Introduction

This is a book about gender in the language and concepts of Renaissance political thought and therefore a book on what politics meant in the Renaissance. Renaissance political thought still holds a fascination over our historical imagination. At the beginning of what is termed 'the modern state', thinkers seem to have advocated a very pure idea of politics.[1] With the rediscovery of the values of classical Greek and Roman political philosophy, it is held, Renaissance thinkers rediscovered and celebrated the ancient art of politics as playing out in a public sphere of action and human fulfilment, of creative and formative citizenship. The Renaissance citizen was enthusiastically engaged in the affairs of the city, a civic player devoted to the common good. He was also, it appears, detached from non-political ties to ordinary, everyday life. This idea of Renaissance politics is defined by an opposition: it is constructed against what it is not. In this narrative of binaries, politics seems to have been the antithesis of everything private. Intimate relationships between men and women, life in the family, the rearing of children, the necessities of the natural, and the natural necessities of procreation and reproduction are held to have belonged to an apolitical sphere. At its core, this is a gendered narrative. The political-public sphere is that of men, the apolitical private sphere of the family is that of women. The dichotomy of the public civic and the private domestic life, of politics and the household, corresponds to a dichotomical setting of man and woman, of the masculine and the feminine. Women thus could not belong to 'the political', at least not in the Renaissance.[2]

[1] For the term 'state' and in what way it is applicable in the history of early modern political thought, see Quentin Skinner, 'A Genealogy of the Modern State', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 162 (2009), 325–70.

[2] See Joan Kelly-Gadol, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?', in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, MA, 1977), pp. 137–64; and Anna

The division of the public and the private sphere has been called the 'grand dichotomy' of Western thought.[3] Its meaning and implications are under continual examination, and it is particularly in regard to feminist scholarship that the most theoretically advanced criticism has been made. But in this criticism, the historical foundations of the dichotomy have often been (silently) reaffirmed and the division of the spheres remains the foundational discursive order that hardly anyone thinking about gender, politics, and its theory can afford not to probe.[4] The roots of this binary divide are taken to be the roots of European political thought itself, informing the Renaissance by reaching back to antiquity. This interpretation has been made particularly forceful by Hannah Arendt in her *Human Condition* (1958). There Arendt argued, that brought down to us from the worlds of the Greek city states, and most notably expressed in the works of Aristotle, was the idea that humans, as political animals, can fulfil their potential only in a sphere of politics that is not weighed down by what Arendt thought were the necessities of the 'natural life'. The public was a sphere in which men as citizens competed with their equals and experienced the possibility of immortality through political speech and political action. Sharply distinguished from this public-political sphere was the sphere of the household, which, Arendt argued, existed simply to provide 'social companionship', a trait human beings shared with animals:[5]

> The private realm of the household was the sphere where necessities of life, of individual survival as well as of continuity of the species, were taken care of and guaranteed. One of the characteristics of privacy, prior to the discovery of intimate, was that man existed in this sphere not as a truly human being but only as a specimen of the animal species mankind.

Becker, '"Antike" und "Mittelalter" in der "Renaissance": Gender als Markierung im politischen Denken zwischen Kontinuität und Wandel', *L'Homme*, 25 (2014), 15–32.

[3] The phrasing is Norberto Bobbio's; see the chapter 'The Great Dichotomy: Public/Private', in Norberto Bobbio (ed.), *Democracy and Dictatorship: The Nature and the Limits of State Power* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 1–21. See Jeff Weintraub, 'The Theory and Practice of the Public/Private Distinction', in Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds.), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago, IL, 1997), pp. 1–42.

[4] The following works are groundbreaking in their treatment of political theory and gender, and they ask about the public/private divide. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ, 1993); Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York, NY, 1989); Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ, 1979); Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA, 1988); Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Women in the History of Political Thought: Ancient Greece to Machiavelli* (Westport, CT, 1985) and Judith Squires, *Gender in Political Theory* (Cambridge, 2000). See also Lawrence Eliot Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (1995), 97–109.

[5] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, ed. Margaret Canovan, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL, 1998), p. 25.

> And this is the ultimate reason for the tremendous contempt held for it by antiquity.[6]

Sub-humanity and a sociability that was more animal-like than human were, in this reading of Greek political thought, the characteristics of the 'female' naturalised sphere of the household. Arendt's alluring interpretation of the Aristotelian roots of the public and private divide (which she herself acknowledged was derived from the work of the German classicist Werner Jaeger) has been highly influential.[7] It has formed readings of ancient thought, and it has shaped ideas of its legacy.[8] One of the most important contributions to the discourse on the emergence of the modern public sphere and its opposition to the private is Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which the author relied entirely on Arendt when he sketched out the historical and theoretical origins of the eighteenth-century 'bourgeois public sphere'.[9] J. G. A. Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment* – one of the most influential accounts of Renaissance political thought – acknowledged Arendt outright as an inspiration. In his 2003 'Afterword' to *The Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock wrote that he was telling the story of the revival of ancient political thought 'in terms borrowed from or suggested by the language of Hannah Arendt'.[10]

Hannah Arendt is not the target of this book.[11] I argue, however, that we need to free ourselves from an Arendtian reading of Aristotle, by which

[6] Ibid., pp. 45–6. [7] Ibid., p. 24 n. 5.

[8] This is acknowledged in Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), pp. 10–13; and in Stephen G. Salkever, *Finding the Mean: Theory and Practice in Aristotelian Political Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ, 2014), p. 173. Handbook articles and encyclopedia entries in fields such as the history of ideas, political science, and philosophy show the unbroken influence of both Aristotle and Arendt over these disciplines. For some examples, see Iain Hampsher-Monk, 'Political Philosophy, History of' in Edward Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. (London, 1998), VII, pp. 505–16, at pp. 505–6; Thomas F. Murphy III, 'Public Sphere' in Maryanne Clyne Horowitz (ed.), *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York, NY, 2005), pp. 1964–7; and John Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips, 'Introduction', in Dryzek, Honig, and Phillips (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 3–41, at p. 8.

[9] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA, 1989). For an influential criticism of Habermas's analysis of women and the public sphere, see Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1988); and Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to a Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56–80. See also Joan B. Landes (ed.), *Feminism, the Public and the Private: Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1998). See also Habermas's new 'Vorwort' to a revised edition of *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt a. M., 1990), pp. 11–50, in which he responds to his critics.

[10] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ, 2003), p. 550.

[11] For a critique of Arendt's interpretation of Aristotle and for a reading of Aristotle as a philosopher who explored all correlations of the political with the social broadly understood, see William James Booth, *Households: On the Moral Architecture of the Economy* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1993);

I mean that we need to rethink our preconceptions on the foundations of politics and its great division between the public–political–male and the private–apolitical–female. In this book we centrally examine how Renaissance readers interpreted Aristotle's characterisation of the political and its relationship to the 'private' sphere of the family. Seen through the eyes of these past thinkers, ideas on marriage, child-rearing, production, and reproduction appear as part of the political nature of human beings. The book follows early modern writers as they explored topics like friendship and animosity, love and compromise, and the struggle that comes with living closely alongside others. What emerges is that Renaissance thinkers examined the space of the household, and particularly the gendered society of marriage, sometimes as a decidedly political space and always as a space that was interwoven with the political.

The examination of the politics of the private attempted in this book is not confined to rethinking early modern Aristotelians. In our dominant narrative(s) of Renaissance political thought, thinkers influenced by Roman theory are seen as equally forceful advocates of the merits of the public and political life, and they seem to have had as little to say about the private realms of the *domus* as their Aristotelian counterparts had on the topic of the *oikos*. If anything, neo-Roman thought emphasising the defence of one's personal liberty and that of one's city, and glorifying the arms-bearing citizen who was also an orator, desiring to discuss civic matters in the publicity of the *forum*, seems to be the embodiment of politics as masculinity (the purported connection of *vir* and *virtus* is often quoted to underline this).[12] Part of the present reconstruction is targeted at the gendered foundations of Renaissance scholarship on Roman political and legal thought and Roman history. As a welcome side effect, focusing on gender makes visible the many connections that early modern thinkers saw between the Aristotelian and Ciceronian traditions.

The world of Renaissance politics, inspired by both Greek and Roman thought, was in its many dimensions intrinsically intertwined with the sphere of the household, and the household was seen as a space in which

D. Brendan Nagle, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis* (Cambridge, 2006); Salkever, *Finding the Mean*; and Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal*. For highly illuminating analyses of the public and the private in Arendt's work, see Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, 'Justice: On Relating Public and Private', *Political Theory*, 9 (1981), 327–52; and Seyla Benhabib, 'Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's Concept of Public Space', *History of the Human Sciences*, 6 (1993), 97–114.

[12] Certainly, there have always been also more nuanced readings, such as those by Quentin Skinner, who has made the connections between the political and the non-political world obvious in manifold studies.

both women and men acted and reacted, cared for others, and governed. By tracing the complex and ever-changing negotiations about the relationship of public and private or, more precisely, the civic and the domestic, we can think about gender in a way that abstracts from the question of inclusion and exclusion of women in and from a monolithically constructed public sphere. That gender has not yet been used as an informative category in the history of early modern political thought is a consequence of a sort of confusion of terms. Often, gender is simply taken to be another word for 'women'. Thinking about gender in political thought has meant the attempt to locate women as political agents. It has contended that unless we excavate writings that advocate women as civic players equal to men, there is nothing else to say about Renaissance political thought other than that women were excluded and absent, banned from exercising power in the public realm, or, in other words, that women were apolitical.[13]

Certainly, there is no doubt that 'women' were excluded from the sort of participatory political and civic combat of speech and action that still fascinates scholars about Renaissance politics.[14] But is this the only measure of inside/outside politics available? The 'realities' of the Italian city states certainly suggest otherwise. Research shows that not only women but the majority of men living in a Renaissance Italian city were excluded from political participation. Citizenship was an exclusive affair. A full citizen in mid-fifteenth-century Florence, for instance, had to be over the age of thirty, a taxpayer, and a member of a guild. In most cities, a citizen had to pass the criterion of belonging to a certain founding family,

[13] See Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 1053–75. The finding that absent women were part and parcel of modern political theory is of course the result of a critical rethinking of liberal political thought in itself and has thus importantly influenced modern political theory. Works such as Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Women*, Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, and Saxonhouse, *Women in the History of Political Thought* have therefore had a theoretical force that is still stimulating.

[14] For enlightening studies on questions of exclusion and inclusion, see Pamela Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman* (University Park, PA, 1992); Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca, NY, 1990); Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2012); Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400–1650* (Baltimore, MD and London, 2008); Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2009); Lyndan Warner, *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France* (Farnham, 2011); and Iain Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge, 1980).

even if the definition of what constituted these founding families was ever-changing.[15] In most cities, only about ten per cent of the entire population – male and female – counted as citizens. On the other hand, female citizens existed: some women appear in the census of Florence as heads of households, and women who belonged to the ruling class were regularly addressed as citizens. In civic practice the question of citizenship was therefore not one that was demarcated by our modern biological differentiation of man and woman, or even by the question of political participation.[16] What divided citizens from non-citizens was *status*, which in turn was determined by an individual's position in a network of family relationships. 'Woman' was not a legal or civic category of too much significance.[17] We shall see in Chapter 5 that this was also discussed in learned commentaries on the Roman law.

It was not only the law that operated with categories other than 'woman' and 'man'; philosophy was also not as clear-cut on the matter as we are made to believe. In the *Politics*, Aristotle had stated that for practical purposes, a citizen was defined as one of citizen birth 'on both his father's and his mother's side'.[18] Since this reflected the realities in many Renaissance Italian cities, Aristotelians read the passage as an affirmation that women were citizens, too. Aristotle also demanded that, since women and children are half of the free population, the constitution of a city needed to be tailored to their needs, too.[19] This was discussed in commentaries on Aristotle's *Politics* in sixteenth-century Italy. This very abbreviated sketch alone demonstrates that it is worth rethinking the narrative of women as civic outsiders and men as civic insiders. The topic is far more complex than is often acknowledged and needs a nuanced approach. This book aims to provide it.

Concentrating on the woman question, and focusing on women's exclusion from politics and political thought, does not let us see gender relationships when they were in plain sight. To be better observers, we shall turn the focus around: instead of searching for 'women', we will

[15] See John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200–1575* (Malden, MA 2006), p. 188; Dale Kent, 'The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century', *Renaissance Quarterly* 28 (1975), 575–638; and Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, NY 1980).

[16] Philip Gavitt, *Gender, Honor, and Charity in Late Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 596. See Silvio Antonioni, *Tre libri dell'educatione christiana dei figliuoli*, 14r, quoted in Gavitt, *Gender, Honor, and Charity in Late Renaissance Florence*, p. 104.

[17] Thomas Kuehn, *Family and Gender in Renaissance Italy, 1300–1600* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 18.

[18] Aristotle, *The Politics,* trans. T. A. Sinclair and rev. T. J. Saunders (London, 1992), 1275b, pp. 171–2.

[19] Ibid., 1260b, p. 97.

examine the spheres that seem to exclusively enclose women and men respectively. We will trace what politics and what family life might have meant for Renaissance thinkers, and so examine how the household related to politics. Thinking about gender in the history of political thought demands an attention to the language of the discourse and an openness to the possibility that 'woman' and 'man' were terms that did not hold a fixed set of meanings but were fluid categories.[20] In our analysis the domestic becomes visible as a deeply human sphere, relating to the political in a multitude of ways. What tied politics to the domestic was marriage. The conjunction, or partnership, of man and female was of course the fundamental and original relationship of human existence. It was also (and therefore) for early modern thinkers the crucial initial point from which to explore the origins of states and to show the best government in states. Marriage thus had a political-structural significance. With this emphasis on marriage as a political category it emerges that women were not necessarily excluded from politics. As we shall see we can consider them, following our Renaissance thinkers, as having been 'political' – albeit in an early modern sense. This might not be very satisfying to us today. But the alterity of the past is always a reminder that there are no linear and orderly narratives of progress to be told.

The book challenges the idea that thinking about politics in the Renaissance meant thinking in dichotomies of public/political and private/apolitical. It suggests that the concept of the political was far more inclusive of private matters than is often assumed, and it focuses on topics that originated in the private sphere or had ties to it: political thought in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe entailed meditations on the role of friendship, on love, and on natural needs and necessities. Politics was infused with gendered meaning, and this book shows part of what was an ongoing debate that had its origins in antiquity, continued in the Middle Ages (particularly from the twelfth century on), and was newly renegotiated, without losing its roots, in the Renaissance. I hence argue that there was a long tradition of texts and contexts in which the gender relationship was central and political. In what perhaps could amount to a volte back to Arendt, we will see that the political was not watered down or contaminated by the private sphere, but that in accepting the political significance of the household we can fully appraise the potential it bears for a wholehearted defence of the value of politics itself.

[20] Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 1.

Although this book questions purported binaries, it is nevertheless structured around sets of twos that we identify in the Renaissance. It examines republicanism and absolutism in the two quintessential Renaissance settings, the Italy of the city states and the France of a slowly centralising monarchy, and it centres on two quintessential Renaissance thinkers from what are assumed to be opposite ends of the political spectrum, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Jean Bodin (1530–1596). These settings are not taken as dichotomies, however. By exploring them we trace a gendered narrative of continuities and discontinuities, held together and/or divided by debates on classical political problems. The term 'Renaissance' is used throughout the book despite its many problems. The Renaissance was once understood as the beginning of something fundamentally innovative and modern; today, scholars stress the ties that bound Renaissance thinkers to the philosophical discourse of medieval Europe. However, the Renaissance narrative is deeply connected to the emergence of a modern public and to the beginning of the modern private life, to modern gender relationships, and, above all, to our modern understanding of politics. Since this study challenges many of the assumptions underlying this narrative and thereby aims to contribute to a better understanding of the language and content of political thought in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries in Italy and France, it is consciously set in 'the Renaissance'.

While this is a book that is concerned with language, it might be surprising that I use the terms *domus* and *familia* without problematising them. Cultural and social historians have worked with a systematic difference between 'the family' and 'the household' when studying early modern societies.[21] For our thinkers, actively and consciously shaping the language of the discourse, *domus* and *familia*, however, were used synonymously, both in their material and in their immaterial senses. 'When Aristotle says "households" (*domus*) you must understand ... that he is not talking about walls and gutters but about families (*familiae*); likewise it is not walls and roofs that make a city but the community of human beings constituted by law,' wrote Leonardo Bruni.[22] While there might be a shift observable (albeit not consistently) from the Latin Aristotelian commentaries using *domus* (for Aristotle's *oikos*) to the vernacular discourse in both

[21] See Christopher Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History* (London, 2001), chapter 7.
[22] Leonardo Bruni, *Aristotelis Oeconomicorum libri duo*, in *Aristotelis Stagiritae Omnia, Quae Extant, Opera*, 11 vols. (Venice, 1560), vol. III, fo. 470v: 'Quod dicit domorum, intellige, ut supra diximus, non enim de parietibus et stillicidiis loquitur, sed de familiis, nam neque civitas muri et tecta sunt, sed coetus hominum societatum.'

French and Italian in which the terms *famille*/*famiglia* took precedence, and which then, in turn, found reflection in later Latin treatises in the usage of the Roman term *familia*, it will become clear that the thinkers themselves did not make a differentiation as to the content of the vocabulary and continued to use it interchangeably, just as the quote from Bruni suggests. Throughout this study, as a further caveat, the terms 'public' and 'private' are used in a modern sense; like the term 'gender', they denote categories of enquiry. They help me to highlight the differences that exist between our modern modes of thinking and those of the Renaissance. In contrast to the term 'gender', however, the terms 'private' and 'public' were sometimes used in a similar way to today. I shall highlight when this appears to be the case; the ambiguities themselves may turn out to be meaningful.

This study examines the role of the Renaissance household and its relationship to politics in detail, but 'inside' the household it is mainly concerned with the gendered marriage relationship and to a lesser degree with the relationship of parents to their children. In Aristotelian political thought the household sphere was made up of three different relationships: that of husband to wife, that of parents to children, and that of master to slave. Sometimes a fourth relationship was also examined: that of siblings. In this book I have left out an exploration of the power relationships of siblings – after all, a relationship of equals – and, more regrettably, the relationship of master to slave (the despotic relationship). Although an examination of the despotic relationship, particularly with an eye to gender and thus attempting an intersectional study, would deliver important insights, it is, for the purposes of this book, important to see that different 'marginalised' groups, women and slaves, have had their entirely unique concerns, and were, before the modern age, also treated completely differently.[23]

This study aims to show a tradition that sees the social as a missing piece in understanding early modern political thinking. Many influential studies from cultural, social, and legal historians, from Christiane Klapisch-Zuber to Thomas Kuehn, from Sarah Hanley to Suzanne Desan, have shown the complexities and ambiguities of gendered 'realities' in early modern Italy and France. Some of the findings I present do not fit easily into what we think we know about how men and women performed gender and family

[23] I have argued analogously about the relationship of women and animals in early modern thought. See Anna Becker, 'On Women and Beasts: Human–Animal Relationships in Sixteenth-Century Thought', *AJIL Unbound*, 111 (2017), 262–6.

in the Renaissance.[24] However, my study does not aim to make any translation from texts to cultural practices. If there are any comparisons to be drawn with 'the realities' (whatever we think that means) of early modern life, readers are invited to do so themselves. While this book is hence crucially influenced by questions asked by cultural and social historians, it is a study about intellectual context, about modes of thinking, and about concept and language. It is about the gendered nature of political thought and political thinking. It makes no claim to be a systematic, comprehensive study. My approach is exemplary and explorative, following some avenues while leaving other possibilities behind.

Chapter 1 of this book, then, will trace the Aristotelian foundations that allow us to reconstruct the Renaissance notion of politics. It shows that the well-explored Renaissance emphasis on the ancient values of active civic participation went hand in hand with stressing the importance of an 'oeconomic' (i.e. household) sphere that had so many intricate ties with the political that it became political itself. The household appears as a fundamental part of the city, and we shall encounter a thoroughly positive notion of the role of 'nature' and 'necessities' in political reflections. This chapter also examines one of the most sacred beliefs in connection to the political philosophy of Aristotle, namely that the household existed for the sake of living, whereas the *polis* exists for the sake of living well, and challenges it. We will particularly examine the relationship of husband and wife in marriage. Thinking about the human couple has had a long tradition in philosophy and theology; it is, after all, the foundational human relationship. In its political dimension, Renaissance political thinkers also saw marriage as the most important relationship of the household, because it came closest to what can be termed a constitutional, or political, relationship. We will trace the manifold connections between the domestic and the civic through the lens of mainly Italian Aristotelian commentaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Aristotelian practical philosophy was the dominant philosophical movement in early modern Europe. Reflecting on the ancient text and its concepts, commentators worked consciously with language and so shaped the modern idiom

[24] See David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven, CT, 1985); Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, IL, 1985); Thomas Kuehn, *Family and Gender in Renaissance Italy, 1300–1600* (Cambridge, 2017); Suzanne Desan and Jeffrey Merrick (eds.), *Family, Gender, and Law in Early Modern France* (University Park, PA, 2010); and Sarah Hanley, 'Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies* 16 (1989), 4–27. The relevant literature is too large to do justice to here.

of the political. Their commentaries thus offer the early modern perspective that is needed to deconstruct, historicise, and gender political categories and political language.[25]

In Chapter 2, we will examine friendship not only as a 'sentiment' connecting the oeconomical sphere to the political but also as the crucial instrument for maintaining civic concord. Love and care for those close to us were political issues. This chapter examines some rarely explored Latin learned commentaries on Cicero's *De officiis* by Pietro Marso and Francesco Maturanzio (and Erasmus). The chapter will also give room to the vernacular tradition, attempting to see in what way learned discourse found its reflection in the civic writings of Matteo Palmieri and Leon Battista Alberti, flourishing in Florence in the fifteenth century. This examination then allows us to see how Niccolò Machiavelli participated in the discourse on friendship and the stabilising role of the domestic for the political – by subverting the narrative. This chapter is the only chapter in the book that specifically asks about 'women' and 'men', femininity and masculinity. Machiavelli's work has been thoroughly analysed for its relevance to 'the woman question'. At the beginning of the modern state, it seems, stood a political theory that was fundamentally misogynist. Re-examining some of the ways that Machiavelli constructed 'the male' and 'the female', this chapter argues that Machiavelli's political thought was characterised by a remarkable openness towards the idea of women as agents in the political sphere. We shall see that the public and the private, also in Machiavelli's work, are very hard to disentangle, once we risk a closer look.

In the next part of the book, which is divided into three chapters, we turn to the French Renaissance, looking at French notions of gendered politics and examining the thought of Jean Bodin in context and in detail. With his powerful reinvention of the concept of sovereignty, Bodin's thought is held to be a major intervention in early modern political thought. In his massive work *Les six livres de la République* (1576), Bodin had more to say about the relationship of family and state and about the importance of the conjugal relationship than any other early modern thinker. Bodin's notion of the family, its structure, and its order was key to his conception of the *res publica*. In Chapter 3, we will examine the nature of Bodin's purported anti-Aristotelianism and observe that his

[25] For the importance of commentaries on Aristotle's practical philosophy for early modern political thinking, see Annabel Brett, *Changes of State* (Princeton, NJ, 2011), Sophie Smith, 'The Language of "Political Science" in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 80 (2019), 203–226.

work, rather than being hostile to Aristotle's political philosophy, was shaped by and grew out of his intellectual preoccupation with the Aristotelian topics we have examined earlier. This also influenced Bodin's use of the language of the political, which he noticeably and fundamentally reshaped. The chapter shows – through reactions his writings garnered in the European *res publica literaria* – that contemporaries understood him as completely rearranging the terms of the political debate, precisely by focusing on the household. Chapter 4 engages with Bodin's notion of oeconomics and politics and looks in detail at matters of inclusion and exclusion, examining the Bodinian polity's ethical foundations, the value of needs and necessities, and the relationship of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, before turning to Bodin's notion of citizenship. Chapter 5 is concerned with Bodin's gendered notion of sovereignty. The conjugal relationship was most important for Bodin's vision of politics, and here the Aristotelian context was highly relevant. In focus will be Bodin's creative treatment of the Roman law of the family, which he often bent considerably to fit his theoretical needs. In all three chapters, Aristotelian commentaries and contemporary monarchist (and anti-monarchist) writings will help to contextualise Bodin's thought. Appropriately, we shall end with a commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* that was written as an answer to Bodin, and in which the author, Antonio Montecatini, argued that Bodin had not understood the extent of the equality that existed between husband and wife. This book shows that many of the central moral and political concepts of early modern thought are gendered. The categories of male and female were implicated in a far broader web of conceptions and significations than is often assumed. If we pay attention to seemingly apolitical matters, we can widen our intellectual horizons and deepen our understanding of historical constructions of the political. In political theory, the past and the present are deeply entangled. I hope that this book will induce some reflections on the state of modern politics and its gendered components, too.