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ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

THE PLACING OF FAMILIES ON THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH STAGE

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ABSTRACT

Family settings are important features in the worlds of the plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries; not only do they function as physical locations, but they are also instruments through which the playwrights communicate the political and social orders of the plays. Reading the plays in light of these social, political and cultural frameworks uncovers the dramatic techniques used by the playwrights, showing how they used challenging accounts about cultures and families to situate the action of their plays. This dissertation builds on the critical theories of spatiality (Henri Lefebvre, Gaston Bachelard, Michel de Certeau, Edward Soja), cultural geography (Yi-Fu Tuan, J. E. Malpas, Julie Sanders, John Gillies), new historicism (Stephen Greenblatt, Katherine Eisaman Maus), feminist criticism (Phyllis Rackin, Natasha Korda, Tim Meldrum, Linda Pollock, Lisa Jardine), and geocriticism (Andrew Hiscock, Andrew Bozio), as well as performance theories (Jean Howard, Steven Mullaney, Janette Dillon, Allan Dessen, Erika Lin) and audience-response theory (Jeremy Lopez). I examine the theatrical placing of families in the context of early modern plays by William Shakespeare (*Titus Andronicus*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and *Love's Labour's Lost*), by Shakespeare and Wilkins (*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*), by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton (*The Roaring Girl*), and by Thomas Middleton (*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*). The concept of *placing* is based on dramatic action and the dramatic space developed in each play under discussion. So is the concept of *dramatic parental family*, which refers to representations of families in the theatre. As the theatre space represents the social world in Shakespeare's time—but it is also different from it—this dissertation follows the theatrical concept of placing the family issues along the lines of dramatic interaction, as the social concepts of family, marriage, parenthood, children and service are dramatized on stage.

By reflecting on what the placing of the family on stage means during specific instances of dramatic action, I analyse the behaviours of dramatic characters functioning as mothers and fathers, and I distinguish several women, besides men, as playing important roles in connection with children, and within the households in early modern drama. This dissertation contemplates on what I have called the *dramatic parental family*—a social and theatrical form that reconsiders the representations of family, children, and servants on the place of the stage. This expression unequivocally refers to fictional characters in early modern plays; it involves adults and children, as well as servants; they are members of a family who are biologically and non-biologically related with each other. I argue that families are dramatized and placed in the social

space of the theatre—including meta-theatrical allusions—and within the fictional space of the respective play's setting. Rather than being mere replicas of the social interactions within the early modern family in the time of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the placing of these theatrical families is both like and unlike the real-life social relations of the time, based on patriarchy and commodification of women.

Chapter 1, entitled "The Placing of Parents on Stage" (1), examines issues of parenthood in two Jacobean city comedies (*The Roaring Girl* by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by Thomas Middleton) and an early Shakespearean revenge tragedy (*Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare), in order to show the placing of parents on stage through the embodiment of the actors' roles and the fashioning of the dramatic parental family, with all the implications derived from the social life of the time. I argue that the spatial and cultural representations of parenthood in comedy and tragedy depend on the play's genre and on various interpretations of the family relations, derived from the social issues of the time and the actors' interpretations of dramatic roles. Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between the characters interpreting various members of the family in the respective play and the space of the stage. While in the Jacobean city comedies set in London (*The Roaring Girl* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*) parental authority (of both mother and father) is vocally claimed, but it becomes ultimately a game (like in a play-within-the-play), in the Shakespearian tragedy (*Titus Andronicus*) parental relations in ancient Rome are pitted against those of the barbarous peoples from distant lands (such as the Goths and the Moors), along with issues of race, and all of them are found lacking.

The subchapter entitled "Fathers and Sons: *The Roaring Girl*" (1.1) of chapter 1 examines the placing of the figures of fathers and sons in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1607) in order to show that parental authority is placed in a particular position in relation to the stage and the city by depicting parentage in the context of the early modern community. I argue that the placing of the families of Sir Alexander Wengrave and his son (Sebastian), of Mary Fitzallard and her father (Sir Guy Fitzallard), as well as those of the marginal fathers Sir Adam Appleton and Sir Davy Dapper shows, in opposition, patriarchal authority and female concealed power. Similarly, the families of the working women (Mistress Openwork, Mistress Gallipot and Mistress Tiltyard) are set in contrast with the transvestite woman Moll Cutpurse, the roaring girl of the title. While fatherly and motherly authority was expected to function in the early modern period, mothers in this city comedy are conspicuously absent and fathers cannot exercise their authority on their children (Sebastian Wengrave and Mary Fitzallard, respectively). Thus, the comedy challenges

the expectations of the social notions of the time by showing that mothers are powerful figures and, when they are absent, family's values are contested.

The subchapter entitled "Mothers and Daughters: *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*" (1.2) of chapter 1 examines the placing of the dramatic parental family in the city comedy *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by Thomas Middleton (1613) in order to show that the urban space in which citizens' families evolve opposes two types of families and relationships: the legitimate Yellowhammer family (father, authoritative mother and daughter), formed of people who pursue material wealth; and the illegitimate Allwit family (with Whorehound as a surrogate father), which ends up in dire straits because the father's authority is undermined. Other families in the play (that of Touchwood Sr. and Sir Oliver Kix) raise issues of parenthood and fertility. Several legitimate and illegitimate babies (represented by prop dolls) appearing in the play's subplot demonstrate that children have no choice in the materialization of authority in the family, while parents have various obscure reasons for using legitimate/illegitimate children in gaining material wealth. Families are images of social conformity rather than harmoniously working organisations; when social conventions are transgressed, families collapse, and it is the children who are the victims of their parents' greed.

The subchapter entitled "Family and Race: *Titus Andronicus*" (1.3) of chapter 1 analyses the issue of race in relation to parentage in Shakespeare's early tragedy *Titus Andronicus* (1593) in order to show that the key parental issues are related to the regulation of the body of the "other"—particularly the children's bodies. Drawing on Foucault's discourse on the symbolic functions of blood (in *The History of Sexuality*), I argue that the placing of Aaron's character as a Moorish (and therefore "black") father is related to religious and racial difference. While Aaron's politically manipulative figure is redeemed by his parental love and compassion for his mixed-race baby, the Roman and Goth families (Titus Andronicus and his sons and daughter, as well as Tamora and her sons) are placed in relations of power one against the other. Rather than favouring their children's lives and happiness over political authority, both Roman and Goth families in this tragedy are more concerned with civil influence and honour than they are with their children's survival. Parents in this revenge tragedy are victims of their own greed and insufficient understanding of parenthood, while a typical villain such as Aaron shows compassion for his recently born (but illegitimate) son. Families in *Titus Andronicus* are not identical mirrors of parental relations in Elizabethan or Roman society, but they reflect these relations in a distorted manner, through the bloody lens of metatheatrical revenge. Parents are cruel and vengeful to their children (and to other parents' children), while a marginalized mixed-race baby is saved from the brutal circuit of revenge.

Chapter 2, entitled "The Placing of Families on Shakespeare's Stage in the Romances" (2) discusses the placing of the dramatic families in three Shakespearean romances, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. I argue that the dysfunctional families represented in these plays transform physical geographic space into individually circumscribed place. As the stage is the site for the placing of these social concepts related to family relations in the dramatic context, families in the romances are located in metaphoric places that suggest their contrastive emotions. Whether these intense passions develop throughout the Eastern Mediterranean locations in *Pericles*, or a fiery Sicilia and a seemingly-pastoral Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*, or on a metaphoric island of imagination in *The Tempest*, the families in Shakespeare's romances are not so much related to issues of power and authority as they are influenced by the characters' prevailing emotions and anxieties. While patriarchal authority is a dominant feature of these plays, female soft power is opposed to these predominant trends, as the women in the plays restore the final harmony in the couples—in both the older and the younger generation. Even if geographic space divides families, they are reunited through the mothers and daughters, by traversing physical space.

The subchapter entitled "Dysfunctional Families in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*" (2.1) of chapter 2 examines the representation of the dramatic parental families in the play by William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, showing that the multiple locations of the play's geography influence the placing of families. The play subverts the pro-monarchic message according to which King James I is a benevolent father and king, showing that Pericles is an indecisive father who wanders throughout the Mediterranean places in search of identity. The incongruent spaces and the images of disease and loss in the play are arguments for the distorted placing of families. Prostitution in the brothel space of Mytilene is a sign of corruption of family relations, while Marina is the daughter who reinstates traditional notions of purity in a corrupt Hellenistic world. The incestuous king and father of Antioch is not a model parental figure to his daughter. Pericles is a weak prince and father, who wallows in self-pity most of the time, and he is not the ideal authoritative head of the family. Neither is Cleon, the governor of Tarsus, who cannot control his wife's ambition and envy. Old King Simonides is the image of the benevolent father, but his authority does not extend beyond the confines of his Pentapolis, so his daughter (Thaisa) is harmed as soon as she exits this protected world. When families are reunited through wife and/or daughter, they are allowed to live harmoniously, as befits the ending of a romance play. The three metaphoric places of the first half of *Pericles* (Antioch, Tyre and Tarsus) signify disaster for the three rulers (King Antiochus, Pericles and Cleon) and their royal families. By

contrast, the other three places from the play (Pentapolis, Mytilene and Ephesus) advocate hope and emotional recovery.

The subchapter entitled "Emotionally Confused Families in *The Winter's Tale*" (2.2) of chapter 2 examines the oppositional families in the play's Sicilia and Bohemia (as well as Russia, the country of Hermione's birth) to show that the final reunion of the psychologically muddled families of the three kingdoms is a responsive result of the errors and transgressions of the fathers. The placing of the family of Sicilia (Leontes, Hermione, Perdita and Mamillus) represents the figurative power of femininity, as opposed to faltering patriarchy, while the family of Bohemia (King Polixenes and Prince Florizel) show the imperfect affective relations between father and son. Even the faraway space of Russia suggests imagination and divisiveness of family, like a disturbing tale told during the long winter nights. As distorted manifestations of real-life familial relations, the play's dramatic parental families evolve in an illusionary world where relations of power and marriage are opposed to emotions such as love, jealousy, mistrust and compassion. I argue that the play's fictional families are placed in a metatheatrical context, which acts as a kind of fictional drugging, or like a parallel world, in which audiences react to the reality of performance.

The subchapter entitled "Distraught Families in *The Tempest*" (2.3) of chapter 2 discusses the anxiety dramatized through the play's disturbed families. None of the families in this romance play are placed in a consistent environment. Duke Prospero and his daughter are banished from Milan to a deserted island. King Alonzo and his son Ferdinand find their identity only when they temporarily lose their royal status and understand who they really are. Caliban's single-parent family (his mother is the dead witch Sycorax) makes him unfit for developing normal relations in society, so Prospero relegates him to the position of slave. The magic island is a dystopic place in which each family evolves according to its members' frustrations, anxieties and hopes. The final reconciliation of these dramatic parental families, however, instils a surreal sense of impossibility, as there is no perfect harmony among different members of the family. The single-parent ducal family of Milan (Prospero and his daughter) are expected to find happiness through Miranda's marriage, but the union is marred by the impending thought of death. The usurping brother Antonio never learns the values of compassion and familial harmony. The single-parent royal family of Naples (Alonzo and his son) apparently find themselves, after uncontrollable manipulations of fate, but neither father nor son is aware of this revitalisation. Finally, Caliban's single-parent and enslaved family remains incomplete, as the son regains his power over the island, but remains alone and isolated in his world of

ignorance. Like in the theatre, there are several possibilities for the development of the play's dramatic families, and none of them is fully accomplished.

Chapter 3, entitled "The Placing of Shakespeare's Servants as Family" (3) examines the figures of servants (actors, playwrights, jesters, clowns, and playful pages) as members of the theatrical family. Drawing on the proven fact that actors in Shakespeare's time were considered "servants" to a noble patron (Thompson 6), servants in the three Shakespearean comedies analysed (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*) are dynamic go-betweens, or messengers, linking various spaces of transition throughout the play's action. I argue that these theatrical servants destabilize the commonplace stereotypes related to the mononuclear family in Shakespeare's time, showing how actors (as servants)—interpreting roles in the theatre—are able to undermine commonly held assumptions about family issues. The chapter also analyses an important primary text of Shakespeare's time related to masters and servants, entitled *Of Christian Oeconomie* (1609) by William Perkins, to highlight the social rules that governed these relationships. I argue that, in the three Shakespearean comedies analysed in this chapter, servants are middlemen linking members of different social classes and households—but also people of different financial positions or interests—and they are associated with the world of the theatre, as actors interpreting roles.

The subchapter entitled "Inconstant Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*" (3.1) of chapter 3 discusses the placing of families in Shakespeare's romantic comedy and the role of servants as meta-theatrical go-betweens, transitional figures that link various spaces of performance (the commercial world of Venice and Portia's household in Belmont), as well as the world of the play and the theatre space. Shylock's single-parent family (Shylock and his daughter, Jessica) is contrasted with the orphaned daughter in Belmont (Portia) to show that opulence and money are not always the answer to a well-balanced family life. Belmont is a place where new and young families are forged out of frustrations existing in Venice. The rich families of Venice are rather imperfect and partially dissatisfied with their lives. Nor are the newly formed families of Belmont (Portia and Bassanio, Graziano and Nerissa, and Jessica and Lorenzo) more content and harmonious in their relationships, as mistrust is often an issue dividing these couples. The servant (Launcelot Gobbo) is the figure of transition linking the two spaces and families, as he used to be Shylock's servant and then moves on to become Bassanio's man. Launcelot Gobbo is the play's clown, just as his father (Old Gobbo); as a symbol of the theatrical mask, he represents the theatre, linking the world of the play and the theatre space, where actors play roles in front of an audience.

The subchapter entitled "Clowns, Servants and Actors in *Twelfth Night*" (3.2) of chapter 3 examines the figures of servants in Shakespeare's romantic comedy from the spatial perspective of an indefinite Illyria, a kind of "non-place" (Augé 75) where characters cannot define their individuality. I argue that the play's servants are associated with actors in the theatre; they express intimate feelings through language; yet they do not speak with their own voice, but with that of their master (the playwright), who scripts their role for them. Audiences are placed in an elusive time-space continuum, in which the identity of actors interpreting roles in the play is merged with the characters' spurious identity. The play's clown character (Feste) and other servants (Malvolio, Fabian, Servant, Viola as page Cesario, musicians) and companions (Maria) suggest theatrical art and the space of the stage. They are transitional characters—or dynamic go-betweens—linking the households of their respective master and mistress (Orsino and Olivia), but they also connect the imaginary Illyria to the theatre space of each production by means of metatheatrical references. Feste, as the clown, suggests the theatrical world; he adopts a disguise (as Sir Topas) and acts as a mediator between Olivia's and Orsino's house, but he is also a middleman linking the audience with the world of the play. Similarly, Viola (as page Cesario) transits various environments (from Orsino's household to Olivia's), but she/he is constantly hindered by uncertain identity. Malvolio's self-importance and his misunderstanding of social relations place him among the characters who do not know themselves; yet he is also interpreting a role, which draws attention to meta-theatricality. Maria designs a play-within-the-play by devising the plot involving Malvolio and the members of the audience in this theatrical production within the comedy, as well as other servants and companions.

The subchapter entitled "Page Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost*" (3.3) of chapter 3 examines the placing of servants (Page Moth, Jaquenetta, but also Costard the clown) within the world of the Shakespearean comedy, in relation to the stage space. Whereas the city of Navarre, where the four lords develop their intellectualized opinions, typifies abstract and sophisticated reasoning, the park in which the princess and her ladies are hosted is a place full of life and empathy. The servants running between these two symbolic places are erudite intellectuals who can break any argument and who can sing and dance (such as Page Moth), or illiterate country bumpkins who display a kind of home-spun practical philosophy (such as Costard the clown). The dairymaid Jaquenetta is also an illiterate country girl who provides much of the fun in this comedy. Despite their lack of sophistication and their low social position, however, these servants draw attention to the fact that all characters are interpreting roles, because page Moth and Costard play in the pageant of the Nine Worthies, and the four

lords and ladies attend the performance. In this way, they are not only literal servants and members of the Navarre family, but they also perform the tasks of carrying various messages between the two parties. Thus, they are go-betweens, linking two social areas, but they are also agents of comedy, interpreting a role in the theatre. Whether they are highly educated or illiterate, their presence in the comedy is like a catalyst, advancing the comic development.

Conclusions

The placing of families on the early modern stage—as on any stage, at any time—is a complex business involving people interpreting roles, and is, therefore, similar to and also different from the social environment in real life. Whether actors interpret fathers and sons (as in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*), mothers and daughters (as in Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*), or the complex relations between family and race (as in William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*), these are actors interpreting roles. Similarly, Shakespeare's dysfunctional families in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, the emotionally confused families in *The Winter's Tale*, and the mentally distraught families in *The Tempest* are theatrical imitations of real-life families—from Shakespeare's time and place, or from elsewhere, according to the director's and actors' interpretation during the performance. The families of servants as actors are placed in the metatheatrical context as well. The clown Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*, the clown Feste and the steward Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, as well as the clown Costard and page Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost* are just as many examples of actors interpreting roles, both in relation to their respective masters and in relation to the theatrical world in which they evolve. The placing of families on Shakespeare's stage responds to a spatial configuration related to the play's setting and geographical allusions, but it also reconfigures the spatial environment dynamically, by means of meta-theatrical allusions, through the actor's identity and interpretation.

Early modern families are judiciously organised and synchronised social units reflecting the dominant social mores of the time. However, the dramatic parental families represented in the Elizabethan and Jacobean plays discussed in this dissertation are fashioned in incongruous ways—both similar to and different from the real-life families existing in early modern society. This is because the theatre is not an exact replica of social relations, but a deforming mirror that augments certain negative features and distorts systems of values and practices. For this reason, the placing of families on the early modern stage is a complex affair, involving issues of meta-theatricality. Whenever the dramatic parental family seems to be identical to a normal family—in London or elsewhere—there is always an element of doubt,

manifested through intense questioning. Fathers, sons and daughters may seem united in the city comedies discussed (*The Roaring Girl* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*), but they are also divisive, as each one interprets a role, scripted by the social rules and their own opinions and frustrations. Fathers and mothers in Rome, in Shakespeare's tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, place their own ambitions and greed for power above their responsibilities as parents, and this mutilates the relations between parents and children, just as Lavinia's body is mutilated by her rapists. In Shakespeare's romances (*Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*), there is a concern with family reunion—as suitable to the genre of tragicomedy—but families are unbalanced, ruled by weak or corrupted fathers, and often deprived of the mother's benevolent action. Moreover, servants of these dramatic families (in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and *Love's Labour's Lost*) act as mediators between the world of the play and the theatre world, as they interpret roles and highlight issues of meta-theatricality.

As concerns parenthood—an essential component of family life—parents are never what they are expected to be in the plays under discussion in this dissertation. Parental authority is divided and fathers do not seem to rise to the expectations of benevolent parenthood. Sir Alexander Wengrave in *The Roaring Girl* refuses his son's suitable marriage with a noble lady of his son's choice for formal reasons, while his son interprets a role before his father, so that he might gain acceptance for his choice of wife. The Yellowhammer parents in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* are under the illusion that they are in control of their children's marital choices, but their daughter and son play roles and hide their true intentions from their parents, thus distorting traditional familial relationships. Family relations in *Titus Andronicus* are loosely connected with racial issues and the notion of blood, as they expose the imperfection of beliefs related to barbarity and the other in relation to family and social mores. While Titus Andronicus' Roman family is expected to be civilized and benevolent, it is far from being so, and the father pays the price of his ambition and intransigence by losing almost all his children. Conversely, the Goth family (Tamora and her sons) are supposed to be barbaric, but they are able to devise complex plots, which lead to the destruction of their enemies' families. All the families in this tragedy—including Aaron's single-parent family (as he protects his newly-born illegitimate baby)—are larger-than-life images of parental relations expected to exist in a normal family. This dramatic hyperbole suggests meta-theatricality.

The dramatic parental family is placed in relation to the specific place of theatrical experience, which may be the setting of each play, but also imaginary locations with symbolic meanings. The dramatic embodiment of the actor playing a role on stage is also involved in this spatial equation, as there is a reciprocal relationship between characters and their spatial

surroundings. Actors use disguise and meta-theatrical dialogue to suggest that they are interpreting social roles. For example, the streets of the city of London and Wengrave's house and gallery of paintings in *The Roaring Girl* are sites of transition, in which the transgressive families in the play evolve and play roles. So are London's shops in this comedy (the apothecary's shop, the seamster's shop and the featherer's shop), which are spaces of transition where male clients interact with available customers and women. The Yellowhammers' goldsmith shop in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* is also a space of transition, where the father is being cheated by his future son-in-law and is deprived of his daughter, who marries against her parents' will. By contrast, the Yellowhammers' home in Cheapside (probably placed above the shop) is supposed to be a place of parental authority and stability, but it is only a place of illusion, in which both parents believe they are in control of their children's lives, but it is not so. Allwit's home in Cheapside, on the other hand, is a place of illegitimacy, because Sir Walter Whorehound behaves as the lord of the house, being the illicit father of Allwit's family. When Allwit decides to leave Cheapside and move to Strand, he departs from illegitimacy and becomes a true father to his family.

The places of theatrical experience in Shakespeare's tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, by contrast, are dramatized to represent ambition, cruelty, political manipulation, revenge and murder within the family. The symbolic function of blood is interrelated with family and race in this revenge tragedy. Whereas Saturninus' palace in militarised Rome is supposed to suggest stability and legitimacy, it is exactly the opposite, as the king is a surrogate father to his baby and he is cuckolded by his empress for political reasons. In exchange, the symbolic places for Titus and his sons in Rome are the tombs and his house. While Titus' courtyard at home is supposed to suggest familial stability and children's education (as represented in the scene evoking Lavinia reading from Tully to young Lucius), it is also the place where revenge is enacted, as Tamora eats her sons' flesh in a pie at a banquet in Titus' home. Similarly, the graves where Titus' sons are buried are not necessarily symbols of respect for the dead, but places of murder, where Titus and his son sacrifice Tamora's son in a barbaric manner. The wild space of the woods—in which Lavinia is raped and mutilated—is set in contrast to the refined portico in Titus' home, where Lavinia reveals the scene of her rape by pointing to the book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with her stumps. Home and forest, royal palace and the Capitol, as well as the Goths' imaginary wasteland suggesting barbarity and conquest are just as many spaces in which the Roman, Goth and Moor families develop their emotions and desire for revenge.

In Shakespeare's romances, the places of theatrical experience are also strongly delineated, as the families' identities are shaped by the spaces they transit. The tragicomedies' dysfunctional families transform geographic space into socially and individually circumscribed place. Geographic space and distance divide families, but they are reunited through the mothers, by traversing physical and mental space. For this reason, Pericles' unstable identity in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is spatially delineated through the six locations he traverses throughout the play. The incestuous palace of Antioch is opposed to Pericles' home in the kingdom of Tyre, while the corrupted brothel space in Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos, is opposed to the harmonious palace of Pentapolis, where a virtuous king-father protects his princess-daughter. Finally, the famine-ridden city of Tarsus is opposed to the sanctity of Ephesus, the place of Diana's temple, where a respectable doctor saves Thaisa's life. Thus, the places dramatized in the first part of *Pericles* (Antioch, Tarsus, Tyre) represent corruption and loss, whereas the places hosting the families in the play's final part (Pentapolis, Ephesus, Mytilene) suggest hope, redemption, and psychological recovery. Similarly, the conflicting locations of fiery Sicilia and pastoral Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale* enclose allusions to atypical families. Leontes' Sicilia is marred by the king's irrational jealousy—just as it is marked, geographically, by the fiery volcano of Etna. Conversely, the geographically land-locked Bohemia is represented as having a deserted sea-coast, suggesting despair and separation of families. The royal and ducal families in *The Tempest* traverse both physical space (from Milan to Tunis and Naples) and the mental space of the magic island's territory.

The places of the servants' experience and action in the three Shakespearean comedies discussed in this dissertation are sites of transition, inhabited by both masters and servants, who interact socially as members of the same family. Venice and Belmont in *The Merchant of Venice* are not only traditional locations of prosperous commerce (Venice) and of honourable wealth and beauty (Belmont), but also thresholds, or spaces marking the transition between various frustrations and positive emotions. Servants in this comedy (such as Launcelot Gobbo, Balthazar and Stephano) are mediators between these spaces of emotional contact. The two household spaces in *Twelfth Night* (Olivia's and Orsino's houses in Illyria) are transited by the clown (Feste), the disguised page (Viola as Cesario) and the incompatible steward Malvolio. Page Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost* is a servant go-between linking the palace of the lords in Navarre to the park where the ladies are hosted. Costard is also a character of transition, whose clownish personality reminds of the theatre world. As masters, schoolmasters and servants perform in a play-within-the-play in *Love's Labour's Lost*, all characters suggest that they are members of the dramatic family of actors. In all these three Shakespearean comedies, clowning,

disguise and playacting are signs of the metatheatrical component related to the performance of comedy. Theatrical place, therefore, is directly connected with actors interpreting roles. The servants in these comedies are members of the patriarchal family and also social actors, interpreting roles on stage.

The placing of families on the early modern stage, in the plays analysed in this dissertation, is both a convention and a device through which playwrights represent, highlight and alter the social realities of their times related to family issues. The placing of the dramatic parental family shows a spatial arrangement in accordance to (1) the space of action; (2) the other characters involved in the action; and (3) the conventions of comedy or tragedy. The space of action is contrastive and suggests multiple meanings at the same time; characters demonstrate that they are interpreting roles, through the use of multiple disguises and the figures of clowns and intermediating servants; whereas the conventions of comedy allow for the placing of the dramatic families in incongruous contexts, thus provoking confusion; in Shakespeare's revenge tragedy, families are placed in environments related to social and racial conflict. However, in neither comedy nor tragedy does the placing of families suggest a single meaning. Like an intricate network of social conventions and practices, each play represents families differently, and never in an identical manner with real life. Whether they are dramatic families of the city of London in Jacobean city comedies; or multi-racial families of ancient Rome in *Titus Andronicus*; or the dysfunctional families in the romances, striving to reach a sense of identity and compatibility; or the comic families of theatrical servants in Shakespeare's romantic comedies, all characters performing these dramatic families show that they are interpreting roles. As the theatre destabilizes traditional family relations and hyperbolizes certain features, marginalized figures of servants become empowered and central in the hierarchical ordering of family relations.

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