methodological observation right. The issue remains unresolved, but the debate continues.

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Janette Dillon’s new book on space and movement in early modern court performance sustains the meticulous historical approach and the commitment to individual case study rather than the large historical narrative that characterize her several earlier, well-respected books on performance and theater. Dillon defines performance broadly, and uncontroversially, as any event that is self-consciously scripted and constructed. Studies of court performance in this period are not unusual, as she acknowledges, and she takes the performative nature of court culture as a given; her particular concern is with space and movement. Throughout the book she mines her mainly verbal sources for what they reveal about the visual – not just spectacle, a word often associated with court entertainments that she avoids for its connotations of stasis, but also “the spatial and kinetic” (6). Among the events Dillon studies are royal progresses, royal entries, and court revels, which (as she says herself) have already received considerable scholarly attention; tournaments and ambassadorial receptions, which have not; and trials and executions, which are familiar historical subjects but not usually interpreted in the context of performance. A greater portion of the surviving records are from 1500 on, and the book skews toward the second half of the period declared in its title. Dillon offers no particular argument for beginning in 1400 and ending with the death of James I, although she does claim a near “obsession,” in these centuries, with ceremomialized space (5).

Dillon’s careful case studies give new body to the truism that early modern culture was performative, reminding us of the enormous range of significance-bearing detail in any performative event and the multiple agencies that take part in constructing it. For the most part, *The Language of Space in Court Performance* eschews general claims and historical disputes, although Dillon does at a couple of moments query the sometimes simplistic Foucauldian notion that it is the point of state performance to subject its spectators to authoritarian power. She warns that it is impossible to establish or even glean much about “behavior on the street,” and with characteristic
judiciousness concludes that neither high new historicist interpretations of state performance nor those of more recent resisters such as Malcolm Smuts or William Leahy are consistently correct: to cite only one of her own refinements, civic shows were probably more concerned with entertainment, and royal entries and coronations dedicated more to ceremony and the performance of authority (47–48). One of the most interesting methodological moves in the book, one with important conceptual implications, is Dillon’s decision to include a long discussion of Fletcher’s and Shakespeare’s play Henry VIII in her chapter on court revels. A play may be less “in earnest,” she says, borrowing a distinction Bishop Stephen Gardiner makes between “earnest” and “game,” but in the end it is not very different, in its constructed and self-conscious nature, from an ambassadorial reception. Each offers the same kind of “cultural facts,” insights into the values and anxieties of its participants, as do other kinds of performance (158).

Dillon worries that her final chapters on trials and executions may offend, by their treatment of deadly serious events as what some might call mere performance. But she makes a strong and credible argument, in discussions of the trials of John Badby (1401), Latimer and Ridley (1555), Queen Katherine (1526), and Mary Queen of Scots (1586), that all the parties involved, including the defendants, scripted and were highly self-conscious of their gestures, their clothing, and their positions in space relative to others as much as of their words. Indeed, the “rhetorical quotient” of the trials was especially high precisely because there were real lives at stake (155). Significantly, she shows that the anxiety about calling these events performance is not just our own: the accusation that any party was “staging” aspects of a trial was strongly resisted as impugning that party’s sincerity and implying a propagandistic intention, even as all sides labored in apparent good faith to script the event. The book concludes with an extraordinarily complete narrative of Mary Queen of Scots’ execution synthesizing primary source material with other scholarship, and before that a discussion of several of the executions represented in woodcuts from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. Although Dillon does not make this explicit, in effect she treats these woodcuts as themselves performances, particularly insofar as they are interested in the positioning of bodies in space. As visual representations of events, they do not receive significantly different treatment in her account from events themselves—a point that cements our sense that as historian Dillon is concerned above all not with what some might call material facticity but with the significance of event, and the human intention that is always bound up with it.

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