
H-France Review Vol. 22 (December 2022), No. 196

Dorothea Heitsch and Jeremie C. Korta, eds., *Early Modern Visions of Space: France and Beyond*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. 443 pp. \$65.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-4696-6740-9; \$29.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-4696-6741-6.

Review by Melanie Conroy, University of Memphis.

Early Modern Visions of Space: France and Beyond, edited by Dorothea Heitsch and Jeremie C. Korta, is a collection of readings of French early modern texts through the lens of space and geography. Drawn in part from the Guthrie Workshop “Spaces of the French Renaissance” organized by David LaGuardia at Dartmouth College in May 2015, the volume takes a liberal approach to concepts of space and geography, with contributors examining texts of many genres that engage with geography, the articulation of the private and the public, as well as spatial metaphors and travel. Many of the contributions emphasize the emergence of modern notions of space from a hodgepodge of non-systematic ideas that coexisted and competed throughout the early modern period about the private and the public, the knowable and the unknowable, the mappable and the unmappable.

The mapping of space was an important part of early modern French military and literary culture. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France saw the mapping of Paris, the rest of France, and much of the globe in an astonishing level of detail. The sixteenth century saw a rapid expansion in discourses about space, travel, and mapping, without the methodological and institutional strictures of later philosophical and cartographical projects that made eighteenth-century mapping a consistent and well-funded endeavor. This mapping was done largely from the perspective of European states like France as part of an extended military and colonial enterprise.[1] Recent scholarship has shown how this culture of cartography and mapping touched cultural spheres far from the military and exploration, particularly the literary imagination.[2] What makes this volume distinct is the editors’ insistence on the pluralism of spatial and geographical discourses, as well as the ways in which these discourses remained incommensurable. The essays show that early modern notions of space obeyed few hard and fast rules, despite the rising importance of the state and capitalist institutions in defining how space functioned. The issues of how space is felt and who has access to particular kinds of space also stand out as concerns of the contributors.

The texts interpreted cover sources ranging from visual images and maps to poetry, essays, and drama, from the canonical (Chrétien de Troyes, Michel de Montaigne, Joachim Du Bellay, Samuel de Champlain) to the less familiar (the poet Théodore de Beze, the printer Jean Passet, the missionary Gabriel Sagard), and a wealth of minor characters that fill out the background.

Indeed, many of the chapters, such as Hassan Melehy's "Spaces of the State: Montaigne and a Few Others," seek to place canonical authors within a broader context as a way of demonstrating the debt that early modern writers had to ancient concepts. The strength of this collection is that the various essays treat concepts of space across a range of genres, incorporating a great variety of literary texts and aspects of print culture, so that no major genre is neglected. A related weakness is that there is no one theory or concept of space that predominates through these diverse readings, and one can wonder whether the same concepts of space are being employed in different readings or whether spatiality is really one set of ideas for all of these authors and in all of these texts. Nevertheless, the collection demonstrates that geography and new divisions of space, such as the greater insistence on private and public, transformed early modern French culture and politics, and that literature and print culture played a large role in the new elaborations of space.

While the volume is divided into five sections, there are many connections--thematic, generic, and methodological--that cut across the sections. Each section brings close readings of texts or aspects of print culture together with historical context, from domestic spaces to royal spaces, whole cities, or historically understood sciences like geography. For instance, David LaGuardia's "Mapping Urban Space in the Oral and Print Cultures of Sixteenth-Century Paris" reads Pierre de L'Estoile's *Registre-journal*, alongside other texts, for hints as to how oral, print, and manuscript cultures in Renaissance Paris interacted.

The subtitle of the collection is "France and Beyond." The "beyond" is mostly equivalent to the so-called "New World" or to "New France." While this editorial decision is hardly surprising, it is interesting that most of the contributions on non-European geographies deal with religious and philosophical pluralism, a topic germane to geographical exploration but certainly not limited to it. Brendan Rowley in "Birth of a Francophone Nation: Identity and Conflict in New France" and Dorothea Heitsch in her chapter, "Early Modern Pluralism: Religious Discourse, Natural Philosophy and (Utopian) Space in France and Beyond," address the issues of pluralism that arise from the contradictions of carrying "Old World" identities to the Americas.

Eric MacPhail's chapter "The New World and the Space of Atheism" argues that religious European missionaries' and thinkers' "inability to recognize indigenous religion" was more severe due to their religiosity (p. 292). Enlightenment figures such as d'Holbach were more likely to notice that Indigenous and non-European religions contained distinct belief systems, rather than being variations on European atheism. As MacPhail concludes convincingly, for French atheists like d'Holbach, "you can't understand religion if you believe in it" (p. 292). The Jesuits and other French colonists who went to the New World looking for Christians and atheists fitted the peoples that they found to their pre-conceived ideas of what religion could be. While early modern French atheists did not necessarily know more about Indigenous religions, they tended to highlight the differences between Indigenous religions and atheism, sometimes drawing on Ciceronian epistemological arguments to disavow knowledge of other cultures' religious beliefs in general. Claiming that Indigenous peoples were atheistic, on the other hand, often "serves the cause of colonization," since atheists are considered to be "easier to convert to Christianity" and the targets of colonization projects are often said to "have no prejudices or prior loyalties" by those promoting colonization, in this case of La Nouvelle France (p. 278). The concept of Indigenous atheism was, therefore, very convenient for religious colonizers.

Many of these readings are intercultural, focusing on the connections of early modern France with classical poetry and philosophy, Italian poetry, German maps, and other national traditions. Reinier Leushuis's "The Space of the Neoplatonic Love Dialogue: Italian Variations in the French Renaissance," for example, studies Tyard and Taillemont's French-language dialogues as "imitation and emulation of Italian Neoplatonic source texts" (p. 267). For the most part, the emergence of space as a concept is described as a European phenomenon in which the Italians, Germans, Dutch, and others contributed immensely to "French" ideas of space. For this reason, many of the commentaries are on the French reception of maps and texts, rather than texts, objects, and images of exclusively French provenance. The illustrations reflect this cosmopolitan orientation, featuring Martin Waldseemüller's terrestrial globe gores (1507), the sectors of a globe laid out on a flat surface used to construct globes, alongside maps drawn from works by the Society of Jesus, Pierre Belon, Marc Lescarbot, and others. Many of these maps and illustrations are not French, and some, such as Buckminster Fuller's *Dymaxion World*, while from the modern era, have been chosen to reflect tendencies in European and Western cartography and architectural representation, rather than as examples of documents from the early modern world.

Two poles of this volume are external mapping and the sometimes unmappable spaces of private life. The chapter which engages most deeply with physical geography, as opposed to human geography, is Phillip John Usher's "The Revenge of the Mines: Earth-from-Nowhere versus Surfaces-with-Depths," a fascinating reflection on disembodied views of the earth from space and ecocriticism. Usher ties twentieth-century views of the earth from space to practices of early modern globe-making that adopted views from "nowhere," in a meditation on the exhibition curated by Bruno Latour at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe in 2016. He convincingly argues that the view from "nowhere" was and is the dominant view of earth, but that totalized globes have also coexisted with other representations of earth, including the idea of Gaia, or mother earth, subterranean maps of oil extraction, and other ways of figuring the earth as a contested space. Elizabeth Black's "Philibert de l'Orme: Building the Secrecy of Kings" links this newfound appreciation of private spaces to intentional changes in architecture for royalty. Katie Chenoweth finds a similar ambivalence towards the creation of new types of spaces in "Glossings: Reading Surface and Depth in the *Essais*," a reading of Montaigne that draws out the peculiar movements in his texts between surface and depths, public and private. Private spaces are rarely fully private, nor isolated from other types of space, but they are fundamental to the experience of reading and interpretation.

This volume presents many rich themes related to space, geography, and spatialization that will be fruitful for early modern French studies. Several questions, however, remain unresolved, notably how much these concepts of space are specific to early modern France and how much they exist in all print-based cultures, or at least in European cultures of the Renaissance. The reflections on the interplay between Latin and Greek classical cultures, German- and Italian-speaking literati, and the nations of the New World suggest that these practices of reading at various scales and with an awareness of intercultural and trans-societal influences were not specific to France. Other contributions indicate that this spatial and conceptual model was specific to the literate and print-driven world of early modern Europe, though not necessarily France. The editors focus on this media- and print-driven mode of interpretation when they state, in the introduction, that "a good deal of scholarship has emerged on the practices of cartography and mapping that were particular to early modern France and beyond," including "the relationship between actual space and the diverse modes of graphic and narrative representation"

(p. 1). But there is another argument presented in the concluding chapter of the volume, “*Locus Narrandi: The Place of Leisure in the Renaissance*” by Philippe Desan. Desan contends that space is such a complex problem for the Renaissance precisely because there are so many competing claims of who can legitimize space, whether authors, kings, or cartographers. Desan leaves aside the questions of concrete spaces and takes a philosophical approach to the idea of narration as the claiming of space. The narrator and the reader effectively made claims to space and time in their own ways by participating in reading culture and adopting leisure as a way of living. This philosophical conclusion ties together some of the earlier arguments about how print-culture participated in discourses of place-making. It also opens up the possibility that narration as claiming space was a broader phenomenon than its instantiation in early modern France, or even Europe. “To reassert his or her presence in the world, the Renaissance writer attempts to have a place of his or her own accepted by others” (p. 419). These “strategies of power,” as Desan calls them, are attempts at stamping places with authority for ideological reasons.

Perhaps this is the true reason that early modern French writers do not seem to have a coherent picture of the world. Rather than preoccupations with geography, we find instead rhetorical gestures intended to claim specific places for various authorities. This focus on rhetoric is perhaps a function of the literary-critical training and orientation of the majority of the contributors. Future work could examine the historicity of this geographical rhetoric and whether it was specific to early modern France or Europe. Discourses of place-making in early modern Europe are contemporaneous with the rise of the early modern European state, but it is not clear to what extent these discourses of legitimacy are a necessary part of statecraft or literary authorship. A volume such as this one, as well as the conference it comes out of, are ideal venues for literary critics and cultural historians to grapple with the question of how much Europe was really unique in its transformation by print culture and mapping. Since France is hardly alone in its production of maps or development of print culture, these discourses of legitimacy and place-making should be found in other cultures and places. If they are not, they may have more to do with the politics of the absolute monarchy than with geographical discourses. It is a question worth future exploration.

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NOTES

[1] Christine Marie Petto, *When France Was King of Cartography: The Patronage and Production of Maps in Early Modern France* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2007).

[2] Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

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ISSN 1553-9172