

## Urban Space and Social Distinction

### The Rise of the Public, Private and Anonymous Spheres

This essay will discuss the rise of an urban ‘public sphere’ well before the eighteenth century in the context of the concomitant emergence of both an ‘anonymous’ and a ‘private sphere’. This three-tiered transformation of urban life will be approached from the perspective of the history of social distinction in the emerging market society of seventeenth-century Amsterdam.

#### 1. The Origins of the Public Sphere

While discussions of urban space have been strongly influenced by the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, spatiality itself only played a minor role in Habermas’ oft-quoted work. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* primarily concerned the merger of civil society and a political sphere that had formerly been exclusively dominated by the non-public institutions of the state.<sup>1</sup> Historians and sociologists have given the original concept a spatial turn by focusing attention on the locations where a politicized public convened, including such informal institutions as theatres, coffee-houses, clubs, academies and salons.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of its application, Habermas’ proposed genealogy of the public sphere has been criticized for recognizing the emergence of a public sphere only in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Historians have noted that the first coffee-houses and public theatres, which Habermas refers to as locations of the public sphere’s development, had appeared in Amsterdam and London during the last decades of the seventeenth century. What is more, widespread voicing of public opinion

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1 Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962).

2 See Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005 [1992]), 79–80.

3 See David Zaret, “Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 212–35. See also Rietje van Vliet, “Print and Public in Europe 1600–1800,” in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 247–58.

and political debate can be antedated to the pamphlet campaigns of the Thirty Years' War, or even to the public discourses and debates of the Reformation.<sup>4</sup>

As Richard Sennett noted, the meaning of 'public' changed over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While 'the public' had traditionally referred to either the public good or to a select group administering it, the notion of what constituted 'the public' would soon come to include a diverse group of urban dwellers, independent of their social backgrounds. More and more, the word was defined in opposition to the realm of the private, i. e. life not on the streets but rather in the household.<sup>5</sup> Antoine Furetière in his *Dictionnaire Universel* of 1687 defined 'public' in part as "opposé à particulier."<sup>6</sup>

The binary distinction between 'public' and 'private' can be extended to three tiers with the incorporation of the 'anonymous' sphere. Anonymity plays an important role in the organization of everyday urban life, as has been shown, for instance, by Marc Augé's study on urban *non-lieux* ('non-places').<sup>7</sup> While 'the public' in its modern sense came to be defined by the mutual engagement of social actors, it was also defined by mutual scrutiny and observation. By contrast, the private sphere would develop into a retreat obscured from the gaze of the public. Yet urban life also enabled the development of an anonymous sphere that allowed for solitude and unnoticed activity amidst the jumble of the urban crowd.

The development of an anonymous sphere was of particular importance for the commercialization of urban *Lebenswelten* ('Lifeworlds') as well as for the processes of modern individuation. Urban anonymity actually opened up possibilities for identity role-play in everyday life which previously had only been available during particular festivities such as carnival, when the world was turned 'upside-down'. Anonymity enabled individuals to imagine themselves in a different social position. In the context of an increasingly commercialized and economically liberal society, the possibility to consume free from the restrictions of sumptuary laws provided the basic conditions necessary for turning such reveries into practice. However, without the relatively unrestricted field of experimentation provided by the anonymous sphere, such role-play would soon have been revealed as ridiculous pretention by the gate-keepers of the social

4 On the public sphere and the Thirty Years' War see Jeffrey Sawyer, *Printed Poison. Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). On the public sphere and the English Reformation see David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture. Printing Petitions and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

5 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 16–7.

6 Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel* (Amsterdam: Desbordes, 1687).

7 See Marc Augé, *Non-lieux : introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

hierarchy. In a free consumer society, the gate-keepers had to resort to more sophisticated methods than simply outlawing conspicuous consumption for the lower classes. Henceforth, habitus and sophisticated codes of civilized conduct were to play an increasingly important role in differentiating social status within the public and the private spheres and in restricting unchecked social role-play to the anonymous sphere.

## 2. Urban Anonymity

An anonymous sphere can only come into existence within an environment in which the sheer size of the citizenry, as well as its rate of fluctuation, has outgrown the individual's capacity to establish a meaningful relationship with his or her co-habitants. The urban environment of Amsterdam underwent dramatic change during the seventeenth century, ultimately succeeding the city of Antwerp in economic importance after the latter city's position had been severely compromised over the course of the Dutch War of Liberation during the final decades of the sixteenth century. By the early 1600s, Amsterdam had become the booming centre of the European economy. It drew to itself not only investors and capital, but also a huge lumpenproletariat workforce from Germany, England, Poland and Scandinavia to work in its finishing and service industries, as well as in its maritime trade ventures. In addition, religious and ethnic groups such as the Huguenots as well as both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews sought freedom from persecution elsewhere within the bounds of the liberal United Provinces. As a result, Amsterdam experienced a sevenfold increase in population during the seventy years leading up to 1660, when the number of its inhabitants reached 200,000. Consequently, about 45 % of the men and 32 % of the women signing marriage contracts during the first half of the seventeenth century had not been born in Amsterdam. Even towards the end of the century, still 35 % of the men and 20 % of the women officially entering wedlock were non-natives.<sup>8</sup> In addition to those registered newcomers, tens of thousands of seasonal labourers, arriving not only from the surrounding rural areas, but also from foreign countries, populated the city. This sudden demographic rise also necessitated a physical expansion of the city, a transformation of urban space which contributed to the breakdown and reorganization of traditional structures within the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. Under the circumstances of massive im-

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8 Erika Kuipers and Maarten Prak, "Gevestigden en Buitenstanders," in *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam*, vol. 2,1, ed. Willem Frijhoff and Maarten Prak (Amsterdam: SUN, 2004), 189 – 240, 191.

migration, widespread construction and social change, existing conventions and social coherence were disrupted.

One of the most prominent commentators upon the emerging anonymous sphere and its interconnectedness with the urban public and private sphere during the first half of the seventeenth century was René Descartes. Between the early 1620s and his death in 1650, Descartes had been an itinerant on the routes that connected the capitals of the European ‘Republic of Letters’. Amongst other cities, he lived in Paris, Poitou, Amsterdam, Leiden, The Hague and Stockholm, as well as other towns in Germany and Denmark. However, his relationship to these urban sites was fraught with tension, for while on the one hand he cherished the comforts and stimulation to be found in the great cities and towns, yet on the other he sought solitude and withdrawal from common opinion and the boring conversations that distracted him from his philosophical writings. While he found it impossible during his stays in Paris to escape the public sphere where his notoriety obliged him to engage in endless conversations which produced in him “chimeras instead of philosophical thoughts”,<sup>9</sup> the ambience he found in Amsterdam, by contrast, provided the perfect conditions for retreat and solitude within the city itself. In 1639 he wrote to his friend Guez de Balzac in Paris, that

in this great city where I am, containing not a single man except me who doesn’t pursue a career in trade, everyone is so attentive to his own profit that I could live here my entire life without ever being seen by anyone. I take walks every day amidst the confusion of a great multitude [...]. Even the noise of their bustle does not interrupt my reveries.<sup>10</sup>

Besides people being busy and simply attending to their own affairs, the commercialization and monetization of everyday life in Amsterdam also helped to create an anonymous atmosphere. Money, as Keith Hart has argued convincingly, is both personal and impersonal. It serves as a social memory, but also allows one to conduct economic transaction anonymously, thus reinforcing the trend of modernizing societies towards individuation and social atomization. Anonymity is inscribed into the very means by which transactions in a monetized economy take place.<sup>11</sup>

9 Stéphane Van Damme, “‘The world is too large’: Philosophical Mobility and Urban Space in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *French Historical Studies* 29, 3 (2006), 379 – 406, 383.

10 Quoted in Kevin Dunn, “‘A Great City is a Great Solitude’: Descartes’s Urban Pastoral,” *Yale French Studies* 80 (1991), 93 – 107, 96.

11 Keith Hart, “Money in an Unequal World,” *Anthropological Theory* vol. 1, no. 3 (2001), 307 – 30.

### 3. Social role-play in the Anonymous Sphere

Depending upon one's perspective, Amsterdam's anonymous sphere and its anonymous spaces had both a liberating and a threatening quality to them. In contrast to many other European cities, by the early seventeenth century, Amsterdam as a place of liberal market economy did not know any sumptuary laws which would have prevented the widening diffusion of formerly restricted status markers. Thus, a contemporary traveller could remark in 1664 that "there was a free and liberal way of life [in Amsterdam], so that everyone, without any difference, was free to wear whatever clothing he desired and was permitted by his wallet."<sup>12</sup> In fact, people in Amsterdam dressed according to purchasing power and not according to the divisions of estates still prevalent in most parts of Europe. Beyond the possibility of freely expressing monetary wealth through conspicuous consumption, the anonymous sphere and anonymous spaces facilitated this new consumerism on a wider level still, since they allowed consumers to dress up in excess of their actual social standing without being immediately identified as impostors by neighbours or other acquaintances.

The impostor was a much debated phenomenon in early modern Amsterdam, frequently mentioned in Dutch literature of Descartes' time. Of the numerous contemporary sources the theatre play *Den Spaanschen Brabander* of 1617 and a moralizing story from the end of the century may illustrate how pretensions to social rank within urban anonymity caused social concern. The theatre play, by the Dutch popular author Bredero, features the main character Jerolimo, a refugee from the Spanish occupied province of Brabant in the southern Netherlands – today a part of Belgium. Jerolimo is actually a penniless have-not, but tries to pass as rich merchant loaded with cash and in possession of both East India Company shares and valuable goods. Conscious of the city's anonymity and of the possibilities for social role-play which he intends to exploit, Jerolimo self-reflectively proclaims at the beginning of the play that "even though you can see people, you never know their heart or their qualities."<sup>13</sup> Pretending to be a gentleman of renown, he puts on display an ostentatious identity marked by elegant clothing and gesture, eloquent speech, and stylish manners, though he is in fact bankrupt, possessing not even enough money to furnish his room or to pay his rent. The play ends with Jerolimo's various creditors gathering at his home, but Jerolimo has already fled the city. The bystanders complain about their losses and comment regretfully upon a changing urban society in which

12 D. van Nispen, *Den verkeerden Pernassus, of De gehoonde à la mode, Gebrilde werelt, Hemelvaart der waerheyt, en De gespoiljeerde post*, ([s.l.]: Momus Knapen, 1664), 142.

13 C. Stutterheim, G.A. Bredero's *Spaanschen Brabander* (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink / Noorduijn, 1974), 156.

mutual relations of trust and recognition have been replaced by anonymity, insecurity and the ever present threat of deceit. The play closes with the moral advice: "Remember, even though you see people, you do not know them."<sup>14</sup>

A similar case of constructing an imposturous identity through ostentatious display within the anonymous sphere was recounted in a pamphlet of unknown authorship, published at the end of the seventeenth century: Here a young girl tries to escape her poor social background by dating army officers. Such men were generally considered to be a good match for a middle-class woman, since they received a regular income and their position accorded them some standing in society. She meets them during her evening strolls and for her rendezvous, dolls up in a Japanese Gown – the latest fashion of the day, very expensive and well beyond her actual financial means. She duly impresses her date but, careful to ensure that her fake identity does not collapse, she knows that she must restrict her presentation to the anonymous sphere of the street: "as she lived in a room as dark as a coal cellar, she was cautious enough not to ask any gentleman to come to her place after he had addressed her during an evening promenade."<sup>15</sup> Her efforts to get promoted in the social hierarchy eventually fail and the story ends with the moral advice that she should dress according to her social rank, return from the anonymity of the city to her parents' home and take up an appropriate occupation as a maidservant.

From the point of view of the conservative elites, the impostor who benefited from the new sartorial liberalism of the anonymous sphere was perceived as a threat to the moral order of the city. Numerous criticisms were raised that "not the wallet but social standing should determine a person's clothing,"<sup>16</sup> or that "today everyone dresses up with clothes and embellishments so that you cannot tell the difference any longer between a burgher, a peasant or nobleman."<sup>17</sup> In a theatre play towards the end of the century, a female character from the higher ranks of society asked quite desperately how the difference between herself and a woman from the lower classes should be made visible, if clothing did not respect the social order.<sup>18</sup> In the expanding economy of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, rising living standards, the growing consumerism of the lower classes and an expanding group of up-start nouveaux riches began to have an erosive

14 Ibid., 323.

15 *Wonderlyke levensbeschryvingen, van elf extra schoone juffers na de mode, geboortig van Amsterdam, s' Hage, Rotterdam en elders. Doormengd met zeer raare en wonderlyke kluchten*, ([s.l.], 17xx).

16 Willem Telinck, *Den spiegel der zedicheyt, daer in alle soorten van menschen haer selven besierende, bemercken mogen oft sy oock niet geweken zijn van de eenvoudicheyt die sy in hare kleedinge behoorden te betrachten*, (Amstelredam: Mart. Jansz. Brandt, 1626), 24.

17 Quoted in A. Deursen, *Mensen van klein Vermogen. Het Kopergeld van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1991), 217–8.

18 Pieter Bernagie, *De Goe Vrouw* (Amsterdam: Albert Magnus, 1686), 32–3.

effect upon the display and recognition of traditional social hierarchies. It was particularly the rise of an anonymous sphere within the city, its manifestation in street life as well as its overlap with and intrusion into places of the public sphere, such as theatres and coffee-houses, which provided the conditions necessary for such experiments in social role-play.

#### 4. Status Display in the (Semi)-Private Sphere

Individuals in urban society constantly move between the anonymous mass and spaces of stronger social cohesion like those found within the public and the private spheres. In response to the questionable validity of status displays among an anonymous crowd, it became increasingly important to back up status display in the streets with complementary proofs of social rank at home. In addition to the overcrowded living conditions of most urban dwellers, the peculiar mixture of work space, family space and, at times, space for animals in most early modern households generally left little room for a sophisticated private sphere. By contrast, as a result of its demographic increase and economic boom, the city of Amsterdam experienced successive phases of expansion, including a ring of spacious modern merchant houses surrounding the narrow medieval city centre. While the centre and some of the peripheral districts, housing the large majority of workers, lesser shopkeepers, and clerks, bustled with artisanal or mercantile activity, by the 1660s a small minority, comprising around ten percent of Amsterdam's 200.000 citizens, lived in the newly built residential areas. The extent to which these novel urban zones were a particularly fertile ground for the development of refined domesticity is witnessed by the numerous paintings of interiors produced by seventeenth century Dutch painters and which were accorded high value and importance by contemporary art buyers.<sup>19</sup>

Renting or owning one of the new houses on the Herengracht, Prinsengracht or Kaisergracht greatly added to a family's social prestige. Commercial traffic was guided away from these privileged streets, seamed with trees and spaciouly laid out along wide channels. In these areas of reduced traffic and modernized housing a whole new bourgeois culture developed around the idea of the home. Simon Schama has discussed with great skill the Dutch moral preoccupation

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19 See Jeroen Dekker, "A Republic of Educators: Educational Messages in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting," *History of Education Quarterly* 36,2 (1996), 155 – 82. See also Martha Peacock, "Domesticity in the Public Sphere," in *Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Carrol and Elison Stewart (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 44 – 68.

with an impeccable household.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to street life in the bustling commercial centre of the town, where anonymity and the ever-present possibility of meeting an impostor called into question the validity of any rank or virtue displayed, the home was seen to function as a place that more reliably displayed its tenant's status and the virtuous or immoral aspects of his character.

In fact, contemporaries self-reflectively and at times self-mockingly took note of their increased interest in a distinct private space, as witnessed, for example, in a 1708 theatre play by Jacob van Rijkdorp. In *Derde Meydag of Verhuys Tyd* (*May 3rd or Time for Moving House*) a woman demands that her husband install a nice kitchen in their new house and that he furnish a salon where she might have tea with her friends. More precisely, the tea salon should face the street and feature a large window pane, so as to allow the tea party to watch passers-by outside on the streets and at the same time to be seen by them while conducting their tea ceremony.<sup>21</sup>

This anecdote points to the double role of the window as the moral interface between the public, private and anonymous spheres and places of the city. Often, large window panes in Dutch urban culture have been interpreted as semi-public spaces, providing a means of public control by making it possible to witness from the outside what is going on in the interior of the building.<sup>22</sup> However, at the same time, the large windows made of the street facing room a semi-private space, presenting to the world outside a kind of show case, or cabinet which allowed residents to display their social prestige. If placed correctly, furniture, wall tapestries, murals, ceiling frescos, lustres and cabinets with porcelain could all be seen from the outside. Occupants could therefore present themselves surrounded by a context of prestige items and thereby raise their appearance in the anonymous streets beyond the doubt of imposture.

While this semi-public function of the emerging private sphere answered the need for a confirmation of social status imposed by the opaque anonymous sphere, it also posed serious moral questions. Vanity and exaggerated, conspicuous consumption were among the serious moral reproaches raised against those nouveaux-riches who attempted to turn their rapid monetary ascent into recognized status. Thus, merely being able to afford a spacious private sphere did not necessarily testify to established social rank and civilized behaviour. On the contrary, similar to the moral doubts which accompanied the emergence of private reading in the eighteenth century, whatever happened in the private

20 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Collins, 1987).

21 Jacob van Rijkdorp, *Derde Meydag of Verhuystyd* ('s Gravenhage: Gerr. Rammazeyn, 1708), 16.

22 Schama, *Embarrassment* (see note 20), 603.



sphere, withdrawn from the public gaze, could provoke allegations of devious behaviour.

One example, which illustrates the narrow line between a private home regarded as reinforcing elevated, civilized and virtuous status and a private home regarded as a den of debauchery is the seventeenth-century Dutch tea ceremony. When close trade relations between the Dutch East India Company and Japan brought the first imports of tea to the Netherlands around the middle of the seventeenth century, the new beverage was soon adopted as a mark of prestige among the elites. Coffee was introduced at about the same time, with an analogous social function. However, it was not long before the elites were joined by the *nouveaux-riches* and soon, with the dissemination of tea through a wider consumer market a few decades later, larger segments of society enjoyed drinking tea and coffee at home as well as in public places.

Inspired both by courtly customs and by reports from their countries of origin, the introduction of those new beverages was accompanied by a whole array of instructions concerning how they should be consumed in a civilized manner: the ownership and correct use of appliances and utensils such as Chinese teapots, saucers, cups, stoves and spoons were essential to civilized private tea parties. Yet, while all this refinement could theoretically distinguish the elegant connoisseur from the unaccustomed imitator, it was in practice a question of making but measured use of the tea ceremony. All too often, congregations of women in private salons were anathema to the keepers of morality. The latter accused devotees of the new drinks of being debauchers, literally 'time wasters,' who indulged in leisure instead of working arduously. *Zaletjuffers* ('Salon Madams') was the reproachful name given to those dubious women who, instead of managing their households with parsimony, enjoyed long *praatjes* ('conversations') over laced coffee and tea.<sup>23</sup>

The private sphere of the prestigious houses in Amsterdam's modern residential areas during the seventeenth century comprised more than just the street-facing tea room. Travellers from other parts of Europe commented with astonishment upon the abundance of private space in some of the wealthy households which allowed residents to reserve one of their salons for special occasions only. Private space also included backyard gardens which were completely sheltered from the public gaze, often cultivated in the French style and which alluded to the peaceful ambiance of a country mansion. However, once more it was a difficult enterprise to bolster social rank through a prestigious private home and yet not fall prey to the critical observation of a moralizing public. The very idea that a small number of people should live in such an

23 Ulrich Ufer, *Welthandelszentrum Amsterdam. Globale Dynamik und Modernes Leben im 17. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008), 218–9.

abundance of private space in the new residential quarters could seem morally dubious in itself. As the encumbrance of private households and the sudden bankruptcy of businessmen whose ventures had proven too risky was a well-known side effect of the city's booming economy, contemporaries expressed doubts about how many of the prestigious households were running into large debts. From this point of view, not only had many of these inhabitants failed to prove their social distinction and virtuousness by having moved into a prestigious new residential house, they had become subject to moral reproach by having extended their pretensions to social rank from sartorial embellishment to the occupancy of a fancy private home.

## 5. Social Distinction in the Public Sphere

The preceding discussion has made it clear that the emergence of a public sphere needs to be viewed as structurally related to the concomitant rise of both a private sphere and an urban anonymous sphere. Returning to the developing public sphere of the later seventeenth century, this essay will finish by discussing forms of social distinction in the newly introduced coffee-houses. Coffee-houses very quickly developed into locations where the urban bourgeoisie and merchant classes assembled and where discussions about politics could take place in a liberal environment alongside business negotiations and everyday talk. As such, they introduced an equalizing spirit well captured by a treatise on the seventeenth-century coffee-houses of London, which stated that "that great privilege of equality is only peculiar to the Golden Age, and to a Coffee-house."<sup>24</sup> From the point of view of the traditional elites concerned with the maintenance of a visible social order, the coffee-house, as a place of public convention, was subject to reproach. Like the anonymous street, it blurred the distinctions of social rank. Yet whereas the anonymous sphere did not allow for any social control at all, since individuals could spontaneously appear from and disappear into the crowd, the coffee-houses of the public sphere allowed for closer mutual observation and engagement.

The equalizing atmosphere of the coffee-houses spread fear that the established social order would be upset. From the perspective of the traditional elites, the liberal bourgeois market society permitted the wrong people to make use of status consumption and hence it was important to find other means of identifying the lesser ranks. While money could buy consumer goods, it could not as easily purchase the nonchalance of accustomed elite habitus. The following

24 Quoted in Steve Pincus, "Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *The Journal of Modern History* 67 no. 4 (1995), 807–34, 815.

anecdote concerning pretenders to social rank in a public coffee-house was recounted in a treatise on the consumption of tobacco: A group of smokers engaged in sophisticated conversation about the superiority of certain sorts of tobacco, but their pretension to connoisseurship was ridiculed when the herb they had lauded most for its excellence was revealed to be of the cheapest quality.<sup>25</sup>

The concern of the traditional elites with social habitus as a marker of social standing that became necessarily complementary to the mere purchasing power to acquire status goods influenced behaviour in the public sphere. However, as Georg Simmel remarked, all status markers in a market society are prone to emulation,<sup>26</sup> and so the concern for civilized behaviour, too, was subject to a trickledown effect. For even if the public sphere of the coffee-house could be reproached for leading *ad absurdum* the virtues and codes of civilized conduct by spreading them to the masses who practiced them in the wrong ways, coffee-house clients themselves established codes of conduct and ostracised those who would not conform to them.

Two Dutch joke books of the 1670s and 1680s provide an interesting source for the history of manners by illustrating how the strategy of seeking social distinction by ridiculing the inappropriate manners of lower social ranks worked on different echelons of society. For want of better knowledge and education, servants and peasants were portrayed as behaving unseemly in a civilized urban environment. Servants were laughed at because they did not know how to prepare coffee, and farmers were ridiculed for mistaking the fashionable beverage for the boorish Jenever-schnaps: Having bought a cup of coffee, the farmer, for want of knowledge about how to drink it, asks the bourgeois bystanders for advice. They tell him to gulp it all down just as he would do with his Jenever. Tongue and lips burnt, the farmer runs out of the coffee-house, leaving behind a laughing crowd of townsmen who find amusement in this form of social ostracism.<sup>27</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Interest in the Habermasian 'public sphere' has sometimes led to analyses giving little attention to the interrelatedness of this sphere with urban anonymity, with the private sphere and with the fact that all these developed concomitantly and in

25 Cornelis Bontekoe, *Gebruik en Misbruik van den Thee, mitsgaders een Verhandelinge wegens de Deugden en Kragten van de Tabak* (s'Gravenshage: Pieter Hagen, 1686), 56.

26 Georg Simmel, "Philosophie der Mode," *Moderne Zeitfragen* 11 (1905), 5–41.

27 Ufer, *Welthandelszentrum* (see note 23), 179–80.

mutual dependence. The example of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century has served to illustrate the complementary connections between the emergence of anonymous, private and public spheres within urban contexts. Where an anonymous sphere is strongly developed, as in a metropolitan context, the private sphere will gain in importance as a check on pretentious identity display, but at the same time it can provoke allegations of undue ostentation. The public sphere and public places like the early modern coffee-houses could be viewed from a conservative perspective as dangerously equalizing social hierarchies, but at the same time they also developed their own logic of distinguishing social status through adequate and inadequate habitus. Habitus as a status marker in the public sphere can thus be understood as operating on different social levels of urban society and must be viewed in relation to the practices of status display in the public, private, and anonymous spheres.