

The Gendering of Privacy

The question I propose to address is this: in early modern culture, did women and men experience privacy in much the same way? The short answer is of course no, for a variety of intuitively sound reasons. Consider the relationship between the male speaker and the female listener in Donne's 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'. Wonderful and mutual and interdependent though their love may be, they can create the perfect circle at the end of the poem only if they keep to their specifically gendered patterns of behaviour: she is the 'fixed foot' of the compass who remains at home while he roams far into the outside world and eventually returns to her. The woman, in short, never moves outside the domain of the private, because there is no need for her to do so. The man's life includes public responsibilities which insist on his departure ('Though I must go')¹ but allow for his return to the private realm with renewed appreciation of its comforts. To put it crudely though not inaccurately, privacy is a cage for the woman, a refuge for the man.²

The difference I have outlined is only a point of departure for a more complicated exploration of privacy as represented in some especially revealing textual materials from the seventeenth century: two diaries (by Lady Anne Clifford and Sir Henry Slingsby), two autobiographical narrations (by Lucy Hutchinson and Sir Simonds D'Ewes), and two poems (by the poet known only as Eliza and by Henry Vaughan). I have chosen texts that I felt would offer interesting ways of imagining and in some senses reconstructing the experience of privacy in seventeenth-century culture. But since my focus here is explicitly on gender differences, I have adopted wherever possible the Noah's ark principle: one female and one male in each pair. This rigid rule is applied only to written texts, where the sheer amount of material is now quite plentiful, thanks to the recovery or the revaluation of early modern women writers in the last two decades. With visual materials I have not been able to live up to the same standard of equity. The works of visual art I refer to were all created by men; but I cite them nonetheless, because of what they suggest

about the experience of privacy, by women and by men. If there was a female Vermeer in the seventeenth century, her work has yet to be recovered.

Privacy did not come naturally to Lady Anne Clifford. She was twice married, but in neither case was wedded life the source of deep or lasting satisfaction. Looking back on her earlier self from the vantage point of her mid-sixties, Clifford admits that both marriages were filled with tension: ‘those two lords of mine, to whom I was afterwards by the Divine providence married, were in their several kinds worthy noblemen as any then were in this kingdom; yet was it my misfortune to have contradictions and crosses with them both’.³ For perfectly understandable reasons, Clifford refused to be the submissive wife in either of her marriages. When she married her first husband, Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset (in 1609), she was already fighting legal battles to ensure that the vast Clifford lands of Westmorland would be hers (as the only surviving child of her father, George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland) and not added to the property of her uncle and his male heirs, if any (as specified in her father’s will). Sackville, instead of standing by her side as an ally, urged her to accept a financial settlement in exchange for her putative rights to the land. His ambition was to cut a very considerable figure at the court of James I, and therefore he was always in urgent need of spending money. When, after six years of widowhood, Clifford married Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery (in 1630), she believed that at last she had found someone mean and influential enough to ensure ‘the crossing and disappointing [of] the envy, malice and sinister practices of [her] enemies’ (*Life of Me*, p. 49). But she was wrong again, in the sense that Herbert’s loyalty quickly faded when he couldn’t get what he wanted: a marriage between one of his sons and Clifford’s younger daughter, Isabella. The consequences of standing up for her land in the one case, and for her daughter in the other, were protracted alienation from her first husband, decisive separation from the second. For a person of her temperament and social position, Clifford alleges, tranquil domesticity was simply not an option:

from my childhood, by the bringing up of my said dear mother, I did, as it were, even suck the milk of goodness, which made my mind grow strong against the storms of fortune, which few avoid that are greatly born and matched, if they attain to any number of years; unless they betake themselves to a private retiredness, which I could never do till after the death of both my two husbands. (*Life of Me*, pp. 35–6)

I have quoted Clifford at length here in order to show that she herself was aware that for her ‘a private retiredness’ was a vain, elusive wish. But I would also like to notice the rhetoric in which Clifford’s judgement is articulated: she begins with the quintessentially maternal image of breastfeeding, and makes this into the source of strength which enables her to resist. Donne is reported to have said of Clifford ‘that she knew well how to discourse of all

things, from Predestination, to Sleasilk'.⁴ Her mental world included both domesticity and metaphysics, a combination that Donne would have found especially attractive. But if Clifford's intellect could spark the admiration of a famous poet and wit, it might also seem exasperating or threatening to a husband less enraptured with cleverness and more accustomed to obedience. That, at least, is the impression created by the *Diary* Clifford kept during three exceedingly difficult years of her first marriage.

The events Clifford recorded in her *Diary* for 1616, 1617, and 1619 (there are no surviving entries for 1618) are usually retold as the story of heroic resistance to authority,⁵ and it is certainly true that Clifford did resist. In February 1616 Sackville summoned her to London where she encountered a large number of her husband's allies, including Archbishop Abbott, who 'took me aside & talked with me privately one hour & a half',⁶ hoping to get her to sign an agreement proposed by her husband. Clifford said no, and then travelled north to consult with her mother. Within a couple of months she had returned to the great Sackville country house, Knole in Kent, where she got 'but a cold welcome from my Lord' (p. 44). On 1 May Sackville sent her a message, indicating that she would have to leave Knole if she did not sign. Two days later he wrote to her from London, requiring that she send up to him their only child, Margaret, not yet two years old. Through all of this harassment Clifford yielded in small things and in some large ones too – she did send him the child, and 'wept bitterly' as she did so (p. 46) – but she stood firm on the one point that she had declared untouchable. There would be no settlement involving the land.

Before long King James began showing an active interest in the dispute between Sackville and Clifford, and on 18 January 1617 they appeared together before the king. He told them he would settle their disagreement, and they could put the matter 'wholly into his hands'. Sackville eagerly consented, 'but', says Clifford, 'I beseech'd His Majesty to pardon me for that I wou'd never part with Westmorland while I lived upon any Condition whatsoever' (p. 66). The king was not pleased with this bold retort, and two days later both Clifford and Sackville were back in the royal presence, this time accompanied by Clifford's uncle and cousin (the designated heirs of the Westmorland property), three noblemen, and at least five lawyers. When asked whether they would 'submit to [the king's] judgement in this case', all of the interested parties said yes; all except Clifford, that is, who said again that she 'wou'd never agree to it without Westmorland' (p. 67). The king 'grew into a great Chaffe', Sackville led his wife out of the room, and she was informed in effect that 'if I wou'd not come to an agreement, there should be an agreement made without me' (pp. 67–8). This indeed happened, and the Westmorland estates became the property of her uncle. Nominally, Clifford had been defeated; but she had shown herself capable of amazing courage, and it is easy to believe (as she herself did) that her virtue was at last rewarded when the lands reverted to her after the deaths of her uncle (in 1640) and his only male heir (in 1643).

Moving and edifying though this narrative of heroic resistance may be, it is not the whole story. The counter-narrative that I am about to construct takes as its centre of attention not Clifford's highly visible confrontations with authority, but her intimate life, her private self, insofar as she discloses this in her *Diary*.⁷

In April 1617 Clifford wrote the following entry: 'Upon the 7th my Lord lay in my Chamber' (78). This may seem an unremarkable event in the life of a married couple, but Clifford chose to remark upon it, so I am tempted to ask why. The answer, I believe, is that intimacy with her husband, including sexual intimacy, was a rare occurrence in her life; indeed, the entry I have just quoted stands almost alone, and is surrounded by many others which suggest that Sackville was at best a reluctant husband. A few days after sleeping with his wife Sackville turned 'very ill' (p. 78), and as a result Clifford changed her sleeping arrangements: first she moved to a 'pallett' so as to be near his bedside, and then to another room, 'Judith's chamber where I mean to continue until my Lord be better' (p. 78). As Sackville recovered, Clifford grew ill, but soon both were in good enough health to continue their longstanding dispute.

On 23 April Clifford wrote, 'this night my Lord shou'd have layen with me in my Chamber, but he & I fell out about Mathew' (p. 80). The third party here is Mathew Caldicott, identified as 'my lord's favourite' in the 'Catalogue of the Household and Family' which survives from this period of the marriage.⁸ The bond between Sackville and his favourite may well have been sexual.⁹ If so, that would help to account for some of the arrangements designed to ensure *their* privacy. In December 1617, for example, Sackville left for Buckhurst, taking many of his servants with him, for the purpose of enjoying the country pleasures of hunting and feasting. After 13 December he dismissed his entourage, and 'from this day to the 20th my Lord lived privately at Buckhurst having no Company with him but only Mathew' (p. 95). If indeed this was a sexual relationship, then Clifford's suspicion of and hostility to Mathew would be based on her perception of him as a genuinely threatening rival. When she is urged by the chaplain, Mr. Ran, to settle her grievances against Mathew, she is unable to do so: 'I told him that I had received so many injurys from him that I cou'd hardly forget them' (p. 90). Earlier she had been provoked to the point of writing 'a letter to the Bishop of London against Mathew' (p. 85), but whatever the contents of this complaint, it does not seem to have inhibited the behaviour of her husband or his favourite.

Nor was Mathew her only rival in Sackville's affections. Aubrey claims that Sackville 'was extremely enamoured of' Lady Venetia Stanley, who bore him either one or two illegitimate children before settling down as wife to Sir Kenelm Digby, and that Elizabeth Broughton was also his mistress, 'whether before or after Venetia I know not, but I guess before'.¹⁰ Clifford's *Diary* implies that in the summer of 1619 Sackville was amorously involved with Lady Penniston, whose overnight visit to Knole 'was much talked of abroad in the world & my Lo[r]d was much Condemn'd for it' (p. 116).

Privacy does not appear to have been, on the whole, an experience that Clifford and Sackville were capable of sharing. Even the private joy of reading, for which Clifford had a considerable appetite, she was able to lavish on herself only in the absence of her husband. Following the death of her mother, Clifford spent several months in the north, mostly at Brougham Castle, her mother's last residence. Now, for the first time in the *Diary*, she mentions her reading: 'this month I spent in working & Reading. Mr. Dumbell read a great part of the History of the Netherlands' (p. 59). As this entry implies, Clifford's reading was not necessarily silent and solitary; someone of her social rank could depend on having servants capable of oral reading, and could therefore listen to a book being read while doing another task, such as needlework. Thus the entry for 9 November 1616: 'I sat at my work & heard Rivers & Marsh read Montaignes Essays which book they have read almost this fortnight' (p. 59). Elsewhere she records reading Chaucer, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Sidney's *Arcadia*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Augustine's *City of God*, and the entire Bible between 1 February and 20 March 1619 (p. 102). In almost all of these cases there is explicit mention of Sackville's absence during or departure just before the period in which reading takes place. On one occasion Sackville arrives home with a bit of a cough, spends the night in a separate chamber, and then gets out of the wrong side of bed: 'my Lord found me reading with Mr. Ran, & told me that it wou'd hinder his Study very much so as I must leave off reading the Old Testament till I can get somebody to read it with me' (p. 76). Doubtless it was nothing more than irritability that caused Sackville to object. But object he did, to a practice that his wife was nonetheless free to enjoy on the frequent occasions when he was away from home.

On 8 January 1617 Clifford and Sackville had one of their many inconclusive arguments about the northern lands. The next day both of them chose isolation: 'Upon the 9th I went up to see the things in the Closet & began to have Mr. Sandys his Book read to me about the Government of the Turks, my Lord sitting the most part of the day reading in his closet' (p. 65). The overt parallelism should not be allowed to hide the many asymmetrical features of this quotation and the situation to which it refers. The husband's closet is *his* closet, as if ownership is secure and specific; the wife's is *the* closet, assigned to her as if by accident or convenience, but not really belonging to her. Other evidence from the early modern period would suggest that, if a husband's closet were furnished with resources needed to master the world (books, maps, and scientific instruments), his wife's would be likely to contain materials of household management (baskets, bottles, and cooking utensils).¹¹ While Sackville sits in his closet reading (in silence, I presume), Clifford is read to in hers (by a household servant, no doubt). This difference may be one of temperament, but it probably suggests greater fluency in silent reading on the part of the husband; he had after all been educated at Oxford, while she was privately tutored at home, most notably by the poet Samuel

Daniel. The difference certainly ensures that the woman's reading will be subject to scrutiny by at least one other person, and therefore to censorship as well, even if this is indirect or self-imposed.

The contrast between two spouses, both sitting resolutely in their respective closets, is but a momentary image in Clifford's *Diary*. More typical is the contrast between a man who moves from place to place at will, and a woman who follows his movements only in her mind. On 12 May 1616 Clifford pauses to reflect on the emotional cost of the situation I have just described:

All this time my Lord was at London where he had infinite & great resorte coming to him. he went much abroad to Cocking, to bowling Alleys, to Plays & Horseraces, & [was] Commended by all the World. I stay'd in the Country having many times a sorrowfull & heavy heart, and being condemn'd by most folks because I would not consent to the agreements, so as I may truly say I am like an owl in the Desert. (p. 48)

Like her husband, Clifford was a relentlessly social person, but her talent for society did not have much scope for development at Knole, especially since her husband preferred conducting his social life elsewhere. As Élisabeth Bourcier points out, solitude was the real source of her suffering at Knole.¹² Though surrounded by elegant luxury, though catered to by many servants, though always within reach of her infant daughter, Lady Anne Clifford as a young woman still in her twenties had more privacy than she would have wanted. Or perhaps she had the wrong kind of privacy: not the pleasure of precious minutes stolen from a busy routine, but the loneliness of having many uncommitted (because unwanted) hours. To be an owl in the desert is to suffer alone, unregarded, unheard. That indeed is how she felt her situation, though the act of recording it has given her a voice that can still be heard.

In August of 1641 Sir Henry Slingsby made a special trip to Skipton for the purpose of speaking with the Earl of Pembroke, who at this time was Lady Anne Clifford's second husband. Slingsby asked to be appointed Understeward of Knaresborough Castle, claiming that the post had been promised to him. But Pembroke had changed his mind, and Slingsby's request was denied. After he records this disappointment in his *Diary*, Slingsby stands back for a moment in the attempt to discover what he can about himself: 'I have not yet learnt the way how to prevail, nor what weapons to bring to assail a wilful refusal, nor what more on my part to be seen than a clear intention & a thankful heart'.¹³ It may seem disingenuous, self-serving even, for an MP in the Long Parliament to declare that he's just too naïve for this world, but I think that Slingsby was in some important ways right about himself. A seat in the House of Commons during the winter of 1640–41 must have been an excellent vantage point from which to watch the unfolding of Oliver Cromwell's career. Moderate, gentle, and fair-minded Slingsby might have gasped at the brilliance and audacity of the gifted politicians. Although he

fought under the king's colours for the next five years, and although he was one of the 59 MPs who voted against the attainder of Strafford, Slingsby was no knee-jerk royalist.¹⁴ In response to the Root and Branch petition, he voted for political reform on the one hand, and for religious continuity on the other: he supported the bill to exclude bishops from the House of Lords, but voted against the abolition of bishops altogether (pp. 66–7). He stood for measured reform at a time when events were moving much more quickly than he was. History, like the Earl of Pembroke, would be unkind to Sir Henry Slingsby; he was pushed aside to make room for those who could act decisively and confidently without second-guessing themselves.

Like Lady Anne Clifford, Slingsby read Montaigne. Indeed, he seems to have adopted Montaigne as a pedagogical and literary model of sorts. In July 1640, on returning from London to his home, Red House, on the Scagglethorpe Moor in Yorkshire, he appointed a Mr. Cheney to serve as tutor and schoolmaster to his eldest son Thomas, aged four.¹⁵ This decision was prompted by Slingsby's conviction that his son was making little progress in Latin, and spending too much time at play. The remedy? Why, a Latin immersion programme in the manner of Montaigne, who as a child had 'those about him that could speake nothing but Latin'.¹⁶ Slingsby's *Diary* itself is a project inspired by Montaigne: 'Hereupon I follow'd the advise of Michael de Montaigne to sett down in this Book such accidents as befall me, not that I make my study of it, but rather a recreation at vacant times, without observing any time, method, or order in my wrighting, or rather scribbling' (p. 55). Although Slingsby sees his text in part as a work of whimsical and unsystematic *bricolage*, he simply lacks both the intellectual daring and the endless associative inventiveness of his famous predecessor. But there is something attractive about Slingsby's book nonetheless, even if his virtues are not the flashy ones. 'My own disposition is to love quietness', he says of himself (p. 118); his was a temperament especially suited to the cultivation of the private life.

On 7 July 1631 Slingsby married Barbara Belasyse, daughter of Thomas Belasyse, first Viscount Fauconberg. By the time Slingsby begins his *Diary* (in 1638), his wife is the mother of two small children (Barbara, aged five; Thomas, aged two) and is expecting a third. She is characterized repeatedly by her husband as a timid and fearful woman. Indeed, the *Diary* opens with an anecdote which leads to this characterization. The event in question is the accidental death of the eldest son of Sir Edward Osborn at the age of seventeen. The Osborn boy had been studying French under the supervision of his tutor, when an unusually powerful gust of wind 'blew down with great violence 7 chimneys shafts upon the roof of that chamber in the mannor house, where he was at study'. The tutor escaped with minor injuries, but the boy 'was found dead and buri'd in a heap of rubbish' (p. 1). This pathetic story had a particular resonance for Slingsby's wife because she was the dead boy's aunt: her older sister Margaret was the bereaved mother. The reaction of

Barbara Belasyse to her nephew's death provides Slingsby with an opening for one of his most telling descriptions of her:

Having warning by this accident she would not let me rest till I had pull'd down a chimney that stood on the garden Side at Red House which was high built & shaken with the wind. She would often say how much we had cause to bless God, that hath given us this warning & not made us examples to give warning unto others. She is by nature timorous and compassionate which makes her full of prayer in the behalf of others. (p. 2)

There may be some affectionate irony in this portrait, but I do not believe that there is any hostility. When Slingsby remarks that his wife would not let him rest until he had pulled down the insecure chimney, he is not complaining about her shrewishness or confessing his own weakness but rather praising her persistence in taking every possible precaution to protect the domestic nest. When Slingsby calls her 'timorous and compassionate' I suspect him of picking out qualities that he finds particularly attractive in a woman. Her fearful reticence makes him feel all the more that he is the one in charge.

By the autumn of 1637 it was clear that Slingsby's wife was suffering from a recurrent and very painful physical ailment which Slingsby refers to as 'her old disease' (p. 39). The Slingsbys consulted doctor after doctor, received a series of diagnoses, and were advised to try a veritable potpourri of treatments and cures. During his protracted stay in London in 1640, Slingsby consulted the king's physician, Sir Theodore Mayerne, whose medicines were, in Slingsby's opinion, both more effective and more expensive than anyone else's. Relief was temporary, however; in November 1641 the Slingsbys travelled to London, still engaged in a search that ended in failure, for, in Slingsby's words: 'The 31st of December my dear wife depart'd this life, after she had endur'd a world of misery' (pp. 73–4). This recording of a sad truth is followed by a husband's solemn tribute to his deceased wife: Slingsby mentions again his wife's timorous character, though now he stresses the sweetness of her disposition, and the readiness with which she was able to forgive. But it is more than a collection of virtues that he is thinking of when he writes: 'The loss of her by death is beyond expression, both to her children, & all that knew her; but chiefly to my self, who hath enjoy'd happy days in her company & society which now I find a want of' (p. 74). Slingsby buried his wife in London and spent at least the next five months living with friends and relations. He could not bear to go home, 'where I should find a miss of my dear wife, & where every room will call her to my memory & renew my grief' (p. 76). For a man of Slingsby's temperament, the destruction of his private life was a devastating blow.

He now gave himself more and more ardently to the public work of defending the king. He received a commission to command a company of 'trainbands' (p. 76) whose special role was to guard the person of the king

during his sojourn in the City of York. He raised a regiment of 200 volunteers to fight under the Earl of Newcastle. He was with the royalist forces who surrendered the City of York in 1644, after the Battle of Marston Moor. He fought in the Battle of Naseby, and participated in the surrender of Newark to the Scots in 1646. While still following the king, though now in the custody of the Scottish army, Slingsby records that 'I was command'd by the King to return home' (p. 179). His military career had come to an end, and he retired after a long absence to the diminished comforts of Red House.

Soon he became the object of various kinds of official harassment, such as the requirement that he take the 'Negative oath' and subscribe to the 'national Covenant'. For Slingsby either of these gestures would have been repugnant: 'The one makes me renounce my allegiance; the other my religion' (p. 119). So he chose to retreat, to the confinement of a single secluded room within Red House, 'where I spend my days in great sylence, scarce dare to speak or walk but with great heed taken least I be discover'd' (p. 118). Even if this is an exaggeration, I have no doubt that it expresses something genuine about the pain of loss and diminution which Slingsby must have felt: about the paranoia, in short, of the politically expendable person he had become.

In March 1655 he was arrested on suspicion of being involved in a royalist plot. While being held in custody in Hull, he appears to have imprudently tested the sentiments of his guard, Major Ralph Waterhouse, to see if he could be drawn in on the royalist side. Waterhouse went straight to his superiors, and the rest of Slingsby's life was merely a series of tactics to delay the inevitable: his execution for high treason on 8 June 1658.

The published account of his trial and death is a moving document. The trial took place in Westminster Hall, presided over by Attorney-General Edmond Prideaux, who read out at length the charges against Slingsby. When asked to enter a plea, 'whether guilty or not guilty', Slingsby was immediately (and justifiably) evasive: 'I desire to have Counsel assigned me'.¹⁷ When told that he could not have the assistance of counsel, he demanded to be tried by a jury, not by a court created by parliamentary commission. After all of his preliminary requests had been denied, Slingsby turned to Lord President Prideaux with what sounds like scorn: 'I am (my Lord) of an opinion, (though you may account it a Paradox) that I cannot trespass against your Laws, because I did not submit to them' (sig. A2). Brave though such rhetoric may be, this was hardly the time or place to deploy it; unless he were to show obvious signs of contrition, Slingsby was doomed.

The evidence against him included the sworn testimony of three witnesses, and a written document which Waterhouse claimed to have received from Slingsby. This document, purportedly in the hand of Charles Stuart, offered to appoint Waterhouse governor of the castle at Hull if he were willing to cooperate in the intrigue of restoring the monarchy. Slingsby's only line of defence was to claim that whatever he had done or said to Waterhouse 'was but in jest' (sig. A3v); indeed, he argued that he had been 'trapan'd' (i.e.

framed) by the witnesses who were reporting in deadly earnest the very things that were 'spoken in mirth between us' (sig. A4). The judges were not convinced, and Slingsby was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered; subsequently, at the behest of the Lord Protector, the severity of the sentence was reduced to simple beheading. On 8 June 1658 he was led to the scaffold on Tower Hill. After kneeling to pray for a short while, he made a brief speech, in 'a very low voice', claiming again that his intentions had been misunderstood: 'what he spoke to them in private, was brought into evidence against him'. He is reported to have shown little fear or sorrow, but to have declared himself ready for the end. 'Then he addressed himself to private prayer again; and kneeling down to the Block, he prayed privately for a short space: Then laid his head upon the Block, and at the sign given, the Executioner severed his Head from his Body at one blow' (sig. C2). As seventeenth-century executions go, this was a very restrained event indeed; as a piece of theatre, it lacks everything except the considerable power of understatement. For a man who declared his own predilection for quietness, it was a fitting end.

Before the outbreak of the Civil War, and before the death of his wife, Slingsby had been a soldier in the first Bishops' War (1639), on the side of Charles I and against the Scottish Covenanters. Given his comparatively advanced age (thirty-seven), he adapted to military life remarkably well. After six weeks in uniform he recorded the belief that military discipline 'greatly improves' both a man's body and his mind: 'by enabling his body to labour, his mind to watchfulness, & so, by a contempt of all things but that employment he is in, he shall not much care how hard he lyeth, nor how meanly he fareth; – whereas the independance of a private life, makes one insolent, & not easily brought under subjection' (p. 38). Here Slingsby's self-knowledge is fallible; he seems to me to have been far better suited to 'the independance of a private life' than to the 'employment of a soulgiers' (p. 38). After marching all day in the hot sun of an early June day, the king's horse (including Slingsby) came face to face with the Scottish army. For various understandable reasons, the order was given not to fight but to retreat, at least for the night. The next day Slingsby's butler arrived with the message that his wife was extremely ill. 'I instantly took post', Slingsby writes, '& without resting, in 24 hours, I got to her & found her well again' (p. 37). With relief Slingsby turned his attention to a few other household matters; then he returned to the king's army, arriving at headquarters just one day before the two sides agreed to disband their troops. I think Slingsby should be commended for responding at once to the urgent message from his wife, and for getting whatever permission he needed for his absence from superior officers. But my reason for praising this action is the value I place on 'the independance of a private life'. Slingsby was unusually dedicated to private values, even at times when public affairs were making heavy demands upon him. If privacy 'makes one insolent, & not easily brought under subjection', as he claims, even this trajectory can be observed, though proleptically, in

Slingsby's life. It is easy to surmise that the various parliamentary officials who had to deal with Slingsby after his arrest in 1655 would have found his behaviour to be at times 'insolent'; it is certain, from the account of his trial, that he was 'not easily brought under subjection'. There is a sense in which Slingsby, unconvinced by the communal rhetoric of the Commonwealth, wanted to make privacy a principle worth dying for.

Lucy Hutchinson and Sir Simonds D'Ewes were both, broadly speaking, puritans, though neither of them felt comfortable with this label. In her biography of her husband, Hutchinson comments at some length on the rhetorical use of the word 'puritan' by her ideological enemies. In response to the debaucheries of the Jacobean court and the moral decline throughout England, she alleges, God's chosen prophets did manage to bring some people back to the straight and narrow path, 'but at court these were hated, disgrac'd, and revil'd, and in scorn had the name of Puritane fix'd upon them'.¹⁸ D'Ewes, though he speaks with pride of being 'knighted by King Charles at Whitehall'¹⁹ in 1626, was a puritan in both the ethical and the political senses. He avoided 'any controversial sins' such as 'usury, carding, dicing, mixed dancing, and the like' (I, 354); he objected to 'those prelates' within the Anglican church who 'oppress the consciences or ruin the estates of many godly Christians, falsely by them nick-named Puritans' (II, 113). For D'Ewes, as for Hutchinson, the principles and practices of puritanism were in fact the right ones; only the name 'puritan' was unacceptable because of its manipulation by the adversaries of true piety and morality.

How much room did the puritan household, subject as it was to the constant surveillance of the providential gaze, manage to create for the pursuit of private pleasures? This is a larger question than I can fully address in the present context, but I offer the experiences of these two puritan sensibilities as a point of reference. Both Hutchinson and D'Ewes learned to escape from the incessant demands of a good home into the secluded practice of reading. Hutchinson remembers being a bookworm from an early age: 'After dinner and supper I still had an hower allow'd me to play, and then I would steale into some hole or other to read'. Never mind that her mother thought excessive reading to be bad for the child's health; 'this rather animated me then kept me back, and every moment I could steale from my play I would employ in any booke I could find, when my own were lockt up from me' (I, 26).²⁰ The private 'hole' into which this child escaped was a refuge from parental authority, from social convention, from the inanity of childhood games, from the endless inhibition connected with being female in the seventeenth century.

D'Ewes too loved to escape into reading. While a student at Cambridge he began buying books, a habit he never relinquished. By the time of his death in 1650 he was the owner of about 1,000 printed books – roughly the same number as the holdings of the Cambridge University Library at this date.²¹ During his residence in the Middle Temple he began reading manuscripts at

the Tower of London, and soon he was both transcribing and purchasing large quantities of manuscript material. He projected using his vast scholarly resources in various useful ways – to write a properly documented history of Great Britain, for example, or to compile an Old English dictionary – but he never completed any of these ambitious works. That he loved his library, however, and devoted himself to it, of this there can be little doubt.

At the age of twenty-four D'Ewes was enmeshed in a very complicated set of negotiations which would soon lead to his marriage to Anne Clopton on 24 October 1626. Since his bride was not yet fourteen, D'Ewes indicated in advance that he was prepared to wait for her to mature before requiring the performance of her sexual duties. And wait he did, for at least eight months, until the summer of 1627.²² In the meantime, however, Anne Clopton was already a source of great pleasure and satisfaction to her husband: she was a very considerable heiress who had greatly augmented her husband's wealth; and she brought with her a pedigree of some distinction which D'Ewes believed he could trace back through at least 500 years of the history of Suffolk. Thus marriage for D'Ewes brought with it a special gratification: 'my very study of records grew more delightful and pleasant unto me than ever before; because I often met with several particulars of moment which concerned some of those families to which she was heir, both of their bloods and coat-armours' (I, 325). It was a marriage made, if not quite in heaven, then at least in the next best place: the library of rare and antiquarian books and manuscripts.

Indeed, both Hutchinson and D'Ewes seem to have been lucky in marriage: both write about their spouses in ways that suggest long-term attraction and admiration. The interest shown by D'Ewes in genealogical questions did not prevent him from noticing that he had married a beautiful young woman, 'every way so comely', he writes, 'as that alone, if all the rest had wanted, might have rendered her desirable' (I, 308). And in Hutchinson's text, though the story of her love is told by indirections and in ways that conform to patriarchal standards, it is a love story all the same.²³

As a young man, recently graduated from Peterhouse, Cambridge, John Hutchinson met by chance his future wife's younger sister. This enterprising child brought him back to her mother's house while her mother and sister were away from home. He was able to achieve a kind of intimacy with his future wife before having so much as met her: 'one day when he was there, looking upon an odd byshelf, in her sister's closett, he found a few Latine bookes'. He enquired about the owner of these volumes, and was told that they belonged to the 'reserv'd and studious' elder sister who was out with her mother shopping for a husband in Wiltshire. But the young man was not to be denied; the various tokens of Lucy Apsley's (as she was then called) had 'so much inflam'd Mr. Hutchinson's desire of seeing her' (I, 86) that he found himself unable to resist when the great moment did arrive: 'She was not ugly, in a carelesse riding-habitt, she had a melancholly negligence both

of herself and others, as if she neither affected to please others, nor tooke notice of anie thing before her' (I, 91). Despite 'all her indifferency', Hutchinson writes of herself, 'she was surpriz'd with some unusual liking in her soule, when she saw this gentleman, who had haire, eies, shape, and countenance enough to begett love in any one' (I, 92). And as her love awakened, so did his; indeed, the nobility of his love for her now becomes the rhapsodic theme of Hutchinson's account. Even her faults melt away under the benign influence of his love, and she becomes 'a very faithfull mirror, reflecting truly, though but dimmely, his owne glories upon him' (I, 95-6). Elsewhere she calls herself 'his shadow'; she claims that her value and her beauty were dependent on his approving gaze: she believes she 'was nothing before his inspection gave her a faire figure' (I, 96). They were married on 3 July 1638, but just before this event they were given a further proof of the sanctity of their love. This came in the form of a severe case of smallpox which briefly threatened the bride's life and then disfigured her face for a considerably longer period. The betrothed husband showed his true character by marrying her anyway, spots and all, on the appointed day; and God did his part too, rewarding the bridegroom's 'justice and constancy, by restoring her, though she was longer then ordinary before she recover'd, as well as before' (I, 97). This episode worked out perfectly, then, because it gave Hutchinson virtual proof that her husband valued her not for her outside but for the beauty of her soul.

As Colonel Hutchinson played his conspicuous part on the stage of public affairs, his wife was indeed little more than a shadow. He was appointed Governor of Nottingham Castle, and given the task of holding the castle and city for parliament against the aggressive incursions of royalist forces under the Earl of Newcastle. After successfully driving the royalist soldiers out of town, the colonel returned to the castle bringing with him a number of prisoners and casualties: one dead man and five more with injuries. The wounded 'were brought to the governor's wife, and she having some excellent balsoms and plaisters in her closett, with the assistance of a gentleman that had some skill, drest all their wounds' (I, 274). Hutchinson seems content with her supplementary role in a passage such as this one; her husband's military achievements are what she celebrates, his anxieties are what she alleviates, his failures are what she extenuates; her own part is to assist.

Colonel Hutchinson's career seems to have peaked in 1649 when he was appointed to the first Council of State of the Commonwealth. By 1653 he had been 'reduc'd into an absolute private condition' (II, 207); he was expelled from parliament as a regicide in 1660, and virtually went into hiding to await the results of further deliberations that might have cost him his property or indeed his life. Lucy Hutchinson now perceived that her husband 'was ambitious of being a publick sacrifice, and therefore, herein only in her whole life, resolv'd to disobey him' (II, 262). It was, of course, a disobedience which proved her undying love, because it was directed towards saving

her husband from further pain and humiliation. She drafted a letter under the colonel's name addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons. Though the exact words of this letter are unknown, in substance it was an act of supplication, indeed of submission. Hutchinson claims that she was told by a friend that the timing was perfect for a brief on behalf of her husband; rather than seeking his approval, which would have caused needless delay, she simply forged his signature and sent the letter along. The results of this action were quite startling. First, 'the letter was very well receiv'd' (II, 264) – so well, in fact, that the colonel was declared exempt from further penalty, with the exception of a perpetual ban on his holding public office. The second and more ironical result Hutchinson could not have predicted: her husband never forgave her for this one disobedient action. He could not bear the stigma of being let off while others who had acted as he did were being punished. Hutchinson seems to have been both hurt and confused by this turn of events: 'His wife, who thought she had never deserv'd so well of him, as in the endeavours and labours she exercis'd to bring him of[f], never displeas'd him more in her life, and had much adoe to perswade him to be contented with his deliverance' (II, 275). She had made the mistake of venturing for once outside the private world and into the public domain. She had forgotten – or almost forgotten – that her accepted role was to be a mirror, a shadow. I say she had almost forgotten because, even in her account of the act of forging her husband's signature, what she fastens on is the element of mimicry involved: she was able to do a plausible signature, she says, because she was often copying him in any case, 'being us'd sometimes to write the letters he dictated, and her character not much differing from his' (II, 264). Technically the word 'character' here means 'handwriting', but I think the ambiguity which the seventeenth-century ear could easily have heard is very much to the point. Hutchinson presumed to speak for her husband because she believed that her agenda and his were inseparable. And indeed this assumption was sound, as long as she practised good works, such as healing the wounded, in the privacy of her closet; when she went beyond this, into the glare of the public workplace, she was by definition unable to please a man who wanted to hear not an independent voice but an echo.

The marriage between D'Ewes and Anne Clopton was of course no closer to being a relationship of equals. In tabulating the 'qualifications' (I, 307) for the role of wife, which he found so splendidly fulfilled in the person of Anne Clopton, D'Ewes was behaving as you might expect a great collector to behave. His wife was a particularly gratifying piece – indeed, an essential piece – of a private world which he was assembling with remarkable patience and care. But by August of 1629 D'Ewes was troubled that his young wife, now sixteen, showed no signs of producing an heir: 'we had now been partakers of the nuptial rites about two years, and yet had as little expectation of issue as in the first eight months of our continence next after marriage' (I, 417). D'Ewes did not know that his wife was already two months pregnant.

She gave birth to a daughter on 30 April 1630, and after that she was pregnant at least six more times (including once with twins) before she died in 1641 at the age of twenty-eight.

Their first son, whom they named Clopton D'Ewes, was born on 24 June 1631 and died two weeks later. Twin boys were born in 1633, but both died in infancy. Another son, again named Clopton, was born on 18 July 1634. He was a sickly boy from the beginning, and developed his first 'convulsion fit' (II, 123) at the age of nine months. D'Ewes had several healthy daughters, but his dynastic ambitions were being borne by this frail little boy. D'Ewes searched desperately for the best medical advice then available, but it was not enough. In early May of 1636 D'Ewes alone was in charge of the household at Stow Hall, Suffolk, his wife having gone to London on a family visit. The little boy had a series of fits much more severe than on previous occasions: 'I was near him all the time', D'Ewes writes, 'bestowing my heavy tears, deep sighs, and humble prayers, upon him' (II, 144). But these efforts made no difference; the boy died that afternoon, at the age of one year and nine months, leaving D'Ewes 'the most sad and disconsolate father that could possibly be' (II, 145). The autobiography ends here, 'with the decease of my sweet and only son' (II, 147), as D'Ewes pointedly observes.

In stressing the connections between Hutchinson and D'Ewes – their puritan orientation, their love of reading, their marital devotion – I have obscured the real differences which separate them. Hutchinson was a modest and self-effacing person, or at least she became so after she married a man who would of course be her superior. D'Ewes was arrogant and full of himself, obsessed with recording and improving upon the prestige of his pedigree. So reading, for example, was not the same experience for them at all. Hutchinson crept into a 'hole' with whatever book she might be able to hide from her mother's disapproving eyes; D'Ewes gathered around him a magnificent collection of books and manuscripts which he read in part to seek public approval for his erudition. Nor, given the conventions of the time, could the experience of marriage have been similar for the two of them. For Hutchinson, marriage was clearly a vocation of servitude, as it would still be for Jane Eyre two hundred years later. It was a servitude she accepted with joy and found it impossible to relinquish (after the death of her husband she continued to serve him by writing his biography), but a servitude nonetheless. For D'Ewes, on the other hand, marriage was an essential step on the road to becoming the master of Stow Hall – a position in which he expected to be served, not only by his wife, but by a small army of servants and domestic officers.

Despite all of the similarities in ideology and culture, then, privacy was not the same thing for Hutchinson as for D'Ewes. This is an inference I will return to in the end, but for now it may be enough to observe that for her privacy is furtive and surreptitious, while for him it is simply his due, and is therefore supported and guaranteed by the members of his household. Privacy may still be privacy, for both of them, but they engage with it in strikingly different

ways; and this divergence is caused, not by misunderstanding on either part, but by the gendering of experience in early modern culture.

Nothing is known of the poet Eliza beyond what can be inferred from her single publication, *Eliza's Babes: Or the Virgin's Offering* (1652), a book of lyric poetry, most of it religious, followed by a sequence of prose meditations. In her prefatory address 'To the Reader' Eliza claims that the reason she has chosen to enter the public domain at all is because privacy simply is not enough. She presents this as an argument not about personal gratification but about Christian witness. At first she shunned the very idea of publication, but at length she concluded 'that those desires were not given me, to be kept in private, to my self, but for the good of others'.²⁴ To keep them hidden would be an act of shame, and therefore unworthy of a God who was willing to make a public spectacle of himself: 'shall I be ashamed to returne him publique thanks, for such infinite and publique favours?' (sig. A3). While this argument makes perfect sense, if taken on its own terms, I do not think that it tells Eliza's whole story. At times her rhetoric suggests that she cares more about personal gratification than she wants to let on. 'I cannot be content, to be happy alone', she says with a frankness that asks the reader to become her partner in blessedness, 'nor can I smother up those great and infinite blessings, that I have received from him, with private thanks' (sig. A2v). No, privacy is not enough for Eliza, and in holding this position she bravely parts company both with the many women writers who claimed to be publishing only under protest or at the insistence of male patrons, and with the many others who did not publish their work at all.

What happens to privacy in the poems is a rather more complicated question, because they are in large measure poems that valorize a private relationship between the soul and God. In 'The Invocation', for example, Eliza calls upon her 'Sacred Muse' to find shelter 'Within the closet of my brest' (sig. A4). Here the metaphor of enclosure would imply an equation between inwardness and value: the place to harbour sacred thoughts is deep within the self. But there are other possibilities, some of them less reassuring, as in the following poem, 'To a Friend for her Naked Breasts':

Madam I praise you, 'cause you'r free,
And you doe not conceal from me
What hidden in your heart doth lye,
If I can it through your breasts spy.

Some Ladies will not show their breasts,
For feare men think they are undrest,
Or by't their hearts they should discover,
They do't to tempt some wanton Lover.

They are afraid tempters to be,
Because a Curse impos'd they see,

Upon the tempter that was first,
By an all-seeing God that's just.

But though I praise you have a care
Of that al-seeing eye, and feare,
Lest he through your bare breasts see sin,
And punish you for what's within. (sig. D7v)

It was of course an age of *décolletage*. As a young woman, perhaps in her late teens, Frances Jennings had herself painted in miniature by Samuel Cooper (Plate 1); she wears a dress that straddles the almost imperceptible line



Plate 1 Samuel Cooper, *Frances Jennings, Duchess of Tyrconnel* (1665),
The National Portrait Gallery, London

between high fashion and bad taste – a dress that reveals not quite everything, but is always on the verge of doing so. The dating of this portrait (c. 1665) places it after the Restoration, and therefore some dozen years after *Eliza's Babes* was published (1652). But plunging necklines were certainly all the rage in the 1630s when Van Dyck and his numerous imitators painted Henrietta Maria and her numerous imitators. During the Commonwealth there was pressure to adopt a more modest standard of dress, as Eliza's poem would attest. But fashion was still fashion, at least in the more privileged levels of society; Cromwell's favourite daughter Elizabeth, to judge by John Michael Wright's depiction of her in the National Portrait Gallery, is only slightly less amply displayed than were the wives and daughters of the cavaliers.

So the occasion for this poem is the observation by a modest, and I think a mature woman, that her younger female friend is wearing clothes that reveal rather a lot of voluptuous flesh. She is trying to see her younger and more daring friend in the best possible light, and it occurs to her that the unveiling of the body signifies the absence of deceit. The younger woman does not 'conceal', and thus brings into being the conditions for real intimacy. The speaker thinks it may be possible to look 'through your breasts' and into her friend's heart, to discover what is 'hidden' there. If the speaker is right, and if she is getting privileged access to the contents of her friend's heart, then the whole display has been perfectly innocent: there's nothing to worry about, because nobody is hiding anything.

So far the poem has proceeded on the assumption that breasts are women's business, and that conversations about breasts simply happen between friends. In the second stanza all this changes because of the introduction of 'men' and what men 'think'. What men do think is of course always the same thing: that a woman who exposes her breasts is trying to attract male (sexual) attention. This horrifying notion, the speaker says, has led 'Some Ladies' to desist from showing their breasts altogether. It was fine when practised innocently, between women, but heterosexual lust poisons the environment and women are obliged to cover up. The third stanza, by far the weakest in the poem, continues to develop the idea of female fear, this time by comparing sexual temptation to the original temptation. This is hardly a novel idea, especially in the seventeenth century, and the poem does not seem to me to do much with it. But the first temptation leads to the thought of the 'all-seeing God' who dispenses justice to tempter and tempted alike. This idea carries forward into the final stanza, and motivates a change in tone towards the didactic or at least the hortative.

The speaker wags her finger at the friend to remind her that not every fashion statement is innocent, and that God's 'al-seeing eye' will discover the 'sin', if any, that is hidden in her heart. God has (as usual) a difficult part to play: he is both the court of last appeal and the cosmic voyeur. In the first of these functions he has to be severe and unrelenting; if he finds 'sin', he has to 'punish'. He is therefore unlike the speaker, who can afford to be far more

generous, who can indeed make the presumption of innocence and therefore 'praise' her friend. In his role as voyeur, God is of course infinitely alert, and therefore far more disturbing than the men of stanza 2. 'Some Ladies' rather cautiously drew back for fear of what men might say, though this has not bothered the friend heretofore. But she cannot risk being indifferent at the thought of what God will say. Will she then cover up to protect herself from God's 'al-seeing eye'? Perhaps, but if she does her modesty will be gestural only, because God will continue to see ... well, everything. Indeed, God sees right 'through' the friend's 'bare breasts'; unlike the men who see only the surface and guess at motivation, God has access to 'what's within'. And this privilege he shares, curiously, with the speaker, who can also see what is 'hidden', or at least thinks she may be able to see it, by looking 'through' the friend's breasts. God has the power to see through flesh and find guilt; the speaker has the gift of seeing through flesh to find presumed innocence.

So what does this poem have to do with privacy? Rather a lot, I would suggest, if the female breast is taken as a particularly potent sign of the liminal zone between the private and the public. Indeed, when the word is used in the singular, it immediately suggests interiority, as in 'the closet of my breast' (from 'The Invocation') as a haven of intimacy. This meaning is not the primary one in 'To a Friend for her Naked Breasts'. How could it be, when the 'breast' has become 'breasts', and the act of exposing them at least enough to justify the adjective 'naked' has brought them into the public domain? The sense of interiority is still present, of course, in the references to the 'hidden', the 'what's within' that lies underneath the surface. In short, this poem is concerned in its every nuance with the dialectic between hiding and showing, concealing and exposing, covering up and undressing. That is why it is in a curious way such an erotic poem. And there is a further though unacknowledged way in which this poem might be an exploration of the private. In the speaker's preoccupation with her friend's body, in her possessive solicitude, and in her celebration of nakedness there must surely be an element of same-sex erotic attraction. This reading of the relationship would doubtless have shocked Eliza, or she might have considered it ludicrous and sent it back to the realm of the unthinkable, but she may well have experienced private pleasures that she could not acknowledge. Her special gift was one of hiding and showing; concealing the erotic quality of her friendship, even from herself, and then writing about it anyway.

Henry Vaughan has a longstanding reputation as a poet of privacy. Some of his most memorable poems are explorations of bereavement, loss, and loneliness:

They are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit lingring here.²⁵

A number of sad events in Vaughan's life may have played their part in releasing the last-remnant feeling which this poem, first printed in the second edition

of *Silex Scintillans* (1655), captures so beautifully.²⁶ The speaker claims that his 'days ... are at best but dull and hoary, / Meer glimmering and decays' (p. 484). The tonality here is remarkable when you consider that their author could not have been more than thirty-three when he wrote these words, and that he would go on glimmering and decaying for another forty years before his death in 1695. Stevie Davies, Vaughan's most recent biographer, has identified a state of mental being very close to what I have been implying. 'Nostalgia is the compulsive force which drives his poems', she writes; 'it is the strongest passion he knows, and the source of his most moving effects'.²⁷ I would add only that it is the nostalgia of a solitary figure who has lost his appetite for the joys of the present and who therefore waits, with longing, for union with God.

As a Christian and certainly as a poet, Vaughan needed privacy and seems to have gathered certain kinds of strength from it. For him the journey inward is a crucial step in the direction of a destination he always desires: to be in the presence of God. The process I am describing is articulated with special clarity and considerable power in 'Vanity of Spirit':

Quite spent with thoughts I left my Cell, and lay
 Where a shrill spring tun'd to the early day.
 I beg'd here long, and gron'd to know
 Who gave the Clouds so brave a bow,
 Who bent the spheres, and circled in
 Corruption with this glorious Ring,
 What is his name, and how I might
 Descry some part of his great light.
 I summon'd nature: peirc'd through all her store,
 Broke up some seales, which none had touch'd before,
 Her wombe, her bosome, and her head
 Where all her secrets lay a bed
 I rifled quite, and having past
 Through all the Creatures, came at last
 To search my selfe, where I did find
 Traces, and sounds of a strange kind.
 Here of this mighty spring, I found some drills,
 With Ecchoes beaten from th' eternall hills;
 Weake beames, and fires flash'd to my sight,
 Like a young East, or Moone-shine night,
 Which shew'd me in a nook cast by
 A peece of much antiquity,
 With Hyeroglyphicks quite dismembred,
 And broken letters scarce remembred.
 I tooke them up, and (much Joy'd,) went about
 T' unite those peeces, hoping to find out
 The mystery; but this neer done,
 That little light I had was gone:
 It griev'd me much. At last, said I,
Since in these veyls my Ecclips'd Eye

*May not approach thee, (for at night
 Who can have commerce with the light?)
 I'le disapparell, and to buy
 But one half glaunce, most gladly dye. (pp. 418–19)*

The speaker who emerges from his 'Cell' in the opening line must be thinking of himself as a hermit; certainly he has been engaged in deep contemplation already, because he is tired of mental work and ready to look to nature for refreshment and rejuvenation. While he takes in the beauty and splendour of the natural world, he formulates a desire to know the Creator of these marvels. This is no idle wish, but a passionate need; he begs and groans for an answer, but receives none. Then, in the second stanza, he brings to the interpretation of nature a more active strategy. In a frenzy that resembles the panic of the mad scientist caricature, he summons, pierces, breaks, and rifles. The speaker's violent need to know is driving him beyond restraint, but bringing him no nearer to the truth he seeks.

Now he turns his gaze inward, and begins to search him 'selfe'. Until this point his quest has been thwarted by the indifference or the resistance of nature to his desires, and his own responses have been characterized by frustration. But now, upon turning inward, he begins to discover at least something: 'Traces, and sounds of a strange kind'. Evidence of God's being is not directly available to the seeker after truth, but there is indirect evidence ('Traces') within the mind of the self. These traces are now further defined by using a series of metaphorical strategies. First, if God is the 'mighty spring', the source of the flowing water of the created world, then within the mind there are 'drills', that is, rivulets or small streams.²⁸ If God is considered in his aural aspect, as the infinite voice, then there are 'Echoes' of his sonority within the self. Or, to use Vaughan's favourite poetic medium of light, darkness, and shade, the internal trace of God is perceived as a dim glowing of 'Weake beames' or as the intermittent flashing of fire. Such intermediate glimmerings of divine light are enough to bring into view the new and surprising metaphor of the not-quite-legible hieroglyph. Sir Thomas Browne, between whom and Vaughan there are many affinities of spirit and language, believed that God has contrived a series of 'common Hieroglyphics' to enable us 'to suck Divinity from the flowers of nature'.²⁹ In Vaughan's poem it is human nature that bears the imprint of the divine author. But it is not a transparently readable imprint; even if it were perfectly preserved the hieroglyph would still need to be deciphered, decoded, interpreted. In the fallen condition of humankind the divine imprint is not only cryptic but broken into fragments. The speaker says he has almost succeeded in uniting the fragments, which presumably would lead to his interpretation of the sign, when the 'little light' by which he has been working fades and he is unable to complete the task.

Is this then a text in which knowledge of God is shown to be impossible? In a sense it is: perfect, unmediated knowledge of God is impossible so long

as we are in our mortal state. Indeed, it is vanity of spirit, as the title implies, to think otherwise. So the speaker longs, in the last five lines, for the day when the 'veyls' will be removed from his 'Ecclips'd Eye' and he will be able to experience God directly. Such a happy unmediated view of God is possible, but only in the life after death, as Vaughan well knew from any number of biblical texts, including this special favourite: 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face' (1 Cor. 13.12). To achieve this longed-for result, the speaker says he will '*disapparell*' – that is, he will cast aside the vestments of human flesh in which his divine soul has been enclosed, in order to achieve union with God in the afterlife. He will achieve his long deferred goal by being naked with God at last. This is perhaps a mischievous way of glossing the image of disrobing, but one that preserves something of the yearning for intimacy which is entirely characteristic of Vaughan.

The privacy which Vaughan celebrates in his poetry is something altogether removed from domesticity. He was the father of eight children, four from his first marriage, four from his second. But these family matters have left no mark upon his poetry or even, so far as I am aware, on his prose. The privacy which interests him is the blessed loneliness of walking with God. In 'Rules and Lessons', one of his most didactic and least accomplished poems, he advises his reader to 'Seek not the same steps with the *Crowd*; stick thou / To thy sure trot'. The solitary jogger will get his reward in the end, because 'A sweet *self-privacy* in a right soul / Out-runs the Earth, and lines the utmost pole' (p. 437). The sense of being out of step with the majority is far more beautifully captured in 'The Retreat', a text in which the speaker, convinced that he once had intuitive access to the divine, wishes he could 'travel back' (p. 419) to recapture the light he has lost:

Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move,
And when this dust falls to the urn
In that state I came return. (p. 420)

Here walking with God has become a sacred paradox in which progress is made by means of regress and, in a quintessential Christian oxymoron, life is achieved in death. All of this is, of course, doctrinally sound and unexceptional. But the image of the speaker as the odd man out, as the one backward walker in a world of people busily trying to get ahead, this is Vaughan at his best. Within a fairly narrow range he had a gift for understanding a certain kind of privacy, and a genius for being out of step with the world at large.

To judge by the written evidence created by three persons of each gender, it would appear that men in early modern culture felt more secure about the experience of privacy than did women. This conclusion may seem counter-intuitive, and I freely admit that it is not the view I held when I started this investigation. I would have been far more likely to believe, given the pervasiveness of

early modern teachings about the private sphere as the natural place for women,³⁰ that women writers would eagerly claim the space of privacy as their own. Instead, there would appear to be a deep-seated ambivalence about privacy in women's writing.³¹ Eliza's insistence that privacy is not enough is an articulation of a restlessness and a need for public endorsement that can also be traced, though less directly, in the writing of Lady Anne Clifford and Lucy Hutchinson. The male writers, by contrast, recognizing that privacy is only one aspect of a busy life, are free to celebrate it. I am not claiming that the valorization of privacy in Slingsby, D'Ewes, and Vaughan is unproblematic; indeed it may seem at times to be mostly compensation (for lost public status) or nostalgic longing (for an impossible wholeness). But the male writers do value privacy, and they return to it again and again as to a place of security and rest.

It is true, of course, that the gender difference I am suggesting depends on my selection of writers, and that the particulars of my argument would not be the same if my diarists had been Lady Margaret Hoby and Ralph Josselin, my autobiographers Alice Thornton and Lord Herbert of Chisbury, my poets Katherine Philips and Andrew Marvell. But I doubt that my first conclusion, though I wish to hold it tentatively and provisionally, would be seriously challenged. My reasons for this belief lie in the structure of early modern culture itself, and in the inequalities that it not only practised but supported with vast ideological and material resources. The early modern men whom I have been citing all went to Oxford or Cambridge; none of the women did, nor could they have done so. And this was only the finishing touch on a process of educational streaming that put Latin classics into the heads of boys, needlework into the hands of girls. Under the circumstances it was a very unusual woman who put pen to paper at all: either a woman of immense privilege, or of relentless determination, or of exceptional intelligence, or of some combination of all three. Such women are very unlikely to raise an unambiguous chorus in praise of a privacy they have only just managed to subvert or escape. They are much less likely than male writers, who have been taught that the borderline between public and private is theirs to cross at will, to experience privacy as a socially sanctioned and temporary retreat.³² A woman who succumbs to the view that privacy is her lot in life will never be heard from again. A man who retires to the privacy of his library, as Montaigne did at the age of thirty-eight, may be embarking on the very enterprise that will ensure his visibility and fame.

Secondly, the evidence I have been able to assemble would suggest that men are free to interrupt women's privacy virtually at will, but that the converse does not apply. Just what is at stake here can be more clearly demonstrated in the visual culture of the seventeenth century. In Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* (Plate 2) the atmosphere of female privacy is evoked with astonishing subtlety. The seated figure seems absolutely composed, perfectly at home in a room filled with artistic pleasures and performances. Her hands are touching the keys with a lightness that makes her own



Plate 2 Jan Vermeer, *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* (c. 1670),
The National Gallery, London

art seem natural. She does not need to refer to the score as she plays, because she has internalized the music, made it her own. What then is missing from this picture of wonderful composure? Only one thing: a man. There are three indications within the picture that this is so. One is the framed canvas just above the young woman, identified by art historians as *The Procuress* by Theodoor van Baburen. The lighting obscures the precise content of this painting within the painting, but a discerning viewer might notice that its two commodities are music and sex, both apparently being offered by the bold

woman on the left. Next, the viola da gamba in the left foreground seems to be waiting for a practised hand to take it up, and from the size of the instrument as well as its pitch, I would assume that this would be a man's hand. Finally, the turn of the young woman's head and the enigmatic smile on her lips would suggest that she has just noticed the approach of a new presence, perhaps the very male presence required to man the gamba and to turn her solo into a duet. The fact that she also looks in the direction of the painter and spectator does not change the equation, at least not for the male spectator, who feels drawn in by the look of calm expectation. All of these devices create a 'feeling of male absence'³³ within the painting, a feeling of absence that appears to be on the verge of being relieved by the arrival of a man.

What happens after the man arrives is brilliantly suggested by Gabriel Metsu's *A Man and a Woman Beside a Virginal* (Plate 3). First, she has stopped playing and her attention is now focused entirely upon him. She rests her left hand on top of the instrument, and with her right hand extends the sheet of music for his perusal. He points in the direction of the score with the index finger of his left hand, and in his right hand he holds a tall, half-filled wine-glass. The flagon placed on the floor near the man's left foot would suggest that there is more wine to be had when the glass has been emptied. The implied pleasures in this scene – musical, bibitory, and erotic pleasures – are inflected at every turn by the male figure's presumption of authority. The wine-glass is certainly a wine-glass, but he holds it as if he were using it to conduct the musical performance, to place the interpretation under the sign of his control. Her body language does not provide any clues about her receptivity, either to his musical authority, or to his offer of wine, or to the implicit erotic appeal made both by the man and by their situation. In this sense she is like Vermeer's young lady: she remains a model of quiet and dignified composure, though in relation to the man her dignity is a kind of deference as well.

Taken together these two images, one of a woman about to be interrupted by a man, the other of a woman patiently deferring to a man's interruptions, virtually define the always provisional character of female privacy in the early modern period. There is something surreptitious about the woman's recourse to privacy because she knows she can be interrupted at any moment. Thus Lady Anne Clifford goes on vast binges of reading when her husband is away, but when Sackville returns and discovers her at it, he can stop her at once with an irritable prohibition. Thus Eliza, even while she celebrates the bond of intimate trust between herself and her female friend, knows that such privacy is subject to invasion perhaps by disruptive male expectations and certainly by divine voyeurism. Would the converse ever be the case? Would Richard Sackville abandon his programme of reading if his wife were to object to it? The answer of course is that the situation would not arise; men are not called upon to defer to the authority of women in this way. Would Sir Simonds D'Ewes expect to be interrupted, in his dedicated study of Anglo-Saxon



Plate 3 Gabriel Metsu, *A Man and a Woman Beside a Virginal* (c. 1665),
The National Gallery, London

charters, by the female shadow of Anne Clopton across his ancient page? This is a more plausible kind of interruption, and I would not rule it out, even though no event of quite this kind is recorded in the texts under review. Women certainly did send messages which interrupted the public pursuits of their menfolk by asserting the urgency of domestic concerns. And I am sure

that in any household where good will prevailed, women interrupted male privacy as well. But I doubt that such interruptions were routine, and I imagine that they were accompanied by various signs of womanly deference. In short, I am convinced that private life in the early modern period, however companionate, was at all times inflected by the semiology of male privilege. In a world where one gender was expected to govern and the other expected to obey, it could not have been otherwise.

Dalhousie University

RONALD HUEBERT

Notes

- 1 *The Complete English Poems*, edited by A. J. Smith (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 84.
- 2 Here and subsequently I am assuming that privacy was a serious and legitimate preoccupation among early modern writers – an assumption that runs counter to the prevailing orthodoxy, which would claim that there is no such thing as the private in early modern culture; see for example Lena Cowen Orlin, who argues (in *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca, NY, 1994)) ‘that “private life” is a social construct’ (p. 18) and that, ‘in the early modern period, the private was, after all, public in consequence’ (p. 73). This view strikes me as a misappropriation of Jürgen Habermas (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1989)), who claims that the intimacy available within the early modern family ‘seemed to be established voluntarily and by free individuals and to be maintained without coercion; it seemed to rest on the lasting community of love on the part of the two spouses; it seemed to permit that non-instrumental development of all faculties that marks the cultivated personality’ (pp. 46–7), but that the family was a vehicle of constraint as well, in the sense that women and children were subject to paternal authority, and in the sense that the family as a whole ‘played its precisely defined role’ (p. 47) within the structure of early modern capitalism. Still, Habermas concedes that ‘the ideas of freedom, love, and cultivation of the person that grew out of the conjugal family’s private sphere were surely more than just ideology’; insofar as they became embedded within the subjective experience of early modern people, and insofar as they influenced the structure of family life, ‘these ideas were also reality’ (p. 48). My own research would suggest that, although the line between public and private was not drawn at precisely the same place by early modern writers as it would be today, it was nonetheless drawn with great regularity and with complete confidence in the meaningfulness of the distinction; see Ronald Huebert, ‘Privacy: The Early Social History of a Word’, *The Sewanee Review*, 105 (1997), 21–38.
- 3 *A Summary of the Records and a True Memorial of the Life of Me the Lady Anne Clifford*, in *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery (1590–1676) and of her Parents*, edited by J. P. Gilson (London, 1916), p. 39. Hereafter cited as the *Life of Me*. In all quotations from old-spelling texts, usage of i/j, u/v, and long s is silently modernized, a few archaic abbreviations

- (such as ‘y’ for ‘that’) are silently expanded, and extended passages of italic type are silently reduced to roman.
- 4 Attributed to Donne by Edward Rainbow, Bishop of Carlisle, in his funeral sermon for Clifford; see *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Right Honorable Anne Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery* (London, 1677), sig. E3v.
 - 5 See, for example, George C. Williamson, *Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery: 1590–1676* (Kendal, 1922), pp. 114–21; Martin Holmes, *Proud Northern Lady: Lady Anne Clifford, 1590–1676* (Chichester, 1975), pp. 41–55, 76–86; Barbara K. Lewalski, ‘Re-writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer’, *Yearbook of English Studies*, 21 (1991), 93–7; and Helen Wilcox, ‘Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen’, in *Gloriana’s Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, edited by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Hemel Hempstead, 1992), pp. 51–3.
 - 6 *The Diary of Anne Clifford, 1616–1619*, edited by Katherine O. Acheson (New York, 1995), p. 41. Subsequent references are to this edition.
 - 7 I do not claim to be alone in sensing that the narrative of resistance rewarded is not the whole story. Mary Ellen Lamb, in ‘The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 22 (1992), 347–68, seems to me especially sensitive to the ironies inherent in Clifford’s situation.
 - 8 See Williamson, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 477.
 - 9 Lewalski, among others, does read the evidence in this way; Clifford, she says, ‘intimates a homosexual relationship’ between her husband and ‘a gentleman-servant’ (‘Re-writing Patriarchy’, p. 96). See also Acheson, ‘Introduction’, p. 10.
 - 10 John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, edited by Oliver Lawson Dick (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 260, 201.
 - 11 See the discussion by Alan Stewart in ‘The Early Modern Closet Discovered’, *Representations*, 50 (Spring 1995), 82–3, and the inventory of the contents of husband/wife closets in John Evans, ‘Extracts from the Private Account Book of Sir William More, of Loseley’, *Archaeologia*, 30 (1855), 290–3. Dora Thornton, in *The Scholar in his Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, 1997), offers a copiously documented and beautifully illustrated account of the role of the study within Italian humanist culture, along with suggestive commentary on the distinction between the (Italian) study and the (English) closet: ‘Even in a Protestant culture, in which the cultivation of private conscience might prompt women towards reflection and study, women seemed rarely to have owned studies, though they often created closets as small, intimate rooms. ... a closet could be the property of a man or a woman, while the study was still a masculine preserve, even a misogynistic one’ (pp. 96–7).
 - 12 Élisabeth Bourcier, *Les Journaux privés en Angleterre de 1600 à 1660* (Paris, 1976), p. 403.
 - 13 *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby, of Scriven, Bart.*, edited by Daniel Parsons (London, 1836), p. 72.
 - 14 As he most often appears to be in Geoffrey Ridsill Smith’s *Without Touch of Dishonour: The Life and Death of Sir Henry Slingsby, 1602–1658* (Kineston, Warwickshire, 1968), a book I have frequently consulted nonetheless.
 - 15 The boy’s date of birth is given by Slingsby as 15 June 1636 (*Diary*, p. 3).

- 16 See Montaigne, *The Essayes: Or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses*, translated by John Florio (London, 1603), sig. H6v: 'the expedient my father found-out, was this; that being yet at nurse, and before the first loosing of my tongue, I was delivered to a Germaine (who died since, a most excellent Phisitian in *France*) he being then altogether ignorant of the French tongue, but exquisitely ready and skilfull in the Latine. This man, whom my father had sent-for of purpose, and to whom he gave very great entertainment, had me continually in his armes, and was mine onely overseer. There were also joyned unto him two of his countrimen, but not so learned; whose charge was to attend, and now and then, to play with me; and all these together did never entertaine me with other then the Latine tongue'.
- 17 *The Tryals of Sir Henry Slingsby K[nigh]t, and John Hewet D.D. for High Treason* (London, 1658), sig. A2. The Slingsby portion of this document is reprinted as an Appendix in the *Diary* (pp. 418–41).
- 18 *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, edited by Julius Hutchinson, 3rd ed. (London, 1810), I, 119. All citations are from this edition.
- 19 *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, Bart., During the Reigns of James I and Charles I*, edited by James Orchard Halliwell (London, 1845), I, 325. Subsequent references are to this edition.
- 20 This anecdote is given in *The Life of Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson, Written by Herself*, an autobiographical sketch which occupies the first 28 pages of volume I; the colonel's life fills some further 700 pages.
- 21 See Andrew G. Watson, *The Library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (London, 1966), p. 40.
- 22 D'Ewes takes a curious pride in his heroic sexual restraint, declaring it to be 'perhaps the first example that ever was of that kind; and so impossible it seemed, as others could scarcely be brought to believe it' (I, 320).
- 23 The autobiographical prelude to her text contains no reference to her husband; it may at one time have included accounts of previous suitors in the missing leaves which, according to her editor, have left 'a great chasm' (I, 28n) in the manuscript. Once she turns to her subject proper, the life of *Colonel Hutchinson*, there is no longer an independent position for Hutchinson to occupy; indeed, she abruptly stops using the first-person singular pronoun and makes her further appearances as 'the governor's wife' (I, 266), as 'his wife' (II, 230), as 'Mrs. Hutchinson' (II, 262), or as 'she'. This rhetorical strategy does not prevent her, however, from giving a brief account of her courtship, albeit an account that purports to be told from the male point of view.
- 24 *Eliza's Babes: Or the Virgin's Offering* (London, 1652), sig. A2.
- 25 *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, edited by L. C. Martin, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1957), p. 483. Subsequent references are to this edition.
- 26 For example, his younger brother William died in 1648, a loss which Vaughan alludes to in several poems, namely 'Thou that knows't for whom I mourne' (pp. 416–18), 'Come, come, what doe I here?' (p. 420), 'Silence, and stealth of dayes' (pp. 425–6), and 'I walkt the other day' (pp. 478–9). His first wife Catherine Wise, who bore him four children, died about 1653 (after which Vaughan married her younger sister Elizabeth). The Act for Better Propagation and Preaching the Gospel in Wales was passed by parliament in 1650, as a result of which Vaughan's twin brother Thomas was evicted from the rectorship of St Bride's Church.

- 27 *Henry Vaughan*, Border Lines Series (Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan, Wales, 1995), p. 28.
- 28 See *OED*, 'drill', sb.¹ 2.
- 29 *Religio Medici*, i.16, in *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1928), I, 25.
- 30 See, for example, William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), sigs. C1v–2.
- 31 So it should not be surprising to find this ambivalence reflected in recent scholarly discussions of early modern women's writing. There appears to be a rhetorical trope by means of which women's privacy is first rehabilitated and then reinscribed as belonging to the public sphere. See for example Margaret J. M. Ezell, who argues (in *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill, 1987)) that women's writing cannot be fairly represented by published titles, and therefore directs our attention to such sources as manuscript volumes and correspondence networks. Ezell then rescues manuscript volumes from the stigma of privacy: 'They were first and foremost presentation pieces, not closet productions. They were "private" only in the sense that the author, not the bookseller, had control of the manuscript' (p. 68). The same service is then performed for letter writing, which has, 'like manuscript circles, been dealt with in a preemptory fashion as being a "private" literary form' (p. 73). Margaret W. Ferguson advances a similar argument in 'Renaissance Concepts of the "Woman Writer"' (*Women and Literature in Britain, 1500–1700*, edited by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge, 1996)), though with greater awareness of its ambiguities: 'Women, particularly aristocratic women, could ... escape the inhibiting effects of the social ideal of females as silent, "private" beings by circulating their writings in manuscript rather than submitting them to the press. But the line between manuscript and print "publication" was often blurred in this era, and some women used that ambiguity to advance their ambitions to reach a public audience with their writings' (p. 149). See also Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington, 1994), where the rehabilitation of privacy and its reinscription as public happen almost simultaneously: 'Deprived almost totally of any chance to produce public writing or other public culture, women created, I suggest, a kind of hidden version of such cultural circulation within the confines of private circles, reproducing the political within the personal and vice versa' (p. 18).
- 32 My position here is compatible with that taken by Cecile M. Jagodzinski in *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville, 1999); in particular, Jagodzinski finds that privacy is difficult to negotiate for a writer like Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, who 'knows that, for women, the retired life is only a pale imitation of that of men. Marriage and domesticity restrict women to the private sphere; it does not free them from authority as it does men' (p. 94). Jagodzinski's book was published after I had completed the present article; hence, although my own work is not indebted to hers, it is a pleasure nonetheless to note points of concurrence.
- 33 This phrase is from Edward A. Snow, who uses it in connection with another Vermeer painting, *Girl Asleep at a Table*; see *A Study of Vermeer* (Berkeley, 1979), p. 54.

Address for correspondence

Professor Ronald Huebert, Department of English, Dalhousie University, Halifax,
Nova Scotia B3 3J5, Canada, e-mail: rhuebert@is.dal.ca