# Introduction

On 4 March 1838, the life of veteran English radical John Gale Jones came to an end at his home at 32 Middlesex Street, Somers Town, London. He was aged sixty-eight.[1] In many ways, his was an archetypal radical life, lived during the efflorescence of radical culture in the age of reform of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A surgeon and apothecary by training, his enthusiasm for the principles of the French Revolution soon saw him abandon his profession to become a prominent member of the London Corresponding Society (LCS).[2] Jones entered the political fray during tumultuous times in Britain and in 1795 he undertook a famous tour of the country with fellow LCS member John Binns. Together they advised provincial reform societies how to evade new anti-radical legislation, the *Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Act*s, introduced that same year.[3] With his 'great powers of declamation', he became a leading orator in London radicalism, particularly in the borough of Westminster. Jones was a prominent figure at the traditional liberal-Whig Westminster political headquarters in the Crown and Anchor tavern in the Strand, where he accompanied the legendary Charles James Fox as he entered the Great Room of the tavern for Fox's 1798 birthday celebrations attended by 2000 guests.[4] The

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1  There is no full biography of Jones, despite him being a prominent participant in London radical politics over so many years. Fragments of his story, however, can be found in almost every text of British radicalism focusing on the 1790s through to the time of his death. See, for example, W. D. Jones, 'Jones, John Gale', in Joseph Baylen and Norbert Gossman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals* [hereafter *BDMBR*], vol. 1 (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), pp. 269–73; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1968), chs 5, 15 and 16, passim; J. Ann Hone, *For the Cause of Truth: Radicalism in London 1796–1821* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 45, 89–90, 114; Iowerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London, John Gast and his Times* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1979), passim. For obituaries for Gale Jones, see *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1838, p. 218; *Manchester Times and Gazette*, 10 March 1838; *Examiner*, 11 March 1838; *Newcastle Courant*, 16 March 1838.
2  On the London Corresponding Society, see John Barrell, 'London and the London Corresponding Society', in James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (eds), *Romantic Metropolis: The urban scene of British culture*, 1780–1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 85–112; Michael T. Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society, 1792–1799*, 6 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2002); Benjamin Weinstein, 'Popular Constitutionalism and the London Corresponding Society', *Albion*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2002), pp. 37–57; Mary Thale, 'London Debating Societies in the 1790s', *Historical Journal*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1989), pp. 57–86; John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative treason, fantasies of regicide, 1793–1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
3  As a result of the tour, Binns and Gale Jones were indicted for 'seditious practices' at a meeting they assembled in Birmingham. See *Evening Mail*, 25 July 1796; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 26 July 1796. For accounts of their trial in Warwick, see *London Chronicle*, 1 April 1797; *The Times*, 8 May 1797. They were eventually confined in Birmingham Prison. For a discussion of the *Treasonable Practices Act*, see Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, pp. 551–603.
4  *Morning Post*, 12 January 1798.

same tavern hosted many of the deliberations of the British Forum, a debating club Jones helped establish after the eventual demise of the LCS at the turn of the century.[5]

In 1810, Jones was imprisoned in the detested and feared Newgate prison after posting a placard condemning a Member of Parliament, Charles Yorke, for seeking to exclude visitors to the Strangers Gallery in the House of Commons during a debate.[6] Yorke had Jones charged with a breach of privilege and confined indefinitely in Newgate. Despite the support of many other MPs—notably the independent Whig Sir Francis Burdett (who in turn was committed to Newgate for his support of Jones)—Jones was not released from prison until four months later.[7] Newgate evidently proved little deterrent for Jones's radical proclivities; later the same year he was committed to a new prison on the London penal landscape: the Coldbath Fields House of Correction. Here Jones was confined for 12 months for a libel on Lord Castlereagh, a man loathed by the radical community for his role in the harsh suppression of the Irish Uprising in 1798, as well as for his vehement stance against political reform.[8] By 1810, Coldbath Fields had become notorious for its harsh administration of justice, and the conditions experienced by its radical prisoners, including Jones, gained wide publicity.

By 1819, Jones can be found among the 3000 other shocked and distressed Londoners who thronged to the Crown and Anchor tavern upon hearing the news of the Peterloo massacre—the now infamous episode in British history in which the Manchester magistrates authorised the local yeomanry to disperse a peaceful mass protest for political reform in St Peter's Fields.[9] On 16 August, the yeomanry drew their sabres as their horses pushed through the crowds, killing more than a dozen people and injuring hundreds of others. Jones later wrote:

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5   For a discussion of the British Forum, which generally operated out of Lunt's Coffeehouse, Clerkenwell Green, see J. W. Hudson, *A History of Adult Education* (1851; reprinted, New York: A. M. Kelley, 1969), p. 49; Iain McCalman, 'Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating Clubs in London 1795–1838', *English Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 403 (1987), pp. 329–30; *Black Dwarf*, 18 June 1823. On debating societies more generally, see Donna T. Andrew (ed.), *London Debating Societies, 1776–9* (London: London Record Society, 1994).
6   W. D. Jones, 'Jones, John Gale', pp. 270–1; Hone, *For the Cause of Truth*, p. 197.
7   On Jones's confinement in Newgate, see *Morning Chronicle*, 17 April 1810; *Leeds Mercury*, 21 April 1810. For Burdett's speech to the House of Commons calling for Jones's release, see *Morning Chronicle*, 13 March 1810. Following the printing of the speech in *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, Burdett was accused of a breach of privilege. See *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 24 March 1810. On Sir Francis Burdett, see J. R. Dinwiddy, 'Sir Francis Burdett and Burdettite Radicalism', *History*, vol. 65 (1980), pp.17–31; Hone, *For the Cause of Truth*, pp. 117–219. For more on Burdett, see Chapters 2 and 5 of this study.
8   *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 1 December 1810.
9   For a contemporary account of events in Manchester in 1819, see Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 134–59. See also Joyce Marlow, *The Peterloo Massacre* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1969); M. L. Bush, *The Casualties of Peterloo* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2005); Robert Poole, 'The March to Peterloo: Politics and festivity in late Georgian England', *Past & Present*, no. 192 (2006), pp. 109–53. On women's involvement in Peterloo, see Anna Clark, *Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the*

> From that fatal day when the sword was drawn and war declared against the people of England, by the bloody and unavenged massacre of the defenceless men, women and children of Manchester, I was one of those, who made up their mind that all further praying and petitioning ought to be at an end, that the *time for Reform was past and the hour of revolution had come*.[10]

Peterloo was a galvanising moment for new and old radical followers alike, and it consolidated the rapidly emerging leadership provided by aspiring Member of Parliament and Peterloo's key platform orator, Henry Hunt.[11] Jones shifted his own political support from Burdett to the immensely popular Hunt, whose enduring support of universal male suffrage mirrored Jones's own political raison d'être.

Jones was again at the Crown and Anchor later that year to deliver a British Forum oration protesting against the imprisonment of leading radical publisher and champion of the freedom of the press, Richard Carlile.[12] Jones developed a close friendship with Carlile over the next decade, supporting the controversial advocate of Thomas Paine's works during his recurrent terms of imprisonment. Jones's commitment to republican principles was also cemented by this time: 'What then was mere youthful predilection, is now deliberate conviction, and will, I doubt not, continue so till the end of my days.'[13]

The friendship between the radical stalwarts saw Jones again rise to prominence as a key player in Carlile's post-prison venture at the Blackfriars Road Rotunda in South London. Now a veteran of the radical movement, Jones continued to delight Rotunda audiences with his political oratory during 1830 and 1831. With the closure of the venue in 1832, however, he appears to have retired from public life. Like most of the prominent male radicals of this period, little is known of Jones's family, though we know he was married. Mrs Jones is briefly visible in the public record during John's time in Coldbath Fields prison, but it is unclear whether she survived him when he died in 1838. The end of his life was also typical of many radicals of the period: he died without seeing his political convictions realised and his final years were 'embittered by poverty'.[14]

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making of the British working class (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 161–73; M. L. Bush, 'The Women at Peterloo: The impact of female reform on the Manchester meeting of 16 August 1819', *History*, vol. 89, no. 2 (2004), pp. 209–32.

10   *Republican*, 28 June 1822.

11   On Henry Hunt, see John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt: Henry Hunt and English working-class radicalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Henry Hunt, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq., Written by himself in his majesty's jail at Ilchester*, 3 vols (London, 1820–22).

12   *The Speech of John Gale Jones, Delivered at the British Forum, held at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand* (London, 1819). For more on Carlile, see Chapters 1, 3 and 6–8 of this study.

13   *Republican*, 6 June 1822.

14   *Manchester Times and Gazette*, 10 March 1838.

This biographical snapshot of John Gale Jones reveals a life that traversed radical London, both literally and metaphorically. There were many common elements to his experience, but one feature that has received only limited attention in the scholarship of early nineteenth-century radicalism is the venues in which it occurred: from the ostensible restrictions of incarceration and the conditional space of the public house—occupied under the capricious eye of the authorities and at the whim of the licensee—to the tenuous liberty of a venue owned and operated by radicals themselves. Thus, it is not Jones's radical life, per se, that is of primary interest to this study, but how his story illuminates some key sites of radical activity in the period of his radical career.

As the drive for political reform gathered pace in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, alongside London's increasing urban sprawl and emerging public sphere, the geography of the capital became patterned with political spaces. This book examines the relationship between radical activity and the spaces in which it operated from the 1790s through to the beginnings of Chartism in the early 1840s. It is guided by two overarching questions. Were sites of radical assembly more than simply physical structures within which to assemble or did the space itself affect the activity taking place therein? And what does this reveal about radical culture of the early nineteenth century and its place within the wider public sphere?

The issue of space is a particularly salient one for early nineteenth-century radical culture. Jones himself faced difficulties securing premises for his Westminster Forum—the earlier incarnation of the British Forum.[15] The view of one of Jones's close Rotunda associates, the Reverend Robert Taylor, encapsulates the importance of such sites to the radical community itself. In 1829, before the opening of Carlile's Blackfriars Road premises, Taylor had identified the importance of establishing a dedicated space from which to operate. What radicalism needed, he felt, was 'to see and feel a tangibility of our great cause about us, a substance and a nucleus; around which support may wreath itself; a place, a house…I cannot dream of an Infidel College, but some place'.[16]

Taylor's yearning for this 'tangibility' highlights the importance of access to spaces in which to assemble and communicate, to organise, gain inspiration and to embrace followers. It also speaks of a significance much deeper than merely a physical structure under which to gather.

The authorities recognised the importance of radical spaces too. Taylor's plea for a 'substance and nucleus' for the radical community spoke to the immense challenge of finding sites for political assembly during this period. When the government witnessed overt popular discontent on an unprecedented scale, its

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15    McCalman, 'Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating Clubs', pp. 311–12.
16    *Lion*, 23 January 1829.

attempts to cripple the burgeoning radical movement had a key spatial element. The two incarnations of the *Seditious Meetings Act*, passed in 1795 and in 1819, placed severe restrictions on the numbers allowed at political meetings to only 50. The acts were introduced alongside a raft of other legislation, including the *Treasonable Practices Act* (1795), the suspension of habeas corpus (1794 and 1817), the *Newspaper Stamp Duties Act* (1819) and the *Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act* (1819), which together formed Britain's domestic security architecture—supported further by a growing network of spies and informers to monitor and survey the key radical players at their sites of assembly.[17] Despite recent scholarly debate over the reach and effectiveness of the legislation,[18] when the approach of the authorities is considered as a whole, it is evident that a key aim was to restrict outlets for expression, including access to spaces in which to assemble, in order to curtail the expansion of the political nation beyond the narrow confines of the aristocratic elite.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the period encapsulated by this study was one in which property equalled not only wealth and prestige, but also political power. Inclusion in the political nation was predicated precisely on the ownership of property, entitling a minority of men access to official spaces of political power. For those excluded from the formal arenas of the political nation, then, the association of space with power—and deliberate attempts of the authorities to restrict access to spaces for political purposes—helps account for Taylor's impassioned appeal for a 'substance and nucleus' for the radical movement. For women, the issue of access to space in this period takes on an added layer of complexity, for, as many scholars argue, women became increasingly marginalised both in radical culture and in the wider public sphere.

The issue of space and its social dimension has captured the scholarly imagination for the past several decades. Scholars from a range of disciplines, including political theory, architecture, philosophy, human geography, sociology, anthropology and history, have all turned their attention to the interplay between spaces, social organisation and social movements.[19] Library shelves

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17   For a discussion of the 1790s legislation including the suspension of habeas corpus, the *Treasonable Practices Act* and the seditious libel laws, see Barrell, *Imagining the Kings Death*, passim. See also Clive Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's Terror: Prosecutions for sedition during the 1790s', *Social History*, vol. 6 (1981), pp. 155–84; idem, 'Repression, ''Terror'' and the Rule of Law in England During the Decade of the French Revolution', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 100, no. 397 (1985), pp. 801–25; Philip Harling, 'The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790–1832', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2001), pp. 107–34; Michael Lobban, 'From Seditious Libel to Unlawful Assembly: Peterloo and the changing face of political crime, c.1770–1820', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1990), pp. 307–52.
18   See Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's Terror', pp. 155–84; idem, 'Repression, ''Terror'' and the Rule of Law', pp. 801–25; Harling, 'The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression', pp. 107–34.
19   Although the literature in the field is too vast to undertake a thorough survey, take, for example: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (1974; reprinted, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Derek Gregory and John Urry (eds), *Social Relations and Spatial Structure* (Bassingstoke: Macmillan, 1985); Charles

now groan under the weight of a plethora of works that interrogate the notion of space, its definitions and varieties, and its importance to human activity and communities.[20] The concept of 'space' has been cast widely, from virtual landscapes to abstract and disembodied arenas in which discourse occurs, from human occupation of natural locales to tangible spaces of the built environment.

Analysis of the built environment, which most directly concerns this study, has traditionally fallen within the purview of the architectural scholar. The earliest sense that architecture was something more than the unison of 'form and function' saw the rise of the notion of *architecture parlante*—that architecture speaks, that it is expressive.[21] Concomitantly, the expressive nature of the built environment enabled architecture to be 'read', as one might read a painting or other form of art. Within the field of architectural studies, such readings of the built environment focus largely on the fabric and aesthetics of the site, and the role of the architect in a particular historical or spatial context, rather than the interactions and interplays between the space and its inhabitants. As Jonathon Hill argues, architects and architectural historians often view the occupants of a space as the 'intruder'—manifested, he contends, most evidently by the practice of the architectural photograph, in which the 'most obvious and important action is…to empty architecture of its inhabitants'.[22]

Many scholars in the humanities and social sciences now consider that a 'reading' of architecture and other spaces—to appreciate the way they are used,

Tilly, 'Spaces of Contention', *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2000), pp. 135–59; P. Howell, 'Public Space and the Public Sphere: Political theory and the historical geography of modernity', *Society and Space*, vol. 11 (1993), pp. 303–22; Richard Sennet, *The Fall of Public Man: On the social psychology of capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Edward W. Soja, 'The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a transformative retheorisation', in Gregory and Urry, *Social Relations and Spatial Structure*; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Allan Pred, *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1990); Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005); Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, *Gender Space Architecture: An interdisciplinary introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000).

20   Another such work, coincidentally, shares the name of this study. The political theorist Margaret Kohn's *Radical Space: Building the house of the people* was published after I began the study for my PhD thesis on which this book is based. It also uses space as the guiding paradigm for a study of the democratic movement in pre-Fascist Italy. Her study undertakes a more overtly theoretical approach to spatial analysis and provides a very useful overview of the development of spatial theory and politics. Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space: Building the house of the people* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

21   For a discussion of the change within French architectural theory that saw architecture become seen in terms of an expressive language—'something more than a mixed art uniting beauty and utility'—see Remy G. Saisselin, 'Architecture and Language: The sensationalism of Le Camus De Mezeieres', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1975), pp. 239–53. See also Richard Wittman, 'Architecture, Space, and Abstraction in the Eighteenth-Century French Public Sphere', *Representations*, vol. 102, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1–26, especially p. 16.

22   Jonathon Hill, *Occupying Architecture: Between the architect and the user* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 139. Some architectural historians, however, consider that 'the interpretation of people's social experience of spaces and buildings' is paramount in understanding architecture's 'relationship to the rest of the world'. See the forward by Adrian Forty as well as the contributions to Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Alicia Pivaro and Jane Rendell (eds), *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of architecture in the city* (London: Routledge, 1996).

formed and transformed by their inhabitants—is a crucial avenue of inquiry. Sites of human activity are no longer seen merely as passive contexts in which the human experience is played out, but rather, as Derek Gregory and John Urry argue, 'as a medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced'.[23] Further, recognition of the cultural conventions that determine behaviour within a particular site has also gained wide traction. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White maintain that 'each "site of assembly" constitutes a nucleus of material and cultural conditions which regulate what may and may not be said, who may speak, how people may communicate and what importance must be given to what is said'.[24] The relationship between culture and space, to borrow from Allan Pred, has the potential to lead to 'a better understanding of human and social phenomena, past and present'.[25]

Historians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century radical movements have long sensed, at least implicitly, that space mattered to radical culture. Among the seminal works in the genre are those involving the narrative of radical culture told through its spaces. In his chronicle of the formation of a class-consciousness among the English working class, E. P. Thompson documented the sites in which radical life unfolded. He recognised that the working-class 'public market' consisted of two important elements: not only the market of the printed word expressed through the burgeoning radical press, but also the 'market for spoken debate'.[26] Iain McCalman's rich and detailed portrayal of the radical underground illuminated the less prominent and less respectable side of radical culture, including its taverns, coffee houses, bookshops and other meeting places.[27] For all that works such as those by Thompson, McCalman and others have provided a window onto radical culture, subsequent work by Dorothy Thompson, Barbara Taylor, Catherine Hall and Anna Clark (among others) has become their essential scholarly companion by bringing to the fore the issue of the gendered nature of radicalism in the age of reform. Their work has identified the spaces in which women either experienced or were denied

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23   Gregory and Urry, *Social Relations and Spatial Structure*, p. 3.
24   Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, quoted in James Epstein, *In Practice: Studies in the language and culture of popular politics in modern Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 113.
25   Pred, *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies*, p. 1.
26   Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 843.
27   McCalman, *Radical Underworld*. Other historians have, of course, noted the importance of such spaces to extra-parliamentary agitation. Take, for example, James Walvin's work on the anti-slavery campaigns and his argument that Exeter Hall 'came to symbolise anti-slavery'. James Walvin, 'The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery', in James Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society 1776–1846* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 53. See also Gillian Russell's contention that the Beaufort Buildings in London represented a 'potent political space'. Gillian Russell, 'Spouters or Washerwomen: The sociability of Romantic lecturing', in Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (eds), *Romantic Sociability: Social networks and literary culture in Britain, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 126–9; and Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell's recognition of the importance of the Manchester Free Trade Hall in the Anti-Corn Law campaign. Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell, *The People's Bread: A history of the Anti-Corn Law League* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 41, 44, 88.

access to the venues of political culture.[28] Although these studies, and the many more that followed, returned the sites of radical activity to the historical map, the spaces themselves were implicit to the narrative, rather than its driving force.

James Epstein was among the first to explicitly invoke the paradigm of spatial analysis in his studies on British radicalism. Strongly informed by work in other disciplinary fields, Epstein's work has focused on the 'logic of spatial practices' in the production of cultural and political meanings. Epstein chides historians for their tendency to give 'short shrift' to space as a 'dimension of historical agency' when 'human action takes place within time and space'.[29] He presents a series of vignettes of the coffee house and the courtroom to illustrate the connections between radical activity and space, anticipating the possibilities of 'writing histories of the economics of social and discursive space, not as a supplement—as background and context—to meaning, but as part of a complex, active process bound to the production of meaning'.[30]

This study seeks such ground. It is concerned principally with enriching our understanding of radicalism by narrowing the lens on specific sites of radical assembly to provide both a deep and a broad reading of the venues in order to explore how these spaces shaped, or were shaped by, radical culture. The following pages populate the spaces of the public sphere with their historical actors through the use of public records—both textual and visual—of the period, as well as private correspondence and secret service reports to the Home Office. In so doing, it perhaps could be categorised as a study invoking the so-called 'spatial turn', however, it does not aim to do so at the expense of other key categories of analysis, such as class and gender, but rather to complement and inform these other explorations of the complex relations between politics, culture and plebeian agency.[31]

The English tavern and coffee house have gained much celebrity as transformative political spaces with the seminal theory of the public sphere penned by Jürgen

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28   Dorothy Thompson, 'Women and Nineteenth-Century Radical Politics', in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London: Penguin Books, 1976); Anna Clark, *Struggle for the Breeches*; Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and feminism in the nineteenth century* (London: Virago, 1983); Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in feminism and history* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992).

29   Epstein, *In Practice*, p. 107.

30   Ibid. Other scholars have followed Epstein's lead. Take, for example, James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A study in English political culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially chs 2 and 6. References to other works appear throughout this study.

31   For a good overview of the often rigorous debates among historians about class and gender in the pre-Chartist and mid-Victorian period, see the introduction in Neville Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class: Labour in British society, 1850–1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 1–20. For another take on the debate, see also the introduction to Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 1–14.

Introduction

Habermas.[32] Habermas envisaged these urban institutions of the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries as part of the fabric that enabled the formulation of a public
sphere, distinct both from the authority of the state and the court on the one
hand and from the private world of the family on the other. The public sphere,
Habermas wrote, was the arena that 'mediates between society and state, in
which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion'.[33] In Habermas's
conception of the public sphere, rational-critical discourse and debate among
the emergent bourgeois about the common good helped formulate public
opinion, shifted power from the state and the court and in so doing provided
the genesis of democratic decision making. Though Habermas considers that the
public sphere was born in the 'world of letters' as an 'apolitical form', he points
to such public spaces as the tavern and coffee house as critical sites that enabled
the transformation to a 'public sphere in the political realm'.[34]

The English edition of Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public
Sphere* (published 17 years after the German-language original) soon captured
the attention of scholars of Britain, both because of the prominence of the British
Isles in Habermas's account of the historical conditions that enabled the public
sphere to emerge and for what were perceived as its crucial historical omissions—
based in large part on who Habermas considered as participants in the public
sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere emerged with the rational discourse
and exchange of the bourgeoisie, and he therefore dismissed the plebeian public
sphere as a 'variant' that was 'suppressed in the historical process', which failed
to ever 'attain dominance' and instead 'oriented itself to the intentions of the
bourgeois public sphere'.[35] Students of British history, such as Craig Calhoun,
Geoff Eley, Jon Klancher, Kevin Gilmartin and Terry Eagleton, swiftly took
exception to Habermas's dismissal of the plebeian public sphere in the British
context.[36] As Eley suggests, 'private people putting reason to use' could be found

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32 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a category of
bourgeois society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). Richard Sennet also considered
the coffee house as a transformative social space due to its egalitarian ideals and forum for free speech. Sennet,
*The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 80–4. There are many scholarly works that focus on Habermas and the British
coffee house. See, for example, the recent paper by Brian Cowan, 'Publicity and Privacy in the History of the
British Coffeehouse', *History Compass*, vol. 5, no. 4 (2007), pp. 1180–213. For further discussion of the coffee
house and the tavern as spaces of the public sphere, see also Chapter 5 of this study.
33 Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An encyclopedia article', in Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas
Kellner (eds), *Critical Theory and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 137.
34 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, pp. 33–6, 51–9.
35 Ibid., p. xviii.
36 See Craig Calhoun's introduction in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge,
Mass.: MIT Press, 1992); and the contribution in that volume by Geoff Eley, 'Nations, Publics, and Political
Cultures: Placing Habermas in the nineteenth century', pp. 289–339; Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism,
From the Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984); Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading
Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987). For an overview of the scholarship that
has sought to restore the place of the plebeian public sphere, see Kevin Gilmartin, 'Popular Radicalism and the
Public Sphere', *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1994), pp. 549–57; idem, *Print Politics: The press and
radical opposition in early nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–10.

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beyond the confines of the bourgeoisie, and the public sphere quickly acquired 'broader democratic resonance' than Habermas's bourgeois construct allowed.[37] And, as Calhoun adds, the discourse of 'artisans, workers and others' cannot be understood as simply 'derivative of the bourgeois public sphere'.[38] Moreover, he continues, 'the absence of social movements from Habermas's account thus also reflects an inattention to agency, to the struggles by which both the public sphere and its participants are actively made and remade' or, further, the ability to 'permeat[e] it with demands from below'.[39]

The revisionist case to re-situate plebeian players in the public sphere has fostered further scholarly debate about the nature of their participation. Did the plebeian public arena constitute a counter-public sphere, or spheres, which either operated beyond, or overlapped with, the mainstream?[40] Or does Habermas's classical public sphere require reframing to take account of a wider breadth of participants? Terry Eagleton, for instance, considers that 'the whole epoch of the intensive class struggle' presented by E. P. Thompson constituted 'nothing less than a "counter-public sphere"'.[41] James Epstein also contends that 'radical dining during the early nineteenth century can be viewed as an aspect of the attempt to fashion an autonomous and distinctly working-class or plebeian "public sphere"', which operated in parallel with the bourgeois public sphere.[42] Kevin Gilmartin, for one, considers this position is overstating the independence of the radical sphere and is concerned that the tendency of revisionist theorists to '"pluralize" and "multiply" as well as spectralize the concept of the public sphere' is at odds with the radicals' own desire for 'unity in opposition and for a limit to counter-publicity', and their own testing of the boundaries of the public sphere, which closer resembles Habermas's 'relatively monolithic theory of the classical public sphere'.[43]

This study heeds Gilmartin's warning to 'remain sensitive to historical variations' in its consideration of the counter-sphere argument as it populates these radical spaces. It also remains mindful of Eley's proposition that the 'public sphere makes more sense as the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place'.[44] This analysis of radical spaces traces the expanding political nation and in so doing interrogates

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37   Eley, 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures', p. 304.
38   Calhoun, 'Introduction', in his *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p. 38.
39   Ibid., p. 39.
40   For an overview of the debate, see Gilmartin, 'Popular Radicalism and the Public Sphere', pp. 547–9; Orrin N. C. Wang, 'Romancing the Counter-Public Sphere: A response to Romanticism and its publics', *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1994), pp. 579–88.
41   Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 36.
42   James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political language, ritual and symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 150.
43   Gilmartin, 'Popular Radicalism and the Public Sphere', p. 556.
44   Eley, 'Nations, Publics and Political Culture', p. 306.

both Habermas's contention that the plebeian public sphere was merely an imitation of the bourgeois sphere and the dichotomy inherent in the analysis of Epstein (and others) between the bourgeois and plebeian spheres. As we can see in the opening biographical snapshot of John Gale Jones, he moved within and between many institutions of the public sphere, and the chapters that follow also make the case for a more integrated and symbiotic relationship than perhaps the bourgeois–plebeian or the counter-mainstream dichotomies allow.

By populating the spaces of the public sphere, this study also aims to address a second major criticism of the Habermas vision: his neglect of the issue of gender in the construction of the public sphere. The English translation of *Structural Transformation* in 1989 drew sustained criticism from feminist scholars, such as Joan Landes, who argued that the gendered exclusion was not merely incidental to the formation of the public sphere, but rather that its masculine construction was crucial to its very formation.[45] Many scholars also took Habermas to task for the relegation of women to the private sphere of the family as a new 'source of subjectivity'.[46] There is now a growing body of knowledge that situates women within the public sphere and views the boundaries between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere as more fluid than Habermas originally envisaged. As Brian Cowan notes, 'the public sphere was (and is) imagined in a manner quite different from the ways in which [it] was enacted in daily life'.[47] In the pages that follow, we will find women where none were thought to gather.

Habermas's neglect of both the issue of gender and plebeian participation can be partly attributed, as Calhoun notes, to his 'general lack of attention to the nineteenth-century public sphere' as well as 'thinness of attention to matters of culture and the construction of identity'.[48] This relationship between identity and radical culture and the public sphere is another central tenet of this book. The radical movement was a loose collective at this time, fractured by ideological affiliation, allegiances to prominent leaders, tensions over religious dissent and the means by which to effect change. This study explores how various venues across London allowed both leaders and followers a collective identity in the years before the disparate working-class movements were encompassed under the umbrella of Chartism or trade unionism.

Despite the paucity of attention to the plebeian public sphere, its gendered nature or its construction of identity, Habermas's work has opened a rich and

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45   Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere: In the age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); idem, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).
46   For a thorough overview of the debates around gender, Habermas and the public sphere, see Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', *Gender & History*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1999), pp. 475–88.
47   Brian Cowan, 'What was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the coffeehouse milieu in post-Restoration England', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 51 (2001), p. 133.
48   Calhoun, 'Introduction', p. 34.

wide vein of inquiry and debate.[49] Although historians such as Cowan lament the overuse of the concept of the public sphere as an impetus to inquiry—'every era has had its own public sphere', making the term 'so fluid that with a little imagination it can be applied to almost any time and any place'[50]—and others such as Ruth Bloch anticipate that the concept has come 'perilously close to dissolving into mush',[51] or David Waldstreicher, who considers the theory 'half swallowed and half dead'[52], I argue that the use of the concept of the public sphere still has much to offer scholars of early nineteenth-century radical culture and of wider society.

A thorough survey of all of London's radical sites—or indeed the thousands beyond the metropolis—lies beyond the scope of this book. There clearly exist a multitude of such spaces, some of which have been highlighted in other scholarship—from courtrooms, taverns, coffee houses and radical bookshops to the open spaces of streets, fields and parks, or the world of the radical family home where ideologies were debated and discussed in private.[53] Instead, this study offers a sample of key radical spaces from London's political landscape of the early nineteenth century, indicated by the calculated selections from the life of John Gale Jones surveyed earlier. These were important sites in and of themselves, but here they also serve another purpose: they provide an index of the types of space in which radical politics happened.

The book is divided into three sections. Section one is concerned with a pre-eminent radical space of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, though not one of any radical's choosing: the prison cell. Although the punitive and

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49  The legion of studies focusing on the public sphere and the nature of its formation is too great to list here. Aside from the works already noted, Harold Mah's overview of the reception and use of the public sphere theory in Britain and beyond provides a very useful survey of the field. Harold Mah, 'Phantasties of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of historians', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 72, no. 1 (2000), pp. 153–82.

50  Cowan, 'What was Masculine about the Public Sphere?', p. 128.

51  Ruth H. Bloch, 'Inside and Outside the Public Sphere', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 1 (2005), pp. 99–106.

52  David Waldstreicher, 'Two Cheers for the "Public Sphere"…and one for historians' skepticism', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 1 (2005), pp. 107–12.

53  See, for example: on outdoor spaces and radical culture, John Michael Roberts, 'Spatial Governance and Working Class Public Spheres: The case of a Chartist demonstration at Hyde Park', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2001), pp. 305–35; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 208–14. For the later Victorian period, see Antony Taylor, '"Commons-Stealers", "Land-Grabbers" and "Jerry-Builders": Space, popular radicalism and the politics of public access in London, 1848–1880', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1995), pp. 383–407. On the coffee house as a venue for political discourse, see John Barrell, 'Coffee-House Politicians', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 43 (2004), pp. 206–32. On the courtroom as a radical forum, see Uwe Böker, 'Institutionalised Rules of Discourse and the Courtroom as a Site of the Public Sphere', in Uwe Böker and Julie A. Hibbard (eds), *Sites of Discourse—Public and private spheres—legal culture* (Amsterdam, NY: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 35–66; Epstein, *In Practice*, pp. 59–82; Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The press and radical opposition in early nineteenth-century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 115–57. On radical culture and taverns in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Antony Taylor, '"A Melancholy Odyssey Among London Public Houses": Radical club life and the unrespectable in mid-nineteenth century London', *Historical Research*, vol. 78, no. 199 (2005), pp. 74–95.

isolated space of the prison might at first appear incongruent with a study of rational exchange of the public sphere, the plethora of convictions for political crime in the period and the number of radical voices that can be heard in the historical record from within the prison warrant an investigation of the prison as a radical space. Chapter 1 utilises Iain McCalman's study of the intellectual culture of the 1790s Newgate radicals as a springboard to explore and compare the experience of a later generation of radical prisoners within the ancient penal site. It focuses on the 1820s, when Newgate not only housed radical prisoners of a more plebeian rank than their 1790s counterparts, but at a time when Newgate's long-established subculture and unique prison economy, based largely on the ability to pay to secure comforts, was rattled by the tenets of the prison reform movement. How did Newgate fare within this new penal regime and what effect did it have on its radical prisoners? Were they able to effect a radical counterculture within the prison walls as their 1790s predecessors had or did the new prison environment impede their participation in the discourse and exchange of the wider public sphere?

These questions are revisited in Chapter 2 within the context of a new prison on the penal landscape: Coldbath Fields House of Correction. This was one of the earliest prisons built to implement the prison reform ideals of separate and solitary confinement, and the chapter explores the architectural changes engendered by the prison reform movement and their impact on the radicals' relationship to the prison space. It considers the theory of Michel Foucault and the work of British penal historian Michael Ignatieff, who contend that the impetus of prison reform had more to do with social control than it did with humanitarianism. However, the radical experience of the reformed prison space remains the central concern; how the changes in architectural configuration affected the ability to forge a radical identity and resist that ascribed by the prison space, and further, whether the new spatial configuration of the prison proved an impediment to the participation of its radical prisoners in the public sphere beyond its walls.

The issues of gender and political crime provide the focus of Chapter 3, which offers a case study of a female radical prisoner, Susannah Wright, imprisoned in both the 'unreformed' Newgate and the 'reformed' Coldbath Fields prisons during the 1820s. It considers how her experience of these prison spaces compared with her male colleagues, particularly in a period when female criminality was associated with liminality and prostitution—the very antithesis of the feminine ideal. Wright's story also highlights the connections between different types of radical spaces that were scattered across London at this time and provides a lens through which to view how women negotiated these spaces.

Section two of the book focuses on a more likely institution in the public sphere: the Crown and Anchor tavern—one of the great cultural and political

centres of the metropolis. From the 1790s through the first half of the nineteenth century, the Crown and Anchor was a vibrant, visible and tangible embodiment of the public sphere. As an established space on London's cultural landscape, the tavern was appropriated by successive generations of radicals throughout the period of this study. Chapter 4 traces the representation of the Crown and Anchor in visual culture—specifically in caricature, or graphic satire—through the late eighteenth century to the period of Peterloo. Through an analysis of these visual records of the past, it charts how the tavern came to be understood in the public sphere as a radical space, but also as a site of legitimate political opposition. It examines how, over time, the tavern generated its own language, protocols and practices. The venue's nomenclature, like its symbolic counterpart, the tavern emblem, became a form of political shorthand.

The story of the Crown and Anchor in the first half of the nineteenth century is taken up in Chapter 5. In this period, the tavern's clientele shifted considerably from its association with elite politics of liberal Whiggish and parliamentary radicals to a space embraced by London's expanding political nation. By examining the tavern's radical clientele, the chapter explores who was participating in public discourse at the venue and how the radical relationship with the tavern was affected following the 1832 *Reform Act*.

The third section of this study focuses on Richard Carlile's Blackfriars Road Rotunda as both a unique radical space and a venue of the public sphere. The Rotunda was one of the first spaces controlled and operated by the radical movement itself and it drew on both new and traditional forms of radical communication and urban sociability. Chapter 6 documents the site's prehistory, as first the Leverian Museum and later the Surrey Institution, before it became a haven for working-class radical culture under Carlile's tutelage between 1830 and 1832. In Chapter 7, we meet the multivalent identities associated with the Rotunda, enabled by Carlile's success, albeit briefly, to combine all the elements of plebeian radicalism under the one roof. It also explores the tensions inherent in London radicalism at this period and how these impacted on the space of the Rotunda and wider radical culture.

The final chapter in this study again brings the gendered nature of such sites of assembly to the fore and explores the participation of women at the Rotunda, both as platform orators and as audience members, in a venue whose dominant public identity was essentially masculine. At a time when the feminine ideal was increasingly celebrated as apolitical, and in a period when scholars consider women were increasingly marginalised from the public sphere, the Rotunda's emphasis on gender inclusion and its repercussions for radical culture warrant investigation.

The book argues the case that space offers a useful unit of analysis, providing a highly focused index of radical culture and experience over time. It takes a narrative approach, utilising the concepts of space, identity and the public sphere as guiding paradigms for the study of radical spaces. Intermittently, it engages in a conversation with relevant theoretical concepts, rather than offering a sustained analysis of any one theory itself. The radical spaces themselves are of uppermost concern and drive the analysis, along with the historical actors who populated them—both the few who are identified and the many more who remain anonymous. These radical spaces provided a generation of men and women excluded from the formal machinery of politics with a voice in the public sphere. We only need now to open the doors and enter.