Postmodern Geographies

The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory

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> Did it start with Bergson or before? Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic. (Foucault, 1980, 70)

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world.... The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendants of time and the determined inhabitants of space. (Foucault, 1986, 22)

The nineteenth-century obsession with history, as Foucault described it, did not die in the *fin de siècle*. Nor has it been fully replaced by a spatialization of thought and experience. An essentially historical epistemology continues to pervade the critical consciousness of modern social theory. It still comprehends the world primarily through the dynamics arising from the emplacement of social being and becoming in the interpretive contexts of time: in what Kant called *nacheinander* and Marx defined so transfiguratively as the contingently constrained 'making of history'. This enduring epistemological presence has preserved a privileged place for the 'historical imagination' in defining the very nature of critical insight and interpretation.

So unbudgeably hegemonic has been this historicism of theoretical

consciousness that it has tended to occlude a comparable critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life, a practical theoretical consciousness that sees the lifeworld of being creatively located not only in the making of history but also in the construction of human geographies, the social production of space and the restless formation and reformation of geographical landscapes: social being actively emplaced in space *and* time in an explicitly historical *and* geographical contextualization. Although others joined Foucault to urge a rebalancing of this prioritization of time over space, no hegemonic shift has yet occurred to allow the critical eye – or the critical I – to see spatiality with the same acute depth of vision that comes with a focus on *durée*. The critical hermeneutic is still enveloped in a temporal master-narrative, in a historical but not yet comparably geographical imagination. Foucault's revealing glance back over the past hundred years thus continues to apply today. Space still tends to be treated as fixed, dead, undialectical; time as richness, life, dialectic, the revealing context for critical social theorization.

As we move closer to the end of the twentieth century, however, Foucault's premonitory observations on the emergence of an 'epoch of space' assume a more reasonable cast. The material and intellectual contexts of modern critical social theory have begun to shift dramatically. In the 1980s, the hoary traditions of a space-blinkered historicism are being challenged with unprecedented explicitness by convergent calls for a far-reaching spatialization of the critical imagination. A distinctively postmodern and critical human geography is taking shape, brashly reasserting the interpretive significance of space in the historically privileged confines of contemporary critical thought. Geography may not yet have displaced history at the heart of contemporary theory and criticism, but there is a new animating polemic on the theoretical and political agenda, one which rings with significantly different ways of seeing time and space together, the interplay of history and geography, the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimensions of being in the world freed from the imposition of inherent categorical privilege.

It remains all too easy for even the best of the 'pious descendants of time' to respond to these pesky postmodern intrusions with an antidisestablishmentarian wave of a still confident upper hand or with the presumptive yawns of a seen-it-all-before complacency. In response, the determined intruders often tend to overstate their case, creating the unproductive aura of an anti-history, inflexibly exaggerating the critical privilege of contemporary spatiality in isolation from an increasingly silenced embrace of time. But from these confrontational polemics is also arising something else, a more flexible and balanced critical theory that re-entwines the making of history with the social production of space, with the construction and configuration of human geographies.

New possibilities are being generated from this creative commingling, possibilities for a simultaneously historical and geographical materialism, a triple dialectic of space, time, and social being; a transformative re-theorization of the relations between history, geography, and modernity.

We are not yet sure enough about this incipient spatialization of critical theory to give a comprehensive and confident epistemological account; too much is at stake to attempt a premature totalization of a still shifting discourse. Nevertheless, the development of what I call postmodern geographies has progressed far enough to have changed significantly both the material landscape of the contemporary world and the interpretive terrain of critical theory. The time has come, then, for at least a first round of responsive evaluation of these two changing contexts of history and geography, modernity and postmodernity – one imprinted concretely on the empirical fabric of contemporary life (a postmodern geography of the material world), and the other threading through the ways we make practical and political sense of the present, the past, and the potential future (a postmodern geography of critical social consciousness).

In this opening chapter I will trace a reconfigurative path through the intellectual history of critical social theory from the last *fin de siècle* to the present, picking out the hidden narrative that has instigated the contemporary reassertion of space. My intent is not to erase the historical hermeneutic but to open up and recompose the territory of the historical imagination through a critical spatialization. As will be evident in each subsequent chapter, this reassertion of space in critical social theory is an exercise in both deconstruction and reconstitution. It cannot be accomplished simply by appending spatial highlights to inherited critical perspectives and sitting back to watch them glow with logical conviction. The stranglehold of a still addictive historicism must first be loosened. The narrative task is effectively described by Terry Eagleton in *Against the Grain* (1986, 80):

> To 'deconstruct', then, is to reinscribe and resituate meanings, events and objects within broader movements and structures; it is, so to speak, to reverse the imposing tapestry in order to expose in all its unglamorously dishevelled tangle the threads constituting the well heeled image it presents to the world.

Locating the Origins of Postmodern Geographies

The first insistent voices of postmodern critical human geography appeared in the late 1960s, but they were barely heard against the then

prevailing temporal din. For more than a decade, the spatializing project remained strangely muted by the untroubled reaffirmation of the primacy of history over geography that enveloped both Western Marxism and liberal social science in a virtually sanctified vision of the ever-accumulating past. One of the most comprehensive and convincing pictures of this continuously historical contextualization was drawn by C. Wright Mills in his paradigmatic portrayal of the sociological imagination (Mills, 1959). Mills's work provides a useful point of departure for spatializing the historical narrative and reinterpreting the course of critical social theory.

The silenced spatiality of historicism

Mills maps out a sociological imagination that is deeply rooted in an historical rationality – what Martin Jay (1984) would call a 'longitudinal totalization' – that applies equally well to critical social science and to the critical traditions of Marxism.

> [The sociological imagination] is a quality of mind that will help [individuals] to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. (1959, 11)

> The first fruit of this imagination – and the first lessons of the social science that embodies it – is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. (12)

He goes further:

> The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations of the two within society. This is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst. *No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within society, has completed its intellectual journey.* (Ibid., emphasis added)

I draw upon Mills's depiction of what is essentially a historical imagination to illustrate the alluring logic of historicism, the rational reduction

of meaning and action to the temporal constitution and experience of social being. This connection between the historical imagination and historicism needs further elaboration. First, there is the easier question of why 'sociological' has been changed to 'historical'. As Mills himself notes, 'every cobbler thinks leather is the only thing', and as a trained sociologist Mills names his leather after his own disciplinary specialization and socialization. The nominal choice personally specifies what is a much more widely shared 'quality of mind' that Mills claims should pervade, indeed embody, all social theory and analysis, an emancipatory rationality grounded in the intersections of history, biography, and society.

To be sure, these 'life-stories' have a geography too; they have milieux, immediate locales, provocative emplacements which affect thought and action. The historical imagination is never completely spaceless and critical social historians have written, and continue to write, some of the best geographies of the past. But it is always time and history that provide the primary 'variable containers' in these geographies. This would be just as clear whether the critical orientation is described as sociological or political or anthropological – or for that matter phenomenological, existential, hermeneutic, or historical materialist. The particular emphases may differ, but the encompassing perspective is shared. An already-made geography sets the stage, while the wilful making of history dictates the action and defines the story line.

It is important to stress that this historical imagination has been particularly central to critical social theory, to the search for practical understanding of the world as a means of emancipation versus maintenance of the status quo. Social theories which merely rationalize existing conditions and thereby serve to promote repetitive behaviour, the continuous reproduction of established social practices, do not fit the definition of critical theory. They may be no less accurate with respect to what they are describing, but their rationality (or irrationality, for that matter) is likely to be mechanical, normative, scientific, or instrumental rather than critical. It is precisely the critical and potentially emancipatory value of the historical imagination, of people 'making history' rather than taking it for granted, that has made it so compulsively appealing. The constant reaffirmation that the world can be changed by human action, by praxis, has always been the centrepiece of critical social theory whatever its particularized source and emphasis.

The development of critical social theory has revolved around the assertion of a mutable history against perspectives and practices that mystify the changeability of the world. The critical historical discourse thus sets itself against abstract and transhistorical universalizations (including notions of a general 'human nature' which explain everything

and nothing at the same time); against naturalisms, empiricisms, and positivisms which proclaim physical determinations of history apart from social origins; against religious and ideological fatalisms which project spiritual determinations and teleologies (even when carried forward in the cloak of human consciousness); against any and all conceptualizations of the world which freeze the frangibility of time, the possibility of 'breaking' and remaking history.

Both the attractive critical insight of the historical imagination and its continuing need to be forcefully defended against distracting mystifications have contributed to its exaggerated assertion as historicism. Historicism has been conventionally defined in several different ways. Raymond Williams' *Keywords* (1983), for example, presents three contemporary choices, which he describes as: 1) 'neutral' – a method of study using facts from the past to trace the precedents of current events; 2) 'deliberate' – an emphasis on variable historical conditions and contexts as a privileged framework for interpreting all specific events; and 3) 'hostile' – an attack on all interpretation and prediction which is based on notions of historical necessity or general laws of historical development.

I wish to give an additional twist to these options by defining historicism as an overdeveloped historical contextualization of social life and social theory that actively submerges and peripheralizes the geographical or spatial imagination. This definition does not deny the extraordinary power and importance of historiography as a mode of emancipatory insight, but identifies historicism with the creation of a critical silence, an implicit subordination of space to time that obscures geographical interpretations of the changeability of the social world and intrudes upon every level of theoretical discourse, from the most abstract ontological concepts of being to the most detailed explanations of empirical events.

This definition may appear rather odd when set against the long tradition of debate over historicism that has flourished for centuries.[1] The failure of this debate to recognize the peculiar theoretical peripheralization of space that has accompanied even the most neutral forms of historicism is, however, precisely what began to be discovered in the late 1960s, in the ragged beginnings of what I have called a postmodern

1. See Popper (1957), Eliade (1959), Lowith (1949), Cohen (1978) and Rorty (1980), for a sampling of very different approaches to historicism. Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (9), makes the interesting comment that traditional Cartesian–Kantian philosophy was 'an attempt to escape from history ... to find nonhistorical conditions of any possible historical development'. The key figures of twentieth-century analytical philosophy espoused by Rorty – Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Heidegger – are then presented as restoratively historicist. Rorty adds: 'The moral of this book is also historicist' (10). Human geography characteristically disappears almost entirely in this modern mirroring of nature, except as an archaic reflection.

critical human geography. Even then, the main currents of critical social thought had become so spatially-blinkered that the most forceful reassertions of space versus time, geography versus history, had little effect. The academic discipline of Modern Geography had, by that time, been rendered theoretically inert and contributed little to these first reassertions. And when some of the most influential social critics of the time took a bold spatial turn, not only was it usually seen by the unconverted as something else entirely, but the turners themselves often chose to muffle their critiques of historicism in order to be understood at all.

Only a few particularly vigorous voices resonated through the still hegemonic historicism of the past twenty years to pioneer the development of postmodern geography. The most persistent, insistent, and consistent of these spatializing voices belonged to the French Marxist philosopher, Henri Lefebvre. His critical theorization of the social production of space will thread its way into every subsequent chapter Here, however, I will extract and represent the spatializing projects of two other critical theorists, Michel Foucault and John Berger, whose assertive postmodern geographies have been largely hidden from view by their more comforting and familiar identification as historians.

The ambivalent spatiality of Michel Foucault

The contributions of Foucault to the development of critical human geography must be drawn out archeologically, for he buried his precursory spatial turn in brilliant whirls of historical insight. He would no doubt have resisted being called a postmodern geographer, but he was one, *malgré lui*, from *Madness and Civilization* (1961) to his last works on *The History of Sexuality* (1978). His most explicit and revealing observations on the relative significance of space and time, however, appear not in his major published works but almost innocuously in his lectures and, after some coaxing interrogation, in two revealing interviews: 'Questions on Geography' (Foucault, 1980) and 'Space, Knowledge, and Power' (Rabinow, 1984, see also Wright and Rabinow, 1982).

The epochal observations which head this chapter, for example, were first made in a 1967 lecture entitled '*Des Espaces Autres*'. They remained virtually unseen and unheard for nearly twenty years, until their publication in the French journal *Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité* in 1984 and, translated by Jay Miskowiec as 'Of Other Spaces', in *Diacritics* (1986). In these lecture notes, Foucault outlined his notion of 'heterotopias' as the characteristic spaces of the modern world, superseding the hierarchic 'ensemble of places' of the Middle

Ages and the enveloping 'space of emplacement' opened up by Galileo into an early-modern, infinitely unfolding, 'space of extension' and measurement. Moving away from both the 'internal space' of Bachelard's brilliant poetics (1969) and the intentional regional descriptions of the phenomenologists, Foucault focused our attention on another spatiality of social life, an 'external space', the actually lived (and socially produced) space of sites and the relations between them:

> The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another (1986, 23)

These heterogeneous spaces of sites and relations – Foucault's heterotopias – are constituted in every society but take quite varied forms and change over time, as 'history unfolds' in its adherent spatiality. He identifies many such sites: the cemetery and the church, the theatre and the garden, the museum and the library, the fairground and the 'vacation village', the barracks and the prison, the Moslem hammam and the Scandinavian sauna, the brothel and the colony Foucault contrasts these 'real places' with the 'fundamentally unreal spaces' of utopias, which present society in either 'a perfected form' or else 'turned upside down':

> The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible ... they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory.... Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. The latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner (1986, 25, 27)

With these remarks, Foucault exposed many of the compelling directions he would take in his lifework and indirectly raised a powerful argument against historicism – and against the prevailing treatments of space in the human sciences. Foucault's heterogeneous and relational space of heterotopias is neither a substanceless void to be filled by cognitive intuition nor a repository of physical forms to be phenomenologically described in all its resplendent variability. It is another space, what

Lefebvre would describe as *l'espace vécu*, actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices. It is a space rarely seen for it has been obscured by a bifocal vision that traditionally views space as either a mental construct or a physical form – a dual illusion that I discuss in greater detail in chapter 5.

To illustrate his innovative interpretation of space and time and to clarify some of the often confusing polemics which were arising around it, Foucault turned to the then current debates on structuralism, one of the twentieth-century's most important avenues for the reassertion of space in critical social theory. Foucault vigorously insisted that he himself was not (just?) a structuralist, but he recognized in the development of structuralism a different and compelling vision of history and geography, a critical reorientation that was connecting space and time in new and revealing ways.

> Structuralism, or at least that which is grouped under this slightly too general name, is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, in short, as a sort of configuration. Actually structuralism does not entail a denial of time; it does involve a certain manner of dealing with what we call time and what we call history. (1986, 22)

This synchronic 'configuration' is the spatialization of history, the making of history entwined with the social production of space, the structuring of a historical geography.[2]

Foucault refused to project his spatialization as an anti-history but his history was provocatively spatialized from the very start. This was not just a shift in metaphorical preference, as it frequently seemed to be for Althusser and others more comfortable with the structuralist label than Foucault. It was the opening up of history to an interpretive geography. To emphasize the centrality of space to the critical eye, especially regarding the contemporary moment, Foucault becomes most explicit:

> In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space. (Ibid., 23)

2. Structuralism's presumed 'denial' of history has triggered an almost maniacal attack on its major proponents by those imbued most rigidly with an emancipatory historicism. What Foucault is suggesting, however, is that structuralism is not an anti-history but an attempt to deal with history in a different way, as a spatio-temporal configuration, simultaneously and interactively synchronic and diachronic (to use the conventional categorical opposition).

He would never be quite so explicit again. Foucault's spatialization took on a more demonstrative rather than declarative stance, confident perhaps that at least the French would understand the intent and significance of his strikingly spatialized historiography.

In an interview conducted shortly before his death (Rabinow, 1984), Foucault reminisced on his exploration 'Of Other Spaces' and the enraged reactions it engendered from those he once identified as the 'pious descendants of time'. Asked whether space was central to the analysis of power, he answered:

> Yes. Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power. To make a parenthetical remark, I recall having been invited, in 1966, by a group of architects to do a study of space, of something that I called at that time 'heterotopias', those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others. The architects worked on this, and at the end of the study someone spoke up – a Sartrean psychologist – who firebombed me, saying that *space* is reactionary and capitalist, but *history* and *becoming* are revolutionary. This absurd discourse was not at all unusual at the time. Today everyone would be convulsed with laughter at such a pronouncement, but not then.

Amidst today's laughter – still not as widespread and convulsive as Foucault assumed it would be – one can look back and see that Foucault persistently explored what he called the 'fatal intersection of time with space' from the first to the last of his writings. And he did so, we are only now beginning to realize, infused with the emerging perspective of a post-historicist and postmodern critical human geography.

Few could see Foucault's geography, however, for he never ceased to be a historian, never broke his allegiance to the master identity of modern critical thought. To be labelled a geographer was an intellectual curse, a demeaning association with an academic discipline so far removed from the grand houses of modern social theory and philosophy as to appear beyond the pale of critical relevance. Foucault had to be coaxed into recognizing his formative attachment to the geographer's spatial perspective, to admit that geography was always at the heart of his concerns. This retrospective admission appeared in an interview with the editors of the French journal of radical geography, *Herodote*, and was published in English as 'Questions on Geography', in *Power/Knowledge* (Foucault, 1980). In this interview, Foucault expanded upon the observations he made in 1967, but only after being pushed to do so by the interviewers.

At first, Foucault was surprised – and annoyed – at being asked by his interviewers why he had been so silent about the importance of geography and spatiality in his works despite the profuse use of geographical and spatial metaphors. The interviewers suggested to him:

> If geography is invisible or ungrasped in the area of your explorations and excavations, this may be due to the deliberately historical or archeological approach which privileges the factor of time. Thus one finds in your work a rigorous concern with periodization that contrasts with the vagueness of your spatial demarcations.

Foucault responded immediately by diversion and inversion, throwing back the responsibility for geography to his interviewers (while remembering the critics who reproached him for his 'metaphorical obsession' with space). After further questioning, however, he admitted (again?) that space has been devalued for generations by philosophers and social critics, reasserted the inherent spatiality of power/knowledge, and ended with a *volte face*:

> I have enjoyed this discussion with you because I've changed my mind since we started. I must admit that I thought you were demanding a place for geography like those teachers who protest when an education reform is proposed because the number of hours of natural sciences or music is being cut. . Now I can see that the problems you put to me about geography are crucial ones for me. Geography acted as the support, the condition of possibility for the passage between a series of factors I tried to relate. Where geography itself was concerned, I either left the question hanging or established a series of arbitrary connections. Geography must indeed lie at the heart of my concerns. (Foucault, 1980, 77)

Foucault's argument here takes a new turn, from simply looking at 'other spaces' to questioning the origins of 'this devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations'. It is at this point that he makes the comment cited earlier on the post-Bergsonian treatment of space as passive and lifeless, time as richness, fecundity, dialectic.

Here then are the inquisitive ingredients for a direct attack on historicism as the source of the devaluation of space, but Foucault had other things in mind. In a revealing aside, he takes an integrative rather than deconstructive path, holding on to his history but adding to it the crucial nexus that would flow through all his work: the linkage between space, knowledge, and power.

> For all those who confuse history with the old schemas of evolution, living continuity, organic development, the progress of consciousness or the project of existence, the use of spatial terms seems to have an air of an anti-history. If one started to talk in terms of space that meant one was hostile to time. It meant, as the fools say, that one 'denied history', that one was a 'technocrat'. They didn't understand that to trace the forms of implantation, delimitation and demarcation of objects, the modes of tabulation, the organisation of domains meant the throwing into relief of processes – historical ones, needless to say – of power. The spatialising description of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power (Ibid.)

In 'The Eye of Power', published as a preface to Jeremy Bentham, *La Panoptique* (1977) and reprinted in *Power/Knowledge* (Foucault, 1980, ed. Gordon, 149), he restates his ecumenical project:

> A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* – which would at the same time be the history of *powers* (both of these terms in the plural) – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.

Foucault thus postpones a direct critique of historicism with an acute lateral glance, at once maintaining his spatializing project but preserving his historical stance. 'History will protect us from historicism', he optimistically concludes (Rabinow, 1984, 250).

I will return to Foucault's provocative spatialization of power in later chapters. For now, I have used his work to illustrate one almost invisible but nevertheless formative career in postmodern critical human geography, a career hidden from explicit recognition as geographical by the persistent hegemony of historicism. Another similarly hidden (historical) geography can be found in the works of John Berger, one of the most influential and innovative art critics writing in English today.

Envisioning space through the eyes of John Berger

Like Foucault, John Berger dwells on the intersection of time and space in virtually all his writings. Amongst his most recent works is a play entitled *A Question of Geography* and a personalized volume of poetry and prose that conceives visually of love, *And our faces, my heart, as brief as photos* (Berger, 1984). Symbolizing his insistent balancing of history and geography, lineage and landscape, period and region, Berger opens this slim volume by stating 'Part One is About Time. Part Two is About Space'. The embracing themes follow accordingly: the first part labelled 'Once', the second 'Here': neither one inherently privileged, both necessarily faceted together. But Berger does make an explicit choice in at least one of his earlier writings and it is upon this assertive choice that I wish to focus attention.

In what still stands today as perhaps the most direct declaration of the

end of historicism, this most spatially visionary of art historians – dare one call him an art geographer? – calls openly for a spatialization of critical thought. In the following passage, from *The Look of Things* (1974, 40), Berger condenses the essence of postmodern geographies in a spatially politicized aesthetic:

> We hear a lot about the crisis of the modern novel. What this involves, fundamentally, is a change in the *mode of narration.* It is scarcely any longer possible to tell a straight story sequentially unfolding in time. And this is because we are too aware of what is continually traversing the storyline *laterally.* That is to say, instead of being aware of a point as an infinitely small part of a straight line, we are aware of it as an infinitely small part of an infinite number of lines, as the centre of a star of lines. Such awareness is the result of our constantly having to take into account the *simultaneity and extension* of events and possibilities.
>
> There are so many reasons why this should be so: the range of modern means of communication the scale of modern power the degree of personal political responsibility that must be accepted for events all over the world: the fact that the world has become indivisible: the unevenness of economic development within that world: the scale of the exploitation. All these play a part. *Prophesy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection; it is space not time that hides consequences from us.* To prophesy today it is only necessary to know men [and women] as they are throughout the whole world in all their inequality Any contemporary narrative which ignores the urgency of this dimension is incomplete and acquires the oversimplified character of a fable (emphases and brackets mine).

This pointed passage pops out of an essay on modern portrait painting in which Berger tries to explain why the historical significance of portraiture, so often in the past the visual personification of authoritative lineage and social (class) position, has changed so dramatically in the twentieth century To make his point, he turns to an analogous change in the modern novel, a shift in the context of meaning and interpretation which hinges around the impress of simultaneity versus sequence, spatiality versus historicity, geography versus biography In so doing, he begins to set into place a train of arguments that define the postmodern turn against historical determinations and vividly announce the need for an explicitly spatialized narrative.

The first of these assertively postmodern geographical arguments rests on the recognition of a profound and crisis-induced restructuring of contemporary life, resulting in significant changes in 'the look of things' and, if I may continue to draw upon Berger's captivating book titles, in our 'ways of seeing' (1972). This restructuring, for Berger, involves a fundamental recomposition of the 'mode of narration', arising from a new awareness that we must take into account 'the simultaneity and extension of events and possibilities' to make sense of what we see. We can no longer depend on a story-line unfolding sequentially, an ever-accumulating history marching straight forward in plot and denouement, for too much is happening against the grain of time, too much is continually traversing the story-line laterally A contemporary portrait no longer directs our eye to an authoritative lineage, to evocations of heritage and tradition alone. Simultaneities intervene, extending our point of view outward in an infinite number of lines connecting the subject to a whole world of comparable instances, complicating the temporal flow of meaning, short-circuiting the fabulous stringing-out of 'one damned thing after another' The new, the novel, now must involve an explicitly geographical as well as historical configuration and projection.

To explain why this is so, Berger astutely situates the restructured narrative in a pervasive context and consciousness of geographically uneven development, into a constellation of lines and photography of surfaces connecting every (hi)story to an attention-shaping horizontality that stretches everywhere in its power, indivisibility, exploitation, and inequality. Our urgent awareness of geographically uneven development and the revived sense of our personal political responsibility for it as a product we have collectively created, spatializes the contemporary moment and reveals the insights to be derived from a deeper understanding of contemporary crisis and restructuring in literature and science, in our daily lives and in the conditions of men and women 'as they are throughout the whole world in all their inequality' I repeat again Berger's provocative conclusion. Prophesy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection, it is space not time that hides consequences from us.

What a shattering assertion for those who see only through the spectacles of time. Arising from the recognition of a profound restructuring of contemporary life and an explicit consciousness of geographically (and not just historically) uneven development is an extraordinary call for a new critical perspective, a different way of seeing the world in which human geography not only 'matters' but provides the most revealing critical perspective.

Before jumping to other conclusions, however, let us not forget that this spatialization of critical thought does not have to project a simplistic anti-history. As with Foucault, the reassertion of space in critical social theory does not demand an antagonistic subordination of time and history, a facile substitution and replacement. It is instead a call for an appropriate interpretive balance between space, time, and social being, or what may now more explicitly be termed the creation of human geographies, the making of history, and the constitution of society. To

claim that, in the contemporary context, it is space not time that hides consequences from us is thus both an implied recognition that history has hitherto been accepted as the privileged mode of critical disclosure and discourse, and an argument that this privileged position, insofar as it has blocked from view the critical significance of the spatiality of social life, is no longer apt. It is the dominance of a historicism of critical thought that is being challenged, not the importance of history Almost as if he were turning Mills's sociological imagination upside down, Berger notes that any contemporary narrative which ignores the urgency of the spatial dimension is incomplete and acquires the oversimplified character of a fable.

Berger thus joins with Foucault in pushing us towards a significant and necessary restructuring of critical social thought, a recomposition which enables us to see more clearly the long-hidden instrumentality of human geographies, in particular the encompassing and encaging spatializations of social life that have been associated with the historical development of capitalism. Foucault's path took him primarily into the microspaces of power, discipline, and surveillance, into the carceral city, the asylum, the human body. Berger's path continues to open up new ways of seeing art and aesthetics, portraits and landscapes, painters and peasants, in the past (once) and in the present (here). To crystallize and expand these spatial fields of insight and to attach postmodern critical human geography even more forcefully and explicitly to the instrumental spatiality of capitalism, the historical narrative must be re-entered at a different place and scale.

The Deconstruction and Reconstitution of Modernity

In *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, (1982), Marshall Berman explores the multiple reconfigurations of social life that have characterized the historical geography of capitalism over the past four hundred years. At the heart of his interpretive outlook is a revealing periodization of changing concepts of modernity from the formative sixteenth-century clash between the 'Ancients' and the 'Moderns' to the contemporary debates that herald still another conceptual and social reconfiguration, another reconsideration of what it means to be modern. In this concatenation of modernities is a history of historicism that can now begin to be written from a postmodern geographical perspective.

Berman broadly defines modernity as 'a mode of vital experience', a collective sharing of a particularized sense of 'the self and others', of 'life's possibilities and perils'. In this definition, there is a special place

given to the ways we think about and experience time and space, history and geography, sequence and simultaneity, event and locality, the immediate period and region in which we live. Modernity is thus comprised of both context and conjuncture. It can be understood as the specificity of being alive, in the world, at a particular time and place; a vital individual and collective sense of contemporaneity. As such, the experience of modernity captures a broad mesh of sensibilities that reflects the specific and changing meanings of the three most basic and formative dimensions of human existence: space, time, and being. Herein lies its particular usefulness as a means of resituating the debates on history and geography in critical social theory and for defining the context and conjuncture of postmodernity.

Just as space, time, and matter delineate and encompass the essential qualities of the physical world, spatiality, temporality, and social being can be seen as the abstract dimensions which together comprise all facets of human existence. More concretely specified, each of these abstract existential dimensions comes to life as a social construct which shapes empirical reality and is simultaneously shaped by it. Thus, the spatial order of human existence arises from the (social) production of space, the construction of human geographies that both reflect and configure being in the world. Similarly, the temporal order is concretized in the making of history, simultaneously constrained and constraining in an evolving dialectic that has been the ontological crux of Marxist thought for over a hundred years. To complete the necessary existential triad, the social order of being-in-the-world can be seen as revolving around the constitution of society, the production and reproduction of social relations, institutions, and practices. How this ontological nexus of space–time–being is conceptually specified and given particular meaning in the explanation of concrete events and occurrences is the generative source of all social theory, critical or otherwise. It provides an illuminating motif through which to view the interplay between history, geography, and modernity.

Sequences of modernity, modernization and modernism

In the experience of modernity, the ontological nexus of social theory becomes specifically and concretely composed in a changing 'culture of time and space', to borrow the felicitous phrase used by Stephen Kern (1983) to describe the profound reconfiguration of modernity that took place in the previous *fin de siècle.*

> From around 1880 to the outbreak of World War I a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking

> about and experiencing time and space. Technological innovations including the telephone, wireless telegraph, x-ray, cinema, bicycle, automobile and airplane established the material foundation for this reorientation; independent cultural developments such as the stream of consciousness novel, psychoanalysis, Cubism, and the theory of relativity shaped consciousness directly. The result was a transformation of the dimensions of life and thought. (1983, 1–2)

During this expanded *fin de siècle*, from the aftermath of the defeat of the Paris Commune to the events which would lead up to the Russian Revolution (to choose somewhat different turning points), the world changed dramatically. Industrial capitalism survived its predicted demise through a radical social and spatial restructuring which both intensified (or deepened, as in the rise of corporate monopolies and mergers) and extensified (or widened, as in the global expansion of imperialism) its definitive production relations and divisions of labour. Accompanying the rise of this new political economy of capitalism was an altered culture of time and space, a restructured historical geography taking shape from the shattered remains of an older order and infused with ambitious new visions and designs for the future as the very nature and experience of modernity – what it meant to be modern – was significantly reconstituted. A similar reconstitution took place in the prevailing forms of social theorization, equally attuned to the changing nature of capitalist modernity. But before turning to this restructuring of social theory, there is more to be derived from Berman's conceptualization of modernity and the recognition of the parallelism between the past and present *fins de siècle*.

As so many have begun to see, both *fin de siècle* periods resonate with similarly transformative, but not necessarily revolutionary, socio-spatial processes. As occurred roughly a century ago, there is currently a complex and conflictful dialectic developing between urgent socio-economic modernization sparked by the system-wide crises affecting contemporary capitalist societies; and a responsive cultural and political modernism aimed at making sense of the material changes taking place in the world and gaining control over their future directions. Modernization and modernism interact under these conditions of intensified crisis and restructuring to create a shifting and conflictful social context in which everything seems to be 'pregnant with its contrary', in which all that was once assumed to be solid 'melts into air', a description Berman borrows from Marx and represents as an essential feature of the vital experience of modernity-in-transition.

Modernization can be directly linked to the many different 'objective' processes of structural change that have been associated with the ability

of capitalism to develop and survive, to reproduce successfully its fundamental social relations of production and distinctive divisions of labour despite endogenous tendencies towards debilitating crisis. This defining association between modernization and the survival of capitalism is crucial, for all too often the analysts of modernity extract social change from its social origins in modes of production to 'stage' history in idealized evolutionary modellings. From these perspectives, change just seems to 'happen' in a lock-step march of modernity replacing tradition, a mechanical teleology of progress. Modernization is not entirely the product of some determinative inner logic of capitalism, but neither is it a rootless and ineluctable idealization of history.

Modernization, as I view it here, is a continuous process of societal restructuring that is periodically accelerated to produce a significant recomposition of space-time-being in their concrete forms, a change in the nature and experience of modernity that arises primarily from the historical and geographical dynamics of modes of production. For the past four hundred years, these dynamics have been predominantly capitalist, as has been the very nature and experience of modernity during that time. Modernization is, like all social processes, unevenly developed across time and space and thus inscribes quite different historical geographies across different regional social formations. But on occasion, in the ever-accumulating past, it has become systemically synchronic, affecting all predominantly capitalist societies simultaneously. This synchronization has punctuated the historical geography of capitalism since at least the early nineteenth century with an increasingly recognizable macro-rhythm, a wave-like periodicity of societal crisis and restructuring that we are only now beginning to understand in all its ramifications.

Perhaps the earliest of these prolonged periods of 'global' crisis and restructuring stretched through what Hobsbawm termed the 'age of revolution' and peaked in the turbulent years between 1830 and 1848–51. The following decades were a time of explosive capitalist expansion in industrial production, urban growth, and international trade, the florescence of a classical, competitive, entrepreneurial regime of capital accumulation and social regulation. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, however, boom turned largely into bust for the then most advanced capitalist countries as the Long Depression, as it was called, accentuated the need for another urgent restructuring and modernization, a new 'fix' for a capitalism forever addicted to crisis.

The same rollercoaster sequence of crisis-induced restructuring, leading to an expansionary boom, and then to crisis and restructuring again, marked the first half of the twentieth century, with the Great Depression echoing the conflictful system-wide downturns of the past and initiating

the transition from one distinctive regime of accumulation to another. And as it now seems increasingly clear, the last half of the twentieth century has followed a similar broad trajectory, with a prolonged expansionary period after the Second World War and a still ongoing, crisis-filled era of attempted modernization and restructuring taking us toward the next *fin de siècle*. The rhythm has been an insistent one, marking time into what might be described as at least four metamorphic modernizations of capitalism, from the 1830s to the present.

The most rigorous and revealing analyses of this crisis-laden macro-rhythm in the historical geography of capitalism have been made by Ernest Mandel (1976, 1978, 1980). Mandel is particularly effective in connecting the periodicity of intensified modernization with a series of geographical restructurings similarly characterized by the attempt to restore the supportive conditions for profitable capitalist accumulation and labour control. This Mandelian periodization/regionalization of the modernization process plays an important role in the development and interpretation of postmodern geographies.

Berman also insightfully describes the characteristic features shaping these periodically intensified modernizations. He presents the following menu of material forces which contribute to the restructuring of the experience of modernity as a collective sense of the 'perils and possibilities' of the contemporary:

> the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle,
>
> immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives;
>
> rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth;
>
> systems of mass communications, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies;
>
> increasingly powerful national states, bureaucratically structured and operated, constantly striving to expand their powers;
>
> mass social movements of people and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain control over their lives;
>
> finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market. (Berman, 1982, 16)

This awesome catalogue vividly outlines the destructive creativity so closely associated with both the modernization and survival of capitalism

over the past two centuries. It is today being repeated, with variations, once more.

Restructuring and modernization punctuate not only the concrete history and geography of capitalist development but also mark the changing course of critical social theory. To make this connection between the political economy of the empirical world and the world of theory brings us to Berman's conceptualization of modernism. In its broadest sense, modernism is the cultural, ideological, reflective, and, I will add, theory-forming response to modernization. It encompasses a heterogeneous array of subjective visions and strategic action programmes in art, literature, science, philosophy, and political practice which are unleashed by the disintegration of an inherited, established order and the awareness of the projected possibilities and perils of a restructured contemporary moment or conjuncture. Modernism is, in essence, a 'reaction formation', a conjunctural social movement mobilized to face the challenging question of what now is to be done given that the context of the contemporary has significantly changed. It is thus the culture-shaping, programmatic, and situated consciousness of modernity.

Each era of accelerated modernization has been a fertile spawning ground for powerful new modernisms emerging in almost every field of discourse and creativity. Of particular interest to the present narrative are two 'modern movements' which emerged around the turn of the nineteenth century to define separate and competitive realms of critical social theorization, one centred in the Marxist tradition, the other in more naturalist and positivist social science. Like other modern movements of the *fin de siècle*, they arose initially as rebelliously creative avant-garde movements challenging their own inherited orthodoxies with a new sense of what is to be done. To the traditionalists of the time, encased in older structures and strictures of modernity, the avant-garde movements appeared to dwell in a different world, in an alternative modernity, a 'postmodern' identity in the sense that it was no longer confinable within inherited and established traditions.

A Leninist Marxism was one of the most successful modern movements through the turn of the century, a reinvigorating and avant-garde restructuring of historical materialism/scientific socialism in both theory and practice: a modernized Marxism that significantly changed the world. Along with many other successful modern movements, Marxism–Leninism consolidated its victories in that part of the world which it changed most significantly. It also steeled itself against the great mid-century crises of the Great Depression and the Second World War, and moved into the last half of the twentieth century so formidably entrenched that it could no longer be described as avant-garde. The new

became old, the vanguard became old guard: hegemonic, rigid, establishmentarian.

This historical process of rigidification at the core of twentieth-century Marxism split the movement geographically and in its approaches to theory and practice. A more conservative and assiduously pragmatic 'Eastern' mainstream deflected theoretical criticism and innovation to what has come to be called Western Marxism, removed enough from the central orthodoxies of Marxism–Leninism to be distinctive but too close to represent an autonomous modern movement of its own.[3] It is from within this 'peripheral' current of Western Marxism that the reassertion of space and the critique of historicism eventually emerge.

Arising in part as a reaction to the restructuring of Marxism was the consolidation of the Western, Modern, or, from a Marxist standpoint, bourgeois social sciences, a much more compartmentalized and fragmented intellectual division of labour than that which came forward from the modernization of the Marxist tradition. There were, nonetheless, some remarkable similarities. Both arose from the intellectual, political, and institutional struggles that developed in the late nineteenth century as competitive reinterpretations of how best to theorize and induce progressive changes in the modern social order (just as Marx and Comte attempted to do in response to the ending of the earlier age of revolution, after the first systemic modernization of capitalism). The social sciences also developed an internal division between an increasingly orthodox and hegemonic core tradition based largely on an instrumental and increasingly positivist appropriation of natural science methods in social analysis and theorization, and a collation of critical variants constantly pressing against disciplinary rigidification, fragmentation and scientism. This critical social science shared with Western Marxism two additional features. an emancipatory interest in the power of human consciousness and social will to break through all exogenous constraints; and a critical inscription of this social power and potentially revolutionary subjectivity in the 'making of history', in historical modes of explanation and interpretation, confrontation and critique.[4]

3. Precisely defining the boundaries and topography of Western Marxism is still a controversial issue. My definition is roughly the same as Anderson's (1976) for the period up to the 1960s, but closer to Jay's (1984) since then – that is, it encompasses continental and Anglo-American leftist scholars as well as several self-proclaimed non-Marxists of particular prominence, including, as Anderson seems loath to do, Michel Foucault.

4. Hughes (1958) still offers one of the best descriptions of the formation of this social science countertradition around the turn of the century. Twentieth-century critical social science has also mimicked the critical theories of Western Marxism in being too close to the mainstream to be defined as a separate modern movement but distinct enough to establish its own identifiable boundaries, traditions, and topography.

The *fin de siècle* thus brought with it a recomposed culture of time and space and a bifurcated critical social theory that was imbued, in both its major variants, with an invigorated historical imagination. What our accumulated histories of theoretical consciousness do not tell us, however, is that the modernisms which celebrated this historical imagination simultaneously induced a growing submergence and dissipation of the geographical imagination, a virtual annihilation of space by time in critical social thought and discourse. The quiet triumph of historicism has, in turn, deeply shaped Western intellectual history over the past hundred years.

The subordination of space in social theory: 1880–1920

A distinctively different culture and consciousness of space, time, and modernity emerged in the decades preceding and following the end of the nineteenth century. Although actually lived experience may not have induced such a logical prioritization, at each level of philosophical and theoretical discourse, from ontology and epistemology to the explanation of empirical events and the interpretation of specific social practices, the historical imagination seemed resolutely to be erasing a sensitivity to the critical salience of human geographies. By the end of this period, the ascendance of a historicism of theoretical consciousness had reached such heights that the possibility of a critical human geography was made to appear inconceivable if not absurdly anachronistic to generations of Western Marxists and critical social scientists.

In the wake of these developments, the discipline of Modern Geography, which also took shape in the late nineteenth century, was squeezed out of the competitive battleground of theory construction. A few residual voices were heard, but the once much more central role of geographical analysis and explanation was reduced to little more than describing the stage-setting where the real social actors were deeply involved in making history. Social theorization thus came to be dominated by a narrowed and streamlined historical materialism, stripped of its more geographically sensitive variants (such as the utopian and anarchist socialisms of Fourier, Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Bakunin, as well as the pragmatic territorialism of social democracy); and a set of compartmentalized social sciences, each on its own becoming increasingly positivist, instrumental (in the sense of serving to improve capitalism rather than transform it), and, with a few exceptions, less attentive to the formative spatiality of social life as a template of critical insight.

In at least one of the disciplinary orthodoxies that consolidated around the turn of the century, the neo-classical economics of Marshall, Pigou, and others, the subordination of space was so great that its most

influential theoreticians proudly produced visions of a depoliticized economy that existed as if it were packed solidly on to the head of a pin, in a fantasy world with virtually no spatial dimensions. Real history was also made to stand still in neo-classical economics and other variants of positivist and functionalist social science (as well as in some versions of modern Marxism), but the logic of time in the abstract was attended to through notions of causal process and sequential change, a comparative statics that rooted itself in natural science models of antecedent cause/subsequent effect and the search for disengagingly independent variables. One might describe this as a mechanistic temporalism rather than an historicism of theory construction, but it tended just the same to expel spatiality

Outside these disciplinary orthodoxies, in the two major streams of critical social theory, the imprint of historicism centered interpretation around the temporal dynamics of modernization and modernism. Modernization was conceptualized in Marxian political economy first of all in the revolutionary transition from feudalism to capitalism, the most epochal of all societal restructurings of the past and the defining moment for the conjunction of modernity with a particular mode of production. Marx built his critical understanding of capitalism from this transition and from the profound restructuring that took place during the age of revolution. But there was another problematic transition unfolding in the *fin de siècle* that required more than Marx's *Capital* to be understood theoretically and politically The interpretation of this modernization process, its perils as well as its new possibilities, came to be dominated by a Leninist vanguard responding to the protracted rise of monopoly capital, corporate power, and the imperialist state.

There was great sensitivity to geographical issues in the writings of Lenin, Luxemburg, Bukharin, Trotsky, and Bauer, the key figures leading the early twentieth-century modernization of Marxism. Although not always in agreement, their collective works supplied a rich foundation for a Marxist theory of geographically (as well as historically) uneven development, one which built upon and extended in scope and scale that most geographically revealing of Marx's concepts, the syncretizing and synchronic antagonism between city and countryside, the agglomerative centre and the dissipative periphery Nonetheless, *fin de siècle* Marxism remained solidly encased in historicism. The motor behind uneven development was quintessentially historical: the making of history through the unfettering struggle of social classes. The geography of this process, when it was seen at all, was recognized either as an external constraint or as an almost incidental outcome. History was the emotive variable container; geography, as Marx put it earlier, was little more than an 'unnecessary complication'. Like capitalism itself, the modern

critique of capitalism seemed to be propelled through an annihilation of space by time. These early theories of imperialism would be resurrected later to assist in the reassertion of space in Marxist social theory, but this was more an act of desperation than inspiration, tapping one of the few areas of modern Marxist thought where geography seemed to matter

In the critical social sciences, modernization was conceptualized around an at least superficially similar historical rhythm and rationalization, initiated with the origins of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution and moving through another troublesome transition at the end of the nineteenth century. Recomposing some of the same sources inspiring Western Marxism, from Kant and Hegel to Marx himself, critical social science characteristically defined this latter transition as the conclusive and categorical passage from Tradition to Modernity, *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, mechanical to organic solidarity. For the major theoreticians, Modernity (with a capital M) had indeed arrived, for better and worse. Above all, it demanded to be understood as the dominant theoretical and political referant, both at home and abroad.

What Marxists saw as the rise of imperialism via the internationalization of finance capital, the critical social scientists began to interpret as the time-lagged diffusion of development (as capitalist modernity) to the undeveloped, traditional, not yet fully modernized parts of the world. Here too there was a primarily Eurocentric vision which attached modernization everywhere to the historical dynamics of European industrial capitalism, to what Foucault described as 'the menacing glaciation of the world'. But whereas Marxism's theorization of history maintained a singular critical focus, social science rendered its critical historicism in many different versions: the methodological individualism of Max Weber, the sociology of collective consciousness of Émile Durkheim, the neo-Kantian scepticism of Georg Simmel, the intentional phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. In all these approaches, there was some attention given to human geography and to the geographically uneven development of society, but this geography of modernity remained essentially an adjunct, a reflective mirror of societal modernization.

While the two streams of critical social theory battled over the appropriate interpretation of history, the core modern movements of Marxism–Leninism and positivist Social Scientism engaged more pragmatically in changing it. Each coalesced around a different response to the *fin de siècle* restructuring of capitalism, creating hegemonic programmes for social progress that would shape the political cultures of the world throughout the twentieth century. The Marxist modern movement based itself in a revolutionary socialist strategy of vanguard action and a controlled territoriality of class struggle, a strategy that would, in

due course, be successfully reinforced by events in Russia. An equally instrumental and opportunistic social science dedicated itself to the possibilities of scientifically planned reform primarily under the aegis of the liberal capitalist state, a visible hand of social guidance that would also be almost immediately reinforced by the successful reforms of liberalism in the 'progressive era' and, more ambiguously, in the liberal socialism associated with the rise of European social democracies. Both of these contemporaneous modern movements were to be shaken by crisis and doubt within their separate spheres of influence during the Great Depression and the Second World War, but they would emerge recharged, restructured, and even more antagonistically hegemonic in the 1950s.

The key argument I wish to establish in this admittedly broad and sweeping depiction of modernization and modernism is not only that spatiality was subordinated in critical social theory but that the instrumentality of space was increasingly lost from view in political and practical discourse. During the extended *fin de siècle*, the politics and ideology embedded in the social construction of human geographies and the crucially important role the manipulation of these geographies played in the late nineteenth–century restructuring and early twentieth–century expansion of capitalism seemed to become either invisible or increasingly mystified, left, right and centre.

Hidden within the modernity that was taking shape was a profound 'spatial fix' At every scale of life, from the global to the local, the spatial organization of society was being restructured to meet the urgent demands of capitalism in crisis – to open up new opportunities for super–profits, to find new ways to maintain social control, to stimulate increased production and consumption. This was not a sudden development, nor should it be viewed as conspiratorial, completely successful, or entirely unseen by those experiencing it. Many of the avant-garde movements of the *fin de siècle* – in poetry and painting, in the writing of novels and literary criticism, in architecture and what then represented progressive urban and regional planning – perceptively sensed the instrumentality of space and the disciplining effects of the changing geography of capitalism. But within the consolidating and codifying realms of social science and scientific socialism, a persistent historicism tended to obscure this insidious spatialization, leaving it almost entirely outside the purview of critical interrogation for the next fifty years.

Why this happened is not easy to answer. How it happened is only now being discovered and explored in any detail. Part of the story of the submergence of space in early twentieth–century social theory is probably related to the explicit theoretical rejection of environmental causality and all physical or external explanations of social processes and

the formation of human consciousness. Society and history were being separated from nature and naively given environments to bestow upon them what might be termed a relative autonomy of the social from the spatial. Blocked from seeing the production of space as a social process rooted in the same problematic as the making of history, critical social theory tended to project human geography on to the physical background of society, thus allowing its powerful structuring effect to be thrown away with the dirty bathwater of a rejected environmental determinism.

Another part of the story has to do with the modernist political strategies of the time. Here geography was given another reductionist interpretation and dismissal, not as external environment but as cognitive intuition. Those seeking the demise of capitalism, for example, tended to see in spatial consciousness and identity – in localisms or regionalisms or nationalisms – a dangerous fetter on the rise of a united world proletariat, a false consciousness inherently antagonistic to the revolutionary subjectivity and objective historical project of the working class. Only one form of territorial consciousness was acceptable – loyalty to the socialist state as soon as it came into being, but even that was considered only a temporary strategic convenience. Those seeking reformist solutions to the problems of capitalism were also uncomfortable with localisms and regionalisms which might too impatiently threaten the expectantly benevolent power of the capitalist state and instrumental social science. And there was the added threat of territorial nationalisms breaking the bonds of empire and cutting off the flow of profits so vital to 'metropolitan' reform. Here too only one form of territorial allegiance was cultivated and expected (i.e. to the national state), but national patriotism and citizenship were usually couched more in a cultural than a geographical identity and ideology, another example of the inherently spatial defined as something else. That the state was itself a socially produced space actively engaged in the reproduction of a particular social spatialization was thus rarely seen – and remained conspicuously absent from critical socialist and capitalist theories of state formation and politics.

The mid-century involution of Modern Geography

By the 1920s, the isolation of Modern Geography and geographers from the production of social theory was well advanced. For most of the next fifty years, geographical thinking turned inwards and seemed to erase even the memories of earlier engagements with the mainstreams of social theorization. Only the ghost of Immanuel Kant effectively remained alive from that distanced past and its privileged apparition was

used to lead the academic discipline of geography into further isolation. After all, who better to wrap Modern Geography in a warm cocoon of intellectual legitimacy than the greatest philosopher in centuries who also professed to be a geographer?[5]

Geography settled into a position within the modern academic division of labour that distinguished it (and rationalized its distinction) from both the specialized and substantive disciplines of the natural and human sciences (where theory was presumed to originate) and from history, its allegedly co-equal partner in filling up 'the entire circumference of our perception', as Kant put it. Geography and history were ways of thinking, subjective schemata which co-ordinated and integrated all sensed phenomena. But by the 1920s, putting phenomena in a temporal sequence (Kant's *nacheinander*) had become much more significant and revealing to social theorists of every stripe than putting them beside each other in space (Kant's *nebeneinander*). History and historians had taken on a crucial interpretive role in modern social theory: an integrative and cross-disciplinary responsibility for the study of development and change, modernity and modernization, whether expressed in the biography of individuals, the explanation of particular (historical) events, or the tumultuous transformations of social systems. The historian as social critic and observer, history as a privileged interpretive perspective, became familiar and accepted in academic and popular circles. In contrast, geography and geographers were left with little more than the detailed description of outcomes, what came to be called by the chroniclers of the discipline the 'areal differentiation of phenomena' (Hartshorne, 1939, 1959).

The exceptional theoretical acquiescence of mid-century human geography was a slideway to disciplinary involution. Here and there, a few geographers individually contributed to theoretical debates in the social sciences and scientific socialism, drawing mainly on the continuing strengths of physical geography and the occasional appeals of historians to limited environmental explanations of historical events. But the discipline as a whole turned inwards, abstaining from the great theoretical debates as if a high wall had been raised around it.

With its Kantian *cogito* mummified in neo-Kantian historicism, Modern Geography was reduced primarily to the accumulation, classification, and theoretically innocent representation of factual material

5. Kant helped to make ends meet by lecturing on geography at the University of Konigsberg for nearly forty years. He gave his course forty-eight times, lecturing more often only on logic and metaphysics. Kant saw geography – mainly physical geography – as 'the propaedeutic for knowledge of the world' (See May, 1970, 5). May opens his interesting account with another Kantian assertion: 'The revival of the science of geography ... should create that unity of knowledge without which all learning remains only piece-work.'

describing the areal differentiation of the earth's surface – to the study of outcomes, the end products of dynamic processes best understood by others. Geography thus also treated space as the domain of the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile – a world of passivity and measurement rather than action and meaning. Accurate packages of such geographical information continued to be of use to the state, in the East and West, for military intelligence, economic planning, and imperial administration. These three arenas of intelligence, planning, and administration defined an 'applied' geography almost by default, cementing a special relationship with the state that probably arose first in an earlier age of imperial exploration. The majority of the most prominent mid-century geographers in the United States of America were tied in one way or another with intelligence-gathering activities, especially through the Office of Strategic Services, the progenitor of the CIA, and there still remains an office of 'The Geographer' in the State Department in recognition of dedicated and disciplined service. Without undue exaggeration, the French radical geographer Yves Lacoste – one of those who interviewed Foucault on geography – entitled his book on the field *La Géographie: ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (Lacoste, 1976).

Given this attachment to the state, it is not surprising that the subfield of political geography generated the most active attempts at theorization. Sir Halford Mackinder's notion of the Eurasian 'Heartland' as the 'geographical pivot of history' (1904) and his active participation in redrawing the map of Europe after the First World War (see Mackinder, 1919) established and legitimized geopolitics as the primary practical and theoretical focus of human geography This centrality would last through the interwar years, at least until the aberrant episode of German *geopolitik* made non-fascist geographers think twice about venturing too far into the realms of political theory building. With its theoretical fingers burnt again, human geography as a whole retreated into the calmer climes of mere description, while political geography became what some called the discipline's moribund backwater

Backed into its neo-Kantian cocoon, the explanation of human geographies took several different forms. One emphasized the old environmental 'man/land' tradition and sought associations between physical and human geographies on the visible landscape, either via the influences of the environment on behaviour and culture or through 'man's role in changing the face of the earth' (Thomas, 1956). Another concentrated on the locational patterns of phenomena topically organized to reflect the established compartments of modern social science. This defined specialized fields of economic, political, social, cultural, and much later, behavioural or psychological geography, but not, one

might add, a geography based in political economy. A third approach aimed at synthesizing everything in sight through a comprehensive and typically encyclopedic regionalization of phenomena, an approach considered by most mid-century geographers to be the distinctive essence of the discipline. Finally, a historical geography roamed freely through all three of these approaches tracing the human geographies of the past as a temporal sequencing of areal differentiation and basking in the intellectual legitimacy and power of the historical imagination. Characterizing every one of these forms of geographical analysis, from the most tritely empirical to the most insightfully historical, was the explanation of geographies by geographies, geographical analysis turned into itself, the description of associated outcomes deriving from processes whose deeper theorization was left to others.

While this involution occurred, the main currents of Western Marxism and critical social science lost touch with the geographical imagination. There were a few small pockets of provocative geographical analysis and theorization that survived through this mid-century spatial acquiescence: in the evolutionary urban ecology of the Chicago School; in the urban and regional planning doctrines that were consolidated in the interwar years (see Friedmann and Weaver, 1979; Weaver, 1984); in the regional historiography and attention to environmental detail of the French *Annales* School, with its continuation of the traditions of Vidal de la Blache; among certain North American and British historians still inspired by Frederic Jackson Turner and other frontier theorists or by the Marxist theories of imperialism; in the work of Antonio Gramsci on the regional question, local social movements, and the capitalist state. For the most part, however, what was being kept alive in these residual pockets was the geographical imagination in retreat of the extended *fin de siècle*. Relatively little that was new was added after the early 1930s and even the preserved remains of the past were encased in an ascendant and confining historicism which consigned its geography to the background of critical social discourse.

In any case, nearly all these residual pockets were to dwindle in impact and importance through the Great Depression and the war years so that by 1960 their specifically geographical insights were only dimly perceptible. At this point, with postwar recovery and economic expansion in full flow throughout the advanced capitalist and socialist world, the despatialization of social theory seemed to be at its peak. The geographical imagination had been critically silenced. The discipline of Modern Geography was theoretically asleep.

Uncovering Western Marxism's spatial turn

Very little has yet been written on the despatialization of social theory up to the 1960s. The sounds of silence are difficult to pick up. The works of Perry Anderson (1976, 1980, 1983), however, offer an excellent critical survey of Western Marxism that almost inadvertently chronicles the loss of spatial consciousness in mainstream Marxism after the Russian Revolution and simultaneously prepares the way, again without necessarily intending to do so, for understanding how and why the pertinent spatiality of social life began to be rediscovered in the late 1960s. To end this chapter and to introduce the next, I will use Anderson's work to locate the origins of what would eventually become a lively and productive encounter between Western Marxism and Modern Geography.

From 1918 to 1968, Anderson argues, a new 'post-classical' Marxist theory crystallized to redirect historical materialist interpretations of what I have called modernity, modernization and modernism. This retheorization was geographically unevenly developed, finding its primary homelands in France, Italy, and Germany, 'societies where the labour movement was strong enough to pose a genuine revolutionary threat to capital' (1983, 15). In Britain and the United States no such revolutionary challenge was apparent, while in the east a rigid Stalinist economism left little room for redirection and reinterpretation. For Anderson, the founding fathers of this countercurrent were Lukacs, Korsch, and Gramsci, while following in their wake were the more modern figures of Sartre and Althusser in France; Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse and others associated with the Frankfurt School in Germany; and Della Volpe and Colletti in Italy.

This Latinate and Frankfurtized movement shifted the institutional and intellectual terrain of Marxist theory, rooting it more than ever before in university departments and research centres, and in a resurgent interest in philosophical discourse, questions of method, a critique of bourgeous culture, and such subjects as art, aesthetics, and ideology (which were lodged in the classically neglected realms of capitalism's superstructure). More traditional infrastructural themes having to do with the inner workings of the labour process, struggles at the workplace over the social relations of production, and the 'laws of motion' of capitalist development tended to be given relatively less attention. The same was true for more conventionally political (and I might add, geographical) topics as the organization of the world economy, the structure of the capitalist state, and the meaning and function of national identity, although here even the classical theorists were often neglectful as well.

To Anderson, Marxism seemed to be moving backwards, from econ-

omics through politics to focus on philosophy, reversing the consummate path taken by Marx. Philosophically understanding the world had taken precedence over changing it. But by the 1970s, this 'grand Western Marxist tradition' had 'run its course' and was being replaced by 'another kind of Marxist culture, primarily oriented towards just those questions of an economic, social or political order that had been lacking from its predecessors' (1983, 20). This restructured Western Marxism also took on a different geography, becoming centred in the English-speaking world rather than in Germanic or Latin Europe. As a result, 'the traditionally most backward zones of the capitalist world, in Marxist culture, have suddenly become in many ways the most advanced' (Ibid., 24).

Anderson's *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (1983) reflects upon his earlier works, his successful and not so successful projections of the fate of this restructured Marxism, with its new zest for the concrete and its re-centred geography[6] Following an introductory personal scorecard on 'Prediction and Performance', Anderson first retraces and expands upon the essentially French debates on 'Structure and Subject' that he argues led to the current crisis of Latin Marxism, and then moves through a review of German Marxism (focusing mainly on Habermas) to elucidate the even more perplexing debates on the changing relations between 'Nature and History' Hidden within these chapters, however, is a lateral story-line that Anderson edges towards but fails to see, an emerging postmodern discourse that was seeking not to dismiss Marxism as a critical theory but to open it up to a necessary and overdue spatialization, to a materialist interpretation of spatiality that would match its magisterial historical materialism.

This initial assertion of a postmodern critical human geography was almost entirely confined to the French Marxist tradition, which had always been more open to the spatial imagination than its Anglo-American and German counterparts. Sartre's 'search for a method' in his increasingly Marxist existentialism and Althusser's anti-historicist re-reading of Marx were the primary pre-texts for this Gallic spatialization. The Marxified phenomenological ontology of Sartre represented an hermeneutic that centred on the subjectivity, intentionality, and consciousness of knowledgeable human agents engaged not only in making history but also in shaping the political culture of everyday life in

6. It is not geographically inconsequential that *In the Tracks* ... is a publication of the Wellek Library Lectures, given by Anderson in 1982 at the University of California, Irvine. It is also interesting to note how filled these lectures were with resplendent spatial metaphors, despite their underlying historicism. Anderson describes his work as a 'cadastral survey' of the shifting 'terrain', an exploration of the 'shaping of a new intellectual landscape', a 'changing map of Marxism'

modern capitalist society Althusser's structuralism, in contrast, emphasized the more objective conditions and social forces which shape the underlying logic of capitalist development and modernization. Each contributed to channelling post-war French Marxism into two discordant streams, split by opposing views of the structure–subject relation but both peculiarly open to the possibility of spatialization.

The crisis of French Marxism that Anderson sadly describes as a 'massacre of ancestors' was a crisis of disillusionment that 'exploded' French Marxism into a multitude of fragments, obliterating the orthodoxies of the immediate and more distant past.[7] Faced with this unprecedented heterogeneity, fragments flying every which way (including antagonistic departures from Marxism entirely), Anderson mourned the symptomatic loss of faith. Sartre would turn in his last years to a 'radical neoanarchism', Althusser and Poulantzas to exasperated lamentations on the absence of a theory of politics and the state in historical materialism. The bedevilling (and also 'neo-anarchistic') Foucault – with Derrida and many others – would dilute and diminish Marxism still further, in Anderson's view, promoting a contagious 'randomization of history' and celebrating the triumphant ascendancy of a poststructuralist (and by implication post–Marxist) episteme. With splendid irony, however, Anderson finds one telling exception to this 'precipitous decline' in French Marxism.

> No intellectual change is ever universal. At least one exception, of signal honour, stands out against the general shift of positions in these years. The oldest living survivor of the Western Marxist tradition I discussed, Henri Lefebvre, neither bent nor turned in his eighth decade, continuing to produce imperturbable and original work on subjects typically ignored by much of the Left. The price of such constancy, however, was relative isolation. (1983, 20)

Lefebvre is discovered seemingly out of nowhere. Anderson gives little attention to him in his earlier works and little more is mentioned of Lefebvre in the discussion of the contemporary decline of French Marxism. What was of such signal honour, exceptional constancy, imperturbable originality in the works of Lefebvre? I suggest that this perhaps least known and most misunderstood of the great figures in twentieth–century Marxism has been, above all else and others, the incunabulum of postmodern critical human geography, the primary source for the assault against historicism and the reassertion of space in critical social theory His constancy led the way for a host of other attempted spatializations,

7. See Lefebvre's discussion of *Le Marxisme éclaté* in *Une pensée devenue monde faut-il abandonner Marx?* (Lefebvre, 1980), pp. 16–19 especially

from Sartre, Althusser, and Foucault to Poulantzas (1978), Giddens (1979, 1981, 1984), Harvey (1973, 1985a, 1985b), and Jameson (1984). And he remains today the original and foremost historical and geographical materialist.

Anderson misses this creative recomposition of Western Marxism taking place amidst the great French deconstruction which followed the explosion at Nanterre in 1968. His interpretations of such key figures as Sartre, Althusser, and Foucault too quickly dismiss as retreats from politics their creative, but not entirely successful, ontological struggles with the spatiality of existential being, modernity, and power; and he does not see at all the anglophonic Marxist Geography that Lefebvre and other French Marxists helped to stimulate. Despite his sensitive tapping of francophone Marxist traditions, Anderson still seems trapped in the 'historically centred Marxist culture' of the anglophone world, in which he claims that 'theory is now history, with a seriousness and severity it never was in the past; as history is equally theory, in all its exigency, in a way it typically evaded before.' Adding to history 'and geography' would have made a world of difference.

2

Spatializations: Marxist Geography and Critical Social Theory

> The dialectic is back on the agenda. But it is no longer Marx's dialectic, just as Marx's was no longer Hegel's. The dialectic today no longer clings to historicity and historical time, or to a temporal mechanism such as 'thesis–antithesis–synthesis' or 'affirmation–negation–negation of the negation' ... To recognise space, to recognise what 'takes place' there and what it is used for, is to resume the dialectic; analysis will reveal the contradictions of space. (Lefebvre, 1976, 14 and 17)

The discourses of Modern Geography and Western Marxism rarely crossed paths after their formative period in the extended *fin de siècle*. Geography isolated itself in a tight little island of its own, building a storage-house of factual knowledge that was only occasionally broadcast into the public domain. Marxism meanwhile stashed away the geographical imagination in some superstructural attic to gather the dust of discarded and somewhat tainted memories. Only in France, as we have seen, did a vibrant spatial discourse survive the mid-century despatialization, keeping alive a debate that seemed to have disappeared entirely in other, non-Latinate Western Marxisms.

In the early 1970s, however, a resolutely Marxist geography began to take shape from a sudden infusion of Western Marxist theory and method into the introverted intellectual ghetto of anglophonic Modern Geography. It formed a vital part of a nascent critical human geography which arose in response to the increasingly presumptive and theoretically reductionist positivism of mainstream geographical analysis (Gregory, 1978). Although this newborn Marxist geography tended to be inward-looking, unsettled in its critical stance, and perhaps therefore largely unnoticed outside the disciplinary discourse, it shook the foundations of Modern Geography and initiated a debate that would eventually extend well beyond the disciplinary cocoon.