²⁹⁴ *The London Encyclopaedia*, (eds) Ben Weinreb, Christopher Hibbert, London: Macmillan, 1983; John Stow, (1598) *A Survey of London* (2vls), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908, Vol I, p. 149.

²⁹⁵ See chapter II, p. 56.

	Meanwell's House	Rashley's House	Quicksands's House	Devil Tavern	Anonymous Inn	London Street
IV, 3		X				
IV, 4			X			
IV, 5			X			
V, 1					X	
V, 2			X			

As emerges from the chart, only III, 2 is set in the Devil Tavern, yet the location is highly significant in the dynamics of the play for multiple reasons: firstly, as for the recurrence of the theme of the devil; secondly, as for its strategic position in the play; finally, as for the idea of space developed. Even though the tavern is put on stage only once, it is evoked very often since *The English Moor* is pervaded by references to the devil: the noun and its adjective recur eighteen times throughout the play and become a *leit-motif*: the name of the devil is evoked in numerous proverbial phrases such as “what devil’s this, raised?” (I, 2, speech 97), “the devil take the hindmost” (I, 1, speech 184), “This devil’s bird” (IV, 2, speech 742) and in curses like “that unworthy Quicksands, devil take him” (I, 2, speech 112). Most of the allusions are, in fact, connected to the usurer Mandeville: when the servant Buzzard hints at the disappearance of Millicent, he describes Quicksands’s house as full of devils, as if it were their natural habitat: “I shall ne’er forget it, that riotous wedding night: when Hell broke loose, and all the devils danced at our house, which made my master mad, whose raving made my mistress run away, whose running away was the cause of my turning away” (III, 3, speech 500). The usurer himself shows familiarity with the devil so that he claims to be in credit with him: “The devil owed me a spite and when he has ploughed an old man’s lust up, he sits grinning at him” (II, 2, speech 311). It is interesting to notice that the first name of the main character of the play, the usurer Mandeville, reflects his Mephistophelian nature and his close bond with the devil, as a “man-devil.” His surname is appropriate for a character who is defined as a “bottomless devourer of young gentlemen” (I, 1, speech 25), as treacherous as quicksand: actually, quicksand is deceptive since it is sometimes invisible and one notices it only while being sucked under the earth; it also evokes the idea of a painful death, a slow fall into a dark hell.

Furthermore, equating an usurer to a devil is to be found in *the Merchant of Venice* in which Shylock is explicitly addressed by his enemies as “a kind of devil,” “the devil himself,” “the very devil incarnation,” “cruel devil” (IV, 1, speech 217), “the devil [...] in the likeness of a Jew” (III, 1, speeches 19-21). The association between Shylock and Quicksands is cemented by the fact that the latter is three times referred to as “a jew.”²⁹⁶ A further connection to *the Merchant of Venice* is created by the fact that Quicksands takes inspiration for the diabolic idea of the disguise for Millicent as a black moor from Venice, during his “young factorship” (III, 1, speech 432).

Actually, the scene set in the Devil Tavern has a strategic position within the play. It is put in the middle of the play as a sort of ‘watershed’ which divides white from black (after this scene Millicent and Phillis have black make-up) and recalls many issues developed in the previous scene such as Millicent’s transformation into a black moor, the idea of otherness and a secret hidden in Quicksands’s past.

3.2.5

Introduction to the Devil Tavern

This scene is the eponymous moment of the play since Millicent is turned into the English Moor of the title. At the beginning of Act III, Quicksands sends his servants away in order to ‘run frantic through the streets’ of London in search of Millicent (the usurer pretends that Millicent has left him while she is actually hidden at home): in this scene Quicksands plans to dress her up as a Moorish servant with blackface make-up.

Quicksands: First know, my sweet, it was the quaint device
 Of a Venetian merchant, which I learnt
 In my young factorship
 Millicent: That of the moor?
 The blackamoor you spake of? Would you make
 An negro of me?
 Quicksands: Why, thinkst thou, fearful beauty,
 Has heaven no part in Egypt? Pray thee tell me,
 Is not an Ethiop face his workmanship
 As well as the fair’st lady’s? nay, more too

²⁹⁶Actually nothing in the play proves that the usurer is Jewish, but Jew seems to be used as a synonym for money-lender and as a way of reinforcing the connection with Shylock and the world of trade. See Steggle, 2004, p. 130.

Than hers, that daubs and makes adulterate beauty?
Some can be pleased to lie in oils and paste
At sin's appointment, which is thrice more wicked.
Be fearless, love; this alters not thy beauty,
Though, for a time, obscures it from our eyes.²⁹⁷
(III, 1, speeches 432, 435, 437)

The usurer evokes a wide geographical space: from England to Africa passing through Venice. The idea for the painting comes from Venice, one of the major trading ports between Western Europe and the Levant, a place full of theatrical resonances (*Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*) and economic and social implications. As for examples of black-skinned people, Quicksands turns to Egypt and Ethiopia, yet the idea of blackness is loaded with all the negative racial connotations. In the play blackness is evoked in relation to the slave trade when the usurer says “I have borrowed other moors of merchants / that trade in Barbary, whence I had my own here / and you shall see their way and skill in dancing” (IV, 5, speeches 720-722), he recalls his mercantile activities with Barbary, that is, North Africa and suggests the presence of other moors as servants in his house. As Habib records, in the period “merchants were not merely the main movers in bringing black people to Britain, but also feature prominently in the records of those who had black servants in their households.”²⁹⁸ This play seems to reflect the beginning of the gradual integration of black people in English society, though only in the lower classes since Africa is represented as an inferior country, exploitable economically and sexually and with one distinctive feature: blackness.

Beside Millicent, also Phillis is dressed up as a moor. The circumstances of her first meeting with Quicksands and the topic of their conversation are very relevant since we will hear of them in the following scene. As soon as she meets the usurer, she pretends to be from Norfolk, in East Anglia and to be looking for a job. She introduces herself as a ‘mawther,’ an East Anglian word which means “a girl or young woman” thus marking his supposed geographical provenance (that Quicksands despises). Norfolk is represented very accurately owing to the use of a specific Norfolk dialect and to numerous references to the

²⁹⁷ All the references from *The English Moor* are from R. Brome, *The English Moor*, Modern Text, edited by Matthew Steggle, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

²⁹⁸ Habib, pp. 88-93.

local textile industry.²⁹⁹ Steggle remarks a further connection between the milieu and contemporary England clarifying Brome's choice of this specific part of the countryside owing to contemporary implications: "the year 1638 would prove to be an important one for the industry's dealings with London. It was in this year, after long campaigning, that the Privy Council granted Norwich stuffs exemption from the usual need to be processed at Blackwell Hall by a team of inspectors and factors."³⁰⁰

Before offering her the role of lady's maid, he asks her with caution if she knows 'one Hulverhead' in Norfolk. Only, when she replies negatively, he seems relieved. Actually, Quicksands has hidden his mentally disabled son Timsy in Norfolk and has paid a farmer called Hulverhead to look after him. Therefore, otherness in its double form of Africa and Norfolk is deeply connected with the idea of blackness and all its implications. Now let us enter the Devil Tavern and see how all these issues are reposed and developed by Brome.

3.2.6

Inside the Devil Tavern (III, 2)

At the beginning of the scene we immediately realize we are inside the Devil Tavern looking at the sign of the tavern, which represents the devil reassuming his true shape (from a beautiful woman into a black monster), hanging over the stage. "Some sixteenth-century Court plays appear to have used both title- and locality *boards*"³⁰¹ often in the form of inn signs, to establish the location and make the audience aware of it. In this case, it also reminds the public of Millicent's and Phillis's transformation from white women into black moors, which is the focus of the play.

The womanizer Nathaniel with his friends Vincent and Edmund meet Quicksands's ex-servant Buzzard at the Devil Tavern, where they conjecture about what happened to Millicent, the wife of the usurer.

²⁹⁹ Brome employs specific words of the textile industry such as "trip-skin" (IV, 5, speech 859), "a piece of leather, worn on the right hand side of the petticoat, by spinners with the rock, on which the spindle plays, and the yarn is pressed by the hand of the spinner" (OED 1, quoting Forby's *Vocabulary of East Anglia*, 1825). Far from being just an example of local colour, Brome's use of the dialect in this play is comparable to the efficacious Somerset idiom in *The Sparagus Garden* and Yorkshire in *The Northern Lass*.

³⁰⁰ Steggle, 2004, p. 127.

³⁰¹ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992, p. 180.

Nathaniel: What excellent luck had we, friend Buzzard, to meet with thee, just as thy master cast thee off.

Buzzard: Just, sir, as I was going I know not whither: And now I am arrived at just I know not where. 'Tis a rich room, this. Is it not Goldsmiths' Hall?

Nathaniel: It is a tavern, man! And here comes the wine. (III, 2, speeches 480-82)

Brome catches the animated atmosphere of the tavern while evoking the powerful presence of Jonson, as if his master was still living and was ordering his favourite wine in the Apollo room, giving metaphorically his literary approval of the play: “[A drinker, within] Jerome, Jerome, draw a quart of the best canary³⁰² into the Apollo.” Buzzard’s reference to Goldsmiths’ Hall is consistent with the realistic setting of the scene for two aspects: on the one hand, it is an up-to-the-minute hint (since the building was completed in 1636, less than one year before the play was written). On the other hand, St. Dunstan was among the patrons of the goldsmiths and the tavern itself had stood next to a goldsmith’s shop since James I’s reign.

Quicksands’s servant has never come to a tavern before on his own so that he easily gets drunk, like the precise Gabriel in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* or Carlo in *Every Man Out of his Humour* (V, 3), where the character gets drunk after too many toasts. This kind of scene is quite common in Renaissance drama: beside representing a comic pause, they enable talented actors to display their abilities in shifting from different tones and attitudes, such as drunk weeping, drunk laughter, as well as in singing. Mindful of the Latin motto ‘in vino veritas’ (truth in wine), the three men try to take advantage of Buzzard’s naivety³⁰³ by making him get drunk in order to obtain information about Millicent’s disappearance:

Nathaniel: But the secret, friend, out with that, you must keep no secrets amongst friends.

Buzzard: If my mistress do bring him home a bastard, she’s but even with him.

³⁰² Jonson should describe his favourite drink, Canary wine, as a sort of ambrosial elixir vitae in his *Inviting a Friend to Supper*, “a pure cup of rich *Canary*-wine, [...] of which had Horace, or Anacreon tasted, / Their lives, as doe their lines, till now had lasted” (lines, 29, 31-32). See Bruce Thomas Boehrer, “Renaissance Overeating: The Sad Case of Ben Jonson,” *PMLA*, Vol. 105, No. 5, Oct., 1990), pp. 1071-1082.

³⁰³ Actually the buzzard is a bird proverbial for its stupidity, there the surname seems very appropriate for the character.

Nathaniel: He has one, I warrant! Has he, cadzooks?
 Buzzard: That he has, by this most delicate drink. But it is the arsy-versiest oaf that ever crept into the world. Sure, some goblin got it for him; or changed it in the nest, that's certain.
 Nathaniel: I vow thou utterest brave things. Is't a boy?
 Buzzard: It has gone for a boy in short coats and long coats this seven and twenty years.
 Edmund: An idiot, is it?
 Buzzard: Yes. A very natural; and goes a thissen; and looks as old as I do too. And I think if my beard were off, I could be like him: I have taken great pains to practise his speech and action to make myself merry with him in the country.
 Nathaniel: Where is he kept, friend, where is he kept?
 Buzzard: In the further side of Norfolk, where you must never see him. 'Tis now a dozen years since his father saw him, and then he compounded for a sum of money with an old man, one Hulverhead, to keep him for his lifetime; and he never to hear of him. But I saw him within these three months. We hearken after him, as land-sick heirs do after their fathers, in hope to hear of his end at last. (III, 2, speeches 516-529)

Even if they do not succeed in their objective, not receiving information about Millicent, unexpectedly they are told something stupefying: Quicksands has a mentally disabled illegitimate child, called Timsy, 27 years old, hidden “in the further side of Norfolk.” In Buzzard’s words, (probably influenced by his ex-master’s view) Norfolk is a remote region inhabited by simple people like Hulverhead, the East Anglian man paid by Quicksands to look after Timsy. His name, which has an East Anglian flavour, means “stupid, muddled, confused; as if the head were enveloped in a hulver bush” (OED, quoting a 19th vocabulary of East Anglian dialect).

Nathanie’s attention is aroused by what Buzzard unintentionally says about the resemblance between him and Timsy: “and looks as old as I do too. And I think if my beard were off, I could be like him: I have taken great pains to practise his speech and action to make myself merry with him in the country.” Therefore, the three men plan to disguise Buzzard as Timsy (and their friend Arnold, Rashley’s servant, as John Hulverhead) and send him to the usurer to make fun of him who is unaware of that fact that his secret has been revealed. From the point of view of the development of the story, the idea of Buzzard’s disguise represents the only contribution so that the relevance of this scene actually lies in the strong iconographic and symbolic value of the Devil Tavern.

On the other hand, in Act V, 1 the other location has a different function, providing the play with the beginning of the final *dénouement*.

3.2.7

Inside the Inn: Act V, 1

Brome takes stock of the situation both for the characters on stage and the audience, giving details of previous events and introducing characters who are unknown to the public. Actually, within the familiar place of the inn run by a reliable old friend, Meanwell, Rashley and Winloss (Phillis's father) reappear after a long absence in order to entrust to the host with what they had been doing for the past years:

Now, my good host, since you have been our friend and only counsel-keeper in our absence, to you, before we visit our own houses, we'll render a relation of our journey and what the motive was that drew us forth. 'Tis true, we did pretend a deadly quarrel at a great bowling match upon Blackheath went off; took horse; and several ways, forecast to meet at Dover, where we met good friends, and in one bark passed over into France: here, 'twas supposed, to fight, like fashion-followers that thither fly, as if no sand but theirs could dry up English blood. (V, 1, speech 916)

This location reproduces the basic dichotomy of the play. On the one hand, the contrast between black and white: the place where they meet, Dover, is famous for its white cliffs, whereas Blackheat (which is an area of open heathland, five miles to the south-east of central London) recalls blackness. On the other hand, there is also a hint at the contrast Englishness-otherness through the reference to English blood and France, to Dover which faces France, and Blackheath, which is the place where Henry V was welcomed after the battle of Agincourt in 1415 during the Hundred Years' War. Actually, the unnamed host of the inn is a choric figure reminiscent of the chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* or *The Winter's Tale*. Devoid of an individual personality, he has a mainly informative role, by allowing the characters to introduce themselves to the audience (who have only heard of them), and is merely practical when summarizing for the absent gentlemen and for the audience as well, the adventures of the children. He is a trustworthy figure as a confidant of the characters on stage and a popular one as host of the tavern for the audience. Despite not being personally involved in the development of the plot, the host appears to be well informed thanks to the information given by Rafe:

Rashley: How camest thou by this knowledge?

Host: Sir, I'll tell you. I have, i' th' house a guest, was once your man and served your son since you went o'er, I'm sure on't. [...] Most of his talk runs upon wenches mainly; And who loves who, and who keeps home, and so forth; And he told me the tale that I tell you. (V, 1, speeches 943-44, 946)

The host represents the folk memory since he is able to describe events prior to the disappearance of the three gentlemen: the spectators learn that Winloss had been in prison in Dunkirk (a sea port in the North of France associated with pirates) for six years and that the two gentlemen had paid a ransom to free him.³⁰⁴ The host embodies the moral conscience of the play while sternly pointing out that the generous act of the gentlemen was due to him since they were guilty for his economic downfall:

I do remember; and, without rhyme I'll tell you, that sad cause, in which you joined against him, overthrew him and all his family; but this worthy act of yours in his enlargement, crowns your piety and puts him in a way of better fortune than his first tottering estate could promise. (V, 1, speech 598)

As we can notice, this inn is the opposite of the Devil Tavern so that they are part of the dichotomy of the play: the famous and the 'obscure' one. The inn does not have a name, it is completely unknown, not frequented by famous clients and while it puts on stage some characters believed to be dead, but still alive, the Devil Tavern is 'haunted' by the immortal spirit of the recently passed away Ben Jonson. Yet, from an anonymous inn, Brome starts the resolution of the story which will lead to the final punishment of the devilish usurer Quicksands and the reappearance of the white Millicent reappears.

The way in which Brome uses a black face as a theatrical device to vehicle a cultural ideology about otherness is new in terms of sexual politics, gender, art and race. What complicates the issue is that actually Brome does not stage real otherness but uses the theatrical device of the disguise and of the play-within-the-play to reproduce the prejudices of his contemporaries related to alterity.³⁰⁵ On the one hand, none of the characters who pretend not to be from London actually come from there. Unlike *The Northern Lass*, *The Sparagus Garden* and *The Demoiselle* in which the characters come from the countryside and

³⁰⁴ Brome actually does not explain the reasons of Winloss's imprisonment, but probably the reference to Dunkirk is to suggest a connection with piracy.

³⁰⁵ Efstathiou-Lavabre, p. 218.

speak their dialect, in this play Phillis, Buzzard and Arnold are Londoners impersonating countrymen: Phillis claims to be from Thripperstown,³⁰⁶ near Norwich, but is daughter of a Londoner, the ruined gentleman Winloss, whereas Buzzard and Arnold only play the part of two people from East Anglia during the masque in Act IV. On the other hand, neither of the moors are real black people, but turn out to be white.

Yet, this integration ends with the performance of the play since at the end of *The English Moor*, when the characters put off their masks, they are all Londoners who have performed their own play on otherness within the boundaries of the city of London.

3.3

The Sparagus Garden

In 1635, between *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and *The English Moor*, Brome stages at the Salisbury Court his most gainful play³⁰⁷ set in a well-known location, the Sparagus Garden, giving a further example of strategic use of space in an eating establishment. The play has in its title an immediate pull for the audience since the garden is a covert high class brothel³⁰⁸ behind the front of a respectable pleasure garden and its main attraction, the asparagus, was a luxury item used for its medicative and therapeutic properties and was famous for its supposed erotic and aphrodisiac qualities.

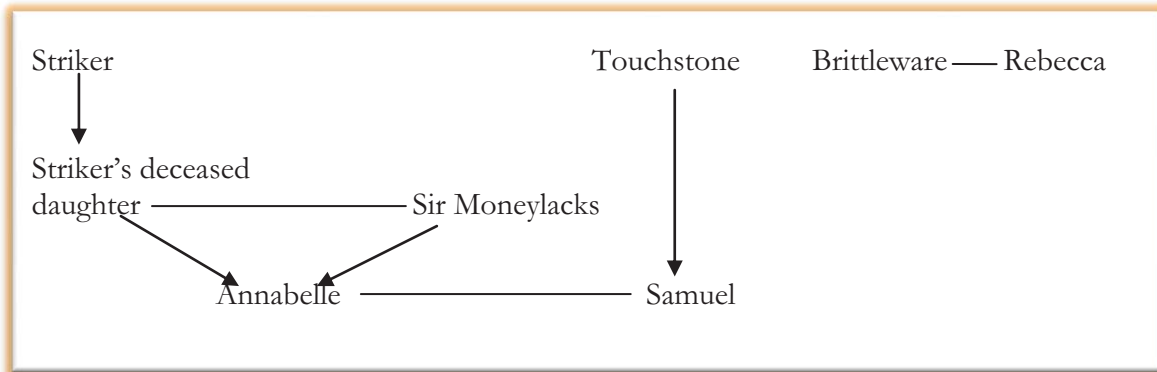
³⁰⁶ Referring to the idea of ‘trip’ (see p. 30 note 90), the place name was probably invented even though Edward Sugden considers it a real place in *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and his Fellow Dramatists*, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1925.

³⁰⁷ The play was extremely successful earning over £1000, which corresponds to £89,000 today (2010 National Archives Currency Converter). This is inferred by the company’s books and writings, as Andrews, Haaker and Collins report, while only Kaufmann finds the sum excessively high, suggesting that its value was exaggerated by Andrews to mark the great success of the play, which Brome himself proudly claims in the epilogue of the *Court Beggar* in 1640.

³⁰⁸ Shaw, p. 81; Sanders, 1999, p. 52; Brome, R., *The Sparagus Garden*, modern text, edited by Julie Sanders, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, II, n7177.

3.3.1

The plot



Adriaen Coorte, *Still Life with Asparagus and Spray of Red-Currants*, 1696, Paper on cardboard
Pieter C. W.M. Dreesmann Collection.

Brome chooses the Sparagus Garden as framework for a pseudo romantic comedy reminiscent of the story of Romeo and Juliet as for the long lasting feud between the two Justices of the Peace and neighbours, Striker and Touchwood, and the romance between Annabelle, Striker's granddaughter, and Samuel, Touchwood's son. To overcome the families' opposition, they work out a series of tricks which culminate in a pretended engagement between Annabelle and a confirmed bachelor, Sir Arthur Cautious, and the pregnancy of the young girl, which turns out to be fictitious only at the end of the story, enabling her to marry Samuel.

The other two plots of the play are strictly connected to the setting and to the character of Annabelle's father, Sir Hugh Moneylacks. On the one hand, he convinces Rebecca and her husband Brittleware³⁰⁹ that they need to eat the asparagus at the Sparagus Garden in order to solve their problems of infertility. On the other, he targets a naive countryman from

³⁰⁹ The name of the character not only reflects his job (it means fragile goods and he actually owns a china-shop), but it also comes to signify sexual impotency, since his first name, John, is a slang form for penis.

Somerset called Tim Hoyden (who was encouraged by his dying mother, sister of a gentleman, to find his uncle in London) who turns out to be Touchwood’s lost son at the end of the comedy. Taking advantage of his willingness to be a gentleman, Moneylacks takes him to the Sparagus Garden where he cheats him of his money while pretending to be teaching how to be a fashionable gentleman.

3.3.2

The title and its contradictions

Since 1942, when Theodore Miles mentioned Brome’s *Sparagus Garden* in his influential article *Place Realism in a Group of Caroline Plays*,³¹⁰ the play has been discussed in terms of place realism and social history as “the most striking example of detached local colour.”³¹¹ The title, as well as the use of the Sparagus Garden as setting, actually represent the first critical problem. The emphasis on place realism through the title has been considered mainly as an exploitation of the audience’s “pleasure of recognition”³¹² of known locations, and as a form of advertisement due to the Londoners’ love for their city and the great concern for its welfare, as Norman Brett-James reports in his famous *The Growth of Stuart London*.³¹³ As clearly emerges from the chart, what is peculiar is that, unlike *The Weeding of Covent Garden* where the whole play is set in the eponymous place, despite the title, the portion of the play concerned with the Sparagus Garden is so slight³¹⁴ that the scenes set within the garden appeared as not “really essential to the mood of the play.”³¹⁵

	Touchwood’s House	Striker’s House	Brittleware’s House	Sparagus Garden	Street (near Striker’s house)	A street in London
I, 1	X					
I, 2		X				
II, 1			X			

³¹⁰ Theodore Miles, “Place-realism in a Group of Caroline plays,” *Review of English Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 72 (Oct., 1942), pp. 428-440.

³¹¹ Miles, p. 435

³¹² Miles, p. 432.

³¹³ Norman Brett James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1935.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995, p. 476. See also Miles and Perkinson.

	Touchwood's House	Striker's House	Brittleware's House	Sparagus Garden	Street (near Striker's house)	A street in London
II, 2	X					
II, 3		X				
III, 1				X		
IV, 1					X	
IV, 2		X	X			
V, 1	X					
V, 2						X
V, 3		X				

Actually, most of the action is set in domestic locations, two scenes are outdoor in two anonymous London streets and only the long scene that constitutes Act III is set in the Sparagus Garden. Brome himself felt it necessary to write a prologue where he focuses on the title and paradoxically apologizes this his choice which could prejudice the play and disappoint the audience, the location being limited to the central act. The critical debate about the prologue has gone in multiple directions: Miles claims that Brome was conscious of a possible structural weakness of the play³¹⁶ and with Kaufmann and Shaw he is inclined to believe that Brome actually wanted to avoid a negative reception of the play and the “identification of the audience with the setting of the play” which could “distract the attention from its thematic matter.”³¹⁷

But this usual account, which does not do justice to the complexity with which the garden is presented,³¹⁸ has been re-evaluated by the studies of Steggle and Sanders, whose works illuminate numerous aspects of the play so far unexplored. Actually, they question the complexities through which the setting is presented and the implications of such a significant choice in dramaturgic terms.³¹⁹ Following this approach, I will show that Brome’s aim in the prologue is highly strategic paving the way for a deliberate use of the location and his choice of the title conscious and accurate. Let us see what Brome actually writes in his prologue:

³¹⁶ Miles, p. 432, Shaw, p. 81.

³¹⁷ Shaw, p. 79.

³¹⁸ Steggle, 2004, p. 71.

³¹⁹ Julie Sanders, “The Sparagus Garden: critical introduction”, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

The title, too, may prejudice the play.
It says 'The Sparagus Garden.' If you look
To feast on that, the title spoils the book.
We have yet a taste of it, which he doth lay
I'th midst o'the journey like a bait by th' way. ³²⁰

Brome warns his audience not to rely on the title for their sensual delight (“to feast on”) which draws attention to the Sparagus Garden, since they would be disappointed: the actual space devoted to the garden in the play is “a taste” in the central Act, Act III, which stands as a bait, a blandishment, a misleading form of advertisement to attract the audience to the theatre. If in a sense Brome attempts to escape the accusation of deceiving his public with a bait, at the same time, in spite of asking his audience not to pay much attention to the setting, he creates strong expectations so that they are made curious and led to focus on what Brome might have considered the core of his play, Act III. With this information in mind, the title ceases to be just “a bait” to attract the audience but become the key to the full understanding of the play.³²¹

Two questions arise from this: why, among the numerous possibilities of pleasure gardens all over London, did Brome choose to “bring into literature the life”³²² of the Sparagus Garden? And what kind of interest could it arouse? I am not inclined to believe that the location was chosen only for the “pleasure of recognition”³²³ from the audience, even if this was one of the ingredients of the genre. Nor was the garden only a device to bring characters together,³²⁴ albeit an effective one, since the meaning of the play would radically change if it were set in one of the other pleasure gardens which sprang into existence in the 17th century and the text would be deprived of most of its richness and fascination. There are specific reasons why Brome chose this setting: first of all, the garden was famous for the cultivation of the asparagus whose qualities can have many implications: medicinal, curative, depurative and sexual related to the never proved aphrodisiac powers. Secondly,

³²⁰ All the quotations from Brome, R., *The Sparagus Garden*, modern text, edited by Julie Sanders, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4. As for the analysis of the scenes, I follow the division suggested in *A Critical Edition of Richard Brome's The Weeding of Covent Garden and The Sparagus Garden*, (ed) Donald S. McClure, New York: Garland Pub, 1980 in which Act III is divided into eleven scenes.

³²¹ Steggle, p. 71.

³²² Perkinson, p. 270.

³²³ Miles, p. 436.

³²⁴ McClure, 1980, pp. 26-27.

the Sparagus Garden was an existing pleasure garden which reflected many social aspects of London contemporary life. Some people were probably eager to see if Brome's description was similar to the garden they knew, others were willing to catch a glimpse of a place they had never been to. Thirdly, the playwright was interested in displaying the manners of the specific categories of people who frequent that garden and the intrigues for which that particular locality was thought characteristic. In his study on *the Sparagus Garden* as a topographical comedy, Perkinson provides the subgenre with a marked sociological connotation beside the geographical one, focusing on the people as well as the place so that the habitual garden goers acquire more importance: "It is a genre, not because it includes plays labeled with the names of particular parks, or fairs, or gardens, but because it is the comedy of manners and intrigues of habitués of some definite, popular locality."³²⁵

My analysis focuses on these three main aspects, while evaluating how the setting actually impacts on the dynamics of the play and which aspects of London cultural geography emerge. A brief history of the garden will clarify its choice as a setting of the play.

3.3.3

The history of the garden

The Sparagus Garden was an existing pleasure garden on the south bank of the river Thames, "where asparagus and fresh strawberries were served, with sugar and wine."³²⁶ An oasis far from city life, devoted to good health, providing entertainment and a rustic landscape where people could promenade, gossip and eat delicacies, as well as have privacy.

It was in existence in the 1630s, as the references in Massinger's *The City Madam*³²⁷ and in Shirley's *Hyde Park*³²⁸ and *Lady Alimony* prove and it was still in activity in 1668, when it was visited on 22 April 1668 by Samuel Pepys, one of the most assiduous tavern and brothel goers: "Met with Roger Pepys, who tells me they have been on the business of money, but

³²⁵ Perkinson, p. 270.

³²⁶ Cicely V. Wedgwood, *Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays*, London: Macmillan, 1960, p. 205.

³²⁷ "The Gardens / Where we traffick for Asparagus" in Philip Massinger, *The City-Madam*, London: Andrew Penycuik, 1659.

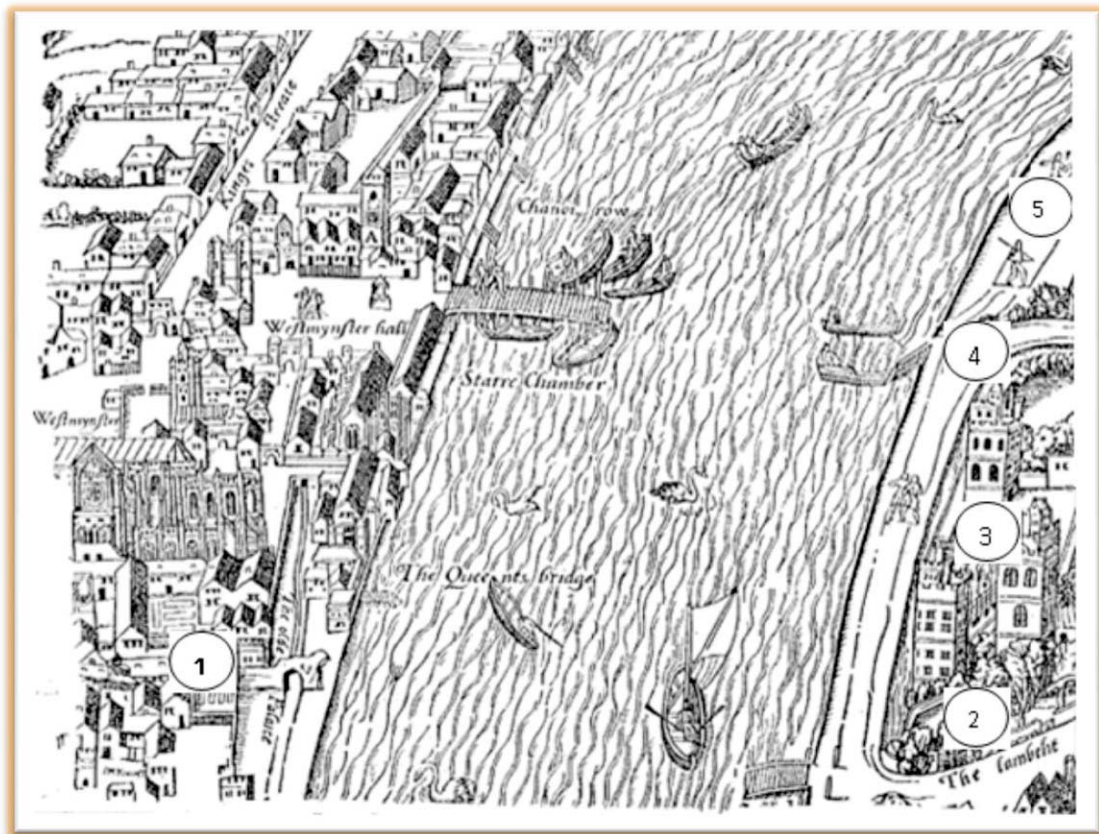
³²⁸ "Spring garden, and the Sparagus", in James Shirley, *Hyde Park*, London: T. Cote, [1637].

not ended yet, but will take up more time. So to the fishmonger's, and bought a couple of lobsters, and over to the sparagus garden, thinking to have met Mr. Pierce, and his wife and Knepp; but met their servant coming to bring me to Chatelin's, the French house, in Covent Garden."³²⁹ Moreover, the location is referred to by John Taylor in his satirical pamphlet entitled *St. Hillaries Teares* in which he implies the existence of more than one Sparagus Garden by using the plural: "The Taverns, and Sparagus Gardens, where ten or twenty pounds suppers were but trifles with them."³³⁰ Actually at that time, more than one pleasure garden had asparagus among its attractions. All evidence considered, Steggle concludes that the Sparagus Garden used by Brome is the one marked in William Morgan's map of Lambeth of 1681, which in the play is claimed to be in an unspecified place such as Deptford Marshes or Lambeth. The map "marks a 'Sparagus Garden' off narrow wall, Lambeth Marsh, a small strip of property on reclaimed land on the edge of the river. It was still there in name at least in 1720"³³¹ when Morgan's map was revised and updated. This is consistent with the information about the setting provided by the play: a flat area of grass of about "two acres" (III, speech 442), a "manor of marshland" (III, speech 414) designed for public entertainment and, as the two tenants the Dutch Martha and the gardener proudly claim, "in request and in fashion" (III, speech 414) at that time.

³²⁹ "Let us image our selves now to be planted in the Sparagus Garden; where if we want any thing, it is our own fault", in James Shirley, *Lady Alimony; or, the Alimony Lady*, London: T. Vere and W. Gilbertson, 1659.

³³⁰ John Taylor, *St. Hillaries Teares, Shed Upon All Professions*, London: N.V. and I. B., 1642, pp. 5-6.

³³¹ Steggle, 2004, p. 73.



1- Westminster Abbey

2- Lambeth Road

3- Lambeth

4- Lambeth Marsh

5- Narrow Wall

3.3.4

Strategies: the place and its produce

The location is presented by Brome in a very strategic way preparing the audience for Act III. In Act I, 3 the Sparagus Garden is first alluded to in a conversation between the Justice of the Peace Striker and the knight Sir Moneylacks (who is his son-in-law after marrying Striker's daughter, now deceased) in which the role of the knight in the management of the garden is clarified:

I heard you had put in for a share at the Asparagus Garden, or that at least you have a pension thence. – to be their gather-guest and bring 'em custom – and that you play the Fly of *The New Inn* there and sip with all companies.”
(I, 3, speech 89)

Sir Moneylacks works as a gather-guest, that is attracting new guests to the garden, and gets a regular payment for it or a share of the profits of the two tenants, Martha and her husband. He is explicitly compared to a character in a play by Jonson,³³² as often happens in Brome's comedies, in this case Fly in *The New Inn* (1629), in which he plays (like the knight) a central role in the Light Heart, the inn where the story is set. This reference represents a further form of appreciation of his master's *The New Inn*,³³³ "by far the finest of Jonson's Caroline comedies,"³³⁴ even if the play was a 'catastrophic failure'³³⁵ in his career.

In Act II, Moneylacks provides the audience with a precise description of the variety of plants and vegetables grown in the garden. In the passage, he also illustrates to Rebecca the qualities of the asparagus which could help her to get pregnant.



Louise Moillon (1609-1696)
Fruit basket with asparagus (1630)

Moneylacks: Have you this spring eaten any asparagus yet?

Rebecca: Why is that good for a woman that longs to be with child?

Moneylacks: Of all the plants, herbs, roots, or fruits that grow it is the most provocative, operative and effective.

Rebecca: Indeed, Sir Hugh?

Moneylacks: All your best (especially your modern) herbalists conclude, that your asparagus is the only sweet stirrer that the earth sends forth, beyond your wild carrots, cornflag, or gladioli.

Your roots of standergrass, or of satyrion boiled in goat's milk are held good; your clary or horminum in diverse ways good, and dill (especially boiled in oil) is also good: but none of these, nor saffron boiled in wine, your nuts of artichokes, rocket, or seeds of ash-tree (which we call the kite-keys), nor thousand such, though all are good, may stand up for perfection with asparagus. (II, 1, speeches 205-9)

³³² Like Lung, Subtle and Dol in *The Alchemist* evoked in *The City Wit* and compared to Crasy, Crack and Tryman or Cockbrain in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, who claims his connections with Adam Overdo from *Bartholomew Fair*.

³³³ There is a further reference to the play in Act III, speech 642, when a gentleman mentions a notorious prostitute, the Countess of Copthall. Copthall was in Barnet, a Northern suburb of London at Brome's time, used by Jonson as setting for *The New Inn*.

³³⁴ Cave, 1991, p. 158.

³³⁵ Martin Butler, *The Selected Plays of Ben Jonson*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985, p. XI.

Herbs have been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years. The first written record of using herbs and plants to cure illnesses was from a Sumerian herbalist in 2200 B.C., but archaeologists have discovered the remains of herbal remedies in Neanderthal burial sites dating back 60,000 years. The herbal treatment in England reached its peak of popularity with the publication of the Herbal of Nicholas Culpeper (1616–54), also known as the *English Physician*: the aim of his Herbal was to explore new medical treatments, make them more accessible to people and educate them about maintaining their health. Culpeper combined plants and illnesses with planetary influences and the Galenic humoral philosophy forging a strangely effective proto-system of medicine since many of the plants he described really help to cure diseases.

3.3.5

A brief history of the asparagus

Moneylacks is considered a sort of specialist of the asparagus, able to “discourse the virtues of this precious plant asparagus and what wonders it hath wrought in Burgundy, Allemagne, Italy, and Languedoc before the herborists had found the skill to plant in England” (III, speech 475).

Yet, the asparagus is not a European vegetable since it has its origins in Mesopotamia. It soon spread to China, Egypt (where it was declared the food of gods), Greece (where it was consecrated to the goodness of love Venus as an aphrodisiac), Persia, Babylon and Ancient Rome. Mentioned in Cato’s *De Agricultura*, Juvenal’s recipes and Martial’s works, the asparagus is also in *Naturalis Historia* by Pliny the Elder, in which he complains that this luxury vegetable is grown for wealthy men who are not contented with the wild variety of the asparagus that nature provided for everyone (19. 54). Therefore, the asparagus acquired a class-oriented connotation so that the wild variety was eaten by those who could not afford the cultivated one. In the 16th century, its cultivation spread through much of Europe, in France, Italy, Eastern Europe, Germany, where the medicative variety of *asparagus officinalis* was grown and, finally, in England. The ‘herbalists’ or ‘herborists’ mentioned by Moneylacks are probably Nicholas Culpepper and John Gerard (1545–1612),

whose *Great Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* appeared in 1597³³⁶ first mentioning asparagus in England and claiming that it “stirs up lust in man and woman.”³³⁷ In the 17th century, Leonard Meager (1604?-1704?)³³⁸ confirms the spread of the vegetable reporting that markets in London were well supplied with asparagus and it had become familiar all over Europe but in England it was considered as a luxury item,³³⁹ also known as ‘royal vegetable.’ Among its numerous properties, the vegetable had medicinal qualities and was known for its action as a diuretic, a laxative, a neutralizer of ammonia and a protection for small blood vessels from rupture, whereas its nutritional value and aphrodisiac qualities have been debated for ages.

Actually, Moneylacks exalts the aphrodisiac qualities of the produce to convince Rebecca and her husband Brittleware. As Sanders notices, all the plants named in his speech tend to grow in the form of long stems evoking the phallic shape and reinforcing the sexual overtones of the scene and the setting³⁴⁰ and, among them, the asparagus stands as, “the most provocative, operative and effective.”

Since Panek’s influential essay³⁴¹ on the real properties of the asparagus, scholars have agreed that Moneylacks’s words reflect a common thinking more than a scientific truth: “In the eyes of most herbalists, asparagus was simply not an aphrodisiac. This was probably true in the ‘popular mind’ as well, for if it were not, the audience would misconstrue a fairly obvious part of Brome’s *Sparagus Garden*.” Peculiarly, Gerard’s work³⁴² was nothing but an English translation of a more famous herbal written by the Dutch scholar Rembert Dodoen in 1554 so that in a sense the knowledge about the asparagus comes from Holland.

³³⁶ Gerard’s work was reprinted in an enlarged edition in 1633 owing to the intervention of a London apothecary called Thomas Johnson, who corrected the numerous mistakes and added over 800 plant and 700 illustrations.

³³⁷ Benjamin Woolley, *The Herbalist: Nicholas Culpeper and the Fight for Medical Freedom, or Heal Thyself: Nicholas Culpeper and the Seventeenth-Century Struggle to Bring Medicine to the People*, London and New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

³³⁸ In his *English Gardener, or, A Sure Guide to Young Planters and Gardeners*.

³³⁹ S. C. Mitchell, “Food Idiosyncrasies: Beetroot and Asparagus,” *Drug, metabolism and Disposition*, vol. 29 no. 4, 2001, pp. 539-543

³⁴⁰ Sanders, 2010, n5871.

³⁴¹ Leroy L. Panek, “Asparagus and Brome’s *The Sparagus Garden*,” *Modern Philology*, Vol. 68, No. 4, May, 1971, pp. 362-363, p. 362.

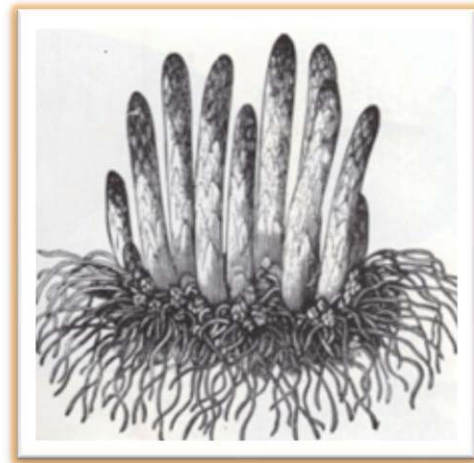
³⁴² His personal contribution concerns the addition of some plants from his own garden and a few discovered in the new world.



Adriaen Coorte, *A bundle of asparagus*, 1703, oil on canvas, Fitzwilliam Museum.

The asparagus is strictly connected to Holland also from an artistic point of view, since this vegetable is the subject of many Dutch still life paintings, a genre which flourished again in the Netherlands in the early 1600s, after centuries of oblivion. The theme of nutrition in still life was particularly congenial to clients and buyers of pieces of art since the representation of scenes of hunting and fishing, or of food, was a way of averting the imminent danger of starvation which was in the air all over Europe. The 17th century Dutch master Adriaen Coorte painted twelve pictures where the asparagus is a very important - or unique - element in the composition.

The numerous reference to Holland both motivate the cultivation of asparagus by the Dutch Martha and her husband, and strengthen the relationship between the sexual innuendos connected to the asparagus and Holland.



Martha's origins are evoked numerous times in the play, but unusually for Brome, nothing in the text marks a linguistic phonetical difference or how the character is supposed to deliver her lines. Sanders remarks that in the workshops it was possible to work on how "to differentiate Martha from the Londoners in the scene as the dialogue dictates but also how it gave a particular rhythm to the distinct vocabulary and idiom of her

lines.”³⁴³ Her provenance is testified by the varied production of the garden: there are tulips, which boomed in the period 1635-36 while the play was being written “the Low Country soil you come from” (III, 1, speech 12), “Your Dutch account [...] as they doe in the Netherlands” (III, 2, speech 429), “The Province of Asparagus” (III, 2, speech 441) which evokes the Dutch United Provinces. According to Steggle, “The Sparagus Garden’s political independence as a ‘province’ mirrors the status of Lambeth and seems as precarious as its legal ownership, or as the very land it occupies. Literally and metaphorically, the Sparagus Garden is built on ground of doubtful solidity.”³⁴⁴ The key to the play is the importance of the earth on which it is built and the connection to Holland is fundamental to penetrate it. The strong Dutch accent of Martha “carried all kinds of contemporary resonances and significations for theatre audiences”³⁴⁵ since it reflects an important issue on the political agenda: the policy of drainage with the involvement of the Dutch Cornelius Vermuyden. He was involved in the possibility of draining marshland so that “the fenland analogies in 3.1 are not as fanciful or far-fetched as they might seem to a Londoner today.”³⁴⁶ Interestingly, the plan saw the involvement of the Earl of Bedford who spent much of the profits he made from the fen drainage for the building of Covent Garden, which I have already discussed earlier in the chapter.³⁴⁷

Most of the sexual innuendos of the play are connected to Martha’s Dutch origin. On the one hand, the garden is reminiscent of the Holland’s Leaguer, a brothel staged by Marmion in the eponymous play and run by a woman called Elizabeth Holland,³⁴⁸ whose surname recalls Martha’s native country; moreover, they are located in the same area of London and stage a group of gallants visiting the location; finally, they both belong to the group of place-realism plays identified by Miles and were staged in the Salisbury Court.

³⁴³ Sanders, “The Sparagus Garden: videos, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

³⁴⁴ Steggle, 2001, p. 77.

³⁴⁵ Sanders, 2010, intro p. 18.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ The concept of drainage is also connected to Hoyden owing to the inauguration of a policy of drainage of the fens in East Anglia and Somerset, the place where he is from.

³⁴⁸ Nicholas Goodman, *Holland’s Leaguer: a Critical Edition*, (ed) Dean Stanton Barnard, The Hague: Mouton, 1970; E. J. Burford, *Queen of the Bawds: or the True Story of Madame Britannica Hollandia and her House of Obsenities, Holland’s Leaguer*, London: Neville Spearman, 1973.

On the other hand, at the beginning of Act III, the gardener expresses his wish to turn his wife into a ‘Bankside lady,’ without reflection on the embedded negative implications of the phrase which hint at prostitution, nourishing the subtext rich in sexual overtones. If the surface meaning implies that, after purchasing the land in Bankside where the Sparagus Garden is, Martha could become a lady, the other sounds like as a synonym for prostitute since Bankside was a notorious area of London. Actually, the garden was a brothel providing private dining rooms where food and drink could be consumed and bedrooms, distinguished by colours, available for rental by the hour on a daily and nightly basis:

Gardener: What did the rich old merchant spend upon the poor young gentleman’s wife in the yellow bedchamber?

Martha: But eight and twenty shillings, and kept the room almost two hours. I had no more of him.

Gardener: And what the knight with the broken citizen’s wife that goes so lady-like in the blue bedchamber?

Martha: Almost four pound. (III, 1, speeches 416-419)

3.3.6

Act III: the garden on stage

A particular spatial practice which characterizes the whole play and the Act within the Sparagus Garden is walking: “Characters are, from the very opening moments, not only seen walking to and from each other’s residences, but also taking daily constitutionals in the form of walking designated routes.”³⁴⁹ Brome puts on stage multiple reasons for perambulation. According to De Certeau, whose theories of urbanity and practice are an acknowledged paradigm, the practice of walking provides the urban space with sense and performs three functions: appropriation, realization of space and the creation of the relations (relational):

Le motricités piétonnières [...] ne se localisent pas: ce sont elles qui spatialisent. [...] L’acte de marcher est au système urbaine ce que l’énonciation (le *speech act*) est à la langue ou aux énoncés proférés. Au niveau le plus élémentaire, il a en effet une triple fonction “énonciative:” c’est un procès d’*appropriation* du système topographique par le piéton (de même que

³⁴⁹ Sanders, 2010, p. 8.

le locuteur s'approprié et assume la langue); c'est une *réalisation* spatiale du lieu (de même que l'apcte de parole est une réalisation sonore de la langue); enfin il implique des *relations* entre des positions différenciées, c'est-à-dire des "contrats" pragmatiques sous la forme de mouvements (de même que l'énonciation verbale est "allocution," "implante l'autre en face" du locuteur et met en jeu des contrats entre colocuteurs).³⁵⁰

Moreover, the act of walking, even if limited within the boundaries of the garden, reproduces the sense of city on the move which characterizes London, and the idea of people and issues circulating so that the Sparagus garden becomes a microcosm of London society. The strong social and citizen connotation of the location emerges in Act III, which is entirely set within the boundaries of the garden. The Act is made up of eleven scenes or vignettes³⁵¹ each of which contributes to show different angles of the setting, recreates the atmosphere of the pleasure garden, and represents a glimpse in the mind and thoughts of the clients, while only a few of them actually contribute to the development of the action.³⁵² The chart summarizes each scene emphasizing the clientele of the location, the division into social groups and the topics dealt with, while evaluating the contribution to the development of the plot.

SCENES³⁵³	CHARACTERS	THEMES	CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACTION
I (412-425)	Martha, Gardener	Description of garden Comments on the profits	
II (426-436)	Martha, Gardener, gentleman, gentlewoman	Protest for the high reckoning	
III (437-466)	Gilbert, Walter, Samuel, Martha, Gardener	The clientele of the garden (and different treatment according to the guests)	
IV (467-487)	Gilbert, Walter, Samuel, boy	Eating asparagus at the Garden Waiting for Sir Cautious	Plan of the involvement of Sir Cautious

³⁵⁰ Michel De Certeau, "Pratiques d'Espace," in *L'Invention du Quotidien*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990, pp. 147-148.

³⁵¹ Sanders, 2010, n7217.

³⁵² Miles, p. 434.

³⁵³ I follow the division into eleven scenes suggested by Donald S. McClure in his critical edition of the play, combining it with the lines from Sander's online edition so to give an idea of the length of each scene.

SCENES	CHARACTERS	THEMES	CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACTION
V (488-555)	Gilbert, Walter, Samuel, Sir Cautious, three courtiers and ladies	A trick to convince Sir Cautious	Sir Cautious is involved in the gallants' plan
VI (556-565)	Courtiers, ladies	The weeding of the Sparagus Garden	
VII (566-610)	Moneylack, Hoyden, Springe, Brittleware, Rebecca, Coulter	Usefulness of the asparagus for Tim Hoyden	Hoyden's transformation into a gentleman proceeds
VIII (611-631)	Brittleware, Rebecca	Usefulness of the asparagus for Rebecca	Discussion on the asparagus's effects
IX (632-634)	Gentleman, city wife, Rebecca, Brittleware	Example of illicit relations within the garden.	
X (635-647)	Servant, woman, gentleman	Reckoning	
XI (648-679)	Moneylack, Hoyden, Springe, Martha, Rebecca, Brittleware	Becoming a gentleman	Development of Rebecca's and Hoyden's plots

Within this context, I am going to analyze in detail three main ideas: the importance of money, the people who regularly go to the garden and their interaction, and the impact of the asparagus on the characters. The most frequent topic of conversation is money, seen from opposite perspectives, under the form of profits for the tenants of the garden, and bills to be paid by the clients. In the first scene we are introduced to Martha, who runs the garden, and her husband, the gardener, whose name is never mentioned so to imply the subordinate role in the couple, but also to mark his function in the business activity: growing and taking care of plants and vegetables. In their conversation at the beginning of Act III, their unique interest seems to be the money they can earn from the Sparagus Garden: the scenes are pervaded by references to reckoning, prices of the rooms (which correspond to the time spent inside) and money, which is not only evoked, but also exchanged on stage.

Gardener: But what did you take yesterday, Mat? In all, what had you, ha?

Martha: Poor piddling doings; some four and twenty pound.

Gardener: What did the rich old merchant spend upon the poor young gentleman's wife in the yellow bedchamber?

Martha: But eight and twenty shillings, and kept the room almost two hours. I had no more of him. [...]

Gardener: That was pretty well for two.

Martha: But her husband and a couple of servingmen had a dish of 'sparagus and three bottles of wine, besides the broken meat, into one o'the arbours.

Gardener: Everything would live, Mat. But here will be great courtiers and ladies today, you say?

Martha: Yes, they sent last night to bespeak a ten pound dinner, but I half fear their coming will keep out some of our more constant and more profitable customers.

Gardener: 'Twill make them the more eager to come another time then, Mat. Ha' they paid their reckoning in the parlour?

Martha: Yes, but hutchingly, and are now going away. (III, 1, speeches 414-17, 420-425)

In their conversation different aspects of their relationship husband-wife emerge: there is no room for feelings since they are dominated by coldness and cynism, and what stands out is a marked lack of interest in real communication between them. Moreover, while Martha proves to be well-informed about the management of the garden, her husband is obliged to ask questions in order to get information. We could even imagine Martha who turns her back on her husband, while replying carelessly to his questions and looking at the entrance of the garden in search of clients.

SCENE II - III - IV - IX - X - XI

CATEGORIES OF CLIENTS AND DEBATE ON BILLS

The setting represents the microcosm of London high society with its variety of people: among its clients there are gentlemen, gentlewomen, wealthy citizens, knights and gallants, all "right noble and right virtuous persons and of both sexes" (III, 2, speeches 436-37). Despite this statement, virtue is not the criterion to select clients that are, instead, selected according to their means so that those who need 'weeding' are those who limit their expenses at the garden. That's why at the arrival of the all-male group of gallants, formed by Samuel in disguise, and his friends Walter and Gilbert, Martha exclaims: "I half fear their coming will keep out some of put more constant and most profitable customers" (III, 2, speech 423). As a consequence they receive second-rate treatment and are not granted private room; they are without women and are not expected to spend much money (even if in reality they order some wine and a dish of asparagus). This originates Walter's complaints: "because we have no wenches we must have no chamber room, for fear she disappoint some that may bring them" (III, 2, speeches 432-33). Moreover, the reason for

their visit to the Sparagus Garden is mainly to look for Sir Arnold Cautious whom Martha considers a useless customer, since he just walks (“the knight that comes hither alone always and walks about the garden here half a day together to feed upon ladies’ looks as they pass to and fro” III, 3, speech 432), a voyeur who “feeds only his eye”(435), and lacks of money (“I never saw five shillings of his money yet” (434). This metaphor reveals Martha’s interest in food so that the act of spying on women becomes a form of metaphorical nourishment, despised by her as not rewarding economically.

Among Martha’s favourite clients, there are people of both sexes involved in illicit relationships like the old merchant and the young gentleman’s wife (scene I) or the knight and the broken citizen’s wife (scene I), or the gentleman and the precise draper’s wife, Mistress Hollycock³⁵⁴ (scene IX). It is fascinating to think of them as well-known people of Brome’s contemporary London, obscure references for the modern audience, but recognizable by his contemporaries, whose voyeuristic spirit, like Cautious’s, was thus satisfied, giving them the impression of spying on them through a key-hole. This could have been one of the possible reasons for the huge success of the play.

As in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, Brome makes an issue of the problem of expensive bills in dining establishments. Many are the complaints about the exorbitant prices established by Martha and her not itemised bills, as often used to happen in alehouses, inns or taverns like the Goat Tavern in Covent Garden. But, as a client exclaims: “well fare the taverns yet that though they cozened never so much would down with it one way or other and their Jacks go again” (III, 10, speech 2640). While, despite the complaints, in a sense people had become accustomed to paying high bills in taverns, in this location the clients complain more strongly since Martha’s increases she makes in price are outrageous. Martha uses her Dutch provenance as a justification in order to disparage the gentleman making him feel as a small-towner ignorant of European uses:

Gentleman: I protest, Master Gardener, your wife is too dear. Sixteen shillings for a dish of ’sparagus, two bottles of wine, and a little sugar? I wonder how you can reckon it.

Martha: That was your reckoning in all, sir; we make no account of particulars, but all to mall as they do in the Netherlands.

³⁵⁴ “A hollyhock is a tall, often brightly coloured garden flower which may give some indication as to how the boy actor in this role might appear,” in Sanders, 2010, n6275.

Gentleman: Your Dutch account, mistress, is too high for us to trouble you any more.

Martha: That's as you please, sir. A fair day after you. (III, 2, speeches 427-30)

The sixteen shillings spent for a dish of asparagus and two bottles of wine correspond to £71.5 today (National Archives Currency Converter), which was a high sum of money at that time and the complaints of the clients are more and more understandable if we consider the prices imposed by Martha for food, drink and rooms: the yellow chamber costs 14 shillings per hour which corresponds to £125 today, whereas the broken citizen's wife and the knight spend £four that is £356:

Gardener: What did the rich old merchant spend upon the poor young gentleman's wife in the yellow bedchamber?

Martha: But eight and twenty shillings, and kept the room almost two hours. I had no more of him.

Gardener: And what the knight with the broken citizen's wife that goes so lady-like in the blue bedchamber?

Martha: Almost four pound.

Gardener: That was pretty well for two.

Martha: But her husband and a couple of servingmen had a dish of 'sparagus and three bottles of wine, besides the broken meat, into one o'the arbours. (III, 1, speeches 416-421)

These prices make clear why Sir Cautious, and other garden goers like him, could only 'feed their eye,' being unable to pay such outrageously high bills.

SCENE VI: DANCING IN THE GARDEN

Scene VI could seem the least incisive at first sight owing to the lack of contribution to the development of the story since Brome stages three male courtiers and three female courtiers involved in a dance. They claim that their dancing represents an example of "harmless mirth and civil recreation" (III, VI, speech 565), contrasting to the immoral habits of the garden so that, as in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, there is the moral design of purging "the place of all foul purposes" (III, VI, speech 565) as if the court practices could dignify the location. While Sanders claims that the scene "does deliberately bring courtly conventions into the heart of the Asparagus Garden by reproducing elements of a masque

in this way,”³⁵⁵ McClure sees it as a theatrical ornamentation owing to its irrelevance in the plot. More than evoking the court, I think that the three ladies allude to the three Graces³⁵⁶ of the classical mythology Aglaea (Beauty), Euphrosyne (Mirth), and Thalia (Bloom). Their names, the last in particular, refer to the pleasing or charming appearance of a fertile field or garden. The scene anticipates some issues developed in the following scenes reinforcing the comparison between the characters and the soil: the fertility of the place foreshadows the pregnancy desired by Rebecca and the garden that the hypocrite courtiers claim to weed is comparable to Tim’s body that has to be purged from his countryside heritage in order to become a gentleman. The insistence on the weeding of the soil is particularly ironic if we consider the strong association of the asparagus with excrements widely used as a fertilizer. The idea of the Sparagus Garden as an high-class oasis is questioned: “if aristocratic status is derived from asparagus, and asparagus grows from the human waste of the city, then aristocratic status is a product of common excrement.”³⁵⁷

SCENE VII – VIII- XI: THE SPARAGUS DIET

Both Rebecca and Hoyden are brought to the Sparagus Garden by Moneylacks in order to try the ‘sparagus diet,’ but for different reasons: the former desires a belly full of asparagus in order to get pregnant, owing to their aphrodisiac properties, the latter to climb the social ladder after eating this urban vegetable:

Moneylacks: You are now welcome to the Asparagus Garden, landlady.
 Rebecca: I have been long a-coming for all my longings, but now I hope I shall have my belly full on’t.
 Moneylacks: That you shall, fear not.
 Rebecca: Would I were at it [at] once.
 Moneylacks: Well, because she desires to be private, go in with your wife, Master Brittleware, take a room, call for a feast, and satisfy your wife, and bid the mistress of the house to provide for us. (III, 7, speeches 570-574)

³⁵⁵ Sanders, 2010, n7147

³⁵⁶ A similar idea is also in Steggle, 2004, p. 82.

³⁵⁷ Steggle, 2004, p. 81.

Nevertheless, the asparagus alone is not enough to succeed in her aim, even though it seems very effective for Rebecca, as she claims “it begins to possess me already, still more and more: now ‘tis an absolute longing, and I shall be sick till I have it” (III, 8, speech 629), but her husband Brittleware fails in playing his part and Rebecca does not hesitate to humiliate him in the public arena of the Sparagus Garden, blurting out with cruelty his sexual failures due to a bout of impotency. Moreover, she threatens him that she will come back alone to the garden in search of sexual satisfaction from other men.

Moneylacks: Now, landlady, are you pleased with your asparagus?

Rebecca: With the asparagus I am; and yet but half pleased neither as my husband shall very well know.

Brittleware: But half pleased, sweetheart?

Rebecca: No indeed, John Brittleware; the asparagus has done its part; but you have not done your part, John and if you were an honest man, John, you would make Sir Hugh’s words good of the asparagus and be kinder to me. You are not kind to your own wife, John, in the asparagus way, you understand me. [...] to this same ‘Sparagus Garden and meet some friend that will be kind to me. (III, 8, speeches 612-13, 615-16, 624)

In the following scene, Brome stages the effects of the asparagus on another character, Tim Hoyden:

Moneylacks: And how do you feel yourself, Master Hoyden, after your bleeding, purging, and bathing, the killing of your gross humours by your spare diet and your new infusion of pure blood by your quaint feeding on delicate meats and drinks? How do you feel yourself?

Hoyden: Marry, I feel that I am hungry and that my shrimp diet and sippings have almost famished me, and my purse too. ‘Slid I dare be sworn, as I am almost a gentleman, that every bite and every spoonful that I have swallowed these ten days has cost me ten shillings at least.

Moneylacks: Well, sir, if you repine at your expenses now that you want nothing but your bellyful of ‘sparagus to finish my work of a gentleman in you, I will, if you please, in lieu of that stuff up your paunch with bacon and bag-pudding and put you back again as absolute a clown as ever you came from plough. (III, 9, speeches 576-77, 586)

In Moneylacks’s words, food becomes a means of climbing the social ladder: the whole play is pervaded by references to food and eating, starting with the ‘bait’ in the prologue, through sir Cautious who ‘feeds his eye,’ till these scenes where food is used as a

metaphor reflecting a social hierarchy. Hoyden is encouraged to change his rural diet made up of “bacon and pudding” for asparagus so to complete his transformation into a gentleman. Hoyden’s rural origins sometimes re-emerge in his language³⁵⁸ and it is funny to notice that he mispronounces the name of the thing that will turn him into a gentleman: he refers to the asparagus as “sparrowbills,” echoing the popular and colloquial name ‘sparrowgrass’ and suggesting all the bills and reckoning he has been paying to succeed in his objective.

Nobility is thus reduced to a fluid balance reminiscent of Jonson’s theory of humours “where one can siphon off base blood, and replace it with new aristocratic blood generated by asparagus.”³⁵⁹ For Tim, eating asparagus is a rite of passage with a series of tasks to be accomplished so that the garden is a sort of purgatory where Tim bleeds, purges and bathes in order to ascend to a higher social class. After Act III, the Sparagus Garden is no longer mentioned because it has fulfilled its dramaturgic aim: putting the basis for the resolution of the three plots, presenting the characters and the main themes of the play and developing Brome’s satire against the vices of the city and of the court through the powerful metaphor of its produce.

³⁵⁸ There are also many examples of unusual phrasing probably derived from his colloquial idiom: “incurable even were you to get to him and try to train him as a gentleman” (III, 9, speech 601).

³⁵⁹ Steggle, 2004, p. 81.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRIUMPH OF THE LAW

Law and justice are an important issue pervading the whole *corpus* of Brome's works, whose universe is peopled by Justices of the Peace, lawyers, students of law, law officers, constables, but also members of the Rabble, thieves, debtors and beggars. Eleven out of sixteen plays show characters belonging to some extent to the world of law and crime and in six of these works (*The Weeding of Covent Garden*, *The Sparagus Garden*, *The English Moor*, *The Demoiselle*, *The Antipodes*, *A Mad Couple Well Matched*) the space is used as a vehicle for this issue.

	Lawyer	Beggar	Law student	Constable	Justice of the Peace	Sergeants Officers	Rabble	Thieves Outlaws
<i>The Northern Lass</i> (1629)	X			X	X			
<i>The Weeding of Covent Garden</i> (1632)				X	X			
<i>The Novella</i> (1632)	X					X		
<i>The Late Lancashire Witches</i> (1634)				X		X	X	
<i>The Queen's Exchange</i> (1638)				X				X
<i>The Sparagus Garden</i> (1635)	X				X			
<i>The English Moor</i> (1637)					X			
<i>The Demoiselle</i> (1638)	X	X	X		X	X	X	
<i>The Antipodes</i> (1638)	X							
<i>The Court Beggar</i> (1640)								X
<i>A Mad Couple Well Matched</i> (1640)								X
<i>A Jovial Crew</i> (1642)		X		X	X			

The insistence on the theme throughout his dramatic production reflects both the connection between literature and law³⁶⁰ and the relevance of the issue of justice during the Caroline period. The dramatic model seems to be *The Merchant of Venice*, the first play which questions the double nature of law and equity putting on stage a trial in a court of justice in Italy. Kenji Yoshino remarks how precise, detailed and realistic is Shakespeare's play claiming that "for lawyers, *The Merchant of Venice* is that most trusted mirror, the work to which every lawyer with a serious interest in literature ultimately makes her pilgrimage."³⁶¹ The play represented a mirror also for playwrights like Brome, who took inspiration from it for *The Demoiselle* in which he stages Vermin, an usurer like Shylock, in the Temple Walks, the place which best represented the justice in London in a controversial period of English history.

As Richard Cave notices, the audience "were experiencing King Charles's long period of personal rule, when in dispensing with Parliament he had removed one major regulator of the law, much of which he now shaped to meet his own requirements and his concept of justice as an expression of his political role as divinely appointed monarch."³⁶² Therefore, if on the one hand the Caroline period was marked by Royal Proclamations, laws and edicts, on the other hand, the country lacked an authority to make them respected. In *The Northern Lass* (1629), one of his first plays, Brome evokes the world of the law through the legal language and its characters. In the *dramatis personae* there are the widow of a lawyer, a lawyer and two Justices of the Peace, thus reinforcing the impression that many of the characters of the play "move in lawyer-related circles."³⁶³ The play, that Steggle defines as "a law student's delight,"³⁶⁴ shows interest in legal theory as well as the gap between this and law in practice. As early as *The City Wit* the themes of law and justice are combined with the device of place realism: the Royal Court protocols are put on stage within the Presence Chamber of Whitehall so showing that something is rotten at the core

³⁶⁰ As for the studies about law and literature, see Ian Ward, *Law and Literature: Possibilities and Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995; Richard Weisberg, *Poethics and Other Strategies of Law and Literature*, New York: Columbia UP, 1992; Richard A. Posner, *Law and Literature, a misunderstood relation*, Cambridge, (Mass): Harvard UP, 1988, Patrick Hanafin, Adam Gearey, Joseph Brooker, *Law and Literature*, London: Blackwell, 2004.

³⁶¹ Kenji Yoshino, "The lawyer of Belmont", 9 *Yale J.L. & Human*, 183, 1997, pp. 183-216, p. 215.

³⁶² Brome, R., *The Antipodes*, Modern Text, edited by Richard Cave, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4), introduction, p. 30.

³⁶³ Steggle, 2004, p. 27.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

of the legal system since the only laws actually applied are those concerning etiquette. Later, in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and in *The Sparagus Garden*, he deals with the Royal Proclamations which limit the bills in eating establishments by staging the places where these laws are supposed to be applied, that is taverns and pleasure gardens. The legal issue is the real nerve centre of a play only in *The Demoiselle* (1638) and *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (1639). In these plays he develops the much-discussed issue of justice in the place where laws should be applied, the Temple Walks of the Middle Temple, one of the Inns of Court thus revealing the many contradictions of the contemporary legal system in a complex, ironic, sharp and subversive way.

The Temple Walks provide *The Demoiselle* and *A Mad Couple Well Matched* with a background rich in resonances and social and political implications, and contribute to emphasize the strong presence of the law in London life and its ineffectiveness at the same time. The Temple Walks stand out as the place of justice, a no man's land for illicit dealings, a space where honesty and dishonesty coexist, where to assert one's rights and to avoid discharging one's duties. This contradiction clearly emerges in these two plays, in which Brome stages both the search for justice and its absence. The dramatist clearly manifests the awareness of the weakness of contemporary law and he discusses it in his plays by concentrating on different types of laws which were topical at that time. On the one hand, in *The Demoiselle* the characters go to the Temple Walks in order to look for justice, yet do not find it, despite the numerous representatives of the legal world on stage. On the other hand, in *A Mad Couple Well Matched* the same space is not the place where one can find justice, since each character applies his or her personal laws according to their own objectives, without scruples about trampling on moral and ethical values or feelings.

Now it is worth sketching the history of the Temple Walks to recognize the dichotomic essence of this location as well as its impact on the dynamics of the plot.

4.1

History of the Temple Walks

Temple Walks were the grounds of the Inner and Middle Temple, and were situated between Fleet Street and the Thames. The name derives from the order of the

Knights Templers, who established in England before the 12th century in this area. When the Templers were suppressed in 1312, the area passed to the Knights Hospitallers who leased a part of it to the lawyers (who are the forerunners of the barristers at the Middle and Inner Temple). After the suppression of their order in 1539, the property passed to the Crown. In 1608, James I divided the area into Inner Temple (the southern part) and Middle Temple (the northern part) and granted it to the lawyers,³⁶⁵ on condition they maintained Temple Church. Therefore, it became a haunt both of lawyers and students of law. Moreover, since 1580, the inhabitants of the area had been given exemption from the jurisdiction of the City and the possibility to protect debtors from arrest.³⁶⁶

The place attracted rogues and outlaws and became the hotbed of crime that concentrated in a part of the area called Alsazia (after Alsace, the long disputed province between France and Germany). The location was “greatly grieved and exceedingly disquieted by many beggars, vagabonds, and sundry idle and lewd persons who daily pass out of all parts of the City.”³⁶⁷ Therefore, the image of the location which emerges is highly contradictory since we can find justice alongside crime.

Throughout the centuries, the location attracted the attention of many writers beside Brome who used it as a setting for their works. Actually, the milieu of the Temple Walks was so wide and variegated that dramatists were able to exploit its multiple spots each offering different starting points for their plots. Among them, Lording Barry in *Ram Alley*, Aphra Behn in *Lucky Chance*, Shadwell in *The Squire of Alsazia* and Walter Scott in *Fortunes of Nigel*,³⁶⁸ but also Shakespeare who set one of the scenes of his *Henry VI* in a specific spot of the Temple Walks, the famous and celebrated Temple Gardens. Within the boundaries of the garden, the members of the rival houses of Lancaster and York first assume their distinctive badges which, consistently with the setting, are respectively a red and a white rose:

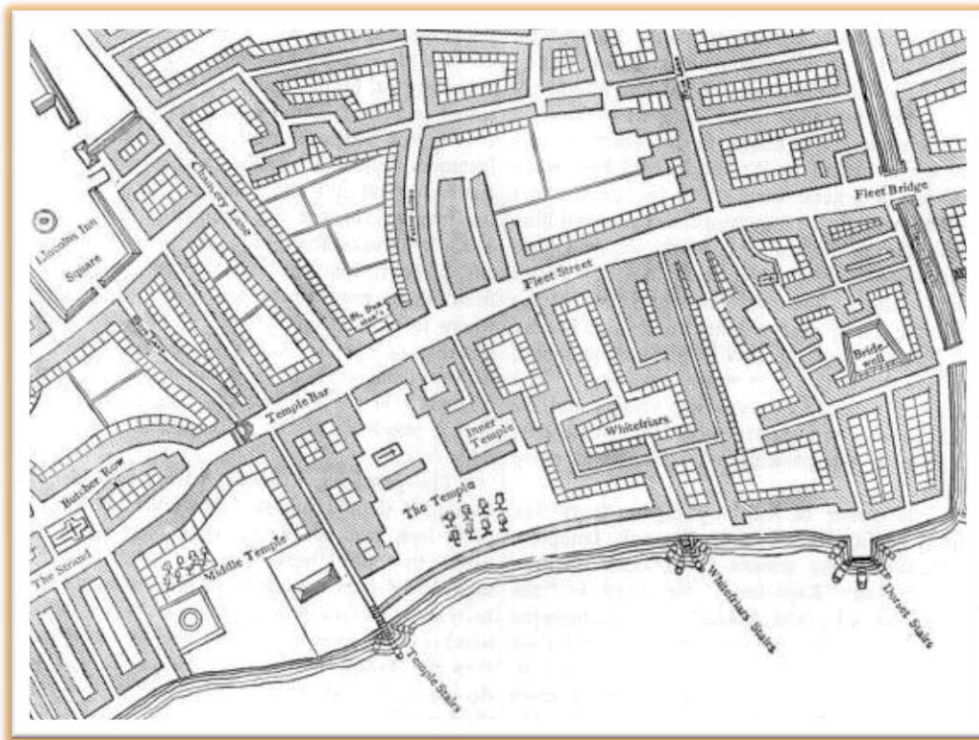
³⁶⁵ Among the most famous people associated with Middle Temple, John Hawkins, Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, Thomas Shadwell, Henry Ireton, William Wycherley and William Congreve, to cite just a few.

³⁶⁶ This privilege was abolished in 1697.

³⁶⁷ Styrpe, p. 202.

³⁶⁸ “The riotous little kingdom of Whitefriars, with all its frowzy and questionable population, has been admirably drawn by Scott in his fine novel. [...] Sir Walter chooses a den of Alsatia as a sanctuary for young Nigel, after his duel with Dalgarno. At one stroke of Scott's pen, the foggy, crowded streets eastward of the Temple rise before us, and are thronged with shaggy, uncombed ruffians, with greasy shoulder-belts, discoloured scarves, enormous moustaches, and torn hats.” Walter Thornbury, *Old and New London*, “Whitefriars,” *Old and New London: Volume 1*, 1878, pp. 182-199. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45036> Date accessed: May 2008.

Suffolk: Within the Temple Hall we were too loud;
 The garden here is more convenient. [...]
Richard: Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
 and stands upon the honour of his birth,
 if he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
 from off this brier pluck a white rose with me.
Somerset: Let him that is no coward, nor no flatterer,
 but dare maintain the party of the truth,
 pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me. [...]
Richard: Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?
Somerset: Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet? [...]
Warwick: This brawl to-day,
 grown to this faction in the Temple Garden,
 Shall send, between the red rose and the white,
 a thousand souls to death and deadly night.
 (Part I, II, 4, 3-4, 27-33, 68-69, 124-27).



As for Brome, the place is significant not only for its social and political implications, but also in terms of personal experience, as we can see in the case of *The Demoiselle*.

4.2

The Demoiselle: the world is turned quite upside down

The Demoiselle (1638) seems to have been one of the last plays written by Brome for the Salisbury Court playhouse, then occupied by Queen Henrietta Maria's Men. In the light of this detail, the choice of setting acquires a more symbolic meaning since the theatre was at the border of Alsazia, near the Temple Walks. Therefore, he puts on stage locations that the audience would see on leaving the theatre at the end of the play.³⁶⁹ In this way, he is able to increase the involvement of the spectators and their sense of identification with the characters in the story as well as paying literary homage to the theatre where he had worked for so many years.

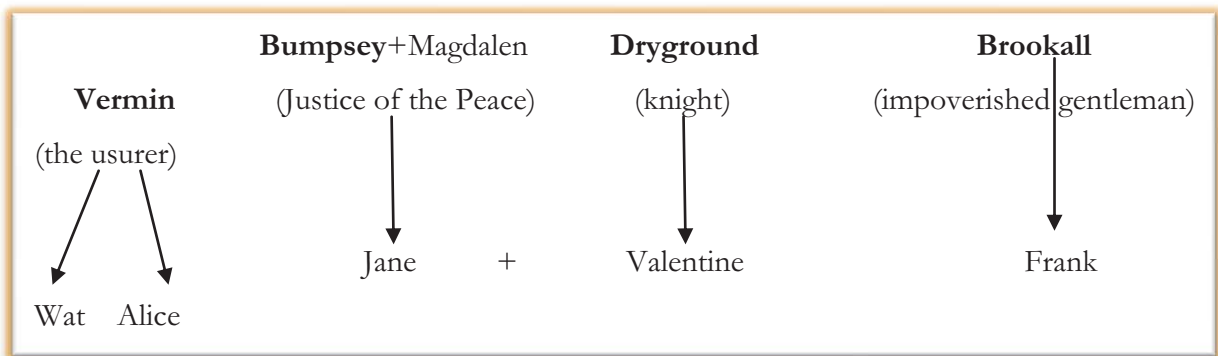
The comedy sums up numerous issues already covered in previous place-realism plays and reveals the maturity of Brome as a playwright in combining different themes. First, the issue of otherness through Frances, the supposed French demoiselle, and the Cornish knight Sir Amphilus, whose characterization adds new elements on the topic of alterity found in Brome's plays in the shape of people from the country (*The Sparagus Garden*, *The English Moor*, *The Northern Lass*) and foreigners (*The English Moor*). Second, the attack on usury already discussed in *The English Moor* and in *The City Wit*; third, the play re-proposes the same social and spatial dynamics as *The Weeding of Covent Garden*. While Brome stages the opposition of the upper class and the low-class characters like the prostitutes and the brotherhood in the milieu of Covent Garden, in this play he shows the dichotomic essence of a place where justice and crime co-exist. Finally, its subtitle, *the New Ordinary* (used as a setting in Acts III and V), alludes to the debate about the prices in eating and drinking establishments to which Brome refers in *The City Wit* and which he develops in the tavern scenes in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and in *The Sparagus Garden*.

³⁶⁹ Steggle, 2004, p. 133.

4.3

The plot

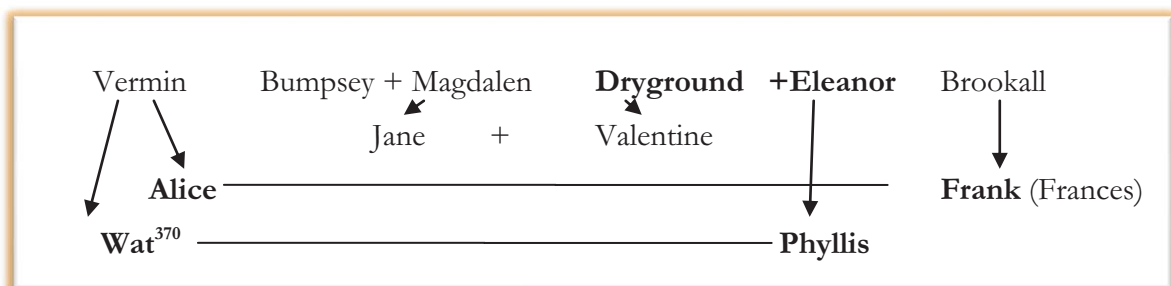
Owing to the intricacy of the plot (one of the most complex given the number of the characters, sub-plots, disguises and deceptions which contribute to confuse things), I have used the following scheme which allows me to summarize the story more easily. I avoid mentioning all the subplots of the play and many minor characters in order not to create confusion in the reader. This is the situation at the beginning of the play.



Despite the French title, the play introduces the audience into a famous London location, the Temple Walks, frequented by those who deal with law and justice. The story revolves around four families and develops through two generations: the Vermins, the Bumpseys, the Drygrounds and the Brookalls. One of the main characters is the villain, the usurer Vermin, who, after lending money to Dryground and Brookall, is involved in the ruin of both of them. Three parallel subplots are connected respectively to these three characters: firstly, Vermin has to cope with the escape of his daughter Alice, unwilling to marry the knight chosen by her father. Secondly, Dryground feels guilty for Brookall's reverse of fortune since he had wronged him by seducing, impregnating and eventually abandoning Brookall's sister, Eleanor, thus bringing dishonour upon her. Therefore, he tries to raise money on behalf of Brookall and, in disguise under the name of Osbright, opens a new ordinary (the one of the subtitle). He is assisted by Wat, the usurer's son, and Frank, Brookall's son, who is disguised as Frances, the supposed daughter of Osbright who has been educated in France (she is the demoiselle of the title). Dryground raffles off the virginity of Frances and obtains a large amount of money since about a hundred people

invest money for chances in the raffle. At the same time, Frances gives lessons in French etiquette to other ladies, among whom Magdalen, the old Justice's wife, and their daughter Jane.

Finally there is Brookall who haunts the Temple Walks complaining about his misfortune with a mysterious beggar called Phyllis (who turns out to be Dryground's lost daughter). At the end of the play Frances turns out to be Brookall's son Frank and the story ends with the repentance of the usurer and the restoration of Brookall's fortune, while Dryground is re-united with Eleanor and Phyllis. The families are thus united through three intermarriages.



4.4

The characters

As for the characters are concerned, Brome re-proposes well-oiled figures such as the usurer (already found in *The English Moor* with Quicksands), the Justice of the Peace (like Cockbrain in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, Striker and Touchwood in *The Sparagus Garden* and Testy in *The English Moor*), the impoverished gentleman (like Winloss in *The English Moor*) and the knight (like Sir Moneylacks in *The Sparagus Garden*).

Through their names, Brome is able to convey the main features of the characters (like Vermin or Brookall) and sometimes the same names are repeated in different plays to strengthen the connection between the stories and suggest to the audience a comparison between the characters and their flaws. One of the recurring names is Phyllis, that is used in *The Demoiselle* and in *The English Moor*. In both cases, the characters are two young women that at the end of the play turn out to be lost daughters of impoverished men.

³⁷⁰ In bold the characters whose relationship with the other characters has changed throughout the play.

Then we meet Alice, the cunning daughter of the usurer, who escaped from her father by betraying his trust in *The Demoiselle*, and Alicia, the unfaithful wife of Saleware, who betrays him openly in *A Mad Couple Well Matched*. In the same play the name of the unscrupulous Wat recurs. It is used for the servant of the rake Valentine and recalls the reckless son of the usurer in *The Demoiselle*. Moreover, the choice of name grows more meaningful in the light of a historical event which dates back to the reign of Richard II. Wat Tyler was the leader of a rebellion known as the Peasants' revolt. As Walter Thornbury claims, one of the main targets of the revolt was the legal system, represented by the lawyers:

In Wat Tyler's rebellion the wild men of Kent poured down on the dens of the Temple lawyers, pulled down their houses, carried off the books, deeds, and rolls of remembrance, and burnt them in Fleet Street, to spite the Knights Hospitallers. Walsingham, the chronicler, indeed, says that the rebels—who, by the by, claimed only their rights—had resolved to decapitate all the lawyers of London, to put an end to all the laws that had oppressed them, and to clear the ground for better times.³⁷¹

Finally, Frances, the demoiselle of the title, interestingly bears the same name of one of the prostitutes in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* so that the audience is led to speculate about the real role of Frances in the dynamics of the play. On the one hand, Frank was a common name for a whore in early modern theatre, owing to the associations of the word 'frank' with 'free.' For example, in Nabbes's *Tottenham Court* (Prince Charles's Men, 1633; pub. London, 1638) the name is used as a stereotypical one for a whore: "I am not the blade's intelligence whether Frank or Moll remove their lodgings to 'scape the constables' search and Bridewell." On the other hand, the name was used for sexually ambiguous characters as in *May-Day*, where Francischina disguises herself as a boy to pursue an affair with Angelo, in Field's *Amends for Ladies* (Queen's Revels, c. 1611), where Frank is asked to disguise himself as a woman, and in Jonson's *The New Inn* (King's Men, 1629), in which the audience believes that a boy named Frank is dressed as a woman called Laetitia and only at the end Frank turns out to be actually Laetitia.

³⁷¹ "The Temple: Church and precinct (part 1 of 3)," *Old and New London: Volume 1*, 1878, pp. 149-158. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45033>.

4.5

Critical approaches

Critical approaches have been multiple, emphasizing the different aspects of this city comedy so rich in themes and issues. Kaufmann defines both *The Demoiselle* and *The English Moor* as usury plays since “the intrigues are so designed as to deal with and discommode the usurer”³⁷² whereas Shaw contextualizes it as a satirical comedy characterized by a very intricate plot.

A further step in criticism is found in Martin Butler’s *Theatre and Crisis*, where the scholar identifies the roots of the comedy with the morality or folk plays (the attacks on usury sound like sermons) and the beast-fable. Similar to Jonson’s *Volpone*, animals are used as nicknames or names for the characters so that the usurer is called Vermin to stress his parasitic attitudes and his ability to take advantage of other people surreptitiously. He is also nicknamed “a wolf,”³⁷³ “a sly fox,” his son is a “wolf”³⁷⁴ and he wants to wed his daughter to “a dunghill scarab, a water dog knight.”³⁷⁵ Butler is also the first to focus on the Temple Walks as setting. The location offers “a gallery of social types, [...] an anatomy of the world, [...] an exposure of a society bound together by law not love.”³⁷⁶ Matthew Steggle, building on Butler’s reading, analyzes the setting in terms of politics, investigating the connections between the Temple Walks and contemporary England: “*The Demoiselle* presents not a single system of law and justice but a number of interlocking and indeed competing ones. [...] in the process, though, the play has asked a number of difficult questions about the mechanisms not just of usury but also of law and justice in Charles’s England.”³⁷⁷

Beside a political interpretation, Alison Findlay studies the play in terms of gender and performance examining the female characters of the comedy and the way in which it parallels Ben Jonson’s *New Inn*. In Findlay’s analysis, the play becomes “a proto-feminist

³⁷² Kaufmann, p. 136.

³⁷³ “That ravenous wolf” (IV, 1, speech 730). All the references from *The Demoiselle* are from R. Brome, modern text, ed. by Lucy Munro, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

³⁷⁴ “Thy brother (though I loath to call him so) is, now, an utter stranger to my blood, not to be named but with my curse, a wolf that tears my very bowels out” (I, 1, speech 39).

³⁷⁵ “I hate to think of such a dunghill-scarab. A water-dog-knight!” (I, 1, speech 76).

³⁷⁶ Butler, 1984, p. 213.

³⁷⁷ Steggle, 2004, p. 136.

critique of commodification of women and the corrupt capitalist world of self-interest.”³⁷⁸ On the other hand, Athena Efthathiou-Lavabre focuses on the stereotypical treatment of France in Brome’s drama, with particular attention to *The Demoiselle* in which the playwright makes fun of French culture and fashion. In her recent introduction to the online edition of *The Demoiselle*, Lucy Munro has two main focuses: the broader concept of consumption, not only in terms of usury, but also of fashion, foodstuffs, money and women, and how the play reworks aspects of plays by Jonson such as *Epicoene*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *The Devil is an Ass* and *The New Inn* which forms the sub-text of the play.³⁷⁹

My view on the play does not dissent from previous criticism but aims to focus on the realistic setting of the play, the Temple Walks, and its contradictory implications since, as Steggle has pointed out, it “represents the law, but it is inhabited by outlaws.”³⁸⁰ I focus my attention on how the concept of law is developed throughout the play and how the story suggests the multiple facets of the English legal system. Finally, I clarify the concept of law not only as connected to legal justice but also to a code of behaviour, concerning both moral and etiquette which differs between men and women.

4. 6

The space within the play

The scenes of the play are set in different milieus: from the domestic locations in Act I (Vermin’s and Bumpsey’s house) passing through the Temple Walks (Acts II and IV) to the fictitious ordinary in Acts III and V.

	Vermin’s house	Bumpsey’s house	Ordinary	The Temple Walks
I, 1	X			
I, 2		X		
II, 1				X
III, 1			X	

³⁷⁸ Alison Findlay, “Gendering the Stage,” in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, (ed) Arthur F. Kinney, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, pp. 399-415, p. 407.

³⁷⁹ Brome, R., *The Demoiselle*, Modern Text, edited by Lucy Munro, *Richard Brome Online* ([http:// www. Hrion line.ac.uk/brome](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome), 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, introduction, p. 7.

³⁸⁰ Steggle, 2004, p. 134.

	Vermin's house	Bumpsey's house	Ordinary	The Temple Walks
III, 2		X		
IV, 1				X
IV, 2				X
V,1			X	

The ordinary and the Temple Walks are put on scene stage respectively in two (330 speeches) and three scenes (449) so that, in spite of the subtitle, *the New Ordinary*, the Temple Walks are the dominant milieu: not only for the space it is given throughout the play, but also for its implications in the story.

Now I analyze how the setting is first introduced and later put on stage in the play, how the different characters interact with the same urban space and how the theme of law is addressed through the vehicle of the location and the people who go there. I will start with the analysis of Act I, set in domestic locations but interesting in terms of space, law and justice.

4.6.1

Act I, 1: the law of the usurer

The importance of law can be seen in the *dramatis personae*: among the characters we notice an old Justice (Bumpsey), lawyers, an attorney (a legal professional who prepares cases for barristers), a Templar (a member of the Middle Temple, an Inn of Court) and two sergeants. The life of all the characters seems to be influenced by the law. Alice, for instance, defines Sir Amphilus as the “western knight, sir, that was here last term” (I, 1, speech 50). She uses the word “term,” one of the four periods of the year during which London’s law courts were active, so proving that the characters’ lives revolve around the law.

Despite being set in domestic locations, Act I provides relevant information about the places of law and justice in the urban milieu of Temple Walks. Moreover, it introduces the issues of justice and the relationship of the characters with it. In the opening scene of Act I, there is a dialogue between the usurer Vermin and the impoverished knight Dryground in which they discuss Brookall’s difficult financial situation:

Dryground: No, sir, my project is in the behalf
 Of the poor gentleman you overthrew
 By the strong hand of law, bribes, and oppression:
 Brookall – do you know him, sir?
 Vermin: Oh ho! I now remember; you have reason!
 That Brookall had a sister, whom you vitiated
 In your wild heat of blood, and then denied
 Her promised marriage, turned her off with child
 A dozen years since, and since that never heard of.
 Ha! Is't not so? Pray, did you know her, sir?
 Dryground: I wish I could redeem that ruthless fault
 By all expiatory means. (I, 1, speeches 22, 25-6)

Far from helping Dryground to succeed in his objective, the law is described as a sort of enemy, a character whose 'strong hand' assists Vermin to overthrow Brookall and is associated with bribes and oppression, thus marking the negative connotation of the law. This issue turns up again through the reference to Brookall's son, Frank, a hopeful student of law (like Mihil in *The Weeding of Covent Garden*). Strangely, it is Frank who assists Dryground in his plan so that in a sense the knight seems to be helped by the law. A strong contradiction stands out in their dialogue: while Brookall's son is a student of law, the usurer's son, Wat, is an outlaw. Dryground is helped by both of them in his plan so that paradoxically he is assisted by the interaction of the two faces of the law, legality and illegality.

Interestingly, the first reference to space in a play that revolves around the issue of justice is to a prison from which Wat has just escaped owing to the intervention of Dryground:

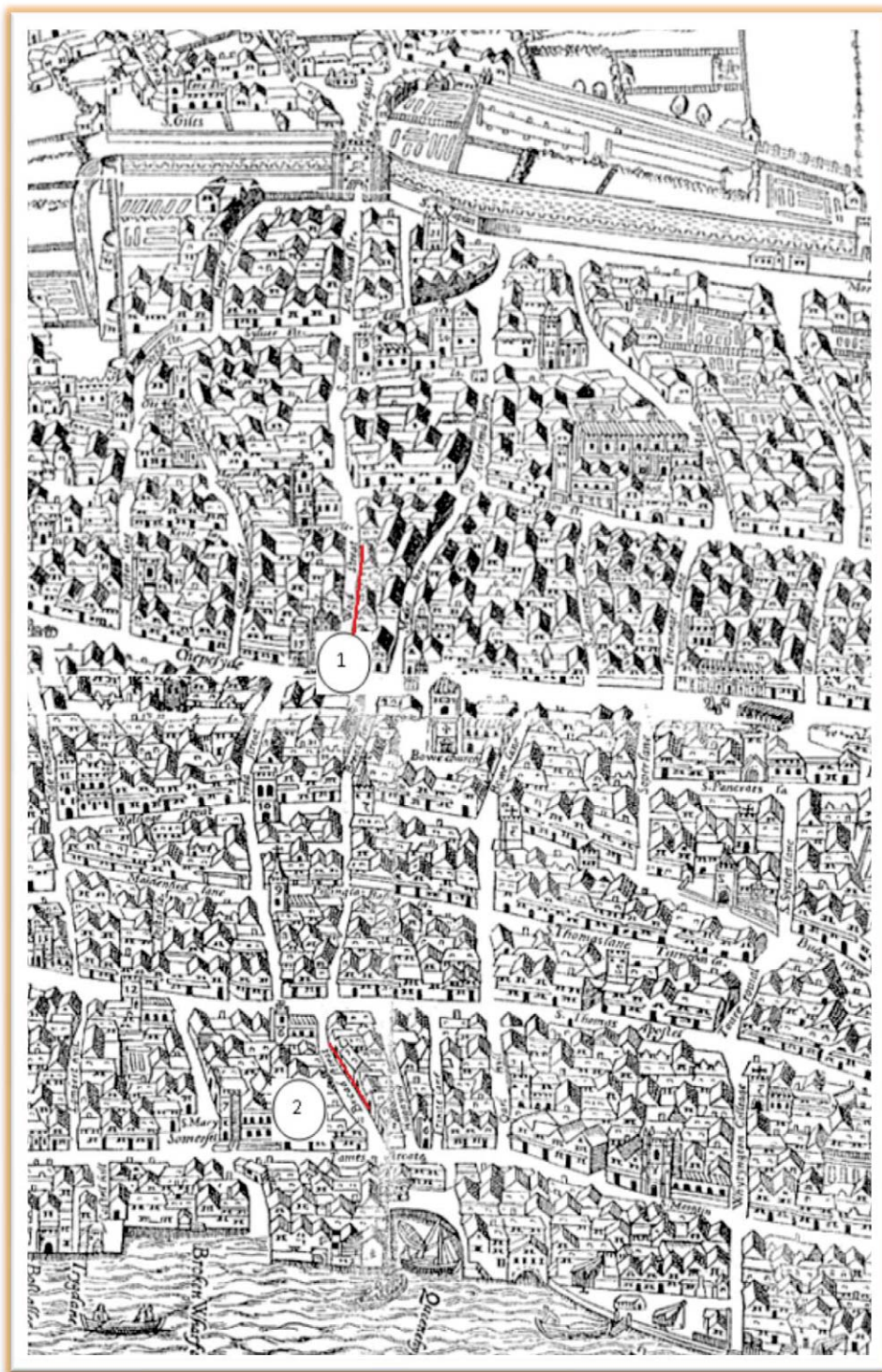
Alice: Beshrew me but I am. How got you hither?
 Could not the compter hold you?
 Wat: So it seems;
 My virtue was not to be so obscured.
 Noble Sir Humphrey Dryground, sister, was
 My frank enfranchiser. (I, 1, speeches 84-5)

The "compter," an old form of spelling for "counter," was the Counter Prison, which was attached to a local magistrate's court specifically used in the 17th century to refer to the debtors' prisons of London. The prison was originally in Bread Street till 1555 and then moved to Wood Street (they were both destroyed in 1666). It served as a debtor prison as well as for people involved in misdemeanours such as public drunkenness. The

second reference to space is again connected with Wat. In order to distract Vermin and help his sister to escape, he disguises himself as servant of sir Amphilus and tells the usurer that the knight is waiting for him in an inn in Holborn and he immediately leaves.

Holborn is a significant choice in symbolic terms: it was a major road running west from the City of London to Covent Garden. It was – and still is – in a area of lawyers, surrounded by the Inns of Court and Chancery to the north and south. The place is famous for other aspects which contrast with the idea of law and justice: as one of the main entrances to London, the road was full of taverns such as the George and Blue Boar, the Castle, the Old Bell, the Sun, the Bear and the Black Bull³⁸¹ and had a notorious reputation for sex trafficking seen in Lording Barry's *Ram Alley*: “what makes he here /in the skirts of Holborn, so near the field, / and at a garden house? ‘A has some punk, / upon my life.” Finally, this road is mentioned in *The City Wit* as the road used to take prisoners from Newgate to their execution at Tyburn tree.

³⁸¹ Sugden, *Topographical Dictionary*, 252, s. v. Holborn



1- Wood Street

2- Bread Street

4.6.2

Act I, 2: The law of the Justice of the Peace

In this scene, at the house of the old Justice Bumpsey, Brome turns to another family group in which the importance of law is stressed. The old Justice discovers that his daughter Jane has just married Dryground's son Valentine without his permission. In Bumpsey's words, lawfulness stands out as his dominant value through the repetition of expressions connected to the law such as "lawful" (127) and "no law exacts it sooner" (129) which stand in sharp contrast to his daughter's marriage which has taken place without his consent. Lucy Munro notices that from line 113 "beyond Dryground's brief and sporadic attempts to intervene, the other characters' responses are entirely in asides"³⁸² since Bumpsey asserts himself relying on his prestige as an old Justice of the Peace.

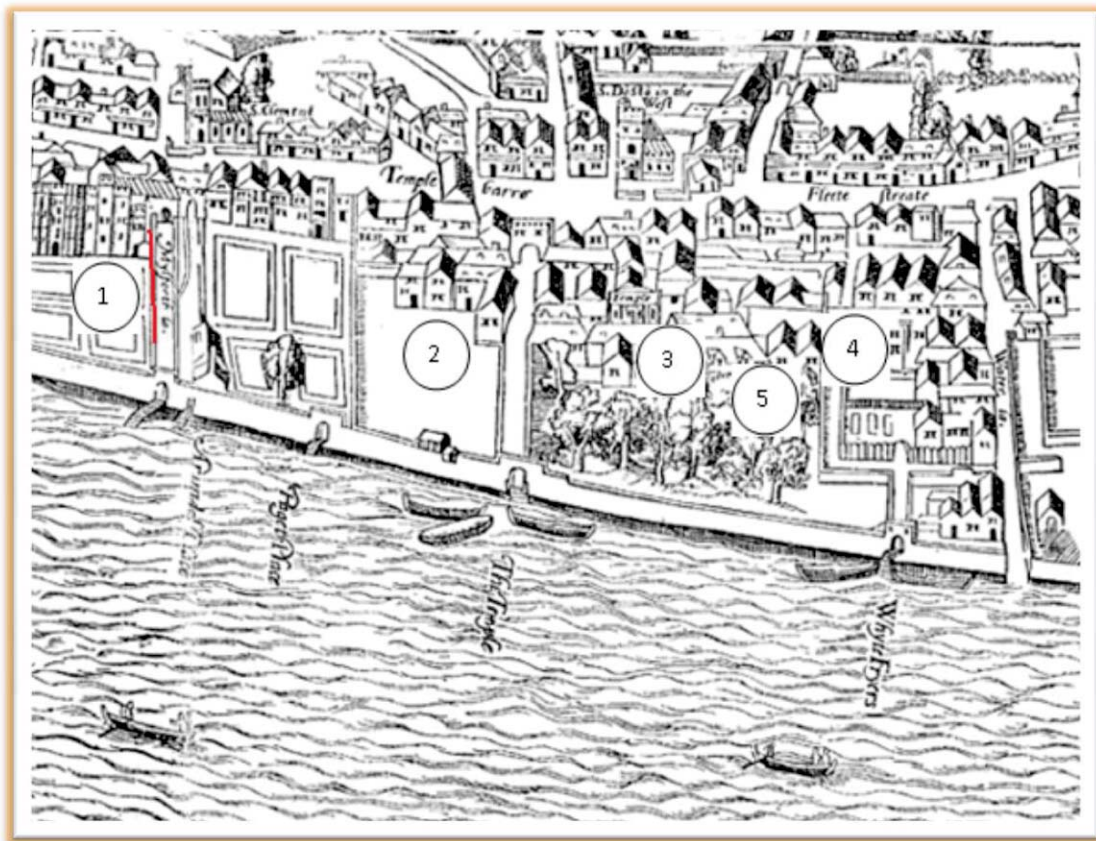
He shows all his aversion towards the marriage marking the difference between himself and Dryground in the areas of social status and economic condition "you are a knight and a man of worship [...] I am a plain fellow, and out of debt" (I, 2, speeches 107, 109) but mainly in terms of space: "you live confined in Milford Lane or Fuller Rents, or who knows where, it skills not" (I, 2, speech 124). The two spatial references are once again highly relevant: Milford Lane was a street running off the Strand to the south towards the Thames, to the west of London, known as a well-known hiding place for debtors. On the other hand, Fuller Rents³⁸³ was a court "opposite the end of Chancery Lane, leading from Holborn into Gray's Inn Walks"³⁸⁴ and a sanctuary for debtors and fugitives. In 1604, upon the joint petition of members of the House residing in Fuller's Rents, a new and strong door was allowed to be placed there, to be opened only during term time and to be kept locked by a porter; and if any further annoyance should arise, it was to "remain dammed up for ever."³⁸⁵

³⁸² Munro, 2010, n5986

³⁸³ The same locations are mentioned in *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, another play deeply concerned with laws and their spatial implications "I need no more ensconcing now in Ram Alley, nor the sanctuary of Whitefriars, the forts of Fuller's Rents and Milford Lane, whose walls are daily battered with the curses of bawling creditors."

³⁸⁴ Sugden, p. 211.

³⁸⁵ Hugh Bellot, *The Inner and the Middle Temple: Legal, Literary, and Historic Associations*, London: Methuen, 1902, p. 202.



1- Milford Lane 2- Middle Temple 3- Inner Temple 4- Whitefriars 5- Fuller's Rents

4.6.3

The Temple Walks onstage

Let us now look at the way the location is put on stage in Acts II and IV and evaluate the actual impact on the dynamics of the play and on the relationships among the characters:

Characters	II, 1	IV, 1	IV, 2
Valentine (Dryground's son)	X	X	X
Brookall (impoverished gentleman)	X	X	X
Phyllis (beggar)	X	X	X
Oliver (gallant)	X	X	
Ambrose (gallant)	X	X	
Amphilus (knight)	X	X	
Vermin (usurer)	X	X	
Trebasco (Amphilus's footman)	X		
Wat (Vermin's son)		X	
Bumpsey (Old Justice)		X	

In the chart, the characters are placed in decreasing order according to their presence on stage. This marks the contradictions of the location since in the place symbol of law and justice, the old Justice Bumpsey, is present just in one scene, while the beggar Phyllis, who is the only woman, and the impoverished gentleman are protagonists of three scenes. On the other hand, the presence of specific characters can also reflect their attitudes: Valentine,³⁸⁶ who lawfully contributes to the reunion of his father and his lost daughter Phyllis, is often in the Temple Walks scenes, whereas Wat, the reckless son of the usurer, is in the location only once and he is also threatened with being thrown into the Thames.

4.6.4

Act II in the Temple Walks

This act, composed by a long scene set in the Temple Walks, impacts heavily on the development of the story presenting a number of strands involving Valentine (the opening of the ordinary) Vermin (his daughter's disappearance), Brookall (his reverse of fortune) and Phyllis (her life as a beggar). All of these contribute to show the different faces of the disparity of the law.

In the first line of the plot, Dryground's son Valentine and his friends Ambrose and Oliver in the Temple Walks discuss the opening of a new ordinary run by a man called Osbright and his daughter. The name of the character might sound as a synonym for sexually disreputable behaviour as for his connections with the story of Osbright, the King of the West Saxons, who raped the wife of one of his nobles, and died while fighting against invaders as a result.³⁸⁷ Once again the name provides the character with a precise connotation which is consistent with the idea of ordinary as a brothel (as was usual for eating and drinking establishments) but contrasts with the idea of legality connected to the setting in the Temple Walks:

³⁸⁶ Yet in a sense the character broke the law when he married Bumpsey's daughter without the consent of the old Justice.

³⁸⁷ This story appears in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and in John Speed's *History of Great Britain*.

They call him Osbright.
A brave old blade: he was the president
Of the can-quarrelling fraternity,
Now called the roaring brotherhood, thirty years since.
(II, 1, speech 199)

These lines recall another of Brome's plays in which tavern life, laws, prostitution and a Brotherhood are given great emphasis: *The Weeding of Covent Garden*. As in that play, here recurs the phrase "roaring brotherhood" and the reference to the "blade" identifies the fraternity as the "brotherhood of the Baton and the Blade." These multiple affinities are more significant if we remember that *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, like *The Demoiselle*, is "full of law of all varieties, but order and authority there is none; and this is the lamentable state of England under Charles's personal rule."³⁸⁸ Yet, in this case the criticism is sharper since the lack of law and authority is to be found at the core of the legal world.

The second plot strand is represented by Vermin's search for Alice: the usurer, like Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, has been deceived by his daughter who has escaped:

Oliver: What makes he here, trow, in the Temple Walks? [...]
Vermin: Go back to the recorder's; fetch the warrant.
I'll search the city and the suburbs for her. [...]
Cannot this place, where law is chiefly studied,
Relieve me with so much as may revenge
Me on these scorners? (II, 1, speeches 218, 224, 242)

His thirst for revenge leads him, his servant and his would-be son in law Sir Amphilus, first to the Temple Walks, where law is principally studied: to this place, as a personification of law and justice, he asks for relief, in particular, legal relief (OED v., 1d). His search for his daughter Alice has definite spatial coordinates: it is not limited to the city, which is the commercial part of London, provided with its own system of government and justice but extends to the suburbs, outside the city walls. Vermin's words are full of references to the world of the law as for the places and the people involved in the administration of justice such as the recorder's and the warrant: the former is the office of the recorder, that is a magistrate responsible for a city or borough; according to the OED (n.1, 10a), the latter is "a writ or order issued by some executive authority, empowering a ministerial officer to make an arrest, a seizure, or a search, to execute a judicial sentence, or to do other acts

³⁸⁸ Butler, 1984, p. 157.

incident to the administration of justice.” Therefore, the usurer invokes the intervention of the law but the ‘strong hand of the law’ that has helped him to overthrow Dryground and Brookall does not assist him in his search of his daughter.

In the meantime, Vermin meets Brookall who blames the usurer for his misfortune. As emerges, his curse on Vermin and his would be-son in law Amphilus is in terms of law: it is interesting to notice that he does not call Sir Amphilus by his name but uses the term son-in-law so marking his obsession with justice:

Brookall: No sir. It was by law he made the purchase,
And by his son-in-law, or outlawed, down he must,
If he set vent’rous foot, as his inheritor,
Upon the mould was got by his oppression. [...]
Thou canst not Nor fly out of the reach of my fell curses.
That freedom (being all that thou hast left me)
Thou canst not rob me of. (II, 1, speeches 320, 323)

Brookall sees himself as a victim of usury and law and he underscores his disappointment with the inequalities of the legal system, unable to support innocent people like him:

That law, once called sacred, and ordained
For safety and relief to innocence,
Should live to be accursed in her succession,
And now be styled supportress of oppression,
Ruin of families, past the bloody rage
Of rape or murder, all the crying sins
Negotiating for hell in her wild practice. [...]
The law? Ha, ha, ha! Talk not to me of law; law’s not my friend.
Law is [...] fatal to me [...] I have enough of law.
(II, 1, speeches 352, 405)

Actually, in the whole play there is a particular insistence on the semantic field of the world ‘law’ (in nouns such as ‘lawyer’ or adjectives like ‘lawful’) which is repeated thirty-six times and twenty in this act alone, marking a correspondence between the setting and the theme. The other act in which this word is most repeated is Act IV, set as well in the Temple Walks.

The last strand of the plot concerns somebody who knows Temple Walks very well, the beggar Phyllis, an illegitimate daughter of a knight and a gentlewoman. The Temple Walks are the only place in London where it is lawful to beg and for a series of professions more or less legal:

Aye, when I beg i' th' streets.
 I have allowance here, as well as any
 Brokers, projectors, common bail, or bankrupts,
 Panders, and cheaters of all sorts, that mix here
 'Mongst men of honour, worship, lands and money.
 [As PHYLLIS speaks] *lawyers and others pass over the stage as conferring two
 by two.* (II, 1, speech 339)

As Martin Butler remarks “the Walks are [...] a displaying of professions” and “usury and Law here share the stage with their unacknowledged allies, Beggary and Ruin.”³⁸⁹ Actually, Phyllis lists agents, business ventures, bails,³⁹⁰ that is someone who procures the release of another person from custody or prison by giving security, insolvent traders or merchants, go-betweens, dishonest gamblers.

Brome puts on stage different exponents of the legal world, such as lawyers, an attorney and Friendly, a member of the Temple. As a first example, the dramatist shows a common legal practice of his day which consists in asking poor people to serve as witnesses for a fee. In this case an attorney (a lawyer who conducts litigation in the courts of Common Law and prepares the case for the barrister, or counsel, who argues the case in open court (OED, n. 1, 3) asks Brookall to perjure himself for two shillings. Upon his refusal, the attorney turns away in search of other perjurers thus proving the usualness of this practice.

Enter ATTORNEY.

Attorney: [Aside] A man, I hope, for my purpose, and save me a-going to the church for one. [To BROOKALL] Will you make an oath, sir?

Brookall: An oath? for what?

Attorney: For two shillings. And it be half a crown, my client shall not stand w' ye; the judge is at leisure, and the other of our bail is there already. Come, go along.

Brookall: I guess you some attorney. Do you know me?

Attorney: No, nor any man we employ in these cases.

Brookall: [Aside] He takes me for a common bail, a knight o' th' post.

[To ATTORNEY] Thou art a villain, and crop-eared I doubt not.

What, darest thou say, thou see'st upon me that—

Attorney: I cry you mercy! I must up, I see, to the old synagogue, there I shall be fitted— (II, 1, speeches 353-359)

³⁸⁹ Butler, 1984, p. 213.

³⁹⁰ Thomas Blount writes in *Glossographia, or A Dictionary* (London, 1656), “There is both common and special bail; *common bail* is in actions of small prejudice or slight proof, in which case any sureties are taken; whereas upon cases of greater weight *special bail* or surety must be given” (sig. F3r).



In the text there is a reference to a synagogue in London which could sound odd. After the expulsion in 1290 under Edward I, the Jews were not permitted to live and worship openly in England till 1656, when Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel of Holland presented the famous Petition to Oliver Cromwell. Moreover, the first synagogue in London was built in Aldgate only in 1698. In this case, the term can be generally applied to a place of worship (OED synagogue, 3.b) so that the attorney is probably referring to the Temple church. What is interesting is that Brome used this word in a play whose protagonist is an usurer, a character associated with the Jewish world.

The same reference recurs in *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, “rather die here in Ram Alley, or walk down to the Temple and lay myself down alive in the old Synagogue, cross-legged among the monumental knights there till I turn marble with ’em” (I, 1, speech 14).³⁹¹

Secondly, another character from the legal world of law is Friendly, a member of the Temple who has been asked to search for Frank, Brookall’s son:

Brookall: I desired you
To seek my son. Ha’ you found him at his chamber?
Or has not want of fatherly supplies
(Which Heaven knows I am robbed of) thrust him out
Of commons, to the common world for succour?
Where is he? Have you found him?
Friendly: No, not him.
But I have found what may be comfort to you,

³⁹¹ All the references from *A Mad Couple Well Matched* are from R. Brome, modern text, ed. by Eleanor Lowe, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

If you receive it like a man of courage. [...]
Indeed he is not dead, but lives— [...]
He's gone to travel, sir. (II, 1, speeches 362-3, 69, 75)

Brookall believes his son to be dead, not knowing that he is actually disguised as the famous demoiselle all London is talking about.

Finally, Brome stages the appearance of lawyers and others who pass over the stage as conferring two by two, while Phyllis, as a 'choric commentator',³⁹² is describing the habitual frequenters of the Temple Walks. If on the one hand it ironically contrasts with the notorious people evoked by Phyllis, on the other hand, it is a touch of local realistic colour. As Munro comments "Brome is at his most Jonsonian here, the movement of bodies around the stage recalling the fair scenes of *Bartholomew Fair* (Lady Elizabeth's Men, 1614), or the Paul's Walk scene in *Every Man out of his Humour* (Chamberlain's Men, 1599)."³⁹³

IN PERFORMANCE

This scene is challenging from the point of view of performance. In the workshop at Royal Holloway and Bedford College, scholars and actors experimented with different ways of presenting the lawyers, proposing alternative versions considering both the interaction with the characters on stage and with the audience: in the former, the lawyers pass across the front of the stage, in the latter they use the diagonals³⁹⁴ of the stage. As for the other characters, they could either ask for money or just make gestures towards them to show that they have noticed them. In both versions, the lawyers' movements focus on Sir Amphilus, while Trebasco attempts to protect his master from what he perceives as a threat. I think that both these versions are effective in staging the issue of law and justice, but I would suggest that the lawyers should circle the other characters so to give the idea of the predominance of law and create a sort of prison limiting the space of the characters on stage. Moreover, the lawyers could pass by without interacting with the other characters

³⁹² Butler, 1984, p. 212.

³⁹³ Munro, 2010, n6486.

³⁹⁴ Yet, when the play was originally staged in the Salisbury Court, diagonals were not used since, due to the configuration of the theatre, the entry doors were only at the rear of the stage.

and even ignoring them, thus emphasizing that they are strangers to the space associated with legal matters.

4.6.5

Act IV in the Temple Walks

Act IV is still set in the Temple Walks, where we find the same characters as in Act II (the only exception are Trebasco, Sir Amphilus's footman, and in addition Bumpsey and Wat) Their priorities and objectives have not changed in the meantime, since they all come to the location in search of justice for somebody they have lost: Vermin is looking for his daughter Alice, Phyllis for her father and vice versa, Amphilus for her would-be wife, Brookall, for Frank.

Brome invites us to see a different spot of the location, the river which flows nearby, the Thames: the scene opens with Wat who is dragged on by a "rabble of rude fellows" and is being threatened with being thrown into the Thames because they believe him to be a pander. He is able to escape only owing to Valentine and Oliver's intervention:

Wat: You rogues, slaves, villains, will you murder me?

Rabble: To the pump with him! To the pump, to the pump!

Valentine: Prithee, beat off the curs.

Rabble: No, to the Thames, the Thames!

Phyllis: Why do you use the man so? Is he not a Christian? Or is he not christened enough, think you, that you would dip him?

Oliver: Pray gentlemen, forbear. It is thought fit, upon request made by a noble friend, favouring his person, not his quality, that for this time the pander be dismissed. So all depart in peace.

Rabble: Away, away, let's go then.

Wat: I thank you, gentlemen.

Phyllis: I thank you for him too. (IV, 1, speeches 654-659)

Two aspects stand out in this extract: on the one hand, the episode contrasts with the supposed legality of the location and puts an emphasis on the underclass of London represented by the beggar Phyllis and the Rabble. The beggar offers a radically different point of view which marks her distance from the Rabble and her non involvement in the dynamics of the setting. Phyllis is the only one who shows real pity towards Wat (even

though they have never met before) and seems to ask for a divine justice more than to a human one, when comparing Wat's immersion to the Christian baptism.

Moreover, the episode has a strong realistic connotation since Brome references to an event actually happened in 1618, when ruffians in the Temple Walks threw into the Thames a bailiff who had attempted to make an arrest there.³⁹⁵ This event must have caused an uproar since a similar episode is evoked in *The Squire of Alsazia* by Shadwell fifty years after *The Demoiselle*. As Lucy Munro noticed, "wrong-doers were often thrust under a water pump as an arbitrary punishment; prostitutes and pimps may have been particularly liable to this; in the Induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, the Stage-Keeper speculates that a pump would make a good stage prop, "And a punk set under upon her head, with her stern upward, and ha' been soused by my witty young masters o' the Inns of Court' (ll. 31-3)."³⁹⁶ From a gender perspective, it is interesting to notice that a similar punishment was also used for women who talked too much: they "were put upon a cucking stool and dunked in water to stop the incontinence of the mouth."

As in Act II, Brome exploits the lawyers on stage whose passage is not a mere repetition of a successful device. In this case this happens while Brookall is on stage alone complaining about the law which stripped him of his status and money:

Brookall: These walks afford to miserable man
Undone by suits leave yet to sit, or go,
Though in a ragged one, and look upon
[As BROOKALL speaks,] *lawyers and others pass over the stage.*
The giants that overthrew him, though they strut
And are swol'n bigger by his emptiness. (IV, 1, speech 692)

The passage of the lawyers aims to emphasize the disproportion perceived by Brookall between the law and himself. In a sort of nightmarish vision, he sees the lawyers as giants that have contributed to overthrow him and have gained financially from his ruin. I would suggest not to stage this scene in a similar way to the one in Act II but to underscore the difference: on the one hand, it could be useful to put the lawyers on a higher level onstage, or Brookall downstage to create a prospective view in which the gentleman seems smaller

³⁹⁵ Walter George Bell, (1912) *Fleet Street in Seven Centuries*, London: Paperback, 2009, pp. 291-2.

³⁹⁶ Munro, 2010, n 655.

and smaller;³⁹⁷ on the other hand, it would be possible to cast the shadows of the lawyers on the backdrop to suggest the worrying silhouette of a giant.

Then the scene seems to move away for a moment from the Temple Walks to a place out of time, in a gloomy cemeterial atmosphere which recalls the graveyard cemetery scene in *Hamlet* when the prince, observing a skull, suggests it could be of a lawyer so claiming that people are all equal in the moment of death: “Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? [...] Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt?”³⁹⁸

Brome expresses the same concept through the powerful image of the character victims of the “gulf of law” which swallows up everything and everyone, even members of the legal world:

What corrupt lawyer or usurious citizen,
Oppressing landlord or unrighteous judge,
But leaves the world with horror? And their wealth,
(By rapine forced from the oppressèd poor)
To heirs that (having turned their sires to th' devil)
Turn idiots, lunatics, prodigals or strumpets?
All wanting either wit, or will, to save
Their fatal portions from the gulf of law,
Pride, riot, surfeits, dice and luxury,
Till beggary, or diseases turns them after? (IV, 1, speech 724)

In a modern staging of the play, it would be interesting to make some characters (minor ones or extras) stand in the orchestra pit to try to convey the idea of a whirlpool where they have been swallowed up.

After this long choral scene, the atmosphere becomes more intimate with only three characters on stage. Brookall, Phyllis and Valentine isolate themselves in a spot of the Temple Walks where, far from prying eyes, they make an important discovery about Phyllis's origins. As Munro notices, “the act also demonstrates Brome's careful handling of tone: again, the potentially sentimental portrayal of Phyllis is balanced by the satiric treatment of Vermin and Sir Amphilus - who are again subjected to sustained moral

³⁹⁷ This would be possible only in a modern performance while impossible in the Salisbury Court due to the configuration of the theatre.

³⁹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V, 1, 97-98, 104-5.

denunciation from Brookall - and by some comic set-pieces, such as Valentine and Bumpsey's competitive charity.³⁹⁹

Valentine: This girl, methinks, howe'er necessitated into this course, declares she has a spirit of no gross air, and I dare think her blood, although, perhaps, of some unlawful mixture, derived from noble veins. One may perceive much in her language, in her looks and gesture, that pleads, methinks, a duty above pity to take her from this way, wherein she wanders so far from the intent of her creation.

Bumpsey: Your meaning is you would buy her out of her calling. Is it not so?

Valentine: Ten pieces I would give towards a new one for her. [Gives money to PHYLLIS.]

Bumpsey: Here's ten more to bind you quite from begging. [Gives money to PHYLLIS.]

Can you afford it? If yes, accept it, and let's see your back. (IV, 2, speeches 785-88)

A real and well-known location like the Temple Walks contrasts with the fictitious new ordinary set in an unspecified part of London, yet presumably near Temple Walks. Interestingly, the place where all contrasts are solved, harmony is restored and justice is done is the ordinary, whereas the Temple Walks stand as the symbol of a law which is no longer able to perform its duty and guide the country.

4.6.6

The ordinary on stage (III, 1; V, 1)

Act III, 1 and Act V, 1 are both set within the new ordinary run by Dryground in disguise. The location seems to evoke the world of law from a different perspective since it is frequented by the same categories of people as the Temple Walks, yet it appears to be in contrast with the space of law. What Wat says about the clients of the ordinary is highly significant:

All must be nameless. There are lords among 'em.
And some of civil coat, that love to draw
New stakes at the old game as well as they;
Truckle-breeched justices, and bustling lawyers
That thrust in with their motions; muffled citizens;

³⁹⁹Brome, R., *The Demoiselle*, Modern Text, edited by Lucy Munro, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, note 8399.

Old money-masters some that seek the purchase;
And merchant venturers that bid for the
Foreign commodity as fair as any. (III, 1, speech 550)

Among them, there are many exponents of the legal world such as Justices and lawyers, but also citizens, merchants and money-lenders. Actually in the scene there are the Justice of the Peace Bumpsey, the usurer Vermin, the gallants Ambrose and Oliver and sir Amphilus. Therefore the dimension of law seems to invade this milieu, even though, since the location is nothing less than a bawdy-house, the law was supposed to oppose its activities instead of taking part.

Therefore, it is deeply ironic when Brome brings on stage the justice of the peace Bumpsey with his daughter and wife in fashionable clothes, both eager to learn the appropriate behaviour for the royal court from “a rare creature come to town, of a French breed, a demoiselle, that professeth teaching of court-carriage and behaviour” (III, 2, speech 577). Within this setting, the idea of law is ironically replaced with the code of etiquette and this gives Brome the opportunity to make fun of current French-influenced fashions. Frances pretends to be teaching them how to make a curtsy, “all de ways to win his love” (898), how to get dressed, to behave and speak.

Magdalen: But neither of 'em can dream French enough to direct 'em hither,
I warrant you. And does she learn the carriages very well, Madam-silly?

Frances: Mademoiselle, s'il vous plaît.

Magdalen: What do ye call 't? I shall never hit it. How do you find your scholar?

Frances: Oh, she is very good. She learn very well.

Magdalen: But how much carriage hath she learned?

Frances: You may learn dat of de leetle shild. De leetle shild, you see, will handle de ting, before it can set one foot to de ground. Come, let me see you make a reverence.

Magdalen: Reverence! What's that?

Frances: 'Tis dat you call a curtsy. Let me see you make curtsy.

Magdalen: Look you here then.[She curtsies.]

Frances: Oh, fee, fee — dat is de gross English douck, for de swag-buttocked-wife of de peasant. (V, 1, speeches 870-74, 882-886)

Two aspects stand out: on the one hand, Magdalen's attempt to refashion herself into a higher class status after Frances's example; on the other hand, the political implications of Frances's French assumed identity. The character can be associated with the French-born Queen Henrietta Maria since “like Brome's supposed demoiselle, Henrietta was born and

bred in France and initially spoke English but brokenly.”⁴⁰⁰ Yet, the association between the Queen and Frances is potentially subversive since the demoiselle, whose virginity is raffled off, is a boy in disguise.

This episode is interrupted by the sudden arrival of two sergeants who are there to arrest Wat. Therefore, now the law seems to invade the ordinary to bring order, yet the law officers’ actions turn out to be far from being lawful: actually, they do not arrest Wat when Valentine offers to pay them:

Sergeants: We arrest you, sir. Nay, we shall rule you.
Wat: Ha, ha, ha! Why, this is well, and very hospitably done.
Sergeants: Will you walk, sir?
Valentine: Sergeants, you shall not
 Out of the house. Here’s for half an hour’s attendance.
[Gives them money.]
 Go into that room with your prisoner.
 You shall have wine and smoke too.
 Be of good cheer, friend, if thou canst be honest
 I can relieve thee. Fear not.
Wat: Sir, get my father but to say as much
 And you shall be coheir with me. I vow,
 You shall have half.
WAT [and] SERGEANTS [exit]. (V, 1, speeches 951-952, 955, 967-968)

The play ends with the triumph of the law in an ironic and metaphoric way. On the one hand, the final image of the law is the one of the sergeants corrupted by a bribe, like at the end of *The Weeding of Covent Garden*. This emphasizes ironically the lack of legality and justice. On the other hand, after the three intermarriages taking place during the play (Wat and Phyllis, Frank and Alice, Dryground and Eleanor), most of the characters have new family ties so that the stage is overcrowded with fathers, brothers, sisters, and mothers-in-law thus showing that the ‘strong hand’ of the law dominates over the universe of *the Demoiselle*.

⁴⁰⁰ Athina Efstathiou-Lavabre, “False Frenchmen” in Richard Brome’s Plays’ in *Representing France and the French in Early Modern English Drama*, (ed) Jean-Christophe Mayer, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008, pp. 207-222, p. 210.

4.7

The lawless world of *A Mad Couple Well Matched*

Unusually for his literary production, Brome stages again the same location, the Temple Walks, in another play after *The Demoiselle*, once focusing on a specific area, the notorious Ram Alley. The playwright carefully and consciously chooses the most suitable spot of the location to stage his most controversial and subversive comedy, *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, and proves he has acquired great mastery in the use of the place realism device. Unlike *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, *The English Moor* or *The Sparagus Garden*, where the story is set in public indoor locations (taverns), public outdoor (Covent Garden Piazza), or private houses in an unspecified part of London, in this play Brome uses a location both private and indoor while specifying its position in the city: as it is explicitly stated, the comedy opens in the protagonist's hovel in Ram Alley. This disreputable location allows the playwright to investigate the relationship between the character and his house and how the life in that street is perceived by the other characters, as well as to develop further the issue of law and justice, enriched with a strong moral connotation.

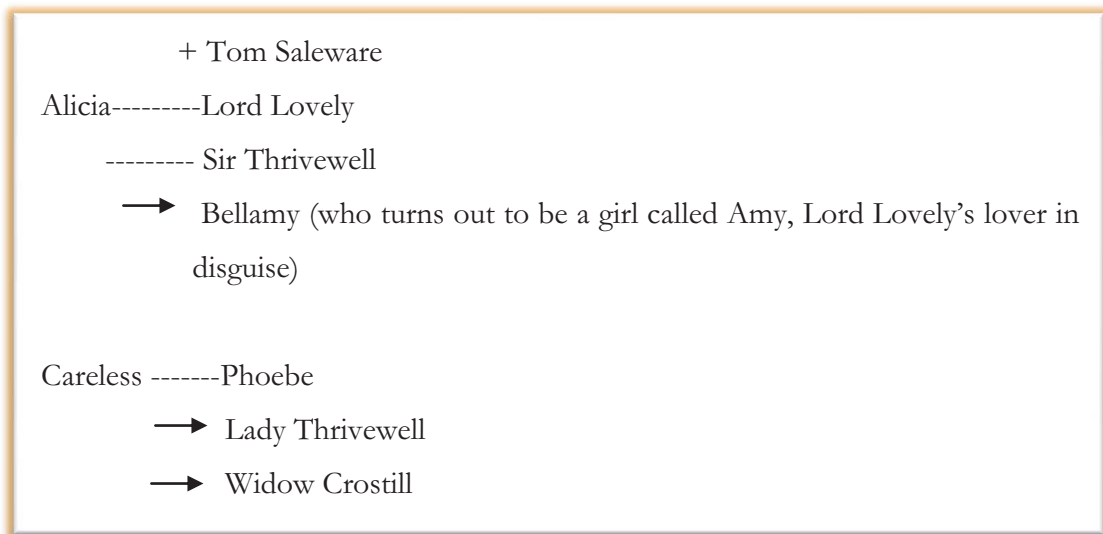
4.8

The plot

The protagonist is George Careless, an unscrupulous young man who lives at his uncle's expense, the rich Sir Oliver Thrivewell. The uncle, who is still heirless after two years, is now planning to make his nephew marry with a young widow, Mistress Crostill, so to avoid supporting him any longer. In the meantime, Careless lives with his servant Wat in Ram Alley, which is also the place where he used to meet his lover Phoebe whom he seduced and later rejected after an empty promise of marriage. Once abandoned, the girl asks a relative, a London merchant called Tom Saleware, for help.

Tom is known all over London as a 'wittol', a complaisant cuckold, since his wife Alicia has many rich and influential lovers, among whom Sir Thrivewell and Lord Lovely.

Alicia seems to be the link connecting the numerous strands of the plot, as emerges from the scheme reproducing all the relationships, lawful (+) or not (-----) and courtship → in the play:



In the play there are a series of tricks and mistakes that complicate the plot. In Act III Careless writes two letters, one to court the widow, and another to Phoebe to reject her while insulting her. Wat, thought, delivers them so that Phoebe receives the widow's letter and vice versa. Yet "what appears to the audience to be a comic plot device leading to a reversal of fortune in fact does nothing of the sort."⁴⁰¹ Later, in Act IV there are two bed tricks, one to reunite Alicia and Saleware and one for Careless and Phoebe. In particular, Careless is led to believe that is sleeping with his aunt, which he does without any kind of moral concern and realizes only at the end that actually he has slept with Phoebe. Even After discovering this Careless does not feel obliged to marry the girl but pleasure prevails once again over responsibility. The end of the play is bitter and ironic: Alicia is obliged to sleep with her husband and to devote herself to her marriage; Thrivewell swears to be faithful to his wife after the betrayal with Alicia; Phoebe, probably made pregnant by Careless, marries his servant Wat as a compensation and Careless marries the widow so creating the mad couple well matched of the title.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Steggle, 2004, p. 145.

⁴⁰² Actually, only two characters of the play are referred to as mad, Careless and the widow, so I can conclude that they are the mad couple of the title, even if other the couples of the play could be considered as both mad and well matched.

4.9

Critical approaches

“The extent of the extra-marital promiscuity in this play is remarkable” so that *A Mad Couple Well Matched* is the one with the shortest critical shrift in Brome’s *corpus*. Kaufmann’s judgment upon the play stigmatized the general approach towards it till the 1980s: “It is a skilful city comedy and the most obscene of his works. It is worth reading but requires little critical comment.” Schelling actually said that the play “reaches depths of coarseness and vulgarity” and some passages “relieve Dryden and Wycherley of the odium of having debased English drama below depths previously reached in the reign of the virtuous King Charles.”⁴⁰³ On the other hand, Swinburne⁴⁰⁴ is the only one who expresses a more balanced and objective view on the work, despite the dominant moralising approach:

A Mad Couple Well Matched is very clever, very coarse, and rather worse than dubious in the bias of its morality; but there is no fault to be found with the writing or the movement of the play; both style and action are vivid and effective throughout. That ‘a new language and quite a new turn of comic interest came in with the Restoration’ will hardly be allowed by the readers of such plays as this. That well-known and plausible observation is typical of a stage in his studies when Lamb was apparently if not evidently unversed in such reading as may be said to cast over the gap between Etherege and Fletcher a bridge on which Shirley may shake hands with Shadwell, and Wycherley with Brome.

The critic actually avoids an exclusively moral interpretation of the play and prefers an analysis in terms of dramaturgy and style, considering Brome’s work as a prefiguration of Restoration drama so comparing him to famous playwrights such as Shadwell and Wycherley.

Shaw definitively reverses this negative trend: not only does she not investigate the play on moral grounds, but she is also the first to identify the play as an example of place realism. This scholar considers the comedy as “one of the best structured of Brome’s city comedies”⁴⁰⁵ and interprets the title claiming that “in *A Mad Couple Well Matched* the

⁴⁰³ Felix E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama 1558-1642*, 2 vols, London, 1908, pp. 272-3.

⁴⁰⁴ Swinburne, p. 360.

⁴⁰⁵ Shaw, p. 91.

multiplicity of mating dances suggests that the title may also refer to the variety of mad couplings in which all are well matched in their intrigues and conniving.”⁴⁰⁶

Following this approach and setting aside the readings which condemn the play on moral grounds, Steggle reads the plays as a destructive satire of the city comedy by close imitation.⁴⁰⁷ If the play starts with an insert of place realism, typical of the genre, Brome’s use of the comic conventions and devices is subverted and turned sour.⁴⁰⁸ In her introduction to the critical edition of the play, Eleonor Lowe discusses the theatrical aspects of the play, considering both how to perform the protagonist Careless and the configuration of the theatre where the comedy was staged, and comments on its stage history and on Aphra Behn’s adaptation *The Debauchee* (1677). What is paradoxical is that a play so controversial and ostracized is the only one studied and translated by Ranieri Parra, the only Italian scholar who has dealt with Brome’s plays. He claims that the mad couple of the title is constituted by Careless and Wat since they are both well matched in the sense of “married.”⁴⁰⁹ Parra underscores important aspects of the play, but completely neglects the spatial dimension, claiming that the space references are not very significant.⁴¹⁰

As for me, setting aside a moral-oriented readings of the work, which would not give a contribution to my analysis but would limit it, I investigate the play as a particular example of place realism and I discuss how the issue of law and justice, which is conveyed through the Ram Alley setting, is subverted.

4.10

History of Ram Alley

Ram Alley, connecting Fleet Street and King’s Bench Walk, was a disreputable street in the Temple Walks, a kind of privileged place for debtors: actually, the location was a well known sanctuary for any kind of criminals such as thieves, murderers and debtors

⁴⁰⁶ Shaw, p. 88.

⁴⁰⁷ Steggle, 2004, p. 142.

⁴⁰⁸ Steggle, 2004, p. 148.

⁴⁰⁹ Anton-Ranieri Parra, (ed) *A Mad Couple Well Matched, Due Dissennati Ben Accoppiati*, Firenze, Italy: Centro 2P, 1983, p. 193.

⁴¹⁰ “Il luogo che fa da sfondo alla vicenda è Londra, ma i riferimenti alla città sono ben pochi (quell’accenno alla battaglia di Finsbury nell’atto I, a Cheapside e Lombard Street e pochi altri), tanto che riterrei opportuno parlare di questa commedia come di una commedia ‘cittadina’ in senso lato.” Anton Ranieri-Parra, *Il Teatro di Richard Brome*, Pisa: ETS, 1999, p. 92.

and doubtful characters. When the abuses became fragrant, in 1697 an act of William III, known as “The Escape from Prison Act,” abolished all London sanctuaries⁴¹¹ and the abolition was completed in 1723 under George I. The privileged places mentioned in the two acts were the Minories, Salisbury Court, Whitefriars, Fulwood’s Rents, Mitre Court, Baldwin’s Gardens, The Savoy, The Clink, Deadman’s Place, Montague Close, The Mint and Stepney.⁴¹²

Now Ram Alley has vanished and the place is known as Hare Place. Yet Ram Alley obtained a long lasting fame due to the references in numerous plays. It is mentioned in *Returned to Parnassus*, one of the three dramas called *Parnassus Plays* performed at St. John’s College in Cambridge in 1606. What stands out is that since the place provided exemption from the process of the courts of the law, it was therefore much frequented by strumpets and pickpockets: “Cuts, thrusts, and foins at whomsoe’er he meets! And strews about Ram Alley meditations.”

In Jonson’s *The Staple of News*, the prodigal Pennyboy junior is dissuaded to go to dine in Ram Alley due to its ill reputation: “O fie! An alley, and a cook’s shop, gross! ‘twill savour, sir, most rankly of ‘em both. Let your meat rather follow you to a tavern (II, 5, 115-17). Also in Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* recurs the reference to the cook’s shop and adds the presence of lawyers and clerks: “The knave thinks still he’s at the cook’s shop in Ram Alley, where the clerks divide, and the elder is to choose; and feeds so slovenly.” Actually, Ram Alley was full of taverns yet was also frequented by lawyers, as Barry says in the eponymous play entitled *Ram Alley* (1611): “and though Ram Alley stinks with cooks and ale, yet say there’s many a worthy lawyer’s chamber butts upon ram alley.” Finally, it was also famous as a site of prostitution: “Are you mad? Come you to seek a virgin in Ram Alley so near an Inn-of-Court, and amongst cooks, Ale-men, and laundresses? (1283–6). As Steggle remarks, Barry’s comedy is an important point of reference for *A Mad Couple Well Matched* “since as well as the common setting it shares such structural elements as a young prodigal; a woman he has deflowered who none the less continues to love him; and the device of a woman disguised herself as a page to serve the man she loves.”⁴¹³ Therefore,

⁴¹¹ Strype, B. iii., p. 277.

⁴¹² James Fitzjames Stephen, *A History of the Criminal Law in England*, London, Macmillan, 1883, vol 1, p. 123.

⁴¹³ Steggle, 2004, p. 142.

when Brome uses this location, he also evokes all these literary works which, being familiar to the audience, enrich his comedy.

4.11

The space in the play

As emerges from the chart, in this play there are only indoor scenes: Careless's hovel in Ram Alley, Lord and Lady Thrivewell's house, the Saleware's shop in or near Cheapside, Mistress Crostill's house, and Lord Lovely's house. On the one hand, all the indoor locations reflect the private dimension of law and justice in this play: actually, the strands of the plot are personal problems that the characters try to keep secret and locations like these, far from the open space, suggest the idea of secrecy.

	Thrivewell's House	Lord Lovely's House	Saleware's Shop	Mistress Crostill's house	Careless's house (Ram Alley)	Unknown Location
I, 1					X	
I, 2	X					
II, 1			X			
II, 2	X					
III, 1				X		
IV, 1				X		
IV, 2	X					
IV, 3						X
IV, 4	X					
V, 1		X				
V, 2	X					

On the other hand, the only location that we can collocate with some certainty apart from Ram Alley is Saleware's shop, in or near Cheapside. Act II, scene 1 opens with a clear spatial reference:

Alicia: All Cheapside and Lombard Street, madam, could not have furnished you with a more complete bargain. You will find it in the wearing, and thank me both for the goodness of the stuff and of the manufacture.

Lady: But now the price, Mistress Saleware. I grant your commodity is good: the gold and silver laces and the fringes are rich and, I hope, well wrought. Has your man made a note of the particulars and their prices at the rate of ready money (for I buy so), and not as you would book'em to an under-aged heir or a court cavalier, to expect payment two or three years hence, and find it perhaps never. I come with, 'Here is one for tother.' (II, 2, speeches 194-5)

The commercial setting, which should put an emphasis on the idea of trade of goods, actually seems to imply the sex trade where Alicia plays an important role. Lady Thriwell clearly shows her awareness of her husband's betrayal with Alicia by saying "I grant your commodity is good," which could be a pun on the textile goods Alicia sells and her physical attributes.

This is part of a subtext hinting at prostitution which pervades the whole play and that contribute to evoke a sort of Ram Alley in any location staged. Actually, each location seems to reflect Ram Alley since they are frequented by similar categories of people: cheaters like Bellamy (in disguise as a man), the adulterer Thriwell, debtors like Careless, prostitutes like Alicia, to give just a few example. Moreover, Ram Alley appears to be a central part of the life of many characters, beside Careless who lives there. As Shaw remarks, Ram Alley "is where Careless has enjoyed his whore (and where Wat, incidentally, has also enjoyed her), and it is where he returns from his uncle's house for his excesses of "wine, roaring, whoring." The area is also where Alicia Saleware has cuckolded her husband and her nickname ally actually recalls Ram Alley.⁴¹⁴

4.12

Ram Alley in the play

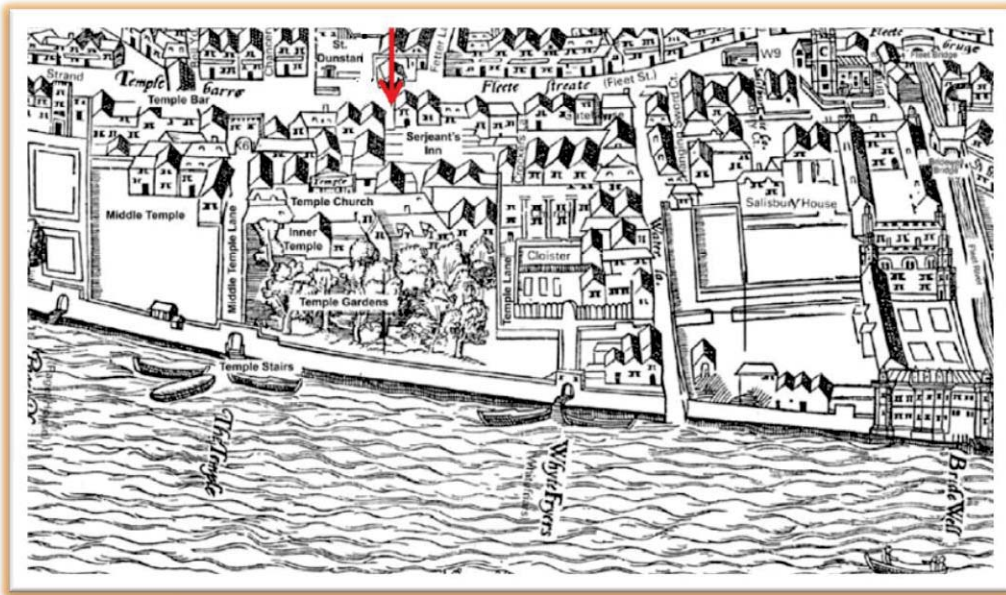
The location is mentioned twice throughout the play, in both cases by Careless while in conversation with his servant Wat. The opening scene is in Ram Alley⁴¹⁵ and introduces the main activities of the protagonist Careless: gambling, whoring and other lewd pastimes:

⁴¹⁴ Shaw, p. 88.

⁴¹⁵ In the map Ram Alley is marked by a red arrow.

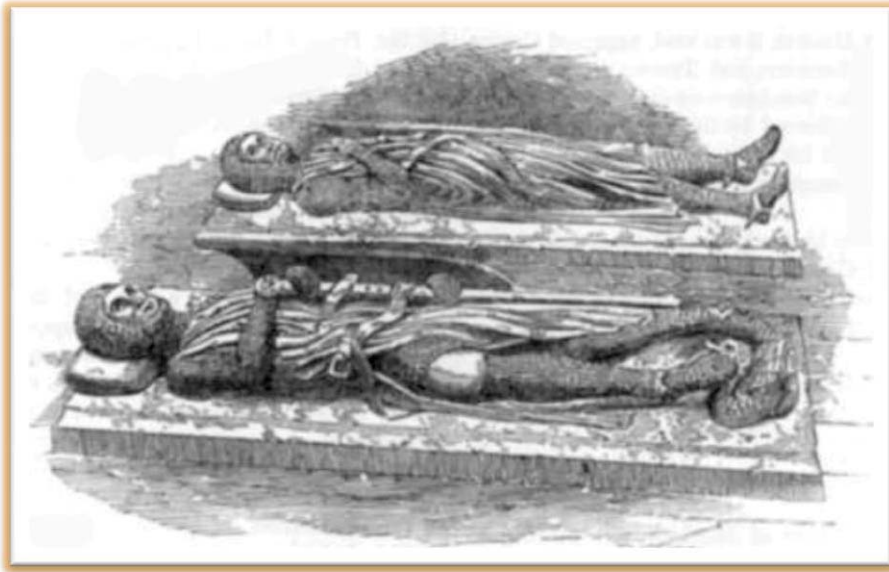
I cannot, nor will I trouble my brains to think of any. I will rather die here in Ram Alley or walk down to the Temple⁴¹⁶ and lay myself down alive in the old Synagogue, cross-legged among the monumental knights there till I turn marble with 'em. Think, quotha! What should I think on? (I, 1, speech 145)

Beside reinforcing the sense of place, Careless's use of the adverb 'here' seems to remind the audience that Ram Alley was not far from the Salisbury Court, for which the play was originally written, thus adding realism since the spectators feel they are actually in Ram Alley as part of the performance.



He states the location and evokes it through the references to its places around it such as the Temple and the Synagogue. We can see all these locations on the map: the former was situated between Middle Temple and Inner Temple, near Fleet Street, whereas the latter was actually Temple Church, already mentioned in *The Demoiselle*. Careless also makes reference to the marble statues of the armed Templar knights inside Temple Church, thus adding credibility and realism to the scene. Interestingly, he claims to be cross-legged, a symbol that denotes a crusading vow, which strongly contrasts with the character.

⁴¹⁶ Situated amongst the buildings of the Inns of Court, Temple Church is just off Fleet Street, and contains effigies of knights lying in stone.



In the dialogue it emerges why Careless has to live in Ram Alley: actually, he is a debtor, who has frequently been to prison:

Wat: Then would he ha' told me again what all your courses have been: namely, running into debt by all the ways can be imagined, and cheating by all could be invented, then that the said thing (as you call it) your uncle, before he cast you quite off, had redeemed you out of prison and several holds within the space of fifteen months, fourteen times.

Careless: That was not once a month then, or if it had, what had that been to him? 'Twas I that suffer'd, thou shouldst ha' told him, not he.

Wat: He would ha' told me then again that several redemptions cost your uncle at least two thousand pounds, and that upon your last revolt, when he quite gave you over for a castaway, two years since, he cast the third thousand with you, upon condition never to afflict him more. And then he married in hope to get an heir. (I, 1, speeches 7-9)

Later in the scene, while thinking of a new way of raising money, Wat lists a series of previous methods used and then proposes something which could be successful in the milieu of Ram Alley, setting up a male brothel, so implying that the setting inspire only immoral or criminal projects.

The idea of public law is represented in a sense by Saleware, the London merchant relative to Phoebe. In order to help her, he tries to convince Careless to marry her, also with the threat of recurring to the official law:

Saleware: Yes, sir, I am the gentleman, and she has told me so much, sir, that I must tell you to tell your master from me, and as I would tell him myself if he were here personally present, he is a most dishonest gentleman if he do her not lawful right by marrying her; and that right I came to demand, and obtain of him, or to denounce the law against him.

Wat: How happy are you that you came short to tell him so, else he would ha' so beaten you, as never was citizen beaten since the great battle of Finsbury Field.

Saleware: Your great words cannot make me fear his blows (I am not dashed nor bashed). nor cross him out of my book for fear of any such payment. I have him there for four score pound, as you know, though you are pleased to forget me. But Sapientia mea mihi, stultitia tua tibi.

Wat: Cry mercy, Master Saleware, is it you? I hope Mistress Saleware is well, your most exquisite and most courtly wife, the flower-de-luce

Saleware: Well, wag, well. You must not now put me off with my wife; she's well and much respected. I come to speak of and for my distressed kinswoman, her whom your wicked master has most wickedly dealt withal. He has deflowered and deluced her, and led her from her friends and out of her country into fool's paradise by making her believe he would marry her. And here he has put her on, and put her off, with hopes and delays till she is come to both woe and want; and (which may prove her most affliction, if he be suffered to forsake her) she is with child by him. [...]

And shall find friends that shall not see her abused by you nor him. There is law to be found for money, money to be found for friends, and friends to be found in the Arches and so tell your master. Come away, cousin.

(I, 1, speeches 113-117, 125).

This dialogue is particularly interesting for the idea of law it provides. The word 'law' and its adjective are used in Act I six times,⁴¹⁷ and Saleware mentions it three times only in this passage. In particular, "law to be found for money" seems to convey the idea that justice is necessary only for personal aims, not for a moral purpose. Moreover, the Latin sentence which is repeated many times throughout the play in order to turn it into an ironic *leitmotiv*, "Sapientia mihi, stultitia tibi", evokes the serious language of the law while mocking its lack of contents. The passage has strong spatial implications and all the places evoked are connected to Ram Alley or to Saleware's shop. A significant moment of the scene is when Wat calls Saleware's wife "flower-de-luce." A flower called fleur de lis was used as symbol of the kings of France, but it could also be found in the signs of two taverns in Fleet Street,⁴¹⁸ near Ram Alley, where the Devil Tavern stood, and one in

⁴¹⁷ The word law is not recurrent in the play since, after Act I is mentioned twice in Act III and Act IV, but not incisively.

⁴¹⁸ At the corner of Shoe Lane, and Fetter Lane, respectively.

Lombard Street,⁴¹⁹ near Saleware's shop. Lowe also suggests the possibility of a pun on 'luce' as 'lues' or '*lues venerea*', or syphilis, thus hinting at Alicia's sexual promiscuity.⁴²⁰

In his reply to Wat, Saleware makes an unconscious pun on flower de luce by claiming that Careless "has deflowered and deluced" Phoebe, so creating a link between Phoebe, who is often referred to as Careless's whore, and his wife. Moreover, the hints at prostitution are reinforced by his claim to find justice at the arches, at the Ecclesiastical Court of Appeal for the province of Canterbury which used to meet at the church of Sancta Marie-de-Arcubus in Cheapside, now known as St Mary-le-Bow. As Williams notices, the periods when the Inns of Court men are present and the law courts like this are sitting are particularly profitable for prostitutes, "hence *Arches* puns on brothel and the ecclesiastical court at St Mary-le-Bow."⁴²¹ All the places mentioned seem to be connected to Ram Alley, either for proximity or for the activities performed, and contribute to reinforce the importance of the setting.

Then Ram Alley is mentioned once again in Act II, when Careless is invited to live at his uncle's house and rethink about Ram Alley without nostalgia since he does not need to live in that place anymore:

I need no more ensconcing now in Ram Alley, nor the sanctuary of Whitefriars,⁴²² the forts of Fuller's Rents and Milford Lane. My debts are paid, and here's a stock remaining of gold, pure gold; hark how sweetly it chinks.

Yet, Careless does not forget the place where he has spent most of his life but evokes it in all its locations: Whitefriars, Fuller's Rents and Milford Lane, already mentioned in *The Demoiselle*. In the two scenes we can see that the relationship between Careless and Ram Alley cannot be identified as *topophilia*, since the character is obliged to live there owing to his debts so that he is glad to leave that location is cheered up. By leaving Ram Alley the gallant aims to forget a part of his past life and start a new life in a different place where he is not known as a debtor and a cheater, yet this does not imply his redemption. We do not

⁴¹⁹ It is mentioned in Heywood's *Edward IV, Part Two*: "To Mistress Blage, an Inn in Lombard Street, The Flower-de-Luce" 13.85.

⁴²⁰ Lowe, 2010, n158.

⁴²¹ Williams, Gordon, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols, London: Athlone, 1994, p. 35.

⁴²² The site of the church of the Whitefriars was pulled down when the monasteries were destroyed. Yet, the area had the privilege of sanctuary thus attracting law-breakers like Careless.

know whether Careless will ever come back to Ram Alley, yet the location has become part of him so that, as a symbiotic relation, it will always follow him wherever he goes.

If in *The Demoiselle* Brome stages the coexistence of law and crime, in this play he shows the lack of a central moral, political or judiciary authority, a situation that England experienced in those decades. Each location of the play turns out to be a tribunal where the characters are at the same time accused and lawyers for themselves, like Lady Thrivewell asking mercy for her actions to the spectators: ‘May ladies that shall hear this story told, Judge mildly of my act since he’s so bold’ (IV 2.speech 816). Therefore, the only real judge of the play seems to be the audience, unique reliable and honest surety in the lawless universe of *A Mad Couple Well Matched*.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of my research is represented by this statement by Martin Butler, in which the scholar points out the great value of Richard Brome as a playwright and the neglect he experienced all over the centuries.

Richard Brome now goes totally unread; yet there is some reasons to consider him as a political playwright of major significance. Brome's artistic importance for the Caroline theatre, that he is simply the best Caroline playwright, is indistinguishable from his centrality within the period.⁴²³

In Butler's wake, I have tried to demonstrate that Brome was more than a simple 'son of Ben' but a talented and successful playwright deserving further investigation. On the one hand, I aimed to contribute to the spread of the knowledge of Brome and his works in Italy by arousing some curiosity about him or, at least, to pass on the enthusiasm and interest that have inspired my research. On the other hand, the second objective was showing what an innovative perspective Brome held. He lived in London in a turbulent period of the English history, the reign of Charles I, and was able to recognize the early symptoms of the crisis which would lead in a few years to the Civil War and to the fall of the monarchy.

My work investigated the complex relationship between space and identity and demonstrated that Brome's city comedies give a cross-section of the urban London geography as well as an honest and precise portrait of English society from the unique point of view of a former servant of Jonson who became a recognized playwright in the Caroline period. In particular I analyzed the mechanism of refashioning, which led people to adapt to any context (space or situation) by refashioning their selves in order to acquire better positions in the social ladder. Brome's works contribute to the representation of the changing shapes of social life and of the social identity of the inhabitants, and conceptualize London in such a detailed way, almost pictorial, that the city emerges as the dramatist's personal stage. As Vivien Jones claimed, London was "the great theatre of the world," a stage where anyone has a part to play. London inhabitants seem to have been in a

⁴²³ Butler, 1984, p. 281.

sense subject to appearances and conventions as if they had a script. Therefore, the theatre becomes a metaphor of the performance of everyday life and, as Peter Ackroyd says, “it seems that everyone in London wore a costume.”⁴²⁴ The stories the playwright tells are strongly anchored to the London places where they are set so that the setting becomes a prominent element and the main vehicle through which issues were addressed. Brome’s plays have insistent political interests and mirror the demands that the king was failing to conciliate or to appease.

All the places I have investigated emerge as equally dense sites of ideological contestation, though under different forms, since each play explores resonant aspects of urban, political and social life questioning the role of the government in solving the problems, and denounce social injustice. The social meanings attributed to these sites become more and more complex and their value in the process of ideological negotiation more pronounced and by staging London in his plays, Brome made the theatre “a place where people would return, again and again, to experience through fictions the world in which they almost lived.”⁴²⁵

Each play provides a specific use of space through which issues with a strong political and social connotation are conveyed as well as an example of refashioning which varies according to the location and the social interaction.

	<i>The City Wit</i>	<i>The Weeding of Covent Garden</i>			<i>The English Moor</i>	<i>The Sparagus Garden</i>		<i>The Demoiselle</i>	<i>A Mad Couple Well Matched</i>
	Presence Chamber	Covent Garden			Devil Tavern	Sparagus Garden		Temple Walks	Ram Alley
		Goat Tavern	Paris Tavern	Piazza		Garden	Rooms		
Spatial Features									
Indoor	X	X	X		X		X		X
Outdoor				X		X		X	
Public		X	X	X	X		X	X	
Private						X			X
Issue									
Otherness					X	X		X	
Law	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
High prices		X	X			X			

⁴²⁴ Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, London: Chatto and Windus, 2009, p. 150.

⁴²⁵ Howard, 2005, p. 215.

	<i>The City Wit</i>	<i>The Weeding of Covent Garden</i>			<i>The English Moor</i>	<i>The Sparagus Garden</i>		<i>The Demoiselle</i>	<i>A Mad Couple Well Matched</i>
	Presence Chamber	Covent Garden			Devil Tavern	Sparagus Garden		Temple Walks	Ram Alley
		Goat Tavern	Paris Tavern	Piazza		Garden	Rooms		
Refashioning									
Disguise	X	X			X				X
Cross-dressing	X	X						X	X
Social climbing: City-court dynamic	X					X	X		
Social climbing: Country-city dynamic					X	X	X		

The chart is divided into three sections which summarize relevant aspects of my investigation: the principal features of the location, the issues discussed and some forms of refashioning adopted in the plays. Throughout Brome's career, his vision of space varies so that he offered different ways of using places strategically. The locations in his works can be grouped into three categories. First, let us focus on indoor private locations. Brome concentrates an entire world in a room: on the one hand, a chamber in the palace of the king, on the other, a room in a notorious street, the Presence Chamber and Careless's hovel. The Presence Chamber is the most powerful and evident symbol of power in London and metaphor of the sovereign. Not only did Brome represent a place with which most Londoners didn't have intimate familiarity, but also practices not directly experienced such as royal etiquette. His choice is potentially subversive since he deprives the court of a degree of political and legislative importance and seems to suggest that the only laws in force are the empty royal protocols. The contrast with Careless's hovel in *A Mad Couple Well Matched* is sharp since the location, in a part of London where thieves, debtors and criminals could find refuge and protection, owing to its status of sanctuary, becomes the emblem of the dishonesty which characterizes its occupant. Brome, moreover, is the only dramatist who invites his audience into the Presence Chamber, which nobody before him had dared to attempt even for a celebration of the monarch. As a contrast, the location in Ram Alley is more and more significant since it was ideologically charged due to the fact that it was visited and revisited by various dramatists before and after Brome so that, in a

sense, after a collective job, the place has become a vehicle thanks to which issues are addressed more powerfully, visited and revisited.

Second, as for public indoor locations are concerned, Brome stages three real taverns, The Goat Tavern and the Paris Tavern in Covent Garden and the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street. These locations play different roles: the taverns in the milieu of Covent Garden are used as a vehicle to discuss the issue of high prices in eating establishments in an age where protest and criticism of government policy were rare. While they could have been replaced by other taverns with similar features in the same milieu, the choice of the Devil Tavern as a location is highly evocative on two counts: on the one hand, the history of the Tavern of the Devil and Saint Dunstan, also known as the Devil Tavern, reflects the play since the double reference to a devil and a saint seems to reproduce the dichotomy in the title and the contrast evil-good, black-white and Englishness-Otherness which are at the basis of the story. On the other hand, the location works as a literary homage to Ben Jonson, one of its most assiduous frequenters, who passed away while the play was being written.

Third, the dramatist stages the Temple Walks, a public outdoor location and the place which best represented the law in early modern London. The issue of law is the most discussed in his plays concerning place realism and, according to Ira Clark, Brome's "recurring stories about victims of malicious and predatory lawsuits reveal a Brome anguished by the misuse of the court."⁴²⁶ After many representations of law and justice, this play is the apotheosis of the issue since the playwright represents the space of the legal world and its characters, showing that the law is completely ineffective in the life of the England's citizens, if not their main enemy.

Finally, the two topographical comedies, *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and *The Sparagus Garden*, entitled after the places where they are set in, provide a more complex idea of space. The former is entirely set in the fashionable milieu of Covent Garden still under construction. Brome brings onstage different public spots of the location, both outdoor, like the central piazza, and indoor, like the two taverns, which enable him to show the variety of its frequenters: not only gentlemen, gentlewomen and Justices of the Peace, but also hooligans and prostitutes. In a sense, the location appears to be divided into two parts:

⁴²⁶ Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome*, Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1992, pp. 157-158.

the open air piazza and the private houses attended by the higher class characters, and the two taverns (a licensed and an unlicensed one) that the lower class characters, who used to living on the fringes of society, can also frequent.

The latter work is much more complex: the garden reproduces the microcosm of the London upper class so that among its frequenters there are courtiers, gentlemen, knights and ladies, but also simple people like the naïve countryman Hoyden, who leaves Somersetshire for the Sparagus Garden in order to climb the social ladder. Moreover, the Sparagus Garden is provided with an outdoor public part, the garden, where people can walk freely, and an indoor one, private chambers, where the guests of the location can find some privacy. This play, as well as *The English Moor* and *The Demoiselle*, articulates the relationship between strangers (in a wider sense, so including people from the countryside too) and the Londoners, and shows their attempt at an integration and at the construction of new identity thus pointing out their way of refashioning their selves.

I have analyzed six plays in which Brome puts on stage precise real London locations, yet his interest in London space is not limited to these works, but pervades all his plays culminating in a meta-travel-drama,⁴²⁷ *The Antipodes*, the last of a series of representations of the London urban space and a final example of a strategic use of space, though, under the form of the subversion of place realism. The playwright uses realistic techniques to represent a location actually unreal called anti-London, “a place where everything is the exact opposite of what would obtain in London, a place of inversions and reversals.”⁴²⁸ As Martin Butler remarks, “Brome hints at a political moral, that Charles will rule better by turning his government upside down [...] returning to rule with the sanction of the parliament”.⁴²⁹ This play, in which Brome stages a metaphorical journey in his ideal London, ends with the word ‘home’ so that at the end of his career Brome seems to have delimited his space and found his own home. “The fantasy of travel is, in the end, a means of reinterpreting one’s one place and space. Brome’s play is exploiting the theatrical nature of the city space itself: the theatre.”⁴³⁰ *The Antipodes* thus concludes with a reference to what Brome considers as his home: the stage and the city, two elements that he managed

⁴²⁷ Steggle, 2004, p. 109.

⁴²⁸ Cave, 2010, p. 1.

⁴²⁹ Butler, 1984, p.

⁴³⁰ Sanders, 1999, p. 75.

to combine in one concept, the city staged, so that London became the focus, probably the main one, of his dramatic production and of his life.

In my analysis, I followed only one of the many possible paths to investigate Brome and his *corpus* of works but even the road I travelled is not completely finished and its perspective can still be broadened. Even if only some plays have elements of place realism, Brome's works are all pervaded by references to London real places and deserving a detailed analysis in order to determine the places more frequented by his characters and more recurrent in his plays and the issues associated with them. On the other hand, not all his works are set in London but also in other English settings such as West-Saxon England in *The Queen's Exchange*, the Lancashire in *The Late Lancashire Witches* or in foreign cities like Venice in *The Novella*, or countries like Sicily in *The Queen and Concubine*. It would be useful to investigate these settings considering the connections among them so to discuss the dynamic possibilities of space and place and the ways in which geography is contested and manipulated in Brome's hands.

Moreover, I think there are at least two interesting fields of research connected to space which would be worth analyzing: one is the study of characters with proper names and their recurrence. They are rich in literary and historical resonances and implications and have different functions: first, they reflect the nature of the characters like in the case of the usurers Vermin and Quicksands, or of the impoverished gentleman Dryground (which refers to the fact that he has wasted all his resources and fortune); secondly, they mark the provenance of the characters, as in the case of Tryman's supposed relatives in *The City Wit* whose names have a Cornish origin (Sir Marmaduke Trevaughan of St. Miniver, Master Francis Trepton and Barbara Tredrite), or Hulverhead in *The English Moor*, whose name has an East Anglian flavor, or Lafoy, the French gentleman of *the New Academy*. Moreover, Brome used Greek names for *The Love-Sick Court* set in Thessaly, such as Philocles, Philargus, Geron, and Italian in *The Novella*, set in Venice, and in *The Queen and Concubine* in Sicily: among them Fabritio, Flavia and Lodovico stand out. Finally, they have strong literary or philosophical associations like Sir Amphilus in *The Demoiselle*, who has the name of a Platonist philosopher who taught Epicurus, Pantaloni in *The Novella* (which recurs in the *Commedia dell'arte*), Erasmus in *The New Academy* or Peregrine in *The Antipodes* that is to be found in Jonson's *Volpone*. Moreover, there is a particular recurrence of Shakespearean names: Osric (*The Queen's Exchange*), Horatio and Francisco (*The Novella*) can

be found in *Hamlet*, and then Don Pedro, Prospero (*The Novella*), Jago and Petruccio⁴³¹ (*The Queen and Concubine*). Furthermore, it would be fascinating to analyze the function of these literary echoes according to a post-modernist view,⁴³² that is interpreting them as a part of the process of intertextuality, more than as a matter of plagiarism or lack of invention and creativity. According to Richard Cave,

one writer engages with another in a critical, creative even deconstructive dialogue through the medium of their chosen and shared art-form. Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva, Deleuze and Guattari have brought respectability to significant referencing as establishing an aesthetics of difference, where noting parallels between texts is less important than investigating why they exist (why the second author in the relationship wishes to open up a dialogue with the first). The technique invites a reader or in the theatre a spectator to be flexible in response, to celebrate creativity in the multiple and divergent ways in which a particular character, convention or dramatic situation may be developed.⁴³³

The other relevant field of investigation is represented by Brome's use of dialects and foreign languages. In each play he re-proposes the variety of language typical of Ben Jonson but in a very personal way, experimenting with Latin, Italian, German and dialects, and playing on the contrast between English and foreign languages, mainly French, throwing light, even through stereotypes, on the place of England in relation to other countries. As Ira Clarks has claimed, "Brome had a penchant and an ear for dialects"⁴³⁴ and idioms and he managed to make space through language in a very powerful and effective way, so that the dialect or a foreign language spoken by the characters evoke at the same time the country they are from. He was also able to produce clever imitations of regionalisms, as in *The Northern Lass* (Northern dialect) in *The Sparagus Garden* (Somersetshire), East Anglia (*The English Moor*) or Cornish (*The Demoiselle*) and he mocks foreign accents, as in *The Novella* (he display of national costumes, French, Italian, German, Spanish and *The Demoiselle* (French).

⁴³¹ This name does not recur only in *The Taming of the Shrew*, but also in plays by Fletched, Shirley, Suckling, Ford and Rawlins so to enrich the resonances of the character bearing this name in Brome's play.

⁴³² See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *Image, Music, Text*, London: Fontana Press, 1977 and *Textual Strategies*, London: Methuen, 1979; Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973 and *Writing and Difference*, London and New York: Routledge, 1978; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

⁴³³ Brome, R., *The Novella*, Modern Text, edited by Richard Cave, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, introduction, p. 9.

⁴³⁴ Ira Clark, p. 155.

As far as research in Italy is concerned, I believe that two steps should be made in order to make Brome and his works better known in Italy. On the one hand, the translations of his plays, or at least the major ones, into Italian, following the example of Parra's translation of *A Mad Couple Well Matched* which, despite failing to capture the great theatrical possibilities of Brome's plays, demonstrates that the dramatist can be translated and his works can be enjoyable in Italian as well. The second step is the staging of the plays. As for this, I would suggest we should choose the works which could arouse the interest of a contemporary audience owing to their topicality and which do not have to be adapted such as *Covent Garden Weeded* and *The Sparagus Garden*. Even though these comedies seem to be closely connected to the London place where they are set, the spectator is still able to associate these stories with his or her own experience. Actually, the issues developed in these play in a sense overcome national boundaries and can still be appreciated by audiences around the world.

While *The Weeding of Covent Garden* exemplifies contemporary issues such as property speculation and the increase in prices, *The Sparagus Garden* can be referred to the idea of beauty farm, or of high class sex shop, combining the issues of food and sex and arousing the voyeuristic spirit of the audience. The controversial *A Mad Couple Well Matched* could be appreciated owing to the titillating plot and *The Demoiselle* could be used to discuss the issue of justice in Italy and investigate if all people are equal or some people are more equal than others.

This dissertation does not claim to be exhaustive, still it opens up a series of possibilities and shows paths less 'travelled by' that might prove to be adventurous, demanding and rewarding for those who are interested in researching, as well as an encouragement to take up the challenge of an investigation of the stimulating and multifaceted universe of Richard Brome's theatre.

APPENDIX:
A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In December 2009, as an auditor, I had the opportunity to join the last workshop on Brome's plays organized at Royal Holloway, University of London which represented a key part of the Brome's Online Edition. For five days, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the editors of the texts of the plays (Michael Leslie, Marion O' Connor, Julie Sanders, Elizabeth Schafer, Lucy Munro, Eleanor Lowe, Helen Ostovich and Richard Cave) and actors drawn from the alumni lists of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe explored the theatrical possibilities of selected excerpts of the plays.

The workshop opened up my horizons in my research through the practice of an innovative method which consists in the investigation of a play while performing and watching at it on stage and which involves actors, directors, scholars and practitioners all working in harmony and synergy. As Brian Woolland, the director of the workshop, said about the project: "one of the great strengths of the project has been this sense of interaction: between editors and actors, actors and audiences, between those involved with the project and the texts themselves; and between the personal and the professional."⁴³⁵

It was fascinating to watch on stage plays that I had only read, like *A Jovial Crew* or *The Antipodes*, and I realized how entertaining they could be, while wondering why they had been absent from the professional stage for hundreds of years. This experience deeply contributed to my understanding of Brome, showing me that his way of writing for the theatre has strong spatial implications, not only in terms of geography, but also of theatrical space. Actually, the dramatist proved he was able to fill the stage with a range of characters, providing each of them with the space they needed and shifting focus with great clarity even in scenes which are organizationally very complex on paper. Therefore, I decided to devote some sections of my dissertation (called 'in performance') to the analysis of the

⁴³⁵Brian Woolland, "All I have seen are wonders.. Directing Richard Brome," *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 17 January 2010), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4, p. 3.

theatrical qualities of specific scenes, also providing personal suggestions about their staging, as in the case of *The Demoiselle*.

During the workshop two aspects struck me most: on the one hand, the ability of the actors to inject life into Brome's plays. They showed not only their talent, but also contributed to making their stage ability and immediacy emerge:

Actors often expressed delight at being in a workshop situation where they were actively encouraged to experiment and to explore a variety of ways of approaching a given text; where they could consult with experienced editors; and where they were themselves consulted by editors. If actors new to the project initially felt slightly intimidated by working in an environment where they had an audience of academics from their very first read through, they rapidly learnt to use this audience as a resource to be celebrated.⁴³⁶

The actors were told the plot of each play and some details about the characters they were going to perform or about the scene and, in many cases, after just an extemporary reading, they were able to reproduce movements, expressions, accents (dialects and foreign languages) of a female or male character of any age and class, often exchanging roles.

On the other hand, I was amazed by the open mindedness of internationally known scholars like Michael Leslie, Julie Sanders or Richard Cave, to mention just a few, who were eager to experiment and take part personally in the performances. Their involvement was not only from a critical point of view, that is explaining the meaning of disused words (since the texts were written in the 17th century and some words are now in disuse or pronounced differently), double meanings or clarifying the context, but they also acted as directors and actors in the scenes performed. They shared their thorough knowledge with the other participants in a collective theatrical collaboration in which all of them played a key role. Even meals and coffee breaks became an occasion for debate and an exchange of experiences not only about Brome, but also about drama and life.

Moreover, I had the unrepeatability opportunity of talking with scholars who are among the major experts in the field of Brome's theatre. Not only did they answer my questions willingly, but also inspired new ones, alighting my curiosity about the multiform and varied *corpus* of his plays. In particular I had the satisfaction to see some of

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

my hints taken into consideration by Elizabeth Schafer, the scholar who edited *The City Wit*, so that she included most of my notes in the area of rhetoric in Latin⁴³⁷ in her online edition of the play. Therefore, I realized the depth of analysis needed in an international project such as this and how stimulating and challenging this field of research can be. The workshop ended with a toast to Brome whose plays had been brought to life again by the passion of editors and actors who proved that also Richard Brome can be ‘our contemporary,’ as Jan Kott claimed about Shakespeare.

⁴³⁷ In *The City Wit* the character of the pedant Sarpego uses numerous Latin phrases and expressions, though often full of gross mistakes.

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