Public Space of the Domestic Sphere Espace public de la sphère domestique

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Vol. II of the Eighteenth-Century French World Centre—The University of Western Ontario

> MESTENGO PRESS London, Canada The University of Western Ontario 1997

Acknowledgements

I thank all the participants to the September 1996 Conference on the Public Space of the Domestic Sphere, the Department of French of the University of Johannesburg South Africa, The Belgium Government, the Department of French, the Women Studies Centre, the Critical Theory Centre, the Modern Languages Department, Dean James Good (Faculty of Arts) of the University of Western Ontario. I thank the SSHRC agency for the generous Occasional Conference Grant. I thank Manal Kodeih for his technical assistance in the revision of the texts and in producing a camera-ready document, in preparing the illustrations, Bill Cox and Wayne Brereton of Technological services for Macintosh assistance. The British Library gave permission (R95/1175) for the publication of the illustrations accompanying Anne-Marie Link's article. They are shown in the Appendix.

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Foreword

by Servanne Woodward

The six articles are selected from the conference, The Public Space of the Domestic Sphere in the Eighteenth-Century French World which took place at the University of Western Ontario, London, September 19-22, 1996. The topic refers to Habermas, yet what remained most specific to the topic was that it was thought in terms of space.

Dr. Benhamou presents the distribution of public and private areas in architectural design. The plans orchestrate the motions of the masters, the servants, various guests and visitors. Some oddities occur revealing important priorities: for instance, Masters and guests may be blocked in a dead end salon while the servants are clearing the dinner table they just left next door. Although the plans give considerable luxuries to the servants' quarters, conversely their contacts to the masters and their guests seems considerably reduced compared to older plans. The politics of proximity, the importance of reserving a portion of one's dwelling to guests is further emphasized by Dr. Girou Swiderski, who analyzes the housing crisis of a woman writer acquainted with Voltaire and Mme de Grafigny, with whom she also shared Panpan (Devaux) as an epistolary friend. Some of the reflections are oddly modern: certainly the ability of accommodating work-related parties in one's home plays a capital role in the business world—including academia. The most democratic society must have retained a lot of the Ancien Régime's values.

In fact, during the discussions, Thierry Belleguic observed a certain perversity of the public/private distinction at the King's court, where entries are highly restricted, but this "private" sphere tends to become the model for bourgeois customs. Hence, the private is a sphere somehow infiltrated and penetrated by the public, who in turn imitates the strategy of closure displayed by the court—a strategy of power, of politics, no doubt. Dr. Heller describes the use Rameau made of the private/public zones of influence

throughout his career. French music and painting were at the service of the crown's prestige in the Eighteenth Century. Dr. McPherson questions Chardin's poetics of domesticity in this context. Chardin is the officer of the yearly exhibit of painting and sculpture which takes place on the King's birthday. Yet Chardin's poetics relate to an ideal model for bourgeois domesticity. The court engages the bourgeois sphere in its intimacy.

The private sphere is supposed to be feminine. Some activity is allotted to women in their salon. Some theatrical productions at home engages women's talents. The epistolary genre is open to feminine developments. When studying the private and public heterogeneous interactions, women's varying position are considered as well. McPherson studied the depiction of women and children regulated by the ideals Chardin reveals through his paintings. Dr. Sol examines Riccoboni's use of the Drawing-Room in her novel Miss Juliette Catesby. The novelistic model of an endangered domestic space may come from Richardson's tradition where privacy is exploited in its inner enclosure, which leaves room for ultra-intimate perversions. The inside of inner space finds expression in the tortuous games of power made possible by the Drawing-Room for instance. But Dr. Link finds another type of permeability between the private and the public in the æsthetic representation of woman published for the broader readership of the German public in the translation of the 1803 French natural history text. The corrected and condensed version of the French text becomes an element of the bourgeois private sphere, when a specialized book is modified to function for domestic, non-specialized readers.

Marie-Jeanne Boisacq also analyzed fashion and the production of whigs; David Trott and his student, Anthony Watanabe, treated the intricacies of theatrical space; Alison Stonehouse gave a memorable presentation of Metastasio, and Jacques Lemaire presented the operative spheres of Freemasonry. Many chose to publish elsewhere or were pressed by time. Many others were victims of our stringent

policy on the focus of the topic, and our editorial policy was to gather unanimous votes. All the participants to the conference are gratefully thanked for their excellent contributions.