



*Queen Katherine Howard:
Space, Place, and Promiscuity
Pre- and Post-Marriage, 1536-1541*

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Abstract: The fall of Queen Katherine Howard in 1541-1542 is a well-known event: the young woman with allegedly loose morals who captured the heart of the King and then proceeded to break it by continuing to arrange sexual liaisons with another man has long captured the public imagination. Unlike her cousin Anne Boleyn, Katherine's fall has not engendered much historical debate. We know, unequivocally, that she was guilty of the crimes with which she was charged, and we know this because the documentation surrounding her trial—the questions asked and depositions given—is exceptionally full. It has not, however, been fully exploited. The descriptions given by witnesses to Katherine's pre-and post-marital liaisons contain an enormous amount of incidental information about the spaces and places in which they occurred, and can therefore be used to inform our understanding of the practical use of, and conceptualisation of, domestic space during this period. This article compares and contrasts Katherine's spatial behaviour and others' reactions to it 'at home' with her grandmother before her marriage, and in royal palaces and lodgings on royal progress after it.

Keywords: Katherine Howard; marriage; sex; space; queenship; Henry VIII; treason

The fall of Queen Katherine Howard is infamous. She was Henry VIII's fifth wife of six, and she was the second and last to be beheaded for high treason: she had had relationships with two men before her marriage to the King, and one after it. Her fall, however, has not seen very much scholarly discussion.¹ Partly this is because we do not know very much about her outside of her short eighteen-month tenure as Queen. Katherine was the daughter of Lord Edmund Howard and Joyce Culpeper; niece to England's premier peer Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk; and first cousin to Queen Anne Boleyn. Though her family was from the top drawer, it was also very large, which meant that she was neither significant nor male enough to make much impact on the historical record before her marriage to the King in 1540.² A bigger reason for the lack of scholarship, particularly by comparison with Anne Boleyn, is that her guilt is not in doubt. There is no need to agonise over the reasons for her fall, but precious little material has survived about anything other than her sexual life.

¹ Most recent work on Katherine Howard has been produced for a general audience and is biographical in nature. See, for instance: Gareth Russell, *Young & Damned & Fair: The Life and Tragedy of Katherine Howard at the Court of Henry VIII* (London: Harper Collins, 2017). The main scholarly account of Katherine's life remains L.B. Smith, *Catherine Howard* (1969; repr., Stroud: Amberley, 2009) but this is somewhat outdated.

² As the debate over her birthdate demonstrates. See: Russell, *Young & Damned & Fair*, 16–19, for an up-to-date discussion of this.

This material, though, gathered for the investigation and trial, is voluminous, detailed, and underused, despite being relatively easy to access amongst the Henrician state papers.³ As always when using material compiled for a legal purpose, an awareness of genre, purpose, and associated narrative conventions is necessary.⁴ In this case, the majority of the material is in the hands of the privy councillors conducting the investigation, which means that though some of the fuller depositions sound as though they have been written to dictation, often the only available version is a precis made by a council member. Though this is a disadvantage when trying to access original testimony or produce a linear account of events, it does create the effect of spotlighting the issues that were considered most important to the investigation. It becomes apparent that there was a strong spatial element to this case: they were not only interested in *what* happened, but *where* it happened, because the latter clearly held strong implications for the former. That they “read” these events this way strongly suggests that we ought to do likewise in order to better understand not only Queen Katherine’s own case, but the gendered use and conceptualisation of certain domestic and political spaces more broadly.

This is not a wholly new idea. Bradley Irish was the first to point out, in a short article in 2009, that the investigation was enormously concerned with materiality.⁵ This article builds on Irish’s work, which was predominantly focused on Katherine’s post-marital affair at the royal court, by analysing the similar preoccupation with space in the material relating to her pre-marital affairs in elite domestic space. This allows us to juxtapose the spatial dynamics of those situations in a way that has not been attempted before, and to move towards filling some of the gaps in the literature concerned with gender, elite spaces, sexuality, and the concept of privacy.

Existing work on women and domestic space has tended to focus either on the medieval to c. 1500, or the period of the ‘great rebuilding’ c.1560 onwards.⁶ This work also tends to be about ordinary women and spaces, particularly sacred spaces, rather than elites, and there is in fact no study of women and space in elite domestic houses during this early Tudor period.⁷ Conversely, while there has been considerable work on early Tudor royal palaces, led

³ The bulk of the material is found in The National Archives SP1/167 and SP1/168, accessible on State Papers Online. Additional statements made by Katherine that no longer survive in their original form are in: Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (New York, 1843), 4:504–505; and *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath Preserved at Longleat* (London: HMSO, 1907), 2:910 [hereafter *CMBath*]. Though not wholly complete—it is possible to establish that there are missing depositions—it is nevertheless substantial.

⁴ For discussion of this, see: Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁵ Bradley J. Irish, “‘The secret chamber and other suspect places’: Materiality, Space, and the Fall of Katherine Howard,” *Early Modern Women* 4 (Fall 2009): 169–173.

⁶ This is less true of work concerning space and gender (rather than explicitly women); see, for instance, Audrey M. Thorstad, *The Culture of Castles in Tudor England and Wales* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019). A notable exception is the work of Rachel M. Delman, “Elite Female Constructions of Power and Space in England, 1444–1541” (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2017).

⁷ Scholarship in this area stems from historical, architectural, archaeological, and literary approaches, and is increasingly (and positively) interdisciplinary. For an overview, see: Amanda Richardson, “Gender and space in the later Middle Ages: past, present, and future routes,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Later Medieval Archaeology in Britain*, ed. Christopher Gerrard and Alejandra Gutierrez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 805–818. See also: Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London: Routledge, 1999); Jeremy Goldberg, “Space and Gender in the Later Medieval English House,” *Viator* 42, no. 2 (2011): 205–232; Hollie Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2017); Lena

by Simon Thurley, this has not really concerned itself with gender.⁸ With the exception of Amanda Richardson's work, these two historiographies have not interacted as much as one might expect; and yet plenty of elite women, Katherine Howard included, moved regularly between these kinds of spaces.⁹ This makes it difficult to set both Katherine's pre- and post-marital activities in a meaningful spatial context, but it means we can use this material to move towards creating that context. The questions are fundamentally ones of access—how was Katherine able to conduct sexual affairs in these spaces?—and thus of the concept and practical working of “privacy.”

“Privacy” has always been a difficult concept to define, and its form, even its existence, in early modern England remains contested.¹⁰ For contemporaries and for us now, it has multiple, overlapping meanings, from “seclusion” to “secrecy” to “freedom from intrusion.”¹¹ It has long been the assumption that the development of domestic space across the early modern period, a development that generally consisted of more and smaller rooms, came

Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Amanda Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007); Rachel M. Delman, “Gendered viewing, childbirth and female authority in the residence of Alice Chaucer, duchess of Suffolk, at Ewelme, Oxfordshire,” *Journal of Medieval History* 45 (2019): 181–203; Corinne Abate, ed., *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Mary Crane, “Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England,” *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2009): 4–29; Sarah A. McLoughlin, “Gender and transgression in the late medieval English household” (PhD thesis, University of York, 2011); Gillian Eadie, “Detecting Privacy and Private Space in the Irish Tower House,” *Chateau Gaillard* 24 (2010): 69–75; Maryanne Kowaleski and Jeremy Goldberg, eds., *Medieval Domesticity: home, housing and household in medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Gerhard Jaritz, “Architecture, Domestic,” in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret C. Schaus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28–30; John Schofield, “Social perceptions of space in medieval Tudor and London houses,” in *Meaningful Architecture: Social Interpretations of Buildings*, ed. Martin Locock (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 188–206; Tadhg O’Keefe, “Concepts of ‘castle’ and the construction of identity in medieval and post-medieval Ireland,” *Irish Geography* 34, no. 1 (2001): 69–88; Oliver Creighton, “Castle studies and the European medieval landscape: traditions, trends and future research directions,” *Landscape History* 30, no. 2 (2009): 5–20; Kate Giles, “Seeing and believing: visuality and space in pre-modern England,” *World Archaeology* 39, no. 1 (2007): 105–121; Pam Graves, “Sensing and believing: exploring worlds of difference in pre-modern England: a contribution to the debate opened by Kate Giles,” *World Archaeology* 39, no. 4 (2007): 515–531; Donna Alfano Bussell and Joseph McNamara, “Barking Abbey: a GIS map of a medieval nunnery,” *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 4, no. 2 (2013): 173–189; and Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994). Earlier work on elite houses during this period has yet to be superseded but did not extend to gendered readings of these spaces. See, for instance: Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Yale University Press, 1978); and Maurice Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House: Architecture and Politics 1490-1550* (London: Hamlyn, 1987).

⁸ Simon Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993); Simon Thurley, *Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments, 1240-1698* (London: Yale University Press, 1999); Simon Thurley, *Hampton Court Palace: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Yale University Press, 2004); and Simon Thurley, *Houses of Power: The Places that Shaped the Tudor World* (London: Penguin, 2017).

⁹ Amanda Richardson, “Gender and Space in English Royal Palaces, c. 1160-1547: A Study in Access Analysis and Imagery,” *Medieval Archaeology* 47 (2003), 115–129.

¹⁰ See, for example, opposing viewpoints in: Orlin, *Locating Privacy*; and Ronald Huebert, *Privacy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016).

¹¹ “Privacy,” s.v., *Oxford English Dictionary*. The history of privacy has its own complex historiography that owes much to sociology and anthropology; its emergence as a concept has been placed in almost every century up to the nineteenth. See: Barrington Moore Jr., *Privacy: Studies in Social and Cultural History* (1984; repr., New York: Routledge, 2018).

about out of desire for greater privacy.¹² Adjacent to this is David Starkey's argument that the development of the royal privy chamber, as physical space and administrative organisation, was initially driven by Henry VII's desire for privacy, though "privacy" here is never explicitly defined or interrogated.¹³ Simon Thurley took Starkey's thesis and mapped it onto architectural changes in the King's apartments in early Tudor royal palaces, arguing for further spatial developments later in Henry VIII's reign out of desire for continued, and greater, privacy.¹⁴ However, this alleged drive towards increased privacy in this period has been questioned, notably by Lena Cowen Orlin, who argues that privacy was often considered suspicious: though individuals might seek privacy for certain specific reasons, there was often communal resistance to this, demonstrating that privacy was a consensual act, strongly dependent on the cooperation of others.¹⁵ In this sense, notions of privacy are also gendered.¹⁶ As Delman puts it, "It has long been recognised ... that in medieval and early modern thought, enclosure was gendered."¹⁷ Thus there is an assumption that elite women were under tighter spatial control than men during this period, and thus, in theory, had greater privacy, and though this has been contested, it has never been considered in relation to the early Tudor court.¹⁸ Katherine Howard's case allows us to do this.

Pre-Marital: MannoX and Dereham

Katherine Howard joined her grandmother Agnes Tylney/Howard, dowager Duchess of Norfolk's, household in c.1531.¹⁹ She was a product of the aristocratic system of wardship: sending older children out to friends or relatives to acquire social polish and the necessary contacts that might lead to a good marriage. During her time there in the late 1530s, she had two sexual affairs: one with one of her music tutors (Henry MannoX), and one with a gentleman in her grandmother's service, Francis Dereham. This ended when Katherine was summoned to court to take a place as a maid of honour in Anne of Cleves' household in late 1539. It was these affairs, particularly that with Dereham, that precipitated Katherine's fall later in 1541. One of the women who had been in Agnes's household with Katherine told her brother about the goings on there, and he promptly informed the privy council. These two

¹² Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 85–118; Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 5.

¹³ David Starkey, "The King's Privy Chamber 1485-1547" (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1974); David Starkey, "Intimacy and Innovation: The Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547," in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman, 1987), 71–118.

¹⁴ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 135–143, recently concisely summarised in *Houses of Power*, 210–217.

¹⁵ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 173.

¹⁶ This is closely linked to the debate regarding the concept of "separate spheres"—that is, the idea that pre-modern women were confined to a domestic sphere that was intrinsically more private than the male political, public sphere, a notion that has been largely rejected by scholars of medieval and early modern women. See: Flather, *Gender and Space*, 5–8.

¹⁷ Delman, "Elite Female Constructions of Power and Space," 102.

¹⁸ Richardson, "Gender and Space in the later Middle Ages"; Roberta Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden: Gender, Space and Metaphor in the Medieval English Castle," in *Gender and Archaeology*, ed. Roberta Gilchrist (London: Routledge, 1999), 109–145.

¹⁹ This was the year when one of Agnes' previous wards, Katherine Broughton, moved out to marry Agnes' son Lord William Howard, and it was also the year when Katherine's father, Lord Edmund Howard, secured the Controllorship of Calais and thus broke up his English household. *LP* 5:318 (21), 220 (14).

pre-marital affairs are usually treated as broadly the same sort of thing; spatial analysis, however, presents a different picture.

The events in question happened across two houses, one in Horsham, Sussex, and Norfolk House in Lambeth, Surrey, opposite Lambeth Palace, both of which were courtyard houses in the late medieval tradition; beyond this, no detailed reconstruction is possible.²⁰ However, the depositions rarely specify the house to which they are referring, suggesting either that the two were sufficiently similar (and thus familiar) in design not to require detailed descriptions, or that the geographical site was not as important as the type of space in which these things occurred. Regardless of location, Duchess Agnes's household is often described as a kind of generic dumping ground for young female relatives living there as aristocratic wards. In fact, only two of those described as inhabiting the infamous "maidens' chamber" are clearly wards: Katherine Howard, and Katherine Tylney, who was another of Agnes's granddaughters. The rest of the women were of gentry extraction, paid for their service. Agnes was not, therefore, *in loco parentis* in the same way for all of the women in the household. Spatially, however, no distinction was made between the wards and the other women. Most infamously, Katherine slept in the same chamber with Agnes's women, termed the "maidens' chamber" in the trial documentation. Such a space was standard in female aristocratic households. As Caroline Dunn points out, Margaret Beaufort's women also slept in a shared chamber at the turn of the sixteenth century.²¹ Agnes's women shared beds, but not necessarily in fixed pairings. Katherine herself had at least four different "bedfellows," which demonstrates as well that these were not decided by social status. During the day, the evidence shows that these women did spend a lot of time in a bunch, and that they usually went about at least in pairs, but that they were not particularly spatially restricted. Katherine clearly had access not only to her own room and to the Duchess's, but to the dining room, the chapel, and various outside spaces too.²² Nor were men kept out of spaces that we might consider to be exclusively female; not only was Dereham often found in the maidens' chamber during the day, but another male servant deposed that he had found him there, demonstrating that he too must have had access.²³ This supports recent work arguing that women were not spatially enclosed within elite houses, and shows that we should not think of Katherine as some sort of hothouse flower kept protectively apart from the rest of the household.²⁴

Such was the case during the day. At night, however, access was indeed restricted, for after the "maidens" had gone to bed in their chamber, the door into it was locked, and the key delivered to Duchess Agnes in her own chamber. This, too, is fairly standard; control of

²⁰ There are no surviving floorplans of either property. On Horsham, see: "Chesworth House," *Historic England*, accessed 18 February 2019, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1027063>. On Norfolk House, see: Brian Bloice, "Norfolk House, Lambeth, Excavations at a Delftware Kiln Site, 1968," *Post Medieval Archaeology* 5 (1971), 99–159; Mike Webber, "Excavations on the site of Norfolk House, Lambeth Road, SE1," *London Archaeologist* 6, no. 13 (1991): 343–350; *The Survey of London, Volume 23, Lambeth: South Bank and Vauxhall*, ed. Howard Roberts and Walter H. Godfrey (London: London County Council, 1951), 137–140; Thomas Allen, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Lambeth* (London, 1827), 339–341.

²¹ Caroline Dunn, "If There Be Any Goodly Young Woman? Experiences of Elite Female Servants in Great Households," in *The Elite Household 1100-1550*, ed. Christopher M. Woolgar (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2018), 318.

²² TNA SP1/167, fols. 112, 120v, 144.

²³ TNA SP1/167, fol. 161.

²⁴ Dunn, "If There Be Any Goodly Young Woman," 318.

household space was usually exercised by the female householder through keyholding, and it was common to lock the doors of rooms, ironically usually to protect the goods therein.²⁵ Contrary to the received image, Agnes was acting as a responsible household head here. That she was able, as she thought, to secure her women simply by locking a single door tells us something about the layout of the house and gendered space within. The maidens' chamber must have been a room with only one entrance and exit from within the house, and it cannot have had easy outside access. This does suggest a level of enclosedness and of "depth" within the building as has often been noted with women's chambers.²⁶ It might also suggest that the performance of security was as significant as its result.

The maidens' chamber was locked and the key taken to Agnes, but the depositions make clear that often this was not the end of things: according to Katherine, there were many reasons whereby the chamber was often unlocked before morning, and according to several of the others, she herself was chief among those reasons.²⁷ As was usual, one of the Duchess's female servants slept with her in her own chamber, and it was claimed that Katherine would inveigle that woman to steal the key to open the door, so that the women within could let their male friends in to "banquet" there, often until two or three in the morning.²⁸ That her servant was able to steal the keys shows that she knew where they were kept; had access to them; that the Duchess did not keep them on her person; and possibly that they were left in an adjoining chamber, not the one in which she actually slept, since she never seemed to have woken and caught the thief in the act. They were able to avoid detection by judicious use of the space available. The maidens' chamber was not one single room, but as was often the case in these sorts of spaces, a room with a "little gallery"—a corridor—attached. When they heard the Duchess approaching, the boys successfully hid there.²⁹ Galleries are usually connecting spaces, with more than one way in and out, so this suggests that any other exit from the gallery was habitually kept locked. Again, this shows that Agnes was not really a lax householder: she took the ordinary precautions to keep her women secluded at night, and when warned, as she was, that something might be amiss, she did indeed investigate. However, this demonstrates Orlin's argument that privacy—in this case, seclusion, or in fact the lack thereof—was dependent on other people.³⁰ Here it was explicitly dependent on other women. Katherine and the women of the household only gained a modicum of control over their own space by colluding with those outside of it; not the men to whom they gave access, but the other of themselves who had access to the keys in Agnes's chamber.

"Privacy" defined in the sense of "seeking seclusion," was something that the investigators explicitly sought evidence for. The Duchess was asked whether she had ever found Dereham and Katherine "in armes to gyther kyssyng," and, crucially, who was present if so.³¹ In the summaries made of witness depositions, they focused on what had physically occurred, where it had occurred, and whether Katherine and her partner had been "alone" or not. This makes clear that to seek seclusion could be considered suspicious, and clearly was so

²⁵ Flather, *Gender and Space*, 46–47; Delman, "Elite Female Constructions of Power and Space," 283.

²⁶ Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 109–145.

²⁷ Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, 4:505.

²⁸ TNA SP1/167, fol. 112.

²⁹ TNA SP1/167, fol. 118v; Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, 4:505.

³⁰ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 173–174.

³¹ TNA SP1/168, fol. 53v.

for a young woman in Katherine's situation. Contrasting the spaces and means by which Katherine sought privacy with Manno and Dereham, however, brings to light considerable differences between them.

Manno was Katherine's first known sexual partner. Engaged along with another man named Barnes to teach the two Katherines to play the virginals, he did not live in the household, but visited for this purpose. It is clear immediately from the division of the material alone that far fewer household members knew about Katherine and Manno than would later know about Katherine and Dereham; in fact, only Mary Lascelles gave any evidence relating to Manno. With him, Katherine was more often fully alone. They met at night, in the dark, out of doors, in liminal spaces where they should not have been at those times. Mary Lascelles saw them "walking hone thow bakesyd of my lades horchard & no cryator w[i]t[h] thaym bot thay to alone."³² Outdoor spaces were often more "private" than indoors, particularly for the purpose of conversation that could not be overheard.³³ Indoors, Manno deposed that they had spent time together "at horscham in my ladyes chambr," quite possibly one of the few rooms indoors in which some sort of privacy could be found.³⁴ When they did engage in sexual contact, they did so under the cover of darkness in the Duchess's chapel chamber when they should have been having a music lesson.³⁵ Clearly, Katherine and Manno went to some trouble to hide their relationship. This is not surprising, since not only was Manno not of a suitable social status to lead to marriage, but he was in fact married already, a fact that is often missed.³⁶

The affair with Dereham was very different. It went on longer; it included full intercourse; the couple referred to each another "wife" and "husband"; and, crucially, their spatial behaviour was almost entirely different. Where Katherine and Manno had sought to be fully alone, and to keep their affair secret, Katherine and Dereham were much more public. There were endless witnesses to their intimacies all over the house: on the bed in the dining chamber, at the jakes, in the maidens' chamber.³⁷ Occasionally there were references to more "secret" meetings. Joan Bulmer claimed that Mistress Baskerville had told her that she had seen them "in the nyght in the duches galery a lone without any light or any other," though one does have to wonder what Baskerville herself was doing there.³⁸ Generally, though, the kind of privacy that Katherine and Dereham sought was more along the lines of "freedom from interference" than genuine secrecy. They would, for instance, draw the curtains around Katherine's bed so that though the others could certainly hear their "puffyng and blowyng," they could not see them.³⁹ On the other hand, there were times when they would engage in sexual activity even while one of Katherine's bedfellows was in the bed with her, to the point

³² TNA SP1/167, fol. 111v.

³³ See: Mary Crane, "Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2009): 4–29.

³⁴ TNA SP1/167, fol. 118. On bedchambers, see: Morgan, *Beds and Chambers*.

³⁵ TNA SP1/167, fol. 118.

³⁶ This is made clear by the fact that Lord William Howard had threatened Manno "and his wief" at their house after Manno and Dereham had fallen out. TNA SP1/168, fol. 88.

³⁷ TNA SP1/167, fols. 136, 144, 161.

³⁸ TNA SP1/167, fol. 146.

³⁹ TNA SP1/167, fols. 138, 140.

where Alice Wilkes, at least, was “wery of the same.”⁴⁰ They might be seen alone in a chamber undressing one another, but they were still in a chamber—a space that was not generally “private”—rather than a more liminal space such as a stairway, porch, garderobe, or even outdoors, and thus Margaret Bennet was able to look in “at a sele of a dore” to discover them.⁴¹ Beds and chambers were not necessarily coded as private spaces to early modern people, as Orlin has made clear.⁴² This affair, therefore, was clearly an open secret. The only person from whom they were actively seeking to hide it was the Duchess herself.

These pre-marital affairs, then, should not be lumped together in the way that they often are, for spatially they read very differently. Manno, the virginals tutor, was a short liaison understood by both parties to be illicit, kept hidden and secret. That they largely succeeded in keeping it so shows that this kind of privacy was difficult, but possible for young women in elite domestic spaces. Dereham, however, was an open secret, a lengthier affair conducted in full view of a reasonable proportion of the household. Though it is clear that they sought to keep it from the Duchess, it is evident that she knew that something was amiss, since she herself admitted to suspecting “love” between them, though both she and those around her strenuously denied that she had known of any actual carnal behaviour.⁴³ Dereham’s later behaviour after Katherine had gone to court and broken off their affair suggests that he may well have taken it more seriously than she had, even to the point of genuinely considering himself married to her, and one wonders whether if Katherine had not gone to court, he might have attempted to brave the row and publicly claim her as his wife.⁴⁴ That their affair continued as long as it did is a further proof of the point that privacy was negotiated, contingent on the acquiescence of others; without their connivance and, in many cases, turning a blind eye, this relationship would never have developed, and would certainly not have escaped the Duchess’s full knowledge.

Post-Marriage: Culpeper

Katherine broke off her affair with Francis Dereham when she was informed that she was to go to court to be one of Queen Anne of Cleves’ maids of honour in the autumn of 1539.⁴⁵ At this point he left unexpectedly and without permission for Ireland, and did not reappear until Katherine was herself Queen in the summer of 1540. At this point, he persuaded various members of her family to sue to her to take him into her service; she did so, and this was later taken as assumed proof that they had resumed their affair, though there is no evidence to suggest that that they actually did.⁴⁶ In the early months of 1540, as the King found himself displeased with Anne of Cleves and attempted to annul this marriage, Katherine herself encountered Thomas Culpeper, one of the Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber. They

⁴⁰ TNA SP1/167, fol. 140.

⁴¹ TNA SP1/167, fol. 136.

⁴² Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 155, 170–174.

⁴³ TNA SP1/168, fol. 8–8v, 87–91.

⁴⁴ He left unexpectedly and without permission for Ireland, and did not return until the middle of 1540. TNA SP1/168, fol. 89v.

⁴⁵ Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, 4:505.

⁴⁶ TNA SP1/168, fol. 87, 89v; *Privy Council of England, Proceedings and Ordinances, 10 Richard II-33 Henry VII (1386-1542)*, ed. Harris Nicolas (London, 1837), 7:352.

liked each other; but she apparently rebuffed him at this stage, and he sought solace in the arms of others, at which point “her [Katherine’s] greff was such that sche cowld not but wepe in the p[re]sens of her ffelowes.”⁴⁷ By April 1540 she had caught the King’s eye, and in June they were married.⁴⁸ At some point over the next year, she and Culpeper renewed their acquaintance, and they continued to meet secretly throughout the summer of 1541 while the court was on progress in the north of England.

Discussion of the Culpeper affair tends to revolve around whether not it was sexual, and whether or not they were therefore “guilty” to a modern eye. There is considerably less information on the physicality of their relationship than there is for Dereham or even Mannox, and this is for two reasons. Firstly, because Katherine spent far more time alone with Culpeper than she had with the previous two, meaning that quite possibly nobody else could produce definitive information, and secondly because the legal case against them did not hinge on whether or not they had actually committed sexual adultery. Because Katherine was Queen, the clause in the treason legislation known as “imagining the death of the King” applied here. Even to intend intercourse with the Queen, or for her to intend it with somebody other than the King, could theoretically threaten the royal lineage, since the parentage of any child Katherine bore would then be in question. Thus the investigators did not need to prove that intercourse had taken place, only that there was an intent that it should do so at some unspecified future point.⁴⁹ This was also strongly gendered; women, as the weaker sex, were thought less able to control their sexual appetites, which meant that guilt was often implied by opportunity. This made spatial information even more important.

The fact that they were seeking and finding such opportunity at the royal court adds a fascinating aspect to this case. One can conceivably appreciate that it might be possible for a woman, even an elite woman, to have a somewhat illicit relationship in a domestic house. Our default understanding of the royal court and, indeed, queenship, however, is that such a thing would surely be impossible there, with so many more people, such policing of space, such restricted access. That we know for certain that Katherine did precisely this suggests that, at the very least, more attention should be paid to female interactions with space in this environment.

As discussed earlier, work on architecture and spatial developments at the Henrician court has focused almost entirely on the King and the King’s apartments, usually with the assumption that changes there were echoed on the Queen’s side. Thurley has shown that by the early 1540s, the preferred arrangement of royal rooms was for them to be laid out in sequence, all on one level, preferably with the King and Queen’s rooms conjoined at one end for easy access. This was by now the layout at Hampton Court and Whitehall, and most probably at Greenwich as well.⁵⁰ We are generally familiar with the basic sequence of royal rooms under the Tudors: watching or guard chamber, leading to presence chamber (effectively an audience chamber), leading to the privy chamber, which was usually not only one room but a collection of smaller “private” rooms, such as the King’s bedchamber, study, bathroom and

⁴⁷ TNA SP1/167, fol. 141v.

⁴⁸ In April she received a grant of goods in her own right, an unusual attention to a mere maid of honour and usually taken as evidence of the beginning of the King’s marital intentions. *LP* 15:612 (12).

⁴⁹ John Bellamy, *The Tudor Law of Treason: An Introduction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 40–41.

⁵⁰ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 135–143.

so forth.⁵¹ The privy chamber, however, was not only a physical space, but an administrative organisation headed by the Groom of the Stool, informally instituted by Henry VII and formalised in several stages during Henry VIII's reign. Thurley has argued that these organisational developments directly impacted the architecture of royal palaces. As Henry's reign wore on, the number of rooms in the royal apartments increased so that there were more rooms between the privy chamber and the King's bedchamber, and yet more rooms beyond. Thurley has argued that as a result particularly of the last stage of administrative development of the privy chamber in 1539-1540 under Thomas Cromwell, the privy chamber "became public"; the right to dine in the privy lodgings had been granted not only to the by-now increased number of privy chamber staff, but also to the new privy councillors, swelling the number of those with access to almost fifty. As a result, Thurley argues that the King retreated further, into the rooms beyond the bedchamber accessible only to the Groom of the Stool, the "secret lodgings," and that he did this out of a desire for privacy.⁵²

This, then, was the state of affairs on the King's side by the time Katherine Howard came to court. Though the layout of the Queen's apartments is known for some of the royal palaces used at this time, notably Whitehall and Hampton Court, there has not been a comparable discussion of access and "privacy" on the Queen's side, admittedly in part because there is less available evidence; the ordinances that so helpfully chart the development of service in the King's chambers are almost entirely silent on the Queen's, and it is also unclear whether she had a similar set of "secret lodgings" to the King.⁵³ The evidence from Katherine's affair with Culpeper, however, has not been fully exploited for its spatial information, and doing so suggests a fundamental difference in the concept of privacy for the King and the Queen.

There is no spatial evidence for their encounters before Katherine became Queen. However, Culpeper deposed that on Maundy Thursday 1541 at Greenwich "the quene sent henry webbe ffor hym brought hym to the entrye betwene her pr[i]vey chamber & the chamber of p[re]sents where sche gaff hym by her own handes a ffaier cappe of velvet."⁵⁴ They had a brief conversation in which he teased her, asking her why she had not given him such attention before she was married, and she told him to hide the cap under his coat so nobody saw it. This single interaction tells us a considerable amount. By this time, it had become usual for the space between the presence chamber and privy chamber to be filled with a short gallery and two rooms, usually closets in which mass could be said and heard, and sometimes there would be a stair leading down to the royal wardrobe. Thurley has argued that this space functioned as a physical filter for people between the presence and privy chambers, and also an

⁵¹ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 135–143.

⁵² Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 136–138.

⁵³ Earlier spatial analysis of queens' apartments in medieval palaces noted that the Queen's apartments tended to be "deeper" within the building, meaning that one had to go through more other spaces to reach them, but others have pointed out that a key issue with this kind of access analysis is that it assumes that often the "depth" of the apartments from one angle was misleading, since it did not take access out of the other end into account. See: Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden"; and Richardson, "Gender and Space." For a good discussion of the limitations of this kind of analysis, see: Eadie, "Detecting Privacy and Private Space in the Irish Tower House." While Thurley's most recent general audience book, *Houses of Power*, includes a larger discussion of the Queen's apartments than his previous work, the broad scope of this publication means that this is necessarily limited.

⁵⁴ TNA SP1/167, fol. 140.

airlock to preserve the mystery of the privy lodgings, since one could close the privy chamber door before opening the one into the presence chamber.⁵⁵ Fundamentally, though, this was a liminal space, and we know already that these were far more likely than chambers to be “private,” even if not explicitly designed or coded to be so. And so it was. Katherine had clearly sent for Culpeper to come to this space because she could meet him in comparative seclusion. The only possible witness would appear to be Henry Webb, the servant sent to fetch him, and yet Culpeper does not say that he remained with them during their interaction, and no deposition survives to prove that he was ever questioned.

Nowhere else in the Queen’s apartments could they have met in this way. It is true that as Queen, she had, in theory, the authority to have Culpeper brought into the privy chamber, or through it into the bedchamber or beyond. She could, in theory, have dismissed everybody else and spoken to him alone in any of these spaces, because there were plenty of reasons for the Queen to speak to a man alone at court without it having to signify a romantic affair. But she could not have done so secretly, and secrecy clearly mattered here; we should remember that she and Culpeper had had some sort of flirtation while Katherine was still among the maids of honour, several of whom now served Katherine herself, and memories were long.⁵⁶ More significantly, the Queen may not have enjoyed the same level of “privacy” as the King in her apartments. On the King’s side, ordinances make it clear that only the Groom of the Stool had automatic access to the bedchamber and the secret lodgings beyond.⁵⁷ Not only is there no evidence to suggest that the Queen had a Groom of the Stool at all, but the depositions from this case show rather that it was the norm for all of the Queen’s women to have access to these rooms.⁵⁸ Margaret Morton deposed that at one point the Queen had ordered that none of her women should come into her bedchamber “w[i]t[h] out thay war calyd”.⁵⁹ The need to give this command, and Margaret’s clear feeling that this was strange and wrong, demonstrates that ordinarily they were used to automatic access. This meant that the Queen’s bedchamber and any secret lodgings beyond it were in fact a lot less secret than they were for the King, a fact that has enormous implications for our understanding of the royal court, but has hitherto gone unnoticed by historians.

For Katherine to bring Culpeper into her privy chamber or through there and into her bedchamber would therefore have been impossible to do without being seen. If there were outside access to those lodgings—an outside stair, perhaps—it might have been easier, but such stairs usually only exited into a privy garden, where again access in and out was both public and controlled. Not only were entrances and exits public, but they were not secure. It was common for doors to have locks, but apparently not always common for said locks to be used by the Queen; when at one point it was discovered that Katherine’s bedchamber door was not only locked with nobody but herself and Lady Rochford inside, but was also bolted

⁵⁵ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 125–127.

⁵⁶ Culpeper’s own deposition makes this clear: TNA SP1/167, fols. 140–141.

⁵⁷ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 137. Though, as Thurley notes, anecdotal evidence shows that other individuals sometimes entered these rooms, it is probable that they were only able to do so with permission of the King or the Groom of the Stool.

⁵⁸ Even under the later Tudor Queens regnant there is no evidence suggesting that any woman held the title of Groom of the Stool.

⁵⁹ TNA SP1/167, fol. 133.

from the inside, this was noted as peculiar and suspicious.⁶⁰ This is because privacy, in many elite spaces but particularly at court with the structure of the royal apartments, was fundamentally performative. There was no point in being private without somebody to witness it and somebody to be excluded, because privacy was a marker of status and of authority. Thus the monarch could be secluded in a bedchamber if they so chose, but the route of access into and out of that chamber was not itself secluded. Those in the outer chambers would know that the monarch was in there, and neither she nor anybody with her could exit secretly: thus Katherine Tylney was asked not whether the Queen had had anybody in her chamber, but whether she had *left* her chamber during the night.⁶¹ To argue that the architectural development of the royal apartments was done to increase privacy, therefore, is to be correct only as regards one rather limited definition of privacy—performative solitude for the purpose of magnificence. The result was that the court permanently kept tabs on these individuals, inhibiting movement, since by default if people are kept out, others are also kept in. Indeed, the Queen's apartments were used for precisely this purpose at Hampton Court, where Katherine was kept confined to her chambers while the initial investigation took place.⁶²

Despite this comparatively less private nature of the Queen's apartments, it is clear that, as Irish has argued, many contemporary male commentators *did* see the Queen's apartments as a private space, because they themselves did not have access. The Queen's privy chamber thus became "a rhetorical construction flexible enough to encompass all manner of palatial nooks and crannies," a "figurative space of limitless transgression" in many of the reports written by ambassadors and councillors about Katherine's case, and they were correspondingly horrified by the fact that Katherine had not only taken her former lover Francis Dereham into her service, but that she had allowed him into the privy chamber.⁶³ This was partly because, as Diane Shaw explains, privacy at this time was communal and relative rather than individual and absolute, reliant, as I have explained, on the cooperation of others; but it also seems to be particularly strongly gendered at court.⁶⁴ Where privacy was concerned, the Queen's women themselves occupied a liminal position. The fact that male commentators were so concerned, even anxious, about the potential for secret scandal in the Queen's apartments, suggests that ordinarily the Queen's women were not considered to be disturbing privacy, for though it is clear that they had access to these spaces, it was evidently not thought that their presence prevented illicit activities. Privacy for the Queen was not conceptualised as solitude. This is why Katherine's women were questioned about her activities, and why many of them had relevant answers and information.

The royal progress, however, was something of a game-changer here. It is clear from the depositions that many more meetings occurred between Katherine and Culpeper while they and the rest of the court was on progress to the north in the summer of 1541. Many of the buildings in which the monarchs stayed on this progress were old, much smaller, and had had hasty repairs made to them. The nature of this accommodation had a particular impact on

⁶⁰ TNA SP1/167, fol. 134.

⁶¹ TNA SP1/167, fol. 131.

⁶² *Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Volume 6 Part 1: 1538-1542*, ed. Pascual de Gayangos (London, 1890), no. 204; LP 16:1332.

⁶³ Irish, "The Secret Chamber," 171.

⁶⁴ Diane Shaw, "The Construction of the Private in Medieval London," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996): 450.

the Queen; while the King would doubtless have stayed in the largest and grandest lodging in each place, sometimes this was the only such lodging in the place, and a set of apartments for the Queen were cobbled together from other rooms that were not designed for this purpose. This is made clear by accounts from the Office of Tents and Revels for fabric used to create doors and walls within accommodation on this progress; an account for such things made for Pipewell and Hatfield Chase, for example, includes an entry for “a partycyon in ye chamber of persons of ye quene syde of yalow blew and grene xxxj yds iij qrts at iij s ye yarde, £6 7s.”⁶⁵ This also helps to explain the focus on spatial information in the investigation, because the level of privacy afforded by these spaces was less obvious. It becomes clear that privacy of the sort necessary to conduct secret meetings with the Queen was both easier and more difficult on progress. Normal routines and spaces were disrupted; it was easier to find access points and liminal spaces, and to plausibly alter the usual access rules, but it was also more difficult because nobody else’s routine was normal either, and they could not guarantee that they would not be interrupted. These meetings were therefore fraught with anxiety, as Culpeper explained, stating that “the quene always in that tyme started away & returned agayn as oon in ffeare lest som body schuld com in.”⁶⁶

Though the risk seems high, the spatial precautions taken were equally intense. They sought out the same kinds of liminal spaces as Katherine had previously used with Manno. Despite her command to her women not to enter her bedchamber without permission, the depositions suggest that she and Culpeper rarely met in any of her own apartments, which suggests that even on progress, these were not sufficiently secret spaces. Usually they remained indoors, presumably out of fear of the “watch” set to patrol the perimeters, but they sought disused rooms, “a place underneath her chamber at Lincoln being as he [Culpeper] thought the queen’s seal house,” “a litle gallery at the steyer hedd,” “back dores & back steppes.”⁶⁷ At every new site, the Queen herself would allegedly seek out the access points, and they often met close to these so that it would be easy for Culpeper to hide or flee if necessary.⁶⁸ Sometimes it simply was not possible for them to meet, and Katherine in particular was sensitive to the danger of her position; at Pontefract Castle, where the King and Queen each had lodgings in an old-fashioned donjon style tower, Lady Rochford explained to Culpeper that they would have met sooner, but “the backdore wich way he schuld haue com / the quene ffeared lest the kyng had sett a watche ther.”⁶⁹ She had had Lady Rochford’s own servant watch the door every night to see if anybody went in or out, and only once it was clear that nobody did would she allow Culpeper to come and meet her there. At Lincoln, the King’s watch did indeed lock the back door by which she and Lady Rochford were waiting for Culpeper, forcing them to hide. Rather than admit defeat, he and his manservant picked the lock and entered.⁷⁰

The cooperation of other people was once again necessary. Though it is only stated in one line of the depositions, Culpeper did not come alone, but brought his “man” with him.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Surrey History Centre, LM 3/2/2.

⁶⁶ TNA SP1/167, fol. 141.

⁶⁷ TNA SP1/167, fol. 141; *CMBath*, 2:9.

⁶⁸ According to Lady Rochford: TNA SP1/167, fol. 141.

⁶⁹ TNA SP1/167, fol. 141. On Pontefract, see: Ian Roberts, *Pontefract Castle* (West Yorkshire Archaeology Service, 1990).

⁷⁰ TNA SP1/167, fol. 143.

⁷¹ TNA SP1/167, fol. 143.

Katherine was dependent on Jane Parker/Boleyn, Lady Rochford. The level of that dependence becomes very clear on progress. Rochford carried all messages between them; she arranged liaisons; she chaperoned; they used her chamber at Lincoln.⁷² Katherine's clear preference for Rochford above the rest of her women was evidently the occasion of much indignation on their part, and there are depositions stating that Katherine would send all her women away apart from Rochford, and that she and Rochford would remain closeted in a chamber together for hours.⁷³ The fact that at Lincoln, at least, Rochford had her own chamber that she did not share with anybody else suggests that her seniority among the Queen's women had translated into spatial seclusion. Rochford's own deposition shows that the investigators were not only interested in where liaisons had taken place between Katherine and Culpeper, but how those spaces were laid out, and the physical positioning of the people within them. This is because Rochford claimed that although she had often been with the couple when they met, she had not overheard what they said or seen what they did, and she was pushed to prove this by recounting her exact position in relation to the space and to Katherine and Culpeper.⁷⁴

The very fact that seeking privacy was suspicious comes out strongly in her attempts to do this. Rather than say that she had stood so far away that she could not hear them, she places the blame on them, stating that they "talked so secretely that sche herd not ther conuer[sal]c[i]on." In the chamber where they met at Pontefract, she explained, she guarded the door that stood at the near end, but the back door was "behynd a wyndoo at the other end," and Culpeper stood on the steps there "redy always to slype down iff noys came," with the Queen on the uppermost step in front of him, "where they myght speke & do to gethere / this deponent being never the p[ri]vier." She even claimed to have slept through one of their meetings until called by the Queen. Nevertheless, she stated that she thought that Culpeper had known Katherine carnally, "consydering all thynges that this deponent hath herd & seen betwene them"—despite having claimed to have heard nothing. Katherine's account is naturally somewhat different; she claimed that "when Culpeper was talking with hir my lady Rocheford wold many tyme, beyng ever by, sytt symwhatt farre of or turn hyr bak and she wold sey to her 'For Goddes sake madam even nere us.'" ⁷⁵ The issue under dispute had become not so much what she and Culpeper had or had not physically done, but whether it was spatially plausible that there were no witnesses.

The story of Katherine and Culpeper often seems fantastical, much more so than Manno or Dereham. And yet, it was in many ways more successfully private than those earlier pre-marital relationships. The Culpeper affair lasted from at least April 1541 until its discovery in November. It might not have been discovered at all if an investigation into the Queen's behaviour had not been prompted by Mary Lascelles/Hall's revelations about her pre-marital activities, for the link there was Francis Dereham. On his return from Ireland, he had persuaded several senior Howard women who had known about the affair to sue to the Queen for him that he might enter her service, a brazen move that sounds conspicuously like

⁷² See: Rochford's deposition, TNA SP1/167, fols. 142–3; and Culpeper's, SP1/167, fols. 140–142.

⁷³ TNA SP1/167, fols. 131–133.

⁷⁴ For her explanation, see her deposition: TNA SP1/167, fols. 142–143.

⁷⁵ *CMBath* 2:9–10.

blackmail.⁷⁶ Once there, he made a number of unguarded comments that made her very nervous, and that others later remembered. Once informed of the reported goings-on at Norfolk House, it did not take the privy councillors very long at all to realise that Katherine's former lover was now in her service at court. Naturally, they questioned her women, who then gave up their knowledge or suspicions about Culpeper as well. Had Katherine sought the same degree of privacy with Dereham that she had earlier with Manno and later with Culpeper, nothing might ever have been revealed, and this demonstrates clearly that the Dereham affair was not originally considered to be of the same illicit nature as the other two.

"Privacy"—in terms of seclusion, freedom from interference, and even secrecy—was therefore possible, but difficult, and strongly dependent on the cooperation and even connivance of other people. Privacy was particularly difficult for queens, who in fact seem to have enjoyed a lesser level of seclusion than the King: where he could withdraw alone into his secret lodgings without anybody raising an eyebrow, the evidence from Katherine's case strongly suggests that this was not usual for the Queen, who was normally attended by a full complement of women. Those women were questioned, which demonstrates that the investigators understood the kind of knowledge to which they were privy; but commentators almost entirely omitted the presence of the Queen's women, suggesting that they occupied an oddly liminal space both in reality and in the popular imagination. More work is needed on this to fully understand the spatial role of ladies in waiting, and how the Queen's side might have differed from the King's in this regard.

This ties into the way in which we understand privacy in these contexts. The Queen could withdraw away from the general public; and, odd though people thought it, she *could* withdraw into comparative seclusion with only one other person there. The key to this case was that she could not do so without other people knowing: so was she really private at all? This implies a greater crowbar separation between privacy and secrecy than has been appreciated in the context of the royal court. Privacy in this case was constructed not only through looking and not looking, seeing and not seeing, but, crucially, through hearing and not hearing as well. Katherine's chief accomplice Jane, Lady Rochford, argued in her deposition that she was far enough away from Katherine and Culpeper because she could not hear them; Katherine, however, claimed to have told Rochford that she was not close enough for the same reason. The ephemerality of buildings during this period ties into this: a curtain might be hung to 'be' a wall, but curtains could not cut out noise, light, or shadow. Clearly there is work to be done to recover the sensory experience of these sorts of pre-modern spaces, and to investigate their impact on political events.

⁷⁶ Russell has read it this way. Russell, *Young & Damned & Fair*, 181–182.