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**Karen Newman: Cultural Capitals**

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## Introduction

Extension is the essential property of the [physical] world,  
just as thinking is the essential property of the mental world.

—DESCARTES

Sir William D'Avenant's *The First Dayes Entertainment at Rutland House*, performed in 1656 in London, as its title page precisely records, "at the back of Rutland House at the upper end of Aldersgate Street in Charter House yard," is sometimes said to herald the revival of the regular drama in England. Often mistakenly termed an opera, D'Avenant's strange theatrical presents Diogenes and Aristophanes seated on two gilded rostra or platforms, declaiming against and for public entertainment, but it ends oddly with a debate between "a bourgeois of Paris" and his "opponent of London," each of whom surveys the capital of the other, enumerating urban ills, pointing out shortcomings in urban planning, and ridiculing metropolitan manners.<sup>1</sup>

As a Royalist who spent four years in Paris with Hobbes, Cowley, Waller, and the exiled English court, D'Avenant was ideally positioned to debate the relative merits of London and Paris. His Parisian bourgeois and his London citizen opponent trumpet each city's imperfections and retail widely repeated censure of each capital: London's narrow crooked tunnel-like streets, sooty, smoky skies, and tobacco-loving populace, its avaricious watermen and the notorious Parisian mud or *la boue de Paris*, overnice Parisian manners, food, and dress, and the disorderly conduct of Parisian servingmen and pages. D'Avenant's two citizens survey customs, diet, dress, child rearing, architecture and housing, traffic, even air quality. Inhabitants and visitors to early modern London and Paris alike suffered, complained, and represented verbally and visually urban ills with which we are all too familiar—noise, filth, disease, starvation, immigration and crowding, violence, crime, traffic, the incongruous and unseemly juxtaposition of the very rich with exploited labor power and the very poor. City dwellers and visitors also enjoyed the myriad pleasures of metropolitan life and the cultural capital cities afforded: theater and the book trade, shopping and collecting, walking the streets, seeing and being seen.<sup>2</sup>

Urban historians and geographers as well as cultural critics have studied, written and speculated about the extraordinary impact of urbanization on the modern world, described by Kingsley Davis in his famous article, "The

Urbanization of the Human Population.”<sup>3</sup> “The large and dense agglomerations comprising the urban populations,” Davis observes, “involve a degree of human contact and of social complexity never before known.”<sup>4</sup> By all counts, the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw remarkable urbanization in western Europe.<sup>5</sup> Whereas Venice and Antwerp dominated the urban landscape of Europe in the sixteenth century, by the 1590s both were in decline.<sup>6</sup> Both London and Paris grow prodigiously in the period: London may have quadrupled its population between 1550 and 1650, from more than 80,000 to some 400,000 or more; by 1700 its population was well over half a million.<sup>7</sup> Though Paris did not grow at the same rate, and though a smaller proportion of the overall population of France lived in Paris—2.5 percent as compared with about 7 percent in England—Paris was larger earlier, and its population increased despite the wars of religion and later the Fronde, from roughly 250,000 in 1564 to some 500,000 by 1645.<sup>8</sup> Though London and Paris both saw a remarkable demographic explosion during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England and France saw a slowdown in both economic and demographic growth in this period. Stagnation and recession precipitated what some historians have called a “crisis” that ultimately cleared the way for new concentrations of capital and the settled prosperity of the Enlightenment.<sup>9</sup> Others have criticized the “crisis” argument, claiming instead that the 150 years from 1500 until the mid-seventeenth century saw extraordinary changes: centralization, internationalization, the Reformation, an increase in population, trade and price hikes, social mobility, and cultural skepticism. Such changes produced first boom, then bust, anxiety and disorder that subsequently provoked the political disturbances that swept Europe in the seventeenth century: the English civil war, the Fronde, the Catalan revolt, the Thirty Years’ War. These problems and changes, so the argument goes, were not finally resolved; instead governments sought to mitigate their effects, to enforce settlement in various arenas that dissipated anxiety, uncertainty, unrest, and disorder.<sup>10</sup> But for our purposes, “crisis” or not, both boom and bust precipitated flight to the cities. Not since antiquity had urban populations approached the half-million mark with their attendant demands: reliable food supplies, fresh water, schemes for managing traffic, for firefighting, street lighting, and cleaning, and a host of other issues.

Demographic urbanization represents an important material definition of cities, but scholars of urbanization also study the diversity of nonagricultural occupations and what is sometimes called the *urbanization of society*.<sup>11</sup> While medieval towns and the smaller urban settlements of the early modern period were pervaded by the countryside, during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries European societies became increasingly urbanized.<sup>12</sup> Scholars of urbanization describe what they term *structural urbanization*, or the concentration not only of populations but also of activities such as the operation of a

centralized state, the production and exchange of goods via large-scale markets, the organization and delivery of resources, especially water and services such as trash collection, and coordinated movement through space.<sup>13</sup> Such rapid growth, population concentration, and the development of large-scale, coordinated activities fostered an unprecedented concentration of both financial and cultural capital and promoted distinctive urban behaviors, social geographies, and new forms of sociability in the early modern city.<sup>14</sup> Though Amsterdam, like London and Paris, grew at a rapid rate and became arguably the urban economic capital of Europe, it never achieved cultural dominance.<sup>15</sup> As Simon Schama has shown, though the Dutch resisted the growing military power of France in the seventeenth century, Amsterdam capitulated “to its cultural tone.”<sup>16</sup> So while I recognize the economic importance of the early modern Dutch cities of Antwerp in the sixteenth century and subsequently Amsterdam, my focus will be on London and Paris, which became, as my title indicates, cultural capitals. Both extended across overlapping, sometimes disorderly, communities; their inhabitants were drawn from throughout both countries and abroad, and that variety produced complex societies with multiple identities and loyalties; increasingly, the means of production and distribution were concentrated in London and Paris, audiences grew, and contact with various forms of literacy spread literacies. Cultural producers and consumers were drawn to urban centers that proffered the social knowledge that was one of the principal axes of stratification in early modern Europe; at the same time, cities offered more sites for social exchange across those very boundaries.

Despite the extraordinary pace and extent of urbanization in early modern Europe, urban historians have largely ignored the early modern city, often termed “failed,” in favor of the medieval town or the nineteenth-century industrial city.<sup>17</sup> Raymond Williams observed almost thirty years ago that the city as a “distinctive order of settlement, implying a whole different way of life,” dates from the seventeenth-century predominance of London and Paris,<sup>18</sup> yet cultural historians of the West have persisted in claiming the nineteenth century as the preeminent metropolitan moment. Dickens’s London and the Paris of Baudelaire, Haussmann, and Zola have been the primary focus of scholars of the city as both trope and place. The great metropolitan themes—speculation and capital, the commodity, the crowd, the street, and *flânerie*—have been read as historically specific to nineteenth-century urban culture.<sup>19</sup> “Paris, capital of the nineteenth century,” in Walter Benjamin’s often-cited phrase, has been read as a production in time, an effect of the proverbial march of “modernity.” Despite Benjamin’s own sustained assault on the “ideology of progress” and his aim, as announced from the earliest entries in the *Passagen-Werke*, “to drive out any trace of ‘development’ from the image of history,” critics and commentators ascribe Paris’s metropolitan preeminence to various forms of political, social, and technological revolution,

to “advances” in architecture and engineering, in manufacturing and marketing, brought about by industrialization.<sup>20</sup>

Though I recognize the significance of time as a determining condition of social life as well as the specificities of nineteenth-century urban culture and its symbolic forms, this book challenges such teleological narratives of the city. Instead it focuses on space and place as determining conditions of economic, social, cultural, psychic, and affective life and on the constitutive relations of time and space. Its purpose is not merely to look backward to point out the significance or resonance of particular urban themes, for the stakes of this attention to space and time are not merely thematic: the nineteenth-century city and its arcades and commodity culture are said to entail hegemonic positions of enunciation and thereby to produce a particular mode of “metropolitan” or bourgeois subjectivity. Metropolitan subjectivity was theorized by Georg Simmel in his essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life” as a problem of the individual attempting to assert autonomy in the face of metropolitan stimulation and distraction: noise, traffic, a market economy, the crowd.<sup>21</sup> Yet already in early modern Europe, new configurations of time and urban space produced discursive figures of address and modes of subjectivity that have been claimed exclusively for modernity.

Modernity has been variously defined, periodized, and theorized. It has sometimes been understood “simply as the ‘new,’ the contemporary, marking a separation from the past and offering reimaginings of the future,” but such a reductive view fails to address how institutions, spaces, and processes “re-make time and give content to understandings of what is historically new.”<sup>22</sup> Social theories of modernity have frequently posited a distinct rupture or break between premodern and modern societies, a “Big Ditch” produced, it is argued, either by changing modes of production and consumption or by a newly instrumentalized rationality traced to the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> Bruno Latour has perhaps most forcefully questioned the notion of a great divide between presumed rational modern societies and allegedly irrational premodern ones. What he terms “the Great Divide” is a ruse that hides continuities with the past and generates repression or erasure, ordering and reordering, sorting and dividing, in order to produce “the impression of a modernization that goes in step with time.”<sup>24</sup>

Rather than argue for an earlier, originary moment at which metropolitan modernity is imagined to begin, *Cultural Capitals* considers how urban space and its local geographies, newly configured in part by demographics, in part by early forms of capital accumulation, and in part by technological transformation—all features of temporal change—produced forms of cultural capital and articulated certain discursive figures, modes of subjectivity, and enunciation usually claimed solely for modernity. The printing press, the expansion of the known world through the so-called voyages of discovery, and of the unknown world through new scientific hypotheses, new artistic and linguistic

modes of representing and interpreting the world, state formation, new bureaucratic forms, changing modes of production and consumption—all worked to produce different ways of thinking, believing, and acting that we have come to call *modern*.<sup>25</sup> My argument is not that seventeenth-century figures, topoi, and subjects are the same, identical with those of the more recent past, but that productive relations among city, subject, and text often claimed for the nineteenth century, and more recently the eighteenth century, are already at work in the verbal and visual cultures of early modern London and Paris. By shifting the analytic to space *in* time, this book demonstrates relations and continuities rather than rupture and break; in doing so, it seeks to debunk the penchant to understand the present as radically cut off from the past and thus contributes to Latour's critique of the great divide. The book also exposes the tendency to pastoralize the past that has characterized work by cultural critics of both modernity and postmodernity.<sup>26</sup>

The modern concept of space as unlimited extension, as in my epigraph from Descartes, is arguably historically specific to the early modern period in Europe: no medieval Germanic or Romance language possessed a word for our modern idea of space.<sup>27</sup> The Latin word *spatium* is first found in French before passing into other European languages, but until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it designated simply a topographic interval or, as Paul Zumthor points out, more often a chronological space or gap.<sup>28</sup> The advent of this new notion of space and the technologies for representing it is linked in early modern Europe both to the developing nation-state and to colonial expansion.<sup>29</sup> Social theory, particularly those traditions that derive from Marx, Weber, and Adam Smith, has often privileged the category of time over that of space by focusing on processes of social change, modernization, and technical, social, and political revolutions. As David Harvey describes this process in his work on postmodernism, which has turned frequently to space as an analytic category, "progress is the theoretical object [of social theory], and historical time its primary dimension. . . . progress entails the conquest of space . . . the annihilation of space through time."<sup>30</sup> In "Questions on Geography," Foucault speaks as well of "the devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations." "Space," he observes, "was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile." In his study of seventeenth-century classicism, *The Order of Things*, Foucault opposes temporal and spatial epistemological strategies to analyze not the "progress of knowledge" (xxii) through historical time but what he terms "configurations within the *space* of knowledge." Spatial metaphors abound: within "what space of order" was knowledge constituted? he writes of bringing to light an "epistemological field" and, in a well-known distinction, dubs his enterprise "not so much a history" as an "archaeology," a disciplinary practice that entails the compression of time in space.<sup>31</sup> Foucault's text is rife with spatial language: *fields, domains, sites, landmarks, foun-*

*datations, grounds, propinquities*. And not only nouns, but verbal forms of the spatial as well, including *extend, delimit, ground, mark, constitute, configure*.<sup>32</sup>

Foucault himself was profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre and the so-called situationists, by Lefebvre's critique of the myriad metaphoric uses of space—we speak and write of the space of ideology, of the nation-state, of literary space, the space of dreams, the topologies of psychoanalysis, of mental space, to name only a few. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre insists on the materiality of space and the work of space in social reproduction. He criticizes the geographer's traditional descriptive models, whether empirical or marxist, for their failure to express the variety of urban experience: space as experienced, as perceived, and as imagined. Not only Foucault's preoccupation with an epistemological "espace du savoir" but also his analysis of material space, including Bentham's panopticon, his critique of topography and surveillance, and his analysis of various systems of classification as forms of spatial ordering owe a debt to Lefebvre's work. These analyses of and reflections on space have in turn profoundly influenced the theoretical assumptions, substantive preoccupations, and practices of cultural critics in various disciplines, from Fredric Jameson's work on the Bonaventure Hotel and Edward Soja and Mike Davis on Los Angeles, to urban geographers like David Harvey and Saskia Sassen, to postcolonial theorists, anthropologists, ethnographers, and architectural historians.<sup>33</sup>

But urban and cultural geographers have recently begun to criticize the dominant ways in which space has come to be analyzed. In an important essay entitled "Representing Space," John Agnew argues that two models of space have dominated work in both the social sciences and literary and cultural studies: space has been defined, on the one hand, in relation to the nation-state, its territories, boundaries, and imperialist ambitions and extension; and, on the other, in terms of the core-periphery model, what he terms the *structural representation of space* represented by Wallerstein's *Modern World System*.<sup>34</sup> Culture, Agnew claims, has become a function of the structural position of a given unit—core or periphery—or, alternatively, the product of a dominant scale, a given nation-state: "Modern social science suffers from a sort of 'agnosia' (or disorder of perception) in which representations of space set boundaries for non-spatial processes rather than provide an understanding of space and society as inextricably intertwined" (261). Agnew argues instead for a "changing matrix of practices that actively mediates scale relationships," for attention to place and what he terms the "contextuality of action and practices." In both philosophy and the social sciences, space and time have often been imagined as a priori universals, with place as the particular. Recently cultural geographers have criticized that distinction and argued that both space and time can only be perceived phenomenologically, as historically experienced and constituted patterns.<sup>35</sup> Space is "culturalized" through the projec-

tion or “reproduction of determinate social actions and structures“ that transform space into place.<sup>36</sup>

Traditional models of urban space emanating from the Chicago school have recently given way to visions of the postindustrial, postmodern metropolis, a polarized city in which all the enticements of city culture are juxtaposed to urban enclaves of poverty and misery. Revitalized city centers of office towers and high-end shopping malls are surrounded by fragmented neighborhoods and “edge” cities.<sup>37</sup> These changes have affected the way cities are managed and are producing a new urban politics characterized less by the local provision of services and welfare than by what is sometimes termed *entrepreneurialism*.<sup>38</sup> The entrepreneurial city has as “its centerpiece the notion of public-private partnership” and a revival of “traditional local boosterism.”<sup>39</sup> These changes and developments in urban spatiality, governance, and self-promotion are useful and provocative for thinking about the early modern city, as we shall see.

This book seeks to show how London and Paris become the overdetermined cultural capitals they became by the eighteenth century and, to some degree, remain today. What material and social actions and structures, from bridge building to theater, to reading and print culture, to the commemoration of and perception of death, produced and registered that transformation? How were London and Paris constituted through images and representations? How did antiquarians and travel writers engage in what today is termed “place marketing”? How did inhabitants, both high and low, and travelers to these two cities perceive urban space and not only represent it, but constitute the new metropolis?

In what follows I will be looking in some detail at the interaction of temporal change with space, place, and cultural production. My inquiry begins in the late sixteenth century, when antiquarians, writers, engravers, and the like first responded to the population explosion in London and Paris; it ends in the 1660s, when London suffered both the plague and the Great Fire, and in Paris with the initial construction of Versailles in 1668 following Louis XIV’s determination, in the aftermath of the Fronde, to move political power out of Paris, away from the disorder of the urban street. The aim is not “coverage” or the encyclopedic, which would be impossible in any case; instead, my approach recognizes that what we seek in the past is always an object that cannot be found, that grand narratives and causes are provisional and partial.<sup>40</sup> Yet by reading a range of cultural texts—both texts specific to a given culture, and cultural formations read as texts—I seek to demonstrate what has been termed their “cultural exemplarity.”<sup>41</sup> If what we term *modernity* is to be found in the early modern city and its cultural remains, perhaps, as I have suggested earlier, how *modernity* is conceptualized needs to be rethought. The readings that follow offer arguments and raise questions that should provoke readers to further reflection and intellectual work.

Introductions conventionally include a rundown of chapters in which their contents are presented in outline form, an aid to the reader who seeks to know what is to come, particularly when book and chapter titles have become increasingly elliptical and often indicate less and less of what is in store. Before laying out what the reader can expect in the chapters to follow, let me offer some further indications of this book's theoretical questions and assumptions. Like my earlier books *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* and *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Science, Visuality, Cultural Capitals* is concerned with the uneasy relations between history and cultural production; with the status of the archive in literary studies; with the constitution and practice of cultural studies and its objects of study; and with the marginalization of the early modern or "old stuff." These broader, theoretical issues are addressed via readings of early modern visual and verbal texts: the work of the French neoclassical poet and essayist Nicolas Boileau; of the English doctor, essayist, and prose stylist, Sir Thomas Browne; of the French playwright Corneille; of Descartes, Donne, Thomas Nashe, and Isabella Whitney; of the French engravers Abraham Bosse, Adam Pérelle, and Israël Sylvestre; the bourgeois romance writer Madeleine de Scudéry and the urban parodist of the romance, Antoine Furetière; the plays of Dekker, Middleton, Shakespeare, and Jonson; the writings of the antiquarian and topographer John Stow and other French and English writers of antiquities and guidebooks; visual representations of the criers of both London and Paris; and anonymous popular pamphlets, ballads, and street poetry from both sides of the Channel.

Chapter 1 considers the new generic forms invented and developed to help inhabitants and visitors navigate the burgeoning cities of Europe and to aid merchants in their commercial travels. It begins in 1665, at the very end of the period this study considers, with the Italian sculptor Bernini's visit to Paris at Louis XIV's behest and considers the topographic surveys, guidebooks, and pamphlets written about Paris and London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The account of Bernini's sojourn illustrates the movement of cultural capital in early modern Europe as well as epitomizing two important topoi that characterize the early modern city: the prospect and the promenade. The *Journal du voyage en France du Cavalier Bernin*, written by a Frenchman about an Italian, exemplifies one series of displacements that mediate the notion of travel and the eyewitness account that comes into prominence in the course of the century. But the prospect and the promenade are topoi that characterize the relation of the elite to the urban environment. This chapter also considers those who walk the city's streets through the cheap print, particularly ballads, that traced their steps. Chapter 2 argues for what I call in this study the *topographic imaginary* by considering one of the most prominent images of modernity in early modern Paris, the Pont Neuf. The chapter shows how the changes wrought by urbanization come to be represented in both verbal and visual materials that illustrate what is now the oldest bridge in Paris.

It demonstrates the importance of the bridge itself as a place of dissemination and of the mix of persons that increasingly characterized urban life in the early modern period; the chapter ends with a comparison of the Pont Neuf to London Bridge and a brief consideration of *topophobia* and the Jack Cade episode in Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*. Chapter 3 is about movement through city space, about walking London, Donne's first satire, and Isabella Whitney's "Wyll and Testament." This chapter ends by considering the impact of new forms of traffic, particularly the coach, on urban subjects. Chapter 4 considers sense and the city, the new sensory dangers presented in metropolitan streets, from the fabled *boue de Paris* to urban noise pollution, by looking at Antoine Furetière's *Le roman bourgeois* and Jonson's *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*. Chapter 5 is about urban commercial places and practices and their representation in the rarely read French city comedies of Corneille that present such a marked contrast to the more widely read and studied English city comedy. Chapter 6 considers metropolitan reading; it focuses on the seventeenth-century romance and the unequal relation of women to culturally valued, educational travel by reading the work of the bourgeois *salonnière* Madeleine de Scudéry. Chapter 7 is about numeracy and the dead; it considers the relation of death and the memorial, at once an account book and a form of commemoration of the dead, in the early modern city. Chapter 8 considers prostitution and crime in early modern London, and briefly in Paris, and the representation of such urban underworld activities for the pleasure and delectation of an educated, urban elite. I allude only briefly to the cony-catching pamphlets and rogue literature about which so much has recently been written, but look instead at prostitution and Thomas Nashe's *Choise of Valentines*. The chapter and the book end with a consideration of history and the archive's relation to literary and cultural criticism and interpretation. As my title *Cultural Capitals* indicates, and as is appropriate to my literary training, my focus is on cultural and literary texts, not urban or social history. Finally, I do not attempt to give equal time and attention in each chapter to both cities and their texts, a procedure that would produce stilted, artificial comparisons. Instead I have chosen those texts and documents that best represent or invoke a particular feature or problem in early modern London or Paris.

Though sections of some of the chapters to follow have appeared in journals and collections over the last several years, those essays are substantively changed—augmented, placed in a comparative context (my essay on Boileau and the Pont Neuf, for example, now juxtaposes his Satire VI with popular French street poetry about Paris and considers London Bridge, *2 Henry VI*, and the topographic imaginary across the channel; chapter 6, which when it appeared in *Renaissance Drama* considered only Corneille's *La galerie du palais*, now considers as well his *Le menteur* and draws comparisons with *The Roaring Girl*.) *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* is a sustained attempt at the practice of comparative literature in the face of disciplinary

conventions in early modern studies that have tended increasingly to encourage work limited by the nation-state and that have moved away from the comparative practice of Renaissance studies.<sup>42</sup> It therefore posits a reader with what have become increasingly devalued forms of cultural capital—knowledge of western languages, and particularly French, and with interests in formal as well as historical questions. For those readers whose training has deprived them of the rich cultural traditions represented by the Romance languages and Latin, translations are provided for those texts not in English.