

Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph P. Ward, eds. *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe: Performance, Geography, Privacy*.

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*Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe* is the latest volume produced in conjunction with a multiyear interdisciplinary research project entitled Making Publics (or MaPs), based at McGill University. Instead of focusing on the various forms of community, voluntary association, and public life present during the early modern period, this collection examines how and why these publics were first created, and developed out of and distinct from more traditional affiliations rooted in family, social status, religion, or occupation. *Making Space Public* addresses the actual physical locations (theaters, churches, coffeehouses, salons, urban and rural architecture), material articles (print media, scripts, drawings, maps), and modes of cultural production (public speech, performance, theology) that coincided with the formation of these novel and heterogeneous publics and made them possible.

Obviously, the elephant in the room throughout this volume is Jürgen Habermas. His account of the emergence of the public sphere in the eighteenth century and related theory of communicative rationality have been widely influential across the human sciences for more than half a century and have come to dominate academic discussions of this topic. The first four essays address Habermas directly, suggesting, in various ways, that his history of the public sphere demands revision. Steven Mullaney's "What's Hamlet to Habermas?" provocatively argues that "theatrical performance played a more significant role in Habermas's own thinking than his explicit comments might suggest" (19). Mullaney notes that staged performance had the same capacity to modify the subjectivity of private individuals that Habermas attributed to the novel, and he deftly deconstructs key passages in the *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) to demonstrate that Habermas, perhaps unconsciously, recognized the theater's capacity to actively circulate and sift knowledge — as opposed to merely displaying it.

The following set of four chapters address geography, the ability of various orientations to physical space to manufacture human publics. Bronwen Wilson, Meredith Donaldson Clark, and Elana Napolitano discuss how various cartographic forms — Venetian *isolarii* (island books), John Ogilby's atlas *Britannia* (1675), and Israël Silvestre's engraving *Profile of the City of Rome* (1687) — shaped public space and, in turn, represented this space for the consumption of various groups. Using Venice as an example, Marlene Eberhart considers the creation of publics by concentrating on the tactile and the sensual, the sounds, bodies, objects, and smells that fundamentally temper the ways people associate in public space.

The book's final section turns toward private life, the sometimes overlooked yet essential backdrop over which the public sphere emerged and gained significance. Essays by Torrance Kirby and Angela Vanhaelen examine the role of changing religious institutions and shifting doctrinal beliefs brought about by the Reformation in constituting and conditioning publics. Kirby argues that Calvin's *Institutes* posits a public sphere rooted in "a culture of persuasion" to mediate between the "spiritual" realm of individual piety and the "political" world of secular communal life (215); Vanhaelen uses Dutch paintings to address the paradoxical place of the church, conceived of as a physical space for collective worship, in a reformed theology where the true church is invisible, located in the hearts and minds of believers. Paul Yachnin concludes the volume by looking at early modern London's playhouses as critical public spaces that opened new opportunities for private individuals to observe and comment on social life. These public amphitheaters reconfigured space in new and exciting ways, changed how people could see and be seen in public, and provided a place where private citizens of all ranks were encouraged to judge the performance — innovations that allowed playgoers to imagine different forms of agency that challenged prevailing convention. Again turning to *Hamlet*, Yachnin continues a critique of public-sphere theory begun in Mullaney's opening chapter, suggesting that Shakespeare's

theater models a more inclusive and dynamic public sphere than Habermas's abstract and sterile ideal.

This diverse collection at times seems too diffuse, its chapters related to one another only by a series of loosely defined terms like *public* and *space*, and theorists like Habermas and Hannah Arendt. The deployment of similar terminology and theoretical context occasionally gives the mistaken impression that its contributors agree on a set of basic issues and conscientiously arrive at similar conclusions even when their interests and background assumptions occasionally diverge. This potential weakness, however, might also be the volume's greatest asset as its editors, Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph Ward, have assembled a rich ensemble of disciplinary perspectives around a compelling and controversial topic.

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