

THE USES OF  
SPACE IN EARLY  
MODERN HISTORY

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Edited by Paul Stock



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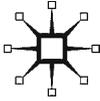
*The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*

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THE USES OF SPACE IN EARLY MODERN HISTORY  
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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-49003-2  
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First published in 2015 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®  
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills,  
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

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ISBN 978-1-349-50434-3 ISBN 978-1-137-49004-9 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/9781137490049

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The uses of space in early modern history / edited by Paul Stock.  
pages cm.—(Palgrave studies in cultural and intellectual history)  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. History—Philosophy. 2. Historiography—Philosophy.
3. History—Methodology. 4. History, Modern. 5. Space—Social aspects—History. 6. Spatial behavior—Social aspects—History.
7. Space—Philosophy. 8. Place (Philosophy) 9. Social ecology.
10. Human ecology. I. Stock, Paul.

D16.9.U83 2015  
907.2—dc23

2014033987

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: March 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xiii
1 History and the Uses of Space <i>Paul Stock</i>	1
2 Living Space: The Interpretation of English Vernacular Houses <i>Matthew Johnson</i>	19
3 Gender and the Organization of Sacred Space in Early Modern England c. 1580–1640 <i>Amanda Flather</i>	43
4 Liminal Space in the Early Modern Ottoman-Habsburg Borderlands: Historiography, Ontology, and Politics <i>Claire Norton</i>	75
5 A Space between Two Worlds: St. Petersburg in the Early Eighteenth Century <i>Paul Keenan</i>	97
6 The Spaces of Science and Sciences of Space: Geography and Astronomy in the Paris Academy of Sciences <i>Michael Heffernan</i>	125
7 The Space between Empires: Coastal and Insular Microregions in the Early Nineteenth-Century World <i>Lauren Benton and Jeppe Mulich</i>	151
8 Space, Sympathy, and Empire: Edmund Burke and the Trial of Warren Hastings <i>Andrew Rudd</i>	173

9	A Tale of Three Scales: Ways of Malthusian Worldmaking <i>Robert J. Mayhew</i>	197
10	The Uses of Space in Early Modern History— An Afterword <i>Beat Kümin</i>	227
	<i>Bibliography</i>	235
	<i>Index</i>	263

# List of Figures

2.1	Monks Eleigh, Suffolk	20
2.2	Plan and section of a late medieval vernacular house	25
2.3	The framing of everyday life around the small scale of a domestic interior: Hearth, bench, flagstones, and heck-post at Spout House, Bilsdale	32
2.4	The early seventeenth-century ideal: Plan of a house	34
2.5	The early seventeenth-century reality: a selection of different possible early modern plan forms	36
3.1	Gender, social, and marital status of litigants in instance causes: 1580–1720	53
3.2	Social and marital status of female defendants in office causes: 1580–1640	55
3.3	Social status of male defendants in office causes: 1580–1640	55
5.1	Johann Baptist Homann, <i>Topographische Vorstellung der Neuen Russischen Haupt-Residenz und See-Stadt St. Petersburg</i> (1719–1723)	115
5.2	Top right cartouche from Ivan F. Truskott, Ivan Sokolov, and Mikhail I. Makhaev, <i>Plan stolichnogo goroda Sankt-Peterburga s izobrazheniem znatneishikh onogo prospektov</i> (1753) (detail)	116
5.3	Bottom left cartouche from Ivan F. Truskott, Ivan Sokolov, and Mikhail I. Makhaev, <i>Plan stolichnogo goroda Sankt-Peterburga s izobrazheniem znatneishikh onogo prospektov</i> (1753) (detail)	117
8.1	James Sayers, <i>Galante Show</i> , engraving (London: T. Cornell, May 6, 1788)	185
8.2	James Gillray, <i>Camera-Obscura</i> , engraving (London: S. W. Fores, May 9, 1788)	186

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# Acknowledgments

*The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* originated as a yearlong seminar series hosted by the International History Department and LSE IDEAS at the London School of Economics and Political Science between 2011 and 2012. I am very grateful to all the speakers for their fascinating papers. For their encouragement of the series (as well as the present book) I wish to thank Nigel Ashton, Tim Hochstrasser, Chai Lieven, and Arne Westad. I am also indebted to Demetra Frini and Milada Fomina for their expert organizational help with the seminars' practical arrangements. The series was funded by the LSE Annual Fund and I am grateful for its generosity. Lastly, of course, I want to thank the attendees of the seminars, whose enthusiastic participation and astute questions helped make each seminar both convivial and intellectually stimulating: colleagues and students from LSE, the University of London, and (much) further afield, as well as employees and members of various research libraries, museums, institutes, learned societies, and secondary schools.

In developing and expanding the series' premise into a multiauthor book with a shared agenda and purpose, my principal thanks must of course be to all the contributors. In beginning this project, I could not have hoped for such a wide-ranging, ambitious, and high-quality set of essays, and I am deeply grateful to the contributors, not only for their hard work and patience, but also for allowing their research to be part of a shared goal. I also owe a special thanks to an anonymous reader, and, especially, to Jo Guldi, whose comments on earlier drafts, particularly my own introductory chapter, were invaluable. Finally, I want to thank Chris Chappell and Mike Aperauch at Palgrave Macmillan for their help throughout the process.

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London, 2014

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# 1

## History and the Uses of Space

*Paul Stock*

### **Introduction**

*The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* argues for the fundamental importance of space in historical study. Space—by which I mean the emplacement, distribution, and connection of entities, actions, and ideas—has become an increasingly important topic in the humanities and social sciences. This volume shows how spatial approaches can be used to understand the societies, cultures, and mentalities of the past. The essays gathered here explore the uses of space in two respects: how spatial concepts can be employed by or applied to the study of history; and how particular spaces or spatial ideas were used for practical and ideological purposes during specific periods. All are grounded in specific case studies, but their procedures and focuses also suggest broader methodological and intellectual implications which resonate beyond those particular contexts. Some, for example, explore how domestic or religious ideologies structured, or were structured by, early modern social spaces and interactions. Others interrogate the political objectives and symbolic meanings integral to city design, or analyze the spatial strategies that define imperial space and practice.

Individually then, the contributions show how space can be integral to a number of disciplinary subfields: the histories of gender, everyday life, cities, borderlands, empires, political economy, science, and emotion. Collectively, however, they explore the imbrication of materiality and representation in the understanding and experience of space. They show how material spaces and other contextual circumstances give shape to ideas about, say, territory and religion, or gender roles and imperial power. However, they also show how those ideas help to structure the construction and experience of

actual sites. In this respect, the volume allows us to see how spaces are built using physical materials, as well as in rhetorical and cultural terms. It explores the mentalities that inspire and structure conceptions of space; but it also investigates the consequences of those constructions, that is, their concrete effects and the realities that they influence.<sup>1</sup> *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* therefore directly engages with one of the central questions of historical research: the relationship between ideas and activity. It contends that a serious investigation of historical spaces can cast new light on the relationship between thought and practice in past societies.

This introductory essay serves several purposes. Firstly, it shows how space has long been an important part of disciplined historical study. Although there are important connections between the “spatial turn” and the “cultural turn,” the two are not identical, and this must be emphasized if the importance of space in history is to be fully exploited. Indeed, the study of space can help historians develop new perspectives on certain critical issues, most notably questions about agency and causation, and the relationship between material and intellectual life. Lastly, the essay introduces the articles that comprise this volume, showing how—together and individually—they represent an approach to space that encompasses both the material and the representational.

## The history of space

How important is space in history? The “spatial turn” is often presented and understood as a phenomenon from the late twentieth century and the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> In fact, however, the study of the past has long been saturated with spatialized concepts, both as evidential historical categories and as historiographical frameworks: nation, empire, border, public, domestic, network, and so on. As Joanna Guldi’s pioneering work on the “spatial turn” has shown, space has long played an important, even foundational, role in disciplined historical theory and practice.<sup>3</sup> Leopold von Ranke, for instance, took the “space of nations” as both the subject and the organizing principle of his enquiries. When he argues that “nations have evolved in unity and kindred movement” and laments the “division” afforded by the Reformation and political strife, Ranke proposes a historical trajectory driven by certain spatialized activities—migration, conquest, centralization—as well as a historiographical vocabulary for assessing

that progress in terms of successful “union.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, Ranke is writing a kind of “spatial history”; a particular way of thinking about space—the idea of national consolidation—underpins his interpretation of historical events and change. Moreover—and this is an important point—Ranke’s archival method is precisely located. His research involved travelling to specific archives and enduring various practical challenges: arduous journeys, poor accommodation, decaying documents, or closed collections. In this respect, he writes spatial history in another sense; his work is the product of interaction with specific material spaces. As Guldi notes, “to write history, as the historical discipline was invented, was very much a matter of interacting with the material landscape... The historian’s route, traveling across diverse landscapes, was the single continuous thread that made possible the forging of an integrated story about the modern nation.”<sup>5</sup>

Another prominent example of the importance of space in history comes from the *Annales* movement. The *Annales*, of course, employed different scalar perspectives in order to consider historical events within spatial frameworks larger or smaller than the nation state. Bloch’s *La Société Féodale* (1939) and Braudel’s *La Méditerranée* (1949), for instance, combine interest in trans-state regions with attention to localized specifics. Braudel speaks of the “need to see on a grand scale,” but also notes that the Mediterranean is not a spatial totality: it is a “complex of seas... broken up by islands, interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by intricate coastlines,” each with their own interconnected contexts.<sup>6</sup> By using different spatial frameworks to choose, focus, and circumscribe certain topics, the *Annales* were able to offer new perspectives through which to interpret the events of the past. More fundamentally, however, the *Annales* also saw space as an active force in shaping history. They talk about geographical and environmental factors—mountains, plains, coastlines, climate—as having direct bearing on historical occurrences. As Braudel argues, “human life responds to the commands of the environment, but also seeks to evade and overcome them, only to be caught in other toils.”<sup>7</sup> This was not, of course, a unique idea. Some scholars have detected the influence of early twentieth-century geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache who identified the supposed “personalities” of different geographical regions by arguing that people and landscape mutually imprint one another.<sup>8</sup> And of course, climactic theories—in which environmental circumstances are said to influence societal and individual development—have a very long provenance, reaching back through

Jean Bodin and Montesquieu to Hippocrates and Strabo.<sup>9</sup> The important point to emphasize here is the centrality of space for the *Annales* movement in both historiographical and historical terms: not only do they present a set of spatial perspectives through which to reconsider the past, but material space is also seen to actively influence historical events.

I am arguing, then, that particular ideas about space are integral to several historiographical traditions. There are other examples. Guldi devotes especial attention to the radical landscape historians of the mid-twentieth century. Works such as Henry Randall's *History in the Open Air* (1936) and W. G. Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) show how the study of natural and built environments can offer evidential insights not accessible to solely documentary methodologies. By foregrounding questions about landholding, land use, everyday experiences, and so on—in other words, by taking spatial contexts seriously—these works pioneered important developments in social history, material culture, and the history of everyday life.<sup>10</sup> One might also mention how urban and architectural history explores the relationship between buildings and socio-cultural practice: for example, the development of different architectural styles, urbanization, city planning, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to acknowledge this depth of historiographical interest in space. The “spatial turn” is often most associated with certain late twentieth-century thinkers: a range of founding theoretical texts such as Michel Foucault's “Of Other Spaces” (1967, published 1984) or Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), and several highly influential cultural geographers, including David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Doreen Massey.<sup>12</sup> However, by acknowledging the significance of space in other, earlier, traditions we can see these figures as part of developing historical and historiographical interests in space, rather than as the creators of a “spatial turn” *ex nihilo*. Instead, Lefebvre, Harvey, and their followers brought to the study of space a set of theoretical assumptions useful for historians. Firstly, that space is socially and culturally contingent: neither material spaces nor societal ideas about them are unchanging universal categories; rather, they are historically specific cultural products—in Lefebvre's famous dictum, “(social) space is a (social) product.”<sup>13</sup> Secondly, Lefebvre and the rest propose that spaces are both instruments and evidence of uneven power dynamics and ideological agendas.<sup>14</sup>

One might say, then, that these scholars have applied to the understanding of space some of the key insights of the 1970s “cultural turn” and the “new cultural history”: a suspicion of universal categories or positivist empiricism, and a focus on cultural processes, rhetorical language, sign systems, and ideological meanings.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, there are many subsequent works exploring the interaction of space, power, and cultural meaning: from classic Foucauldian themes such as madness and sexuality, through to the strategies of power implicit in architecture and landscape.<sup>16</sup> The effect of this cultural approach to space is perhaps most evident in the history of cartography. Formerly preoccupied with somewhat Whiggish narratives about the progress of scientific objectivity and ever-improving technology, J. B. Harley reframed the field around the idea that maps are reflections and agents of social ideologies: they “redescribe the world . . . in terms of relations of power and of cultural practices, preferences and priorities.”<sup>17</sup>

Clearly, it is important to acknowledge the influence of the cultural turn on ideas about space. However, we must also recognize the breadth and significance of earlier historiographical interest in spatial topics. Otherwise, the danger is that we straightforwardly equate the emergence and possibilities of the “spatial turn” with the scholars, methods, and achievements of cultural history after the “cultural turn.” Indeed, the term “spatial turn” may be problematic, not least because it unhelpfully suggests a parade of transient moments in scholarly fashion.<sup>18</sup> Instead, I want to suggest, thinking about space is fundamental to the study of the past; it encompasses crucial questions about materiality, perception, and agency. Cultural approaches have been, and remain, invaluable: for example, by promoting the notion that space is historically constructed and understood. But “spatial history” also has additional strengths and prospects: it can combine interest in representation with greater attention to materiality and agency.

### **Representation, materiality, agency**

A cultural approach to space offers one especially important insight: that space itself is a historical concept. In other words, space is not something outside history; it is not a contextless, pre-existent “given,” or an “inert, frozen set of relations devoid of social origins and social implications.”<sup>19</sup> Instead, space is historically contingent and

constructed by specific circumstances and perspectives. Historians can therefore analyze the intellectual, cultural, and social contexts that give rise to particular understandings of space, and explore how those understandings are reproduced, transformed, and used.<sup>20</sup> Some scholars have argued that the idea of “space as a naturally given, grid-like platform for human conduct” only became “an everyday premise” in seventeenth-century Europe. In other words, it is a particular perspective on the world, especially associated with ideas about the bureaucratic state and commodity exchange. Adopted by scientists, army officers, administrators, and estate surveyors in the early modern period, this view of space has now become so commonplace that it is often taken for a neutral description of the world, when it is in fact a contextualized and historically located interpretation of it.<sup>21</sup>

If understandings of space are historically specific, they can therefore be disputed—something can be glimpsed when one examines the history of spatial thought. Isaac Newton understood space (and time) as “abstract, absolute entities that existed independently of their measurement.” However, his contemporary, Gottfried von Leibniz, held that time and space are relational, that is, comprehensible only through “frames of interpretation.” Space and time have no “independent existence... but [are] derivative of how we measure them.”<sup>22</sup> These different interpretations encompass a significant philosophical problem: principally, whether space is an intrinsic property of the universe, or whether it is an ordering mechanism devised by human observation. But these two views also remind us that understandings of space are not given or fixed. Instead, they are contested and historically constructed—that is, space has been understood in various ways at particular moments and is thus a contingent concept. This is even more evident when one examines non-European traditions. Barbara Mundy’s study of cartography in the New World shows how European and Aztec mapmakers comprehended and represented space in profoundly different ways. Spanish cartographers espoused “scientific rationalism”: they employed geometric techniques to describe “architecture and other man-made constructions” as “the defining and constituting features of space.” Conversely, the Aztecs offered “humanistic or social projections”: “their spatial reality was one defined and structured by social relationships,” rather than Euclidean geometries.<sup>23</sup> Others scholars have identified critical cultural moments in which a society radically reassesses the way in which it understands space: such moments in Europe might include,

for example, the discovery of the New World, the “dismantling of purgatory,” or the shift to heliocentrism.<sup>24</sup>

The idea that space is contingent has thus been widely adopted; indeed, many contemporary theoretical paradigms in the humanities are underpinned by ideas about the cultural construction of space. To take two very well-known examples, Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined communities” and Edward Said’s analysis of the “Orient” are both premised upon the idea that “human beings plot their actions with reference to an imagined spatial projection of the world around them.”<sup>25</sup> Some historians have concentrated on how individual actors constructed their own “mental maps” based on their “education, experience and personal values.”<sup>26</sup> Others, however, have focused on the social, economic, intellectual, and political contexts through which different types of spatial imaginations are produced.<sup>27</sup> Charles Withers, for example, argues that the European Enlightenment was constituted, not only by particular geographical circumstances, but also by developing eighteenth-century ideas about space: the possibility of exact measurement, the utility of the natural world, and the borderless movement of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> For some historians, the landscape itself is a cultural construction. Influenced by John Berger’s art criticism, Denis Cosgrove argues that “the landscape idea represents a way of seeing—a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it, and through which they have commented on social relations.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, landscape is, in part, an interpretative procedure—a kind of text which carries certain meanings and can be read by those who understand its metaphors.<sup>30</sup>

This method, then, tends to see space predominantly as a set of metaphorical conceits, symbols pregnant with cultural meaning and situated within conceptual discourses.<sup>31</sup> But it also risks underemphasizing the physicality of space; if spaces are merely texts to be read, one can lose sight of their materiality and the concrete experiences which take place in them. An approach to space largely concerned with representation risks presenting “spatial history” merely as a late-flowering branch of the cultural turn.<sup>32</sup> Instead, therefore, historians also need to consider the physical elements and consequences of spaces. How do tangible spatial factors—proximity, resources, communication networks—affect the material and rhetorical construction of space, both at individual sites and in spatialized ideas such as nation and empire? Can we identify the effects of spaces

“without reducing them to clumsy, brute determinants”?<sup>33</sup> To what extent is all knowledge “situated”; that is, produced and organized by specific spatial contexts such as the laboratory, the museum, or the coffeehouse? <sup>34</sup> How are ideological or societal concepts physically emplaced and enacted at specific locations, and how might they be changed by the material properties of those locations?

These are difficult questions, but they also suggest great opportunities for historical scholarship. The study of space can explore how materiality, social relations, epistemology, and aesthetics interrelate. Talking about the spaces of empire, for example, Daniel Brewer argues that “the imaginary space of colonization intersects with aesthetic space; it is also an epistemological space, where forms of knowledge are set up, as well as a space of affect, where forms of desire are played out.”<sup>35</sup> By investigating space, historians can explore how the material and the representational are interrelated and mutually constitutive, not only in particular locations—churches, cities, and other sites—but also in the wider contexts of spatial thought and practice; for instance, in the notions of “the border,” “territory,” or “the home.” Space concerns both “matter and meaning”: it is simultaneously “a set of social circumstances and physical landscapes, and as a constellation of discourses that reflect, constitute, and at times undermine, the . . . social order.”<sup>36</sup> The essays in this volume therefore discuss the practical uses of physical spaces, how past societies conceptualized space, and, importantly, explore the connections between activity and ideology. This last point is the crucial one. By considering both the physicality of material practices, as well as ideas about the world, the contributions can offer new perspectives on one of the most challenging issues in cultural and intellectual history: the relationship between ideas, matter, and activity.

This, however, leads us to another important set of issues, relevant to not only space and history but also to historical study more broadly: questions about agency and causation. How do spatial factors—boundaries, proximity, distribution, connection, and so on—affect past events? How, and from where, do particular concepts of space emerge and with what concrete consequences? How do people, cultures, and societies shape spaces; and how do spaces affect those cultures and societies? On one level, we might consider how social or intellectual elites construct physical and representational spaces that reflect their priorities. Many scholars have shown how the elite manipulated urban and rural landscapes in order to articulate

tangible and symbolic authority.<sup>37</sup> However, this implies that space is simply acted upon by human actors—an assertion that, while persuasive in many respects, also contains some potential drawbacks. One problem is that it grants space anthropomorphic attributes: gendered space, sacred space, elite space, and so on. In these cases, an interpretation may be “read into or onto a space from a *knowledge generated elsewhere*, and then read back off the space as if it were the source of the knowledge, and then feted as a new evidential category.”<sup>38</sup> Another consequence is that it treats material space as a passive blank canvas; it turns physical sites into reified expressions of social or cultural ideas.<sup>39</sup>

The bigger question, then, is how space might itself influence actions and shape events. Some historians have spoken of space’s “generative aspects”: it offers a way to think about agency and activity in material terms, outside the “shadowy world where such abstractions as ‘the market,’ ‘political self-determination,’ or ‘the state’ reside.”<sup>40</sup> In this sense, space is not solely a contingent product of abstract historical forces; instead, it can also play a role in shaping historical practices, because it enables and constrains action.<sup>41</sup> Lief Jerram phrases this starkly: if materiality “acts in its own right,” then the “material dispositions” of spaces may be able to “force, enable, delimit and prevent.”<sup>42</sup> The point here is that space is not simply another expression of historical experience; rather, it replicates, enforces, or generates new categories of, for instance, gender or polity.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, this leads to difficult and controversial territory. To speak of space “acting in its own right” implies volition, or, at the very least, a set of essential qualities which can prescribe activity. Martina Löw, for example, talks about the “potentiality of spaces”: the way in which spatial and atmospheric qualities can influence societal responses. By way of illustration, she suggests that one might “enter a small shop in feverish haste,” but “restful music and pleasant aromas” might “retune” one’s responses and foster a sense of calm.<sup>44</sup> The problem with this example is that these atmospheric effects are not intrinsic qualities of the space; they are the products of human intervention. Any agency may therefore ultimately belong to those who acted on the space, rather than to the space itself. Furthermore, as Löw acknowledges, if spaces can “retune” or affect behavior, this may well be due to culturally contingent responses to perceived conditions, rather than the intrinsic qualities of spaces themselves.<sup>45</sup> There are some longstanding philosophical problems here concerning

perception, specifically, a debate about whether it is possible to perceive the world directly or whether perception is always filtered through human sense experience—an issue which Kant discusses explicitly with regard to space in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).<sup>46</sup>

As if this were not enough, any mention of space and agency also raises the specter of determinism: the idea that space is an “autonomous determinant” and that supposed spatial characteristics inevitably direct certain outcomes.<sup>47</sup> Clearly any causal explanation founded on a presumption of necessity is highly problematic, though this is a potential difficulty for a range of historiographical traditions and fields—ranging from “Whiggish” political history to the history of technology—and as such, is hardly unique to the study of space.<sup>48</sup> For this reason, the significance and possibilities of spatial history should not be disabled by a wider dilemma at the heart of historical study. Space may well have “generative aspects,” but this does not mean that spaces *act* in themselves, or that essential spatial qualities necessarily structure activity—only that the material characteristics of spaces can influence beliefs and practices, just as beliefs and practices can shape concrete spaces. Taking examples from this book, to what extent did the spatial conditions of the St Petersburg site shape its physical construction and ideological messages? How did the arrangement of early modern sites of worship help organize the enactment of societal roles?<sup>49</sup> Spatial history requires historians to confront and re-examine important questions about agency and contingency. It provides a way to explore how matter, lived experience, and intellectual life interact in specific historical fields and contexts such as the history of religious practice, city design, nationalism, science, or the emotions—topics all covered by the essays in this volume.

### **Spatial questions; spatial answers**

How, then, can historians analyze space? Firstly, we need to recognize that all historical events and practices are emplaced; that is, they are located in a physical and conceptual spatial context. We might then ask how these spatial circumstances may have shaped those events and practices. And we can also explore how physical spaces and spatial ideas are produced and constructed by changing and competing activities and ideologies.<sup>50</sup> These lines of enquiry lead to further questions encompassing both the material and representational elements of space. What are the dominant paradigms for thinking about

space in a given period? How, where, and when do these emerge? How are spaces classified or divided—both literally and conceptually—and with what consequences? Who controls space, and how is this maintained or challenged? What is the relationship between space and socio-cultural identities? How are specific sites constructed in physical and ideological terms? How might material or conceptual spaces influence ideas and activities, and how might historians identify this influence? How do spaces help us understand the relationship between the material and the representational in particular contexts?<sup>51</sup>

The essays in this volume represent a set of contextually specific answers to some of these questions. The book begins with Matthew Johnson's essay about early modern "living space." He argues that vernacular houses do not simply express existing symbolic concepts or mentalities, but instead "materialize a set of cultural practices and meanings at... [a] quotidian level." In other words, "meanings and values do not have ontological existence prior to spaces and objects, but rather they emerge through... practice that takes place within and through spaces and objects." Johnson discusses the layouts and activities of particular sites alongside early modern conduct manuals, exposing how homes were fashioned in physical and representational terms. His discussion shows how "living space" was, in some respects, constructed at an idealized discursive level and disseminated to an "imagined community" of readers, but also, crucially, how home spaces were produced by the material practices and locally-interpreted activities of everyday life. Amanda Flather's contribution on gender and sacred space moves away from "the abstract historiographical metaphor" of separate spheres for men and women in order to "explore what people *did* in spaces and how gender influenced spatial meaning and patterns of use and control." She concentrates on parish churches, noting how "questions of identity and social cohesion were bound up with issues of position and performance in particular places." Her essay shows not only how church spaces and activities gave material expression to gendered ideas, but also how the local uses of space affected and modified understandings of social relations. That these mutual interactions occurred in churches—spaces which localize "the holy"—also suggests the imbrication of the spiritual, social, and material in particular early modern locations.

Claire Norton focuses on the liminal spaces between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. She warns historians against anachronistically

imposing “nation-state spatial imaginaries with their concomitant emphasis on ethno-cultural, linguistic and religious homogeneity onto early modern conceptions of geographical space.” Early modern imperial authorities may well have employed propaganda to conceptualize space in terms of “loci of power.” However, literature, muster records, tax records, and correspondence suggest instead an imperial space that “permitted and encouraged both political cooperation and ethno-cultural and religious interaction.” In other words, we need to reassess how early modern communities conceptualized and experienced space in terms of connections, allegiances and synthesis, rather than centralized state power or bordered division. Crucially, Norton also argues for a corresponding fluidity in ethnic and religious identity in the borderlands, suggesting that intersecting economic and political alliances and networks helped constitute plural overlapping conceptions of space, society, and identity alike.

Turning to early modern city spaces, Paul Keenan interrogates the material contexts and symbolic resonances central to the design and construction of St Petersburg. He explains how the city’s location served, and was intrinsic to, certain military, commercial, and political objectives. However, he goes on to analyze the symbolisms literally built into the site; through its structure and details, the city displayed itself as an Orthodox Christian space, a sophisticated “European” space, and as a “well-ordered,” rational space. In this way, St Petersburg employed a rhetorical language of the built environment in order to materialize particular interpretations of Russia and its rulers. Importantly, it also shaped that language, lending substance and physicality to representational rhetoric.

Michael Heffernan’s contribution discusses a significant development in early modern conceptions of space: the idea that space is “a fundamental physical parameter, measurable by techniques of survey and calculation that linked a knowable earth to the wider universe.” This was a critical moment in the “emergence of modernity,” partly because it challenged traditional Aristotelian and Judeo-Christian understandings of the earth and the cosmos. Heffernan concentrates on the eighteenth-century Paris Academy of Sciences, suggesting that its debates about the relative merits and utility of terrestrial measurement and celestial calculation held substantive epistemological, disciplinary, and institutional implications. He also locates these disputes within their specific sites and networks, showing that large-scale

re-conceptualizations of space are themselves the products of particular spatial contexts.

The volume continues with two essays on imperial spaces. Lauren Benton and Jeppe Mulich use the concept of “microregions” to complicate historiographical understandings of early nineteenth-century empires. They show how the imperial and the local become entangled in small regions, and how “cross-polity movements and alliances” knit these zones together. These microregions—for example, the Leeward Islands, the Gold Coast, Mauritius—are defined equally by “thickening networks of local exchange” and by the global imperial competitions and hegemonies which intersect there. Moreover, these regions are at the forefront of political experimentation: free ports, confederations, and other inter-polity jurisdictions. The key point is to understand these polities and spaces outside “narratives of a global politics dominated by either the continuities of empires or the proliferation of nation-states.” Microregions provide a spatial framework to explore the configurations of regionalism and global integration in empires. Andrew Rudd’s article explores the relationship between physical distance and imaginative sympathy in the spatial conception of empires. He discusses the practical problems occasioned “at the level of material space,” notably the “worryingly fragile networks of communication.” However, he also demonstrates how eighteenth-century notions of sympathy were used to conceive of “empire as a community bound together by common laws, ideas and values, despite the remoteness between its constituent parts.” Focusing on Edmund Burke’s prosecution (1788–1795) of Warren Hastings, Governor-General of India, Rudd suggests that ideas about universalism, cultural difference, morality, and law are defined and given application by different perceptions and conceptions of space. He therefore explores the unexpected connections between imaginative and emotional spaces, and the theory and activity of imperial governance.

In the final essay, Robert Mayhew considers the significance of space and scale as historiographical tools. “Concepts of space,” he says, “can act upon the world, peoples’ spatial understandings driving their actions (which then affect the material world), just as assuredly as the socially-produced material world can affect mental space.” But space does not possess independent volition; it “cannot ‘do’ anything” in itself. Instead, space and scale are “logical devices for ordering our inquiries”; they structure our understandings of

objects, events and experiences, and in that sense, are instruments of “worldmaking.” Mayhew demonstrates his approach by showing how different scalar perspectives—global, national, and local—can facilitate diverse readings of Thomas Malthus’s *Essay on the Principle of Population*. Spatial categories, he concludes, are “one way of weaving the web of a historical narrative, of making a coherent historical worldview to contextualize an object, moment, or person.” Beat Kümin closes the volume with a discussion of the essays’ wider implications. He argues that together they explore three themes of especial consequence: the negotiation of gendered spaces, the spatial limits of political control, and the formation of contextualized discourses about space and place. Moreover, he shows how the essays suggest important questions for future work on space and place, particularly concerning the relationship between materiality and immateriality and the definition of “early modernity” itself. Finally, Kümin uses the essays’ insights to propose a fresh terminological framework for analyzing historical spaces, a vocabulary which “helps us integrate the material, social and mental components of space constitution.” By “testing concepts, providing new insights and provoking further questions,” he says, “*The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* advances the field in significant ways.”

## Notes

Acknowledgement: I am very grateful to Jo Guldi for her comments on an earlier version of this introduction.

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  7. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 199.
  8. Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988; reprinted London: Verso, 2008), 86–87. See also Kevin Archer, "Regions as Social Organisms: The Lamarckian Characteristics of Vidal de la Blache's Regional Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no.3 (1993): 498–514.
  9. See David N. Livingstone, "Environmental Determinism," in *Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. John Agnew and David Livingstone (London: Sage, 2011), 368–380.
  10. Guldi, "Landscape and Place," 68–70.
  11. For a useful bibliography see Simon Gunn, "'The Spatial Turn: Changing Histories of Space and Place,'" in *Identities in Space: Contested Territories in the Western City since 1850*, ed. Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 1–14. See also Guldi, "Landscape and Place," 70–72.
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13. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 26.
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15. Lynn Hunt "Introduction" to Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 7. See also Roger Chartier, "Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories," in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, ed. Dominick LaCapra and Steven L. Kaplan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Ralph Kingston, "Mind Over Matter," 112.
16. See, for example, Andrew Scull, *The Insanity of Place / The Place of Insanity: Essays on the History of Psychiatry* (London: Routledge, 2006); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic, 1994); Robert Titler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
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25. Kingston, "Mind Over Matter," 113–114. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. (London: Verso, 2006); Edward Said, *Orientalism*, rev. edn. (London: Penguin, 2003).
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27. See, for example, Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

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  35. Daniel Brewer, "Lights in Space," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37, no.2 (2004): 184.
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  37. Denis Cosgrove, *The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and Its Cultural Representations in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993); Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*.
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  39. See Daniel Miller, "Materiality: An Introduction," in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 3
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43. I owe this observation and its phrasing to Jo Guldi.
44. Martina Löw, "The Constitution of Space: The Structuration of Spaces through the Simultaneity of Effect and Perception," trans. Rhodes Barrett, *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no.1 (2008): 43–44.
45. Löw, "Constitution of Space," 43, 45–46.
46. See particularly the section "Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements. First Part: Transcendental Aesthetic."
47. Ross, *Emergence of Social Space*, 9. For some problems surrounding spatial and environmental determinism see: Gabriel Judkins, Marissa Smith, and Eric Keys, "Determinism within Human-Environment Research and the Rediscovery of Environmental Causation," *The Geographical Journal* 174, no.1 (2008): 17–29; James M. Blaut, "Environmentalism and Eurocentrism," *The Geographical Review* 89, no.3 (1999): 391–408.
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49. See the articles by Paul Keenan and Amanda Flather in this book.
50. Crang, "Spaces in Theory," 249.
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# 2

## Living Space: The Interpretation of English Vernacular Houses

*Matthew Johnson*

### Introduction

Ordinary houses are a familiar, even iconic, element of the English countryside. Houses that are modest in size and built of local materials using traditional methods can be found in almost every English rural community. Thousands of these houses were either built or modified in the early modern period and are still in use as family homes today. A casual walk down the high street of a Midland village, a hike along the shoulders of northern valleys, or a stroll around the Sussex or Kent countryside is not just physical exercise; if accompanied by an attentiveness to the buildings around the observer, it can be an observation and appreciation of the physical presence of the past landscapes of England<sup>1</sup> (see figure 2.1).

These houses are commonly described as “vernacular.” The term “vernacular” has a complex set of meanings, some of which are quite at odds with its use in early modern intellectual history. Eric Mercer sees the term “vernacular,” when applied to houses, as having “three distinct but related meanings: first, vernacular houses are of traditional form, are built in traditional ways with traditional materials, and use traditional ornament; secondly, they are common within, and peculiar to, one or more limited parts of the country; thirdly they are small and mean in comparison with some of their neighbors.” For Mercer, vernacular buildings are “those which belong to a type which is common in a given area at a given time.”<sup>2</sup>

The interpretation of surviving vernacular houses is complex, but they were lived in by inhabitants below the level of the elite;



*Figure 2.1* Monks Eleigh, Suffolk: A “typical English village,” with houses first constructed at varying dates between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries around a green and church. Photograph by Matthew Johnson.

conversely, few that survive today were inhabited by the laboring poor, at least until the eighteenth century. There is an ongoing debate about the difference between “vernacular” and “polite,” the social connotations of this changing divide in building styles and traditions, and the degree to which our sample of surviving buildings fail to reflect the dwellings of the poorest elements of society; and I will touch further on this divide below.<sup>3</sup> However, the broader outlines are clear. Thousands of these houses were built and dwelt in by the lesser gentry, by yeomen and husbandmen, and their families and households.

The issue then for the historian and archaeologist, as opposed to the casual visitor to an English village, is how to understand these buildings. English vernacular houses were and are, among other things, deliberate arrangements and configurations of space. How do we make mute stones speak—what can the materiality and the spatiality of these buildings tell us about the early modern period? How can the study of vernacular buildings be more than an appendix or set of illustrative footnotes to parochial history?

This chapter starts, then, from a rather different interpretive position than most of the contributions to this volume. Following the standard convention for this genre, most contributors start with a problem in “early modern history” as defined through primary textual sources and through a pre-existing tradition of historical scholarship; they then proceed to work through the ways in which a consideration of issues of space and place can contribute to the understanding of that problem. The problem for the student of vernacular architecture is rather different, and arguably more direct and physical. We have these thousands of houses; with apologies to Dr. Johnson, kick one of them and it hurts. How do we offer a scholarly account or explanation for them? How do we address and explain not an immediately *historical* problem, but rather this physical matter arranged in the *present*? (This intellectual issue is also expressed in the different professional make-up and disciplinary composition of academic history versus the study of vernacular buildings; where history is a largely academic discipline, much scholarship on vernacular buildings is driven by the concerns and priorities of conservation and heritage management<sup>4</sup>).

Until the last couple of decades, the approach taken by students of vernacular architecture to understanding English vernacular houses was largely commonsensical. In other words, there were few explorations of space as meaningfully constituted, and few attempts to see the past as different. Classic studies concentrated on building materials and techniques; where they discussed the interior layout and pattern of the vernacular house, they tended to take a utilitarian and functional view, often explicitly so.<sup>5</sup> Where discussion moved beyond what was conceived of as the practicalities of the subject, many scholars chose to discuss the economic patterns behind building rather than the cultural patterns inscribed in dwelling.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter, then, when compared to others in this volume, makes a rather different interpretive move, arguably in a reverse intellectual direction from that proposed by historians who wish to take space seriously. Many historians, including many of the contributors to this volume, have set themselves the task of engaging with the social and cultural meanings of the past, and have become aware of the need to confront space if they are to do so effectively. In contrast, students of vernacular architecture have space, but have become aware of the need to confront its social/cultural meanings if they are to successfully understand that space.

## Space and place in archaeology

The study of vernacular architecture has been a site of enquiry from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds. The pages of *Vernacular Architecture* are filled with contributions from social, cultural, and economic historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, both academics and professionals engaged in heritage studies, folk-life specialists, ethnographers, and many others. Though featuring often-sharp scholarly disagreements, the tone of discussion is largely—though not exclusively—positivist, and largely though not exclusively free of explicit discussion of theory.

Such an approach is in contrast to a more diverse set of perspectives in other countries. Most pertinent for the discussion in this volume is the work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century “common” or vernacular landscapes in North America. This work draws on diverse perspectives from folklife and material culture studies, as well as cultural, social, and economic history. Its theoretical inspirations are diverse, but a central theme is that vernacular building is “the study of people acting. It shows us people... engaged with their surroundings in a critical way, people making their own histories in the face of authorities trying to make it for them.”<sup>7</sup> Much of this work, then, is rooted in a populist celebration of the “vernacular” as a distinct tradition in its own right that is not simply secondary to elite histories, and which shares a deep commitment to the material and everyday world. Ordinary people are engaged with their surroundings in a material way, and that engagement is an active and critical one.

The discipline of archaeology starts from a distinctive intellectual position in these debates, in part due to its disciplinary context. To state the obvious, the vast bulk of the hundreds of thousands of years of the human past for which archaeologists seek explanations occurred well before the existence of written records. Archaeology has the primary intellectual task, then, of taking observed arrangements of matter and space in time, and interpreting them in terms that have no reference to any accompanying textual record. Great monuments and landscapes like Stonehenge and Avebury, the practices and meanings of Paleolithic cave art, as well as the everyday and small-scale details of life at Starr Carr and the prehistoric lake village of Glastonbury, must be explained by archaeologists not in terms of some wider frame of documentary reference or in terms of historical debates or issues, but in terms of their own physical and

contextual properties, often in conjunction with the use of ethnographic parallels.<sup>8</sup>

Archaeology has at the same time become an exceptionally ambitious discipline. It has long moved beyond the position that archaeologists can only talk about dates and chronologies; as a discipline, it sets itself the task of understanding the totality of social and cultural life from the material fragments with which it is faced. The attempt to do so raises a host of theoretical and methodological issues, and requires, among other things, a well-developed, sophisticated, and coherent set of theoretical concepts in order to move from those fragments to an imaginative but nevertheless rigorous and evidence-based understanding of human life.

In the last couple of decades, archaeological interpretation, faced with the problem of how to understand prehistoric space, has foregrounded issues of materiality and lived experience.<sup>9</sup> The term “materiality” has become central in a variety of different disciplinary fields, and subject to lengthy theoretical exegesis; here, I use it in a very modest way, to make two simple propositions. First, material things, for example houses, but also urban and rural landscapes, churches, barns, farm buildings, ceramics, pins, items of clothing, are *important*.

Material things not only express symbolic values in highly charged locales like a church or a piazza, but they also materialize a set of cultural practices and meanings at an everyday or quotidian level, for example, in routeways in and around the village, the layout of the farmyard, and the textures and forms of the house. The close relationship between materiality and everyday practices is expressed through the concept of “lived experience”—it is not, simply or only at least, some abstracted set of symbolic concepts or deep mentalities that drives our understanding of the world, it is our everyday living in and moving through the world that frame our understanding of it.

Second, things, including spaces, are not passive or secondary. They materialize practices and meanings in a way that is not reducible simply or only to the written or spoken word, or to a pre-existing set of values. In other words, meanings and values do not have an ontological existence prior to spaces and objects, but rather they emerge through practice; practice that takes place within and through spaces and objects. This is a point also made by Amanda Flather in this volume. As I understand her argument, spatial order and social order in

church seating reconstituted and reinforced each other; one did not have an ontological existence prior to the other.

This second point as stated above seems commonplace enough, but it has quite radical and counter-intuitive implications for the study of houses in the past or, for that matter, any study of space in the landscape or built environment. Scholars, including the author, habitually write about architecture “expressing” some prior cultural belief, set of values, mentality, or *zeitgeist*; for example, “status,” “civility,” “privacy,” “the spirit of the Middle Ages,” and so on. Such statements may well have some purchase when discussing elite Renaissance buildings where the presence of a named architect, and/or where a Classical or Palladian system of meaning can be readily invoked. In such contexts, the assumption of a prior agency or intention in the mind of the builder/owner or architect can be safely assumed or at least argued for in powerful terms. Such statements, however, are not at all clear or unproblematic for the building process before the Renaissance, or for vernacular as opposed to polite building.<sup>10</sup> They can certainly not be stated as universals; true at all times and in all places.

Space exists and is constituted at a series of scales; in the remainder of this chapter, I take as my theme the issue of scale, and specifically, the question of what scale is appropriate for understanding vernacular architecture in early modern England (though I will touch on the status of “England” itself as a constructed rather than self-evident concept). I start by outlining what a broader pattern and scale tells us, drawing on my own previous work on vernacular houses from the later Middle Ages onward. I then turn to a suite of recent studies—often primarily focused on objects rather than houses—that complicate this broad picture in interesting ways. I conclude by asking how scale was itself constituted and redefined through the material practices of buildings and class, by exploring issues of ideal and “reality” in early modern husbandry manuals that deal with the English house and household.

### **Explaining larger developments**

In my previous work,<sup>11</sup> I outlined a large-scale model for the development of English vernacular houses between the late medieval and early modern periods. I started by observing the arrangement of space in late medieval houses, space that was centered around a hall open

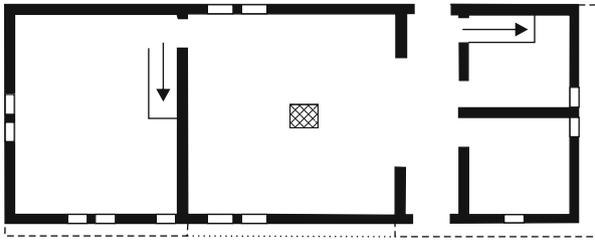


Figure 2.2 Plan and section of a late medieval vernacular house. Illustration by Matthew Johnson, after Matthew Johnson, *English Houses 1300–1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (London: Pearson, 2010), figure 4.1.

to the roof (see figure 2.2). I explored the cultural practices and meanings embedded in the form of the hall, in particular, the way the hall materialized status differences through its division, even in relatively humble dwellings, between upper and lower ends. Large halls characteristically had a raised dais and fixed bench at the upper end, upon which the table for the master and wife was set; this “dais end” was often lit by an oriel window. At the lower end of the hall, a screen or cross-passage framed the entrance of guests and household members, and the ninety-degree turn from the door into the hall oriented them toward the upper end.

These practices and meanings were materialized not just in the arrangement of space within late medieval houses, but in and through their construction, the process, technical systems, and manner of building. As Richard Harris has pointed out, the bay system of framing echoed the cultural layout of the house, with bay divisions and spatial divisions being congruent. The joints of the frame were “pegged-in” in such a way that the “fair faces” or ends of the pegs always faced the upper end of the hall. Where the hall was of two bays, the upper bay was slightly wider than the lower, by one rafter.<sup>12</sup>

The story of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was of the transformation of the open hall, starting with the disappearance of the open hearth and its replacement with various forms of chimney or fire hood. The fireplace and chimneystack had been known at elite levels since at least the twelfth century. It was introduced at socially middling levels in the sixteenth century, with earliest examples varying in date from region to region (c. 1500 in parts of East Anglia; later in the north and west).<sup>13</sup> A variety of forms of smoke bay, fire

hoods, and timber and brick chimneystacks were either built anew or skilfully inserted into earlier medieval houses. These insertions reduced the floor area of the hall and disrupted the arrangement of its internal features. The chimneystack also facilitated the insertion of ceilings into the hall. A lower ceiling made the space warmer and more comfortable, and made the hall a more intimate and less open space. It also removed the visual focus of the timber frame and rafters of the roof, and it also meant that the circulation pattern of the house became less centralized and more segregated—movement at the level of the upper floor from one end of the house to the other was facilitated.

The early seventeenth-century house still characteristically had a hall as the central room, but its importance had been diminished; in many areas, entrance to the house was now via a lobby that gave access both to hall and parlor, or hall and kitchen, rather than cross passage or screen entry. Evidence from the goods and furnishings listed in probate inventories shows that in the course of the next century, the upper story of the house became more important: the bed moved from the ground floor parlor to an upper story chamber, for example.

The picture that emerged of a socially middling house and household around say the year 1600 was quite unitary. Such a house retained a central hall, now with ceiling and chimneystack, but still the center of the home. Cooking, mealtimes, work, and other activities still retained the hall as their focus. A parlor contained the bed of the master and wife at the upper end of the hall, with service and ancillary rooms at the lower end, often leading out in turn to the farmyard, with its barn, byre, and other buildings.

The whole arrangement, then, represented an ordering of space that reflected social forms and values that are well known, specifically of the patriarchal household.<sup>14</sup> It was a small interpretive step from the spatial ordering and landscape setting of the farmhouse and household of c.1600 to, for example, the forthright advice of Dod and Cleaver's Puritan tract, *A Godlie Forme of Household Government*:

The dutie of the Husband is to get goods: and of the Wife to gather them together, and save them. The dutie of the Husband is to travel abroad, to seeke living, and the Wives dutie is to keep the house. The dutie of the Husband is to get money and provision; and of the Wives, not vainely to spend it. The dutie of the Husband is to

deal with many men; and of the Wives to talk with few. The dutie of the Husband is to be entermedling and of the wife, to be solitary and withdrawn. The dutie of the man is to bee lorde of all; and of the wife, to give account of all. The dutie of the husband is, to dispatch all things without dore; and of the wife, to oversee and give order for all things within the house.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time as ordinary houses changed in form, they also become more different in layout from elite buildings. To simplify, houses of c. 1500 were larger and smaller versions of a similar basic plan, with the open hall at its center, whether the hall was the everyday living space of a peasant or the more formal but still multi-functional space of lordly ceremonial. Where the open-hall house of c. 1500 shared spatial characteristics across different status groups, the house of c. 1700 was markedly different. The use of Classical style and features at upper social levels, and the use of new building materials, such as brick, served to differentiate the houses of different classes not just in their arrangement of space, but also in their visual language and appearance; in the way their form could be “read” and understood from outside.

In this quite sweeping and large-scale view of developments in vernacular architecture across the centuries, then, the early seventeenth-century house and household idealized by Dod and Cleaver was a mid-point of a process that looked forward to the development of eighteenth-century houses that have variously been labelled as symmetrical or Georgian. Symmetrical or Georgian houses, in this view, were not simply or only the result of a top-down process of stylistic change in which Palladian ideas filtered down to vernacular levels. Instead, they could also be seen, in a bottom-up way, as materializing internal changes in the socially middling household. By the early eighteenth century, ordinary houses were often two rooms rather than one room deep. The two-room-deep plan again disrupted the traditional ordering of the house as a line of rooms from kitchen to hall to parlor, and made its internal arrangement much harder to “read” from the outside; it also relegated women’s activities to the rear of the house, at a time when traditional conceptions of the active role of the housewife were also being eroded.

This model shared elements of earlier work. It drew from and reflected upon W. G. Hoskins’s thesis of the Great Rebuilding; though the narrow dates of 1560–1640 proposed by Hoskins were in this view

a small segment of a much longer change. It also echoed Eric Mercer's Marxist interpretation of ordinary houses in England, published in his monumental *English Vernacular Houses*<sup>16</sup>—for many one of the most significant books on traditional buildings in England ever published. Until the publication of *English Vernacular Houses*, much of the discussion on vernacular traditions had stressed regional tradition and peculiarity; differences between one area and another were understood in terms of local tradition or simply not thought through or explained at all. Mercer's thesis in *English Vernacular Houses* was that all areas of England went through the same fundamental transition between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries, and had the same start points and end points. However, they went through this transition at different paces and in different ways. As a result, what might appear to the casual observer as idiosyncratic regional differences were actually manifestations of a deeper, quite simple pattern: a fundamental, single social change affecting the whole of the country. The power of this idea lay in its ability to unify the story of English vernacular architecture into a single narrative, and to say interesting things about regional differences beyond seeing them as local particularities or idiosyncrasies. It was derived from quite a literal reading of classical Marxism—specifically, the Marxist account of the feudal/capitalist transition in which all societies undergo the same basic set of changes but at different times.

Both Mercer and I, then, put forward a unified, large-scale story about the pattern of English building. I suggest that such a large-scale story is necessary and valid. However, it is only part of the story.

### **Critiquing larger models**

There are several issues with the larger story I have outlined that need to be explored. First, it was highly normative, taking the rural house built and dwelt in by socially middling farming households as its ideal. In taking the rural house as the norm, it tended to downplay or view as secondary the important developments that were going on in urban housing and topography. These other developments indicate, first, much greater diversity in different house forms, and diversity also in the form of the open hall itself.<sup>17</sup>

In a sense, the difficulties encountered by contemporary commentators, most famously Gregory King, in fitting urban householders into a social scheme that was based on a rural hierarchy, are echoed

by the modern scholar's difficulty in encompassing rural and urban housing within a single narrative of development.<sup>18</sup> To clarify: King and others had little trouble articulating schemes of vertical social hierarchy running from the monarch and aristocracy, through gentry and yeomen, to husbandmen and the laboring classes; but such schema took rural society as their norm, and always had difficult fitting urban social classes into this single hierarchy. In parallel, the single narrative of development in houses outlined above always has difficulty encompassing urban forms and change in these forms within its parameters.

A related issue with such a larger model is the way it posits developments in lowland England as the norm. It runs the risk of relegating the stories of regions outside lowland England to ones of late or secondary development, in which the south and east of the country showed the north and west the way forward. The unifying story of the "English house" also runs the risk of marginalizing areas outside the boundaries of the English nation. Intellectual and cultural historians are now very familiar with the idea that "England" was a created and contested construct, constantly being re-made in an unstable and dialectical relationship with other areas of the British Isles.<sup>19</sup> It is worth pondering upon what the intellectual implications of this insight are for the study of vernacular buildings in England and the British Isles. It may be the case that "the English house" is just as much a construct as early modern understandings of the English nation. I shall touch on this point again briefly in the conclusion, in comparing Gervase Markham's idealized vision of the English house with the reality.

Second, the larger picture tended to minimize the active nature of space—in other words, the way space structures social relationships as much as it is structured by them. When phrased incautiously, it could be read as stressing how the material form of the house was a reflection of (presumed) underlying social values with a (presumed) prior existence: medieval social relations produce the medieval house; seventeenth century social relations produce the seventeenth-century house. Specific studies within this larger model should then engage in detail with how the material form of the house and the social form of the household mutually created each other.

It is a truism to state that this mutual creation was played out through the patterns and rhythms of day-to-day practices, specifically, activities in and around the household: the everyday realities

of cooking, sewing, washing, feeding and caring for livestock and other animals, sleeping, looking after children, sexual relations, eating, and working in gardens and fields. These practices were practical activities, in the sense that they were tied in to and constitutive of the economic survival and well-being of the household; but they must also be seen as constant and small-scale acts of cultural definition and redefinition, working in subtle and not-so-subtle ways to define cultural identities.

We know a great deal about these everyday activities. In the last decades, there has been a plethora of studies on material culture and the way it was used, produced, and consumed in and around the household—ceramics, glass, objects adorning the body, garments concealed in the walls of houses, etc. These studies have not had the impact they deserve on the study of built space, in part because they tend to be classified as studies of “material culture” and as such are not perceived as directly relevant to “architecture.”<sup>20</sup> As a result, the larger narrative presented above has sometimes been presented as being in opposition to competing explanations that stress practical or everyday factors in house and household forms—when in fact, the two should be presented as being in tandem.

Another consequence of the lack of stress on the active nature of space was that the house was viewed in a univocal way as a symbol of patriarchy. It was counter-intuitive to move beyond the observation that the house was built by men and reflected dominant patriarchal values that could be all too easily and readily matched up with texts like *Dod* and *Cleaver's*. Again, such a view is not necessarily wrong, but is far from being the whole story. Matching the material record with the textual record is an exercise that gives archaeologists and historians great satisfaction; scholars are always happy when all the evidence points the same way to a smooth, single interpretation. But perhaps they should also be suspicious. Perhaps, instead of constantly trying to match up pieces of evidence into a single pattern, we might deliberately look for elements that fail to fit and ask why they fail to do so.

We might, for example, start from a different point: that of noting a critical disjuncture in this kind of didactic advice. Such advice was elite rather than vernacular, being written by men of the gentry classes for the consumption of those below them on the social scale. As I will explore below, embedded within such advice was a series of tensions and anxieties over the nature of the gendered

social order, as much as they were a normative proclamation of social values.<sup>21</sup>

These tensions and anxieties can be illustrated by thinking about some of the activities that took place in and around the household. Thinking about such activities has tended to be obscured by a presumed opposition between “structure” and “meaning” on the one hand, and a common-sense view of “practicality” on the other. Theories of practice and everyday life have long moved beyond this disabling opposition but it still recurs in the more traditional literature.<sup>22</sup>

As an example, consider the everyday activity of sweeping. There is copious evidence that houses were carefully swept by housewives and female domestic servants on a regular basis. The earthen floors of excavated houses have a slightly dished profile, while surviving ceramic and stone floors have a patina indicating regular sweeping. One of the most arresting—and transient—examples of “folk art” comes from northern England, where it was customary to use fine sand as a scouring agent for the flagstones of the floor. Sieves were used to create complex patterns on the floor; it was a matter of pride for the housewife that the patterns were created in the morning and lay undisturbed on the threshold of the house until they were swept out at the end of the day’s housework.<sup>23</sup> However, sweeping is more than simply being a locus of household order. Household order and disorder was literally dramatized, placed on stage, by Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers.

Wendy Wall has explored the very complex set of meanings behind the episode, in Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, when Puck, also known as Robin Goodfellow, is sent by his master Oberon to sweep out the house of the newlyweds. She points out this episode has complex class and gender dimensions. By 1600, elite writers saw belief in fairies as something characteristic of children and backward folk, for example, female domestic labor. Fairies were “child-sized country pranksters who wore coarse clothing and busied themselves with . . . tinkering with household order . . . they sometimes punished bad housewifery, sometimes worked laboriously, and sometimes simply danced among the trenchers of the kitchen.”<sup>24</sup> In Elizabethan drama, the broom is both a symbol of menial status, and also has priapic resonances, as in traditional representations of Robin Goodfellow in action, wielding his broom, sporting what may be an interesting codpiece if not a real erection, and surrounded by pots, jugs and other

symbols of the domestic household. Sweeping, then, was so much more than sweeping. When a housewife or domestic servant picked up a broom and swept out the corners of the hall, they were actively involved in engaging—and warding off—a threatening, disorderly, and sexualized spirit world.

The broom, of course, was the mode of transport by choice of the witch, who held it between her legs to fly through the air. In parallel with much of the discourse around vernacular architecture, the beliefs and fears surrounding witchcraft have been seen as a univocal assertion of patriarchal values.<sup>25</sup> However, a fuller and deeper understanding of both the archaeological and cultural/literary evidence for witchcraft suggests a deeper and more complex picture. Witches, of course, took everyday household objects and turned them into items of fear and fantasy. They threatened and attempted to penetrate the margins of the house: they worked through everyday substances and objects—blood, milk, pins, dress. The world of the witch,



*Figure 2.3* The framing of everyday life around the small scale of a domestic interior: Hearth, bench, flagstones, and heck-post at Spout House, Bilsdale. The heck-post is the vertical timber to the left that defined the intimate space around the hearth; traditionally, it was one focus for the placement of precautions against witchcraft. The cast iron oven is a later insertion, itself an artefact of the later “closure” and diminution in size of the fireplace in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Courtesy: Crown Copyright EH.

then, was the world of the everyday, and that of household economy. Witches struck at processes and activities that were at the center of the household's economic wellbeing, and specifically the wellbeing of the women of the household. Witches stopped milk curdling, thus depriving women of the economic benefit of butter and cheese; they interfered with the fermentation of beer and other alcoholic brews. Witches threatened fertility, childbirth, and children. The many precautions against witchcraft found around vernacular houses, then, speak of a fear of the penetration of its margins, and such precautions center on those parts of the house that were the center of everyday activities. Anyone cooking over the fire in the hall leant over and under apotropaic marks inscribed on the wooden lintel above the hearth; the husband enjoyed a pipe of tobacco leaning back against the "heck-post" adjacent to the hearth; mummified cats, worn shoes, and other items of clothing were stuffed into the crevices in walls<sup>26</sup> (see figure 2.3).

### Ideal and reality

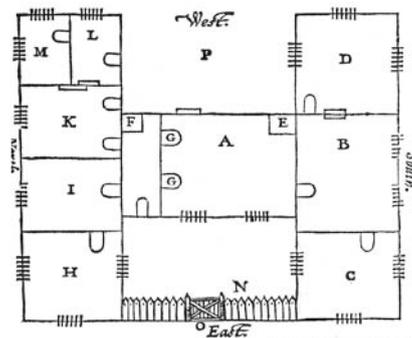
I have argued, then, that a serious engagement with space must engage with, on the one hand, the large-scale architectural developments over several centuries, and on the other hand, with the minutiae of everyday activities such as tending animals, processing foodstuffs, cooking and cleaning. It must also engage with scale in a different sense, with the interaction of national ideals and regional realities.

It is well known that elites in early modern England loved giving their inferiors advice. From 1550 onwards, elite writers, mostly of the gentry, produced a plethora of printed books aimed at giving advice and instruction to the middle sort of people. These books pronounced on the management of the household, on gender roles, and on techniques of husbandry and of housewifery. The Puritan moralists were but an extreme wing of this general trend. These advice books were written by elite men, generally members of the gentry classes; some were written by women towards the end of the seventeenth century. A few early books were addressed to fellow gentlemen; however later books were addressed first to the "plowman" and then to the "husbandman" (Fitzherbert's classic text *The Boke of Husbandry* was post-humously edited to make just this change<sup>27</sup>). They were obviously dependent on the technology of printing, and have to be understood as circulating alongside other new or evolving forms of knowledge,

including printed maps, surveyors' manuals, and indeed, printed Bibles.

Advice books, then, have as their explicit purpose the prescription of appropriate behavior for women and men of the middling sort—for the constructed ideal of the rural household. They were nevertheless a metropolitan production: husbandry manuals were addressed to the country farm, following Classical models, but were published in London. They were thus implicated in the production a distinctively national space, being part of the growing cultural dominance of the metropole and part of an active production of national identity.<sup>28</sup>

On the surface, these books reflect a highly normative picture of a self-sufficient working farm or manorial center, a solid building block of the commonwealth. However, this normative picture concealed two anxieties. First, the manor and the system of values that the



- A. Signifieth the great hall.  
 B. The dining Parlor for entertainment of strangers.  
 C. An inward closet within the Parlor for the Mistresses use, for necessaries.  
 D. A strangers lodging within the Parlor.  
 E. A faire case into the rooms over the Parlor.  
 F. A faire case into the God-mans rooms over the Kitchen and Buttery.  
 G. The Shrine in the hall.  
 H. An inward cellar within the buttery, which may serve for a Larder.  
 I. The Buttery.  
 K. The Kitchen, in whose range may be placed a bzing lead, and convenient Duens, the bzing vessels adoyning.  
 L. The Dairy house for necessary businesse.  
 M. The Milke house.  
 N. A faire stone pale before the for most court.  
 O. The great gate to ride in at to the hall doze.  
 P. A place where a Dumpe would be placed to serve the offices of the house.
- This figure signifieth the dozes of the house.  
 This figure signifieth the windows of the house.  
 This figure signifieth the Chimnies of the house.

Figure 2.4 The early seventeenth-century ideal: Plan of a house, from Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (London: Browne, 1619), call number RB 99553, pages 1A4v-B1r. Huntington Library, San Marino, California. This was intended as an ideal scheme for a husbandman's house, with the letters indicating the names of the different rooms (A is the hall, K the kitchen, and so on).

manor materialized was under threat, as seen in the genre of country house literature and the attacks on “Mockbeggars Hall,” the house built by a new man, which failed to conform to ideals of hospitality and good lordship. Later books have a subtle shift, beginning to emphasize thrift and profit rather than subsistence. In addition, they reflect gendered anxieties: woman were enjoined to stay indoors, most classically in *Dod and Cleaver*, at the same time as they are enjoined to go to market, or enjoined to produce fanciful and exotic pastries at the same time as practicing plainness and thrift.<sup>29</sup>

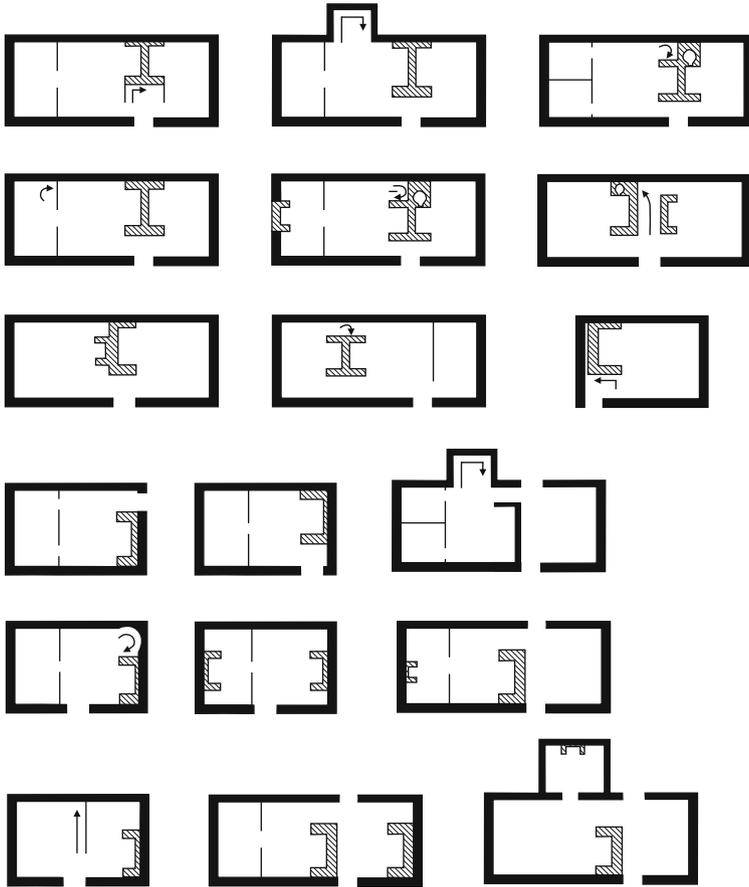
The most famous and popular author of such literature was Gervase Markham (c. 1568–1637). I want to focus on the ordering of space to be found in his classic *The English Husbandman*. Markham provides a plan of what he recommends as a husbandman’s house. (See figure 2.4.) He writes:

Here you behould the modell of a plaine country mans house, without plaster or imbosture, because it is to be intended that it is as well to be built of stude and plaster, as of lime and stone, or if timber be not plentifull it may be built of courser woode, and couered with lime and haire, yet if a man would bestowe cost in this modell, the foure inward corners of the hall would be conuenient for foure turrets, and the foure gauell ends, being thrust out with bay windowes might be formed in any curious manner: and where I place a gate and a plaine pale, might be either a tarrisse, or a gatehouse: of any fashion whatsoeuer, besides all those windowes which I make plaine might be made bay windowes, either with battlements, or without, but the scope of my booke tendeth onely to the vse of the honest Husbandman, and not to instruct men of dignitie.<sup>30</sup>

Markham’s model reflects an idealized conception of household space. It is, by definition, a national model. It is also explicitly concerned with “a plaine country man” or “the honest Husbandman” rather than a member of the upper classes.

Markham’s and others’ advice was eagerly consumed; these texts ran into multiple editions and were often plagiarized. However, the middling sort proceeded to read the advice carefully—many surviving texts are covered in marginal annotations—and then, in critical respects, ignore it. Having carefully read Markham’s prescription, the socially middling famer then proceeded to build a house in one of the

forms laid out in figure 2.5. These houses were neat compact boxes; wings of the sort Markham specifies for his H-plan were rare after the start of the seventeenth century at social middling levels (though they were present in later medieval and sixteenth-century houses).



*Figure 2.5* The early seventeenth-century reality. A selection of different possible early modern plan forms. Illustration by Penny Copeland, after Ronald Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture: An Illustrated Handbook*, 4th rev. edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 107–109. These forms could be produced either by building a new house from scratch, or by insertion of a chimneystack and ceiling into an earlier medieval house, often with similar end results. The different plan forms illustrated have different and complex distributions across different parts of England, though it is important to stress that exceptions can always be found.

The gap between ideal and reality in Markham's advice must also be seen in terms of the creation and maintenance of a particular conception of nation-state. It is of note that such husbandry manuals were eagerly consumed in the seventeenth century-New World, where their advice on the seasons, on crops to be sown, and other matters was patently inapplicable; rather, such books were in part potent symbols and icons of Englishness.<sup>31</sup> Markham's house not only failed to correspond to what socially-middling farmers were actually building in the early seventeenth century; it also failed to correspond to what was actually being built across much of the country. In much of northern England, and in areas of Wales, rather different forms of house could still be found (e.g., the longhouse, where humans and animals lived under a single roof, often separated by a cross-passage). The ideal Markham represented, then, was not simply or only inflected in terms of class; it was also part of a representation of "England" that foregrounded the southern and eastern parts of the realm as the norm.

On a broader level, the consumer behavior of the early modern middling sort was often in direct contradiction to the thrift advocated by advice books. At the same time as the counsel of thrift was taking hold in the texts, the archaeological record is one of new kinds and forms of goods. These goods were bright, varied, and colorful—slipwares, other brightly colored ceramics for the kitchen and table, brass and pewter trinkets, clothing in new fabrics, clay pipes, and tobacco.<sup>32</sup> And while the rural was held up as the ideal, it was the urban bourgeois household that was consuming much of this advice.

The critical disjuncture in the description, then, is that such an H-plan house was prescribed, but not followed. A newly conscious and literate middling sort read these books, and then acted differently and variously. What was at stake here was the way space was framed on the one hand in terms of a national ideal, and on the other hand, structured through a reality of localism, contradiction, and expedience.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that a serious engagement with space must involve a serious engagement with issues of scale. In this chapter, I started with a larger, national story that has been told by others and myself about the development of "English" houses in the later medieval and early modern period. I then pulled this story apart by

moving to a more detailed and intimate scale of quotidian life in the early modern household, and also by stressing how different scales, for example of the nation-state, were themselves constructed and negotiated through the form of the house. I discussed how moving between the smaller and the larger scales, and between the generation of printed texts such as husbandry manuals and forms of built space such as the house and farmyard, generates a deeper interpretation of space in the early modern period.<sup>33</sup>

I suggest that there are further themes to be explored that might lead us to question the very category of space itself. First, where the larger story posited the house basically as a spatial envelope, to be classified according to how it divided up segments of space and provided circulation through those segments, a different though complementary view might stress lived experience, texture, the senses. Well-known statements like “the rise in material comfort” associated with the Great Rebuilding might be unpacked—what, for example, were the qualities of light in an early modern house? How did sounds reverberate from one end of the house to the other? How did the lashing of the rain against wooden shutters of glass windows, the creaking of floorboards, the contrast of heat from the fire against the cold corners of the room, the swish of curtains and of brooms, and the clatter of pots and pans create and condition a certain mode of living and how the house was experienced?

Exploration of such issues might be held to interrogate seriously the boundaries of what is or is not “reliable” knowledge about the past. I make two suggestions in this regard. First, the qualities of light, the clatter of pots and pans, and the swish of brooms, are quite physical and tangible elements—whereas many of the categories early modern historians are quite comfortable with, for example state formation, commercialization, rise in material comfort—are quite intangible. Second, assumptions about what does or does not count as “evidence,” and conversely, what might be considered wild or fanciful interpretations are open to critique, just as feminist historians now have a well-developed critique of traditional evidential criteria as systematically disqualifying women’s experiences.<sup>34</sup>

The new technologies have a central role to play in developing methods and techniques for the exploration of lived experience; some of the most exciting developments in the digital humanities center around the use of digital visualization to explore very basic issues of how buildings might have been experienced by

contemporaries, the different sensory impressions (sights, sounds, even smell and touch) that crowded in upon the human senses. In the process, they tackle head-on difficult issues of evidential criteria and what we can and cannot say about the past, but from a very different perspective than that of more traditional text-driven discussions.<sup>35</sup>

Taken together, a serious and sustained engagement with themes of materiality and lived experience through the lens of the new technologies might lead archaeologists and historians to write about the past in very different ways. They might even contribute to the ongoing move by archaeologists and historians beyond text itself, to explore other ways of representing the past that are rigorous and evidentially based, but which also give a real sense of everyday worlds in the past, a sense of past people's lived experience of space in a world that was so very different to our own.

## Notes

Acknowledgements: I thank Paul Stock for inviting me to give this paper at the London School of Economics and for his persistence and patience during its production. Paul Stock, Rebecca Johnson, and an anonymous reviewer made invaluable comments on earlier drafts. My thoughts on lived experience and digital humanities owe a great deal to discussions with Catriona Cooper and others arising from our fieldwork on medieval buildings and landscapes in south-east England, discussed further at <http://sites.north-western.edu/medieval-buildings/> (accessed June 5, 2014).

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# 3

## Gender and the Organization of Sacred Space in Early Modern England c. 1580–1640

*Amanda Flather*

The relationship between gender and space has been a consistent theme in histories of women and of gender over many years, even if not always explicitly stated. One of the most influential master narratives about the status of women is a story of decline from the early modern to the Victorian age. Historians who support this theory argue that, with the advent of capitalism and the rise of a class society, the division between domestic space and work space became more distinct, the household became more sharply identified as private, domestic, and feminine, in opposition to the public and masculine spaces of work and politics, from which women were progressively excluded. The outcome of this sharpening of spatial and social distinctions, it is argued, was to produce a more rigidly hierarchical and patriarchal society.<sup>1</sup>

This “separate spheres” model continues to have a very powerful influence on women’s and gender history, although there is now a mounting body of literature that challenges many of its assumptions. Work on masculinity has drawn attention to the “private” and domestic aspects of the lives of men as well as women.<sup>2</sup> The “public” aspects of the family have been addressed in terms of its relationship to the community, to political institutions, public policy, and in terms of its economic role.<sup>3</sup> Studies have also begun to stress continuity in the spheres and status of women. Historians of women’s work have argued that during the pre-industrial era of domestic production, women’s economic status was already low and opportunities for work were constrained. Amanda Vickery takes arguments for continuity

still further by stressing that normative notions of a basic separation of spheres in which women were associated with home and children while men controlled “public institutions” was not a creation of the nineteenth century, but could be “applied to almost any century and any culture”; it was an idea “at least as old as Aristotle.” She argues for detailed studies to find out “how women accepted, negotiated, contested or simply ignored the much quoted precepts of proper female behavior” in different times and in different places.<sup>4</sup>

Vickery’s work points to the need to extend study of the ways in which ideologies about gender and space and practices of gender roles intersect back into the seventeenth century, although to date, most research has focused on the period after 1750. While it has been acknowledged that the gender order of early modern England was often defined in spatial terms, for the most part, historians of the early modern period have implicitly or explicitly rejected the applicability of the “separate spheres” paradigm for the pre-modern past.<sup>5</sup> Research has concentrated on recovering the “public” aspects of women’s lives and the ways in which the worlds of men and women were integrated rather than separated, especially in arenas of work and worship. Studies of the early modern family have argued that pre-modern households were not “areas of privacy” but “public political institutions”;<sup>6</sup> early modern marriage was an economic, if unequal, partnership and the tasks and spaces of men and women overlapped in a society in which there was not the sharp division between work and home that later generations experienced.<sup>7</sup>

Influenced by the insights and accomplishments of the social history of the 1970s, this work has been keen to make distinctions between prescription and practice and to recover the material circumstances of the lives of men and women in early modern society. Yet while this research enormously enriches our knowledge of female and male experience and emphasizes that prescription and practice should not be confused with one another, in other ways, it shrinks the scope of analysis of gender and space. Its focus on social mixing tends to present a picture of an unproblematized heterosocial world, and conceals the extent of segregation that existed in early modern society. Universities and arenas of formal political and administrative institutions (both local and national) were exclusively male arenas; the parish church, as we shall see, was segregated by gender.<sup>8</sup>

More importantly, perhaps, an implicit reliance on a generalized model of “spheres” manages to be too schematic and abstract

in terms of both gender and space. Recent developments in gender history, influenced in part by the linguistic turn, have complicated our understanding of how prescription and practice relate to one another. It is now recognized that while prescription tells us how people were supposed or told to act, it does not necessarily provide evidence of how people actually behaved. That said, "ideal" prescription and "real" practice were not wholly distinct. The content of conduct literature was a product of the interests and concerns of its readership, just as "real" lives were shaped by the texts that formed part of the culture. People might revise or reject normative notions, but the two are not wholly separable. Laura Gowing, for example, in her study of early modern gender relations, has stressed that relationships within "real" households were shaped by prescriptive and popular literature, just as imaginative and informative descriptions of marriage drew on stories of "real" lives. The language of insult and the examinations and information of witnesses in marital disputes were informed by familiar printed fictions and prescriptions. At the same time, women manipulated normative notions and texts telling tales of female weakness and dependence to pursue their own interests, in particular, if they wished to extricate themselves from an unattractive marriage agreement.<sup>9</sup> Experiences and discourses are not the same thing, but they intersect and overlap. Gender roles, as actually lived, were a product of complex interactions of ideas and material circumstances.

These developments suggest that analysis of the social effect of gender on the use of space in the early modern period should examine normative notions and practices in relation to one another, rather than viewing them as prescription on the one hand and practice on the other, as Matthew Johnson has demonstrated in his essay for this volume. The analytical framework of study should not be constructed around a male/public and female/private or domestic dichotomy, which runs the risk of an unhistorical, contextually insensitive application of those terms.<sup>10</sup> The focus should not be on "spheres" but spaces themselves, how historical actors defined and described them and how normative ideas and practice intersected to shape gendered use and experience of those spaces. Such a shift would allow discussion of gender relations to move away from arid arguments about "prescription versus practice" or "representational versus real" to attend to the complex ways men and women accepted, negotiated, manipulated, or even ignored normative boundaries, just as they do

today (though the distribution of power meant that some were more able to do so than others).<sup>11</sup>

Many writers in a variety of fields have shown ways in which spaces can be gendered, even when they are shared by men or women, through perception, experience, and use. Individual sense of space, and behavior within it, is influenced by a host of cultural clues that enable people to create "mental maps" to help them to use spaces and to let them know when spaces might be difficult or dangerous to enter.<sup>12</sup> These different perceptions and experiences are determined in large measure by the different degrees of power wielded by individuals or groups over how the space is accessed, used, and given social and cultural meanings.

The strength of this strand of scholarship lies in the way that it understands space in social and performative terms. The feminist geographer Doreen Massey has explained that, "the spatial organization of society...is integral to the production of the social and not merely its result. It is fully implicated in both history and politics."<sup>13</sup> Massey has criticized scholars for ignoring the links between gender, space, and the construction of social relations over time, questioning conceptualizations of time and space that have so often been simply mapped on to the public, private, masculine, feminine dichotomy. Together with Linda McDowell, she has looked at the varying impact of industrial restructuring and development in four different parts of England, for example, to show how the intersection of patriarchy with capitalism created different divisions of labor between women and men and different structures of paid employment in different parts of the country, complicating our understanding of the dynamics of work, wages, citizenship, and public and private spheres.<sup>14</sup>

Such conceptual advances suggest that problematizing space and gender should be a fruitful area for historical research.<sup>15</sup> Important developments in early modern studies have offered a corrective to the assumption that women were always and simply passive victims of absolute male dominance. Scholarly attention is now paid to the complex, varied, uneven, and changing articulation of patriarchal authority. Contradictions and tensions between the ideal model of gender relations disseminated through the pulpit and prescriptive literature and the practices of everyday life, as well as the intersection of gender with other social factors such as age, social, and marital status, created arenas for female agency. It has been emphasized that this agency can be seen not only in occasional acts of resistance, but

also in the continual negotiation of everyday interactions.<sup>16</sup> Since space is the context in which these power relations were played out, and the organization of space influenced how and when interactions occurred, the usefulness of spatial analysis becomes apparent. It provides us with a highly contextualized, dynamic picture of how gender relations were constructed, maintained, manipulated, negotiated, contested, or changed by daily human encounters and through the medium of space.

These developments in mind, the following analysis moves away from a focus on the abstract historiographical metaphor of “spheres” to explore what people *did* in *spaces*; how gender influenced spatial meaning and patterns of use and control. The essay that follows offers a case study of the spatial organization of the parish church. This arena has been selected because it was the most important social space in early modern local society in which hierarchy was spatially, visibly, and materially displayed, and so it allows very precise exploration of how social life and gender roles were materialized in objects, spaces, and practices. The aim of the analysis is to show how a focus on space can offer new insights into issues of agency and the shifting dynamics of gendered power. By taking seriously the way individual people behaved in certain spaces, and by exploring the weight that they attached to them, we can also explore how questions of identity and social cohesion were bound up with issues of position and performance in particular places. The work also reminds us that talking about space is about engaging with individual and local practices as well as large-scale conceptual problems.

Social space was vitally important for the marking out and maintaining of the series of hierarchies of age, gender, and rank that sustained social order in early modern society. It was not simply a passive backdrop to a social system that had structural origins elsewhere. The way people used space reflected and in turn had effects back upon the way social relations were expressed, reaffirmed, challenged, or changed. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a person's place in a procession was obsessively ordered; codes of dress, gesture, posture, and modes of address were all minutely measured to make sure individuals were accorded the appropriate respect required to sustain a social system based upon principles of hierarchy and locality, deference, and difference.<sup>17</sup> The parish church was the most important arena in which these finely grained social boundaries were materially and symbolically mapped out by the precise placing

of parishioners in their pews. During the sixteenth century, and in many parishes even earlier, church chancels and naves were filled with seats for the whole congregation.<sup>18</sup> There were practical and religious reasons for these innovations. After the Reformation, the Word of God became the priority. Protestant sermons were lengthy, unlike the Catholic mass, and sitting and listening rather than standing and seeing became the appropriate attitude for receiving the reformed Gospel message.<sup>19</sup> Recent research has challenged a historiography that associates the Reformation with desacralization.<sup>20</sup> The majority of Protestants were not fundamentally opposed to the localization of the holy. Indeed, the work of Alexandra Walsham has demonstrated that the Reformation did not destroy sacred space but rather re-arranged its topography and its forms.<sup>21</sup> Through their ideas on consecration and idolatry, English Protestants developed newer and narrower definitions of how the holy should be present in spaces and objects. The Church of England constructed a theology and architecture based upon compromise, careful to avoid ascribing holy meaning to material objects, yet encouraging reverence and care for the building itself, a process intensified by Laudian developments in the 1630s.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, after the Reformation, as before it, social identity was inscribed on to the design, placing, and ordering of sacred space. Just as in the medieval church, religious objects such as altarpieces or monumental tombs were paid for by private patrons and imbued with temporal significance: social and sacred meanings sat comfortably together in the pew. Hierarchical arrangements offered opportunities for social display, but privilege was underpinned by religious principle. The most prestigious pews were those in or near to the pulpit and the chancel, the sanctified stage of the priest under Catholicism and the most important focal point for worship after the Reformation. Church attendance was not universal in early modern society but most parishioners of whatever gender, age, or rank took part in the same service, said the same words, and participated in the same rituals every week. As Christopher Marsh has argued, the vision was one therefore of divinely ordained inequality but also of neighborly reciprocity, of enduring hierarchy but also of harmony. The spiritual and the social were inextricably intertwined.

The social and symbolic significance of seating for contemporaries is demonstrated powerfully by the fact that when, in 1701, Richard Gough began to write a history of his parish of Myddle in Shropshire titled "Observations concerning the seats in Myddle and the Families

to which they belong," he organized his study around the seating arrangements in the parish church. He listed each pew in turn and in order of social precedence and wrote a history of the families to which they belonged.<sup>23</sup>

What happened in Myddle in Shropshire was typical of many places in the country at this time. The top people, the gentry, began by installing three rows of seats in the most prestigious position nearest the chancel at the east end, followed by the tenement farmers and then the cottagers. Seating for the poor was provided at the back on simple benches, often marked in red "for the poor." In addition to organization according to rank, seating systems were generally further refined to separate the old from the young, the married from the single, and men from women.

By this date also, the power to place parishioners in all pews, aside from those privately held in the right of a house, was invested in the churchwardens, minister, and a select group of the "better sort" of male parishioners. In a society still wedded to the ideology of an unchanging divinely ordained social order, the aim was always to define a stable local social hierarchy, but the reality was that the well-attested social and economic changes generated by population growth in this period, meant that there was considerable social mobility and so order was always changing. This left a good deal of room for argument about how people's stake in the community should determine their correct place in the symbolic order of social precedence set out within the local parish church, as the plentiful pew disputes that survive in the church court records amply demonstrate. What is clear is that within this system, a man's place in church was judged differently from that of a woman. Land ownership, contribution to parish rates, office in the parish were all relevant to where a man would be placed in the seats not privately owned. But since outside of the household, women had no formal status other than being someone's wife; the position of a married woman was determined by the social qualities and characteristics possessed by her husband. Nonetheless, there is much evidence that women as well as men were very much exercised about where they sat in church.

It is the seating disputes that involve women that form the focus of this essay. A number of fascinating questions need to be addressed in order to appreciate properly the significance of these spatial conflicts, questions which need to be tackled at a local and regional level: for example, what kinds of women were involved in these disputes, of

which type, and why? The purpose of the case study that follows is to address these questions by exploring the structure of seating disputes in seventeenth-century Essex parish churches that involved women. The essay focuses upon the county of Essex for three main reasons: first, archival evidence is rich, since ecclesiastical records survive for all jurisdictions for the period. Second, knowledge of pew disputes in general, and of disputes in Essex in particular, is still at an early stage. Third, the distinctions of the local and regional economy and culture, in terms of the dominance of the cloth trade and proximity to the economic and cultural influences of London, meant that the well-attested social, economic, religious, and cultural changes of the period were especially pronounced in Essex. By concentrating upon this county, the study is able to offer an analysis of the context and gendered meaning of disputes, especially sensitive to the influence of these social, economic, and cultural forces. What the essay aims to show is that sacred space was not static or simply structured by the formal and legal initiatives of male parochial parish elites. The construction of sacred space was a highly dynamic process, and was a product of the interplay between official authority and the actions and attitudes of women themselves.

Turning first to the question of which women were involved in these types of disputes, recent attempts by historians to explain which women were prominent in controversies over the custom of seating the congregation during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and why have focused on two largely complementary interpretations. David Underdown has argued that explanations lie in the social and economic context of the period. He and Susan Amussen have used detailed social and economic analysis of disputes to demonstrate that contests over seats in church were predominantly "symbolic struggles for power and status." They argue that there was an increase in this type of litigation, especially amongst the middle and better sort of people, during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and that this was symptomatic of social strain generated by demographic, economic, and social structural change. Parishioners struggled to maintain a system of seating in church that mirrored a supposedly static social hierarchy, but the reality was that population growth and social mobility meant that order was always changing. Disputes reflect the tensions that this redefinition of the social hierarchy could produce. Underdown argues that in the context of harshening economic conditions for the lower orders, disputes

involving women reflected their economic, social, and political marginality, making them vulnerable targets for presentment by churchwardens.<sup>24</sup>

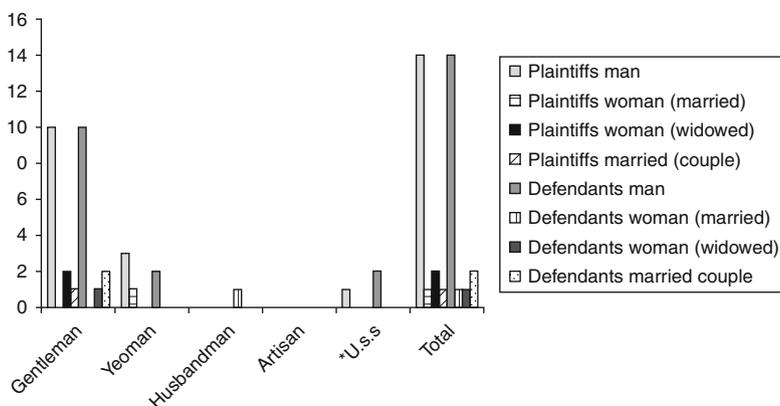
Kevin Dillow to some extent supports Underdown's suggestions. In his fine study of seating disputes over a wide variety of jurisdictions, he argues that gendered patterns of litigation can be explained by the way in which most seats were allocated to women. He makes the important point that there were many more female defendants in disciplinary disputes promoted to punish disobedience or physical disruption than there were female litigants in instance causes: disputes between parties where a place in a seat was at stake or a whole seat was claimed. This gendered pattern of litigation, he suggests, "may well reflect their [women's] reliance on churchwardens for the provision of their seats."<sup>25</sup> Instance causes predominantly focused on disputes over the title to an exclusive seat in church. Most of these seats were held in the right of a house. Since the title to the seat was invested in the head of the household and most heads of households were adult males, it was men, mainly of minor gentry status, who were involved in this sort of litigation, whether the seat belonged to a man or a woman. In seventeenth century Essex, there were several cases in the records where men sued other men for the seats of their wives.<sup>26</sup> The seats of married women were important symbols of the status of their husbands and their households. In 1584 in Braintree, for example, Richard Gooday of the Temple, gentleman, sued Joseph Mann of the same parish, for displacing his wife Anne out of a pew she had previously shared with Mann's wife. The court concluded that because Anne Gooday's "husband is a gentleman student in the Inns of court we think it meet that his wife be placed in some convenient higher pew fit for her calling."<sup>27</sup>

The detailed dispute that occurred in Chelmsford in 1624 further demonstrates the symbolic political and social importance to married men of the position of the seats of their wives within the symbolic system of hierarchy. The quarrel involved two of the "chiefe parishioners," Richard Freeman and John Wallinger. They were both lawyers, but there had always been tension between the two families. Wallinger was the younger man but head of an old established town family. The Wallingers had appeared in Chelmsford in the 1390s and, during the sixteenth century, played a leading role in the town's affairs. They served regularly as churchwardens, overseers of the poor, and also in high office as governors of the town.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Freeman was

a newcomer. He had only come to Chelmsford in the 1590s, but he was clearly doing well, having purchased Guy Harlings, one of the largest properties in the town in 1616 for £550.<sup>29</sup> He represented a considerable challenge to the Wallingers, professionally, socially, and politically.

Before 1624, Wallinger's wife had shared a pew with the wife of Matthew Rudd another member of "the better sort." Rudd was the owner of the Saracen's Head and other property in the town. However in January 1624, Mr. Wallinger asserted a bid for social and political predominance by applying to the bishop of London for a faculty giving his wife and children the exclusive right to sit in the "foremost" of the women's' pews on the south side of the church, built for their wives by his father Thomas Wallinger and his uncle John Reynolds in 1593. Wallinger claimed in his application that the arrangement with Mistress Rudd was "only on sufferance." Although confirmed by the Consistory court, the faculty was revoked in February when the churchwardens, Matthew Bridges and Nicholas Sutton, issued an order placing Mrs. Knightsbridge next to Mrs. Wallinger in the pew. Mrs. Knightsbridge was the wife of John, gentleman, Attorney of Common Pleas, and another rising star in the Chelmsford ruling elite.

Contention over the Wallingers' bid for symbolic social precedence culminated in a clash between Mr. Freeman and Mr. Wallinger on Sunday March 21, 1624. Both men were in the chancel discussing parish business with the other "chiefe parishioners" when they "fell into some speech" about Wallinger's faculty. Freeman said that Wallinger had used false information in his application, an accusation that Wallinger fiercely denied. Both men were presented to the bishop's commissary court by the churchwardens for "using brawling words in the church." Wallinger confessed that, "in the heat of blood rashly and unadvised" he had called Freeman a liar. Freeman also confessed that he, "being much moved by the said uncivil and disgraceful words... did rashly and unadvisedly" tell Wallinger in the chancel that "he was a jack and a base fellow in giving him the lie." Both men were barred from church until they had made "humble submission" at court. Mr. Wallinger lost his battle to establish superior symbolic status over his social and political rivals and soon after, Mrs. Knightsbridge joined Mrs. Wallinger in her pew.<sup>30</sup> But the case provides powerful proof of the local political and social significance of married women's seats as symbols of the power and prestige of their husbands and their households.



\*Uss : unknown social status

Figure 3.1 Gender, social, and marital status of litigants in instance causes: 1580–1720. Illustration by Amanda Flather.

Sources: ERO D/AED 1–8; D/ABD 1–8; D/ACD 1–7; D/AXD 1–3; D/AEA 12–44; D/ACA 9–55; D/ABA 1–12; Q/SBa 2; Q/SR 5–560; T/A 42; LMA DL/C/211–258; GL MS9189/1–2.

It is clear from the information presented and summarized in figure 3.1 that in Essex, as in other regions, married women rarely appeared in court as plaintiffs or defendants in instance suits.<sup>31</sup> We can see that widows, on the other hand, did on occasion act on their own. As female family governors, the position, especially of wealthy widows, resembled those of other male household heads. When seats were held in the right of a house, for example, it might be a widow, as head of a household, in whom a title to a seat was invested. In 1603, Margaret Eadon of South Hanningfield successfully defended her right to a seat in the parish church on the basis of residence “at a ferme called Giffords.”<sup>32</sup> Joyce Smith, widow and gentlewoman of Dagenham, was placed in a pew at the east end of the nave next to the chancel because she had recently bought a house called Hydes “and there is a pew belongs to the house so bought by her.”<sup>33</sup> The widowed mother of Stephen Bussard, sometime parishioner of St. Botolph’s Colchester, had been granted title to a pew she had built in the parish church to be “used and innioyed by her or her ffarmers of a ferme wh[i]ch shee then helde.” Mistress Lambert and Mistress Maynard, both widows, had also built pews in the church.<sup>34</sup> It is also clear, as Dillow acknowledges, that a widow, as head of the household, could

retain control of prescriptively-held men's and women's seats on the death of her husband.<sup>35</sup> In 1616, Mary Archer, widow of Theydon Garnon in Essex, was granted a faculty giving her title to the seat once occupied by her husband.<sup>36</sup> Inheritance of a prescriptively held seat was not always automatic. Some faculty applications were granted as a kind of restoration of rights to a seat to the widow of the previous occupant.<sup>37</sup> But where widows' claims to privately-held seats were contested, judges frequently found in their favor, as, for example, with Mary Archer and Margery Lawson of Fobbing.<sup>38</sup> Outside the county, there are also cases, of widows successfully defending similar claims in the higher courts of Star Chamber and High Commission.<sup>39</sup>

It must be acknowledged that these similarities with men could be outweighed by significant differences. Where seats were allocated by churchwardens, a widow's right to retain her place continued to be derived from the status of her late husband. In 1699, "Mrs. Northey wife of William Northey esq, Mrs. Vernattie, wife of Constantine Vernattie esq, Mrs. Eastwick and Mrs. Lane widdows" defended their claim to a seat in the middle aisle of St. John's church Hackney, on the basis that they were all "persons of considerable estates" and that their husbands had "served all offices in the parish."<sup>40</sup> Dorothy Comyns, widow of Richard Comyns, gentleman of Dagenham, defended her right to continue to sit in the foremost seat of the middle aisle of the church, in part because her husband left "an Estate in the s[ai]d parish of 150 or near two hundred pounds the yeare which the widow and children now enjoy" and also because "Richard Comyns was in his lifetime a Captaine of the Malitia [*sic*] in the county of Essex."<sup>41</sup>

The unique and often complex position of widows notwithstanding, evidence summarized and presented in figures 3.2 and 3.3, provides considerable support for Dillow's argument that women were far more likely to appear as defendants in office causes. Detailed examination of the records has identified a total of 104 office-promoted seating causes relating to Essex parishioners presented to the ecclesiastical courts between 1580 and 1640. Thirty-one of these disciplinary cases, that is just under a third, involved female defendants. In Essex, as in most other regions, these sorts of presentments died out after the Restoration.<sup>42</sup>

Evidence from Essex also tends to confirm Underdown and Amussen's conclusions about the social distribution of these sorts of disputes. An impression of the wealth and status of deponents has been obtained through a careful examination of a variety of sources

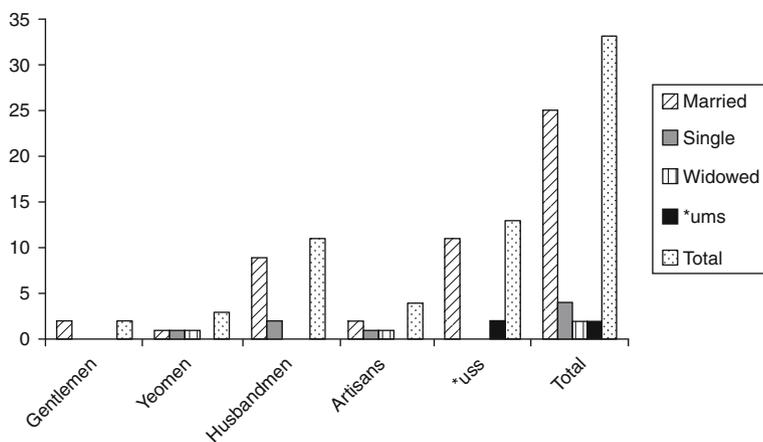


Figure 3.2 Social and marital status of female defendants in office causes: 1580-1640. Illustration by Amanda Flather.

Note: \*uss : unknown social status; \*ums: unknown marital status.

Sources: ERO D/AED 1-8; D/ABD 1-8; D/ACD 1-7; D/AXD 1-3; D/AEA 12-44; D/ACA 9-55; D/ABA 1-12; Q/SBa 2; Q/SR 5-560; T/A 42; LMA DL/C/211-258; GL MS9189/1-2.

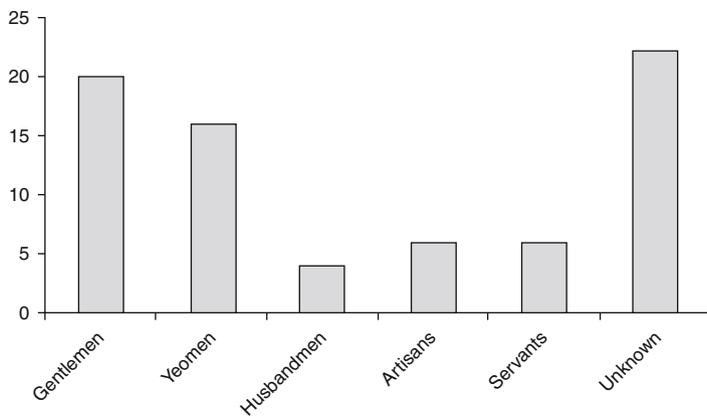


Figure 3.3 Social status of male defendants in office causes: 1580-1640. Illustration by Amanda Flather.

Sources: ERO D/AED 1-8; D/ABD 1-8; D/ACD 1-7; D/AXD 1-3; D/AEA 12-44; D/ACA 9-55; D/ABA 1-12; Q/SBa 2; Q/SR 5-560; T/A 42; LMA DL/C/211-258; GL MS9189/1-2.

including common law records, wills, and ship money assessments (see figures 3.2 and 3.3). It shows that the majority of individuals involved with this sort of litigation were from the middling sort and lesser gentry. There were some differences between men and women. The social distribution of female defendants was found to be lower than that of men. Only 8 percent (two) women were of gentry status, as compared to 27 percent that is (20) of men.<sup>43</sup> Of the women presented to court for disciplinary offences related to seating disputes, just over 50 percent (19) can be identified as members of the middling sort as compared to 35 percent (26) of men. The large proportion of male and female defendants of unknown social status were probably more likely to be of lower social status and not so easily identifiable

But closer examination of the social identity of defendants makes it more difficult to accept Underdown's suggestion that women's involvement in this form of dispute represented their more marginal status. First of all, the majority of defendants were men. Authority did not especially target women. Second, 76 percent (25) of female defendants were married. Only one defendant can be identified as a widow, two as daughters, one as a sister, and one as a servant. This may admittedly reflect the limitations of the sources. The poor and the vulnerable, as Underdown suggests, may be amongst those whose status is unknown and who suffered social humiliation at the hands of churchwardens in a dignified but powerless silence.<sup>44</sup> But these cases do not provide proof of any sort of rigorous repression of marginal or masterless women.

Some women were from the poorer sort of households. The wife of husbandman George Hockley was one of several humble female parishioners presented to court, "that she will not take her place according to an order out of this court by the churchwardens and the Minister." The Hockleys rented a smallholding of around four acres in the village.<sup>45</sup> In 1638, Anne Biggs of Goldhangar was presented to court "for refusing to be placed in the church by the churchwardens." Her husband Edward was not rated in the ship money assessment of 1637. According to William Hunt's scheme of social stratification, Biggs was therefore likely to have been an agricultural laborer or a poorer artisan, possibly a weaver.<sup>46</sup> In 1605, the wife and daughter of Bartholomew Bradford, a carpenter of Great Leighs, were presented for refusing to be placed according to order. The household had clearly been suffering for some time from pressures and problems

generated by poverty. Several members of the family had been presented to court over the previous two years for petty theft of wheat and barley.<sup>47</sup> These women had clearly fallen on very hard times. As they suffered the humiliations and deprivations of life on the margins of poverty, a seat in church was vitally important to them. It was a sign that they still belonged within the boundaries of "respectable" local society.

However, many more women presented to court for disobedience or disruption were married to men of some significance in local society. Marian Halstead of Lawford, for example, was presented to court in 1607, "for sitting in a stool in Lawford church unseemly and unfitting for her degree and years."<sup>48</sup> When the churchwarden Thomas Cole, "requested and desyrered [her] to remove herself... she proudly and stubbornly said to Mr. Cole I will not out of this stole."<sup>49</sup> Some measure of the wealth and status of the Halsteads can be gleaned from the fact that Robert's father, Christopher, had served as a juror at the court of quarter sessions.<sup>50</sup> Robert himself was rated at four shillings and seven pence in the ship money assessment in 1637, suggesting that he was probably a small farmer or prosperous artisan.<sup>51</sup> Margaret Potter of Mount Bures was another woman who defied the orders issued by parochial authority with regard to her place in church. In 1593, she was presented "for that she refuse to sitt in such a convenient place (stole) as by consent the cheif of the parishioners ys appointed."<sup>52</sup> Her husband William Potter was rated at three shillings in the ship money assessments, suggesting the household was of solid middling status.<sup>53</sup> Mary Spillman of Great Leighs was another female defendant presented in 1605 for disobedience. Her husband James described himself as a "husbandman" in his will of 1607. He held "ffreeland" in the parishes of Great Leighs, Terling, and Fairstead.<sup>54</sup> Rose Aiger, wife of John Aiger of Feering, provides another example. She was presented to the archdeacon's court at Colchester in 1638, for her "disorderly sitting in the church in a seat that is not appoynted for her rank or to the forme of the commission granted for the placing of the parishioners both men and women." The wife of George Mott, of the same parish, was presented for the same offence at the same time.<sup>55</sup> John Aiger and George Mott were both assessed at 2s. in the ship money assessment.<sup>56</sup> Acts of defiance could sometimes reach severe proportions. In 1612, the wife of Robert Sturgeon, a tanner of Great Sutton, "being quietly admonished by the minister to take her place according to an order taken by Mr.

Chancellor did notwithstanding the admonishment of the minister, on Sunday 20th brake down the order, disturb the congregation by her rude and disorderly behavior and force the minister to brake off in time of prayers."<sup>57</sup> Official authority would not and could not tolerate such disobedience and disruption by women or men. All these defendants were admonished by the court to take their place, "in the pew arranged by the churchwardens."

However, these women were not marginal to the "moral community." They were likely to have been significant actors within local society, well integrated into local networks of sociability, work, and worship. Indeed I would argue that the participation of all these women in this type of controversy indicates that the neighborhood, socially and materially, was central to their existence. As such, the place they occupied in it was vitally important to them. The ferocity with which they fought to defend their symbolic status demonstrates a profound concern for local public opinion and a strong commitment to the church and to local society.<sup>58</sup>

Turning now to why disputes occurred, it seems safe to conclude—as Dillow, Underdown and Amussen argue—that disputes, for both women and for men, were primarily about the defense of status and honor, which a place within a pew symbolized. But while the central role of social competition is acknowledged, the complex and gendered dimensions of these causes should not be overlooked. It is important to recognize that women had their own objectives in these actions, and that these were, on occasion, different from those of men. There were, for example, probably personal reasons for married women's involvement in disputes over place. Since women's seats were significant public symbols of status in early modern local society, and men were willing to go to the trouble of instigating costly and lengthy litigation to defend the symbolic social position of their wives, it is no surprise that women themselves were prepared to protect actively the only public emblem of status they possessed. These actions also had a practical purpose, closely connected to married women's work and household position, and thereby to feminine codes of honor and self-worth.

It is well established that married women were seen to have a particular "public" role in the protection of the reputation and resources of their household. In the domestic context, this could involve violent resistance to attempts by officials to "rescue" members of the family or to distraint goods or taxation. At other times, it might mean

participation in negotiation and confrontation with male officials who controlled the market in food or in opposing the damaging actions of market traders and middlemen. In the parish church, the arena where the social hierarchy was most clearly defined and displayed, it was exemplified by the willingness of married women to challenge or to resist decisions made by churchwardens and clergy to reduce the symbolic status and reputation of their household. The ultimate aim of the women in all these interventions was the same. It was to protect the income and social standing of their household.

Early modern England was a society where reputation was of economic, social, and personal importance and depended on public recognition and symbolic and spatial representation. As I have said, details of dress, gesture, and forms of address were obsessively ordered. Seemingly small matters such as a person's place in a public procession or, most importantly, his or her seat in church, were powerfully protected. They were part of a "shared system of meanings," which underpinned order and stability in a strictly hierarchical, but vastly unequal society.<sup>59</sup> The actions and gestures involved in struggles over a seat in church were then a deliberate defense against symbolic humiliation, which might cause an individual or a household social or material harm through loss of neighborhood credit.

Such interpretations take us some distance from explanations of these causes in terms of local elite campaigns directed against a vulnerable or marginal female population. What they suggest is that the actions of these women were bound up with their own cultural perceptions of female responsibility, female authority, and female social and sacred space. This becomes even more apparent when consideration is given to causes which came to court as disciplinary disputes, but which clearly involved tensions between women. As we have seen, women were less likely than men were to fight over rights to a place in church through a disputed faculty cause in the official sphere. Disputes between women over claims to a place typically came to the attention of the ecclesiastical court when one or both parties were sued for causing a disturbance in church. These incidents took different forms. They could range in severity from spontaneous scuffles to more serious assaults. In 1596, goodwife Keeble of Great Holland was presented to court, "that when Mistress Woody took her seat above goodwife Keeble in the place where she used to sit, she punched the intruder with her elbow."<sup>60</sup> More subtly, perhaps, Judith Brett of Pleshey was presented in 1637, for disturbing Elizabeth Soame

in her seat, "by plucking flowers out of her hatt and throwing them on the ground in a scornefull and disgracefull manner."<sup>61</sup>

Other incidents were more calculated and more carefully planned. They could involve acts of exclusion: a symbolic casting out of the victim to try to reduce their reputation by subjecting them to humiliation and loss of face. A controversy that came before the courts as a disputed faculty cause, involving women of higher status, provides an example. In 1616, Anne Archer, widow of Henry Archer, gentleman and lord of the manor of Hemnalls in Theydon Garnon, made a formal complaint to the Bishop of London's consistory court. Until her husband's recent demise, she had sat in the uppermost place in the foremost pew in the nave of the parish church, together with her neighbors Mistress Carleton and Mistress Mitchell. But recently, she had arrived at church to find that:

without the consent and against the will of the said Anne Archer and without any lawful authorization...Mistress Carleton had...sett a locke on the door wherein the said Mistress Archer was to sitt and by that meanes kept her out.<sup>62</sup>

The Archers, Carletons, and Mitchells were all members of the parish elite, although the Carletons were of slightly higher status in terms of wealth and landholdings than the Archers and Mitchells.<sup>63</sup> The Carletons and the Mitchells had interests in lands that formed part of the manor of Theydon Garnon, and the Carletons had a turn in presentations to Theydon Garnon rectory.<sup>64</sup> Mistress Carleton was taking advantage of Anne Archer's social vulnerability as a new widow to assert a perceived precedence of symbolic status. However, the bishop's chancellor defended Mistress Archer's title to her former seat and her status, reputation, and property were protected.

Another, more serious, incident involved the wives of two gentlemen of Laver Marney. On Sunday July 23, 1598, Frances Cammock arrived at church, to find that a lock had been fixed to the door of her pew by Elizabeth, wife of Peter Tuke esquire. Mistress Cammock, her daughter Martha, and servant, Robert Beridge, were then threatened when they tried to enter the pew. Mistress Tuke and her manservant:

Beat and ill-treated the said Frances, Martha and Robert and tore a lawn apron which the said Frances wore, and violently withheld the said Frances from her pew, so that the said Frances with her

children, household and servants were not able to hear divine service quietly and peacefully without peril of death.<sup>65</sup>

The tearing of Frances's apron was significant here since damaged or disheveled clothing was recognized by contemporaries as a symbolic sign of disgrace. This incident was the beginning of a long contest over space and place within the church between the two leading families in Layer Marney.<sup>66</sup> Peter Tuke, esquire and Justice of the Peace, was lord of the manor of Layer Marney. The Cammocks were also an old established local family. They were tenants of the Tukes, but also held lands in Layer Breton, Little Birch, Messing, and Maldon. Elizabeth was the daughter of Robert, the third Lord Rich, and had heroically eloped with Thomas Cammock while he had been in service to her father. This marriage had complicated the local hierarchy of status, since the Cammocks were now related to the peerage within the county.<sup>67</sup>

Close examination of the background to these disputes between women reveals, that like disputes between men, they had a variety of contextual causes.<sup>68</sup> Some were merely transient tussles generated by petty jealousy, malicious gossip, or more simply the desire to defend one's place in a congested and ill-defined area. Others could be weapons in wider conflicts, endemic in the day-to-day life of early modern face-to-face local societies. Several of the quarrels appear to have originated within a female social domain. A clash between Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Cowper from Grundisburgh, just over the county border in Suffolk, provides an example. Officials in court were told that on a Sunday during divine service:

Mrs. Cowper went beyond Mrs. Palmer but sat up close to her whereupon Mrs. Palmer rose and sat in Mrs. Cowper's lap then Mrs. Cowper did use her best endeavours to remove her off and when she did so remove her the said Mrs. Palmer did after that set upon Mrs. Banyards arm or some part thereof and very near to her all the time of the sermon and during that time and especially while Mrs. Cowper reached to lift up her scarf and which (being out of order) Mrs. Palmer did shove and in a manner punch the said Mrs. Cooper and said "be quiet."<sup>69</sup>

Again, the gestures incorporated into these incidents symbolized more than resentment at the discomfort at overcrowded seats. As

Laura Gowing has recently shown, married women expected—and were generally accorded—respect for their personal space and to jostle or touch their bodies was regarded as a serious social slight.<sup>70</sup> The depositions also reveal that the incident was symptomatic of long-term social tensions between Mrs. Palmer and several of her female neighbors. Two women witnesses deposed that Mrs. Palmer was, “contentious with her neighbors of a very turbulent spirit and given to suit contention upon several causes.”<sup>71</sup>

The details of this case also provide some support for Christopher Marsh’s argument that disputes might sometimes have been as much about maintenance of communal harmony as inter-personal competition. The orderly arrangement of parishioners at prayer symbolized hierarchy *within* community, a simultaneous acceptance of both values. Disciplinary presentments by churchwardens of people who refused to adhere to communal conceptions of order were not necessarily about power and control. It could be a function of a widespread adherence in early modern society to ideals of harmony and communal unity of effective if not actual equals before God, encapsulated in the concept of “common prayer.”<sup>72</sup> Mrs. Palmer was clearly one of those individuals who did not always adhere to communal values of consensus. Women, as well as male officials, were perhaps prepared to identify and isolate other women who offended these neighborly norms. In similar vein, although more unusual and serious, is the case of Parnella Abbott, a widow of Greenstead. During her prosecution for witchcraft in 1599, it became clear that an altercation in church involving Parnella and Jane Dyson was the second serious breach of neighborly relations between the two women, and was interpreted as the occasion for witchcraft. According to John Dyson, a laborer and Jane’s husband, he had been present at home when, “the sayd Parnell did misuse his wife.” About a fortnight after, “this examinant’s wyf going into Grenstead church with her yonge childe the sayd Parnell was sett there in the stole before his wife cam in and the sayd examinant’s wyf thrusting in by her with the said childe the same child was presently taken shaking and quaking in fearful manner and languishing long after and leaving ytself afterwards thee said child dyed and she believeth was done by the sayd Parnell.”<sup>73</sup>

Laura Gowing has shown that in a culture where women’s words, actions, and access to the law were limited by “a whole host of pre-scriptions,” slander litigation provided “a way of shifting personal semi-public disputes into the official sphere.”<sup>74</sup> These cases suggest

that women may have used disputes over seats in church in a similar way: either to defend personal reputation or to damage the neighborhood credit of a female rival. They might also represent unofficial efforts by women to retain some measure of communal harmony, by isolating and expelling women who disrupted deeply held ideals of Christian unity.

This argument is reinforced by striking examples of women's involvement in disputes that goes beyond interpretations in terms of tensions entirely within "the female domain." It is now recognized that married women claimed an informal power to police and to punish sexual misconduct. It seems that struggles over seats could sometimes grow out of this sense of communal authority and responsibility. A dispute at Colchester between the wife of William Rogers, yeoman and keeper of Colchester jail, and the wife of the "chirugion," Marcellus Godwin, provides an example. One Sunday in 1600, after divine service in St. Giles's church, Roger's wife came to Godwin's wife and her daughter sitting in their pew, "and with vehemency bade them come out, or else I will pull you out." Later in the churchyard Goodwife Rogers accused Mistress Godwin of being a "gossip and flirt," and the wife of William Pydd completed the insult by calling her a "butcher's curr, butcher's dog and crouchback."<sup>75</sup> The Godwins were already involved in a very public conflict with the officials of the parish and their wives over a disputed paternity suit. Earlier that year, Alice Bradley, servant of Widow Swetyng, had given birth to an illegitimate child. During the delivery, Goodwife Pydd had pressured Alice to name the father and she had accused George, son of Marcel Godwin. However, on examination before the borough court, George Godwin denied the charges, and his testimony was supported by his father.<sup>76</sup> In the context of a parish-based system of poor relief under severe strain due to depression in the cloth industry and growing problems of poverty, this problem over paternity had implications for the economic as well as the moral welfare of the community. The prospect of another newborn infant being charged to the parish was extremely unwelcome. When officials failed to make George Godwin financially and legally responsible for his actions, the wives of the parish were prepared to intervene informally to symbolically exclude and to shame the household that threatened the good name, material well-being, and good order of their neighborhood. Although the public confrontation was fought out within the female sphere, its purpose was larger and more pervasive. The wives of the parish intended to put pressure on the

men of the Godwin family to conform to community demands, by challenging the single-most important symbol of status, credit, and political prestige that the household possessed.

Like so many inter-personal conflicts in early modern society, other disputes had their roots in religious differences. For example, there is an interesting cluster of cases related to use or misuse of the seat set aside for the churching of women, the ceremony that mothers attended four weeks after the birth of their babies. David Cressy has demonstrated that the meaning of Churching had shifted by the early modern period from a purification ritual closely linked to Old Testament ideas about the female biological functions of childbirth as polluting, to a ceremony of thanksgiving for the safe delivery of mother and child. Yet its form remained controversial. To most female parishioners the ceremony was an acceptable and enjoyable part of the liturgy but to zealous Protestants it was "heretical, blasphemous knavery."<sup>77</sup> Where cases did appear in court, they usually signified doctrinal differences and divisions in the community between the godly and their more moderate neighbors. It is well established that the Elizabethan settlement was not acceptable to extreme Protestants in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England, and that they consistently called for further reformation, objecting to what they regarded as "popish" elements that contaminated the services, ceremonies, and sacraments of the Book of Common Prayer. Disputes often turned on seemingly small details such as costume, gestures, and the materials or architectural settings of services, but these were far from trivial matters to the people of the time. Each small-scale struggle signified conflicting but deeply held convictions about religious belief and practice.<sup>78</sup> Because churching was a female ceremony, throughout the period, it provided a frequent occasion of connection but also collision between godly women and local ministers.<sup>79</sup> Conservatives believed that the spiritual significance of the ceremony was bound up with the physical location of the service and the garments to be worn, but puritans regarded these customary arrangements as mere superstition. Men did not participate in the service and so could only oppose authority over the conduct of the ceremony by expressing support for their wives' non-conformity.<sup>80</sup> It was women who engaged in direct action. Some radicals refused to be churched but more often, female protest took the form of dissent from established practice by deliberately coming to be churched at the wrong time, in the wrong clothes, and positioning themselves

in the wrong seat. For example, Joanna, wife of Nathaniel Whitup of Corringham, was presented to the archdeacon in April 1614 for coming to be churched "in her hatt . . .," for sitting in "her seate where she cold not be descried" and for saying that "none but whores did weare vayles and that a harlot or a whore was the inventor of it, or that first wore a vayle."<sup>81</sup> Earlier in 1593, Dorothy Mastell was presented by Mr. Cole, the Rector of St. Peter's Colchester, because "not churched . . . she went abroad and thrust herself in the pewe wherein Mr. Cole satt after her had churched George Mowles wife."<sup>82</sup> In similar vein, another godly woman, Ellen, wife of John Brettle, a religious radical, disturbed her more moderate female neighbors and the churchwarden of St. Giles Colchester, Robert Osborn, during divine service in 1615, by "thrusting" herself into "the stole where women used to be churched"<sup>83</sup>

Admittedly, for most of this period, such episodes were regarded as minor matters by established authority, which tended to turn a blind eye to occasional acts of non-conformity.<sup>84</sup> However, disagreements intensified and erupted more frequently into violent confrontation during the decades leading up to the Civil War. Abroad, alliances with popish powers and a marriage to a Catholic queen were believed by many to threaten the fate of the immortal soul of the elect Protestant English nation. At home, the resolve of Charles I and his archbishop William Laud to re-assert the independence of the church and the clergy over the laity appeared to corrupt and disrupt the proper ordering of church and state. Fears were fuelled by a renewed emphasis on ceremony and sacrament and the demand for significant alterations and improvements to church furnishings, most controversially, moving the communion table altarwise and railing it in. These changes appeared to challenge the customary order of worship to a dangerous degree and in some parishes, especially those with a puritan influence, they became the cause and the context of violent clashes between godly parishioners and established authority.

Non-conformity began to be interpreted as a political critique of established authority and presentments of women over issues related to churching became more frequent. Laudian ecclesiastical authority attempted to enforce the wearing of veils and the churching of women at the altar. To ceremonialists these details not only added to the honor and ornament of God's house, they were also vital to salvation through sacramental grace. To the godly, the gestures signaled surrender to popery and needed to be repudiated at all costs. Thus the wife of Edward

Firmin was presented for "refusing to come neere the communion table according to the Rubricke in the booke of common prayer to give thanks for her safe deliverance in childbirthe."<sup>85</sup> We also find that the wife of Samuel Taylor of Saffron Walden "refused to give god thanks for her safe deliverance in childbirth at the rayles neere the communion table."<sup>86</sup> In 1638, Elizabeth Cram was presented "for being churched without a vaile" and in 1637, Mary Judd of Haverstock was brought before the archdeacon's court, for coming to be churched, "without a vaile or kerchief to the ill example of others."<sup>87</sup> Episodes like these point to a willingness by godly women to challenge male ecclesiastical authority when episcopal policy clashed with their beliefs about proper religious practice. In doing so, these women cast themselves as custodians of the settings of ceremonies closely associated with female knowledge, female fellowship, and female sacred space.

Historians continue to debate the consequences of the Reformation for women.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, this essay has drawn attention to the central role of female parishioners in the shaping of the life, liturgy, symbolism, and organization of the reformed English parish church. The variety of local social, political, and religious circumstances surrounding protests over place connected women to wider contests over the maintenance of communal order, the broader politics of local social relations, and the local politics of ecclesiastical power. Women were not the passive or vulnerable victims of patriarchal parochial authority, but active social actors, who were, within the limits of social power available to them, pursuing concerns and goals of their own.

The notable absence from the records of disciplinary disputes involving women after 1660 suggests that the social role of the parish church, at least for a certain section of female local society, changed as systems of segregation gradually died out. Reformation reverence for the institution of marriage meant that over time, it became common practice for husbands and wives to sit together in church, even if initially this was only amongst the elite. Eventually, gender-specific seating was generally only assigned to the young and the unmarried. This age-specific system of segregation reflected and reinforced the lower position of servants and children in the social order. It also expressed the higher position in the social hierarchy of the wife and mistress. At the same time, family pews expressed and enhanced the patriarchal power of the husband over his wife as well as his household. Space in the reformed church reflected and reproduced a system that rendered women subordinate. The disappearance of a separate

social and spatial terrain meant the loss of probably the best public location for developing altercations with female adversaries. A focal point of middling-sort married women's social lives, over which they had some informal control, had been lost.

Understanding of the dynamic, complex, uneven, and unstable influence of patriarchal ideology upon the organization, imagination, and experience of space has important implications for approaches to the study of gender relations in early modern England. Most importantly, it raises additional doubts about the utility of the separate spheres analogy and, particularly, the use of binary oppositions of male/female and public/private, to describe gender relations and their changes in this period. Space was not static but fluid and highly dynamic. Its meaning was constantly shifting, and further complicated by the intersection of gender with other aspects of social identity. The presence of interlocking factors of time, status, and age, that enlarged the scope for some women, by the same token meant that other women who lacked some, or all, of these advantages were more constrained. Recognition of these complexities requires a revision of interpretations of the gendered meaning of changes in the organization of space *over* time. Research that relies on generalized models of public/private and male/female *spheres*, to argue for a progressive sharpening of the division between male and female space and a corresponding decline in female status, fails to capture the complexity of the influence of gender upon the changes in the organization of specific *spaces* over time. What is required is further research into the spaces where we see individual men and women on a daily basis negotiating the tensions created by the interplay between gender and other social factors such as age, social, and marital status, as well as the inconsistencies between competing expectations of female and male behavior that existed in tandem with patriarchal codes.

## Notes

### Key to unpublished primary sources in the references:

*Chelmsford: Essex Record Office (ERO)*

Archdeaconry of Essex

D/AEA 12–44 act books, 1580–1665

D/AED 1–10 depositions, 1576–1630

D/AEV 7 visitation, 1638

Archdeaconry of Colchester

D/ACA 9–55 act books, 1580–1666

D/ACD 1–7 depositions, 1587–1641

D/ACV 5 visitation, 1633

Bishop of London's Commissary in Essex and Hertfordshire

D/ABA 1–12 act books, 1612–1670

D/ABD 1–8 depositions, 1618–1642

D/ABC 1–8 causes, 1618–1665

D/AXD 1–3 depositions, Essex and Colchester, 1631–1740

Quarter sessions records

Q/SR 5–560 quarter sessions rolls, 1580–1714

Q/SBa 2 quarter sessions bundles: main series, 1621–1689

Q/SBb quarter sessions bundles: later series, 1727

T/A 42 (transcript) calendar of Essex ship money assessments, 1637

Colchester Borough records

DB5 Sb2/2–9 books of examinations and recognizances, 1573–1687

D/B 5 Sr52 quarter sessions roll borough of Colchester, 1690

*London: Guildhall Library (GL)*

MS 9189/1–2 Bishop of London's Consistory Court Depositions, 1622–1624, 1627–1628

*London: Metropolitan Archive (LMA)*

Bishop of London's consistory court

DL/C/338–43 vicar general's books 1601–1640

DL/C/322–43 act books, office, 1629–1640

DL/C/ 13,14,16, 20 act books, instance, 1605–1609, 1609–1611, 1613–1616, 1634–1637

DL/C/211–258 depositions, 1586–1740

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STAC 8 Court of Star Chamber proceedings, James I.

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  4. Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? a Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 413, 414; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 6.
  5. For studies that outline the patriarchal model of gendered space, see Susan D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society. Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 68–69; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1995), 120–121; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers. Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 86–7. Studies that explicitly reject the "separate spheres" paradigm include, Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort, Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660–1780* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).
  6. Patrick Collinson, "The Protestant Family," in his *The Birthpangs of Protestant England. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan 1988), 60–61.
  7. Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (London: Hutchinson 1982), 93. For studies that stress patterns of gender-mixing within early modern society, see Hunt, *The Middling Sort*; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*; Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 241–242.
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10. Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres?", 412.
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  24. Susan Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1988), 137–144; David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 29–33.
  25. Dillow, “Pew Disputes,” 208.
  26. For examples, see Godwin c. Rogers (1600) ERO D/ACA 24 f. 339v; Lacy c. Kemp (1616) ERO D/ACA 39 f. 125.
  27. ERO TA/42 f. 37.

28. Hilda Grieve, *The Sleepers and the Shadows. Chelmsford: A Town, Its People and Its Past, Volume 1. The Medieval and Tudor Story* (Chelmsford: Essex Records Office, 1988), 128–129.
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30. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
31. The proportions of female plaintiffs and defendants vary slightly from Dillow's findings. In the records of the seven jurisdictions he studied, a greater number of women appeared as defendants in instance causes than as plaintiffs. In Essex, with fewer cases, numbers were almost the same. Dillow, "Pew Disputes," 7–8.
32. ERO D/AEA 23 f. 157.
33. *Comyns c. Elkyns* (1705) LMA DL/C/248 f. 401v.
34. PRO STAC/8/63/1; *Stephens c. Bussard* (1614) ERO D/ACD 2 ff. 51–54.
35. Dillow, "Pew Disputes," 140–141.
36. LMA DL/C/341 f. 22.
37. LMA DL/C/342 f. 209; LMA DL/C/342 f. 20.
38. LMA DL/C/339 f. 6; ERO D/AMW 3/143. Will dated 1618; LMA DL/C/341 f. 22
39. S. R. Gardiner, *Report of Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission* (London: Camden Society, 1886), 243–244.
40. *Marsh c. Northey et al.* (1699) LMA DL/C/246 f. 384.
41. *Comyns c. Elkyns* (1705) LMA DL/C/248 ff. 393v–410v.
42. In the seven jurisdictions studied by Dillow, including the diocese of London, office cases died out or declined markedly in numbers, after the Restoration: Dillow, "Pew Disputes," 193–194.
43. This is explained in part by the regular presentment of gentlemen heads of households for the construction or alteration of private pews without proper permission from the bishop. For examples, see ERO D/AEA 20 f. 32; ERO D/AEA 27 f. 20; ERO D/AEA 35 ff. 15v, 45; ERO D/AEA 36 f. 4.
44. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, p. 33.
45. ERO DDDFC. 130; ERO D/ACA 42 f. 56.
46. ERO D/ACA f.100; ERO T/A 42 f. 21. This attribution of status and those that follow, drawn from ship-money assessments, are based on the system of social stratification from Ship Money assessment devised by William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: the Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 21.
47. ERO D/AEA 23 f. 174; ERO Q/SR 162/50, 51, 73, 74, 75.
48. ERO D/ACA 29 f. 363.
49. ERO D/ACA 29 f. 363.
50. ERO Q/SR 129/11.
51. ERO T/A 42 p. 168.
52. ERO D/ACA 21 f. 160.
53. ERO T/A 42 f. 234.
54. ERO D/AEA 23 f. 202; ERO D/ABW 36/72.
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56. ERO T/A 42 f. 236.

57. ERO D/AEA 27 f. 35
58. For the significance of disputes for the strength of local ties, see John Bossy, ed., *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For similar arguments about disputes signifying the strength of communal ties, see Marsh, "Common Prayer in England 1560–1640," 66–92, 72–73.
59. Wrightson, *English Society*, 37–65.
60. ERO D/ACA 23 f. 26.
61. ERO D/ABA 8 f. 198.
62. ERO DL/C/341 f. 22.
63. PRO E179 112/617 Lay subsidy 1629. George Carleton assessed at £7 lands, Anne Archer, widow, at £6 lands and Francis Mitchell at £2 lands. ERO T/A 42 f. 278. The Carletons and the Archers were both assessed at £2.
64. *V.C.H.* Vol. 4, p. 264.
65. ERO Q/SR 143/73
66. LMA DL/C/338 ff. 68v–69.
67. Frederick G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder*, (Chelmsford: Essex Records Office 1971), 186; Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of Essex, Volume 1*, (London: Osborne, 1768), 323.
68. For examples and details of disputes between men, see Flather, "The Politics of Place", 42–54.
69. East Suffolk RO FAA/3/6 ff. 20–21.
70. Gowing, *Common Bodies*.
71. ESRO FAA/3/6 f. 21.
72. Marsh, "Common Prayer."
73. CRO D/B5/ Sb2/5 f. 85.
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75. ERO D/ACA 24 f. 339v; ERO D/ACW/7/125; ERO Essex Calendar Assize Files Ass. 35/57/T/32; 35/59/T19
76. CRO D/B5 Sb2/6 ff. 1–2, 5, 7.
77. David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Lifecycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 37.
78. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 11.
79. *Ibid.*, 208–210.
80. For examples, see ERO D/AEA 40 f. 122; ERO D/AEA 43 f. 10; ERO D/ACA 47 f. 98v.
81. William Hale, *A Series of Precedents and Proceedings in Criminal Causes Extending from the Year 1475 to 1640* (London: Rivington, 1847), 237. See also ERO D/ACA21 fos 55v,56. ERO D/ACA21 fos 55v,56.
82. ERO D/ACA 21 fo. 90v.
83. ERO D/ACA 39 fols 27,34, 45. Thanks to Robert Dean Smith for biographical details.
84. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 11.
85. ERO D/ACA 54 fo. 113v.
86. ERO D/ACA 51 fo. 228v; see also ERO D/ACA 51 fo. 237v.

87. ERO D/AEA 41 fo. 181v.

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# 4

## Liminal Space in the Early Modern Ottoman-Habsburg Borderlands: Historiography, Ontology, and Politics

*Claire Norton*

### Introduction

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman-Habsburg marches were a fluid geographical space that stretched from the Dalmatian coast eastwards through what is today Croatia and Hungary, up to the Crimean Black Sea coast. This border zone has frequently been characterized as a line dividing two qualitatively different, antagonistic, and competing empires: the Christian Habsburgs and the Muslim Ottomans. As such this frontier has been depicted as a space which dichotomized and separated; a place of conflict, division, and mutual pugnacity; an arena for the retrospective reification of the clash of civilizations.<sup>1</sup> The predominance of the nation as a means of delineating geo-political space and articulating identity, in conjunction with a series of Balkan conflicts, the September 11 attacks, and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, has exacerbated cartographies of difference, and exaggerated a belief in the enduring and irreconcilable hostility and difference between communities in this region and elsewhere.

However, recent studies of border zones have suggested that although, to some extent, they constituted ruptured spaces “between cultures, peoples, and...empires,” they were (and are) also places of mediation between different communities and peoples.<sup>2</sup> As a result of their contested nature, they were places where a diverse range of beliefs, ideologies, institutions, practices, and customs clashed, co-existed, and

compromised; liminal geographies where religious, linguistic, cultural and political distinctions endured and “remained identifiable,” but also “shaded into each other” and were transformed, reflecting new shared realities based on local concerns and practices.<sup>3</sup> Here different peoples worked to create “a common, mutually comprehensive world” or a “middle ground,” a place where diverse communities interacted and imagined more complex, plural, inclusive identities.<sup>4</sup>

The Ottoman-Habsburg marches can be seen as both historically and historiographically contested spaces. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both empires struggled to extend their dominion over this space and exert both a physical presence through fortifications, settlements, and military garrisons, as well as an ideological dominance through maps, narratives, and state documents. More recently, the border has been the site for competing historians’ interpretations and narratives. In both cases the construction and imagination of space has played a crucial role. While a realist explanation of geo-political space would stress its ontological reality and determinacy, I find a Rortian anti-representationalist explanation of our interactions with the world to be more heuristically beneficial and less problematic.<sup>5</sup> Such a position argues that our concepts of space—that is, the means by which we conceptualize, delineate, and divide up geographical, territorial, and political space—are no more fundamental or “given” than any of our other conceptual categories that we use to impose order on, and make sense of, the world.<sup>6</sup> Our ways of mapping the world are thus not naturally occurring and congruent with an objective, mind-independent, geo-political reality; they cannot be separated from the interpretative strategies we use to negotiate our relationship with the world. They are instead contingent, socially produced, and contextually situated. They are inextricably intertwined with expressions of power, and the production of cultural meaning.

In this volume’s opening essay, Paul Stock argues that all historical events and practices are enplaced; I would add that so too are historical narratives.<sup>7</sup> The narratives we construct about the “before now” implicitly articulate, reflect and respond to “political paradigm shifts...and the cultural transformation of societies,” and the articulation of spatialities implied by those narratives also reflects such evolutions.<sup>8</sup> In this article, by focusing on the imagination or construction of space in historical narratives of the early modern Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands, I want to explore how (often implicit) concepts of spatiality inherent in such narratives have

shaped, or have been shaped by, intersecting interpretative frameworks and imaginations of community within imperial rhetorics, nation-state cartographies, orientalist or Eurocentric metanarratives, and other ontological and justificatory explanations. A focus on spatialities foregrounds the means by which pasts are narrated in order to legitimize preferred, current imaginations of geo-political and juridico-legal space. I therefore want to explore the role that spatialities have in “worldmaking” through their ability to structure or frame the possible narratives that can be told.<sup>9</sup>

People use a variety of “before now” narratives to provide themselves with a coherent identity, a sense of place, and belonging. Said argues that “[m]emory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority. Far from being a neutral exercise in facts and basic truths, the study of history, which of course is the underpinning of memory, both in school and university, is to some extent a nationalist effort premised on the need to construct an insider’s knowledge of, and a desirable loyalty to, one’s country, tradition, and faith.”<sup>10</sup> In arguing for interplay between geographical imagination, historical memory, and invention, he echoes both Anderson’s comments about the nation as an “imagined community” and Gellner’s now famous dictum that nationalism “invents nations where they do not exist.”<sup>11</sup>

One could argue that the nineteenth-century spatial turn in history, both engendered, and reflected specific imaginations of nationalism. When the nation—as a geopolitical, socio-cultural means of demarcating space—became the subject of history, it persuaded readers in turn that there *was* a nation, that the nation reflected historical change, and that a history of *the* nation could be written.<sup>12</sup> The re-imagining of geo-political space engendered by nation state cartographies has resulted in the re-membering of the liminal, heterogeneous Habsburg-Ottoman marches in accordance with nationalist geographies that emphasize ethno-cultural and religious homogeneity.<sup>13</sup> Thus many historians writing about the Balkans in an intellectual context in which the discourse of nationalism is especially prevalent have glossed over the ethno-cultural, linguistic, and religious differences of the diverse peoples inhabiting the marches, and have “forgotten” the co-operation, synthesis, and integration that existed between these communities.<sup>14</sup> Instead they have anachronistically placed undue emphasis on ethnicity as a key constituent of early modern identity and argued that early modern Balkan

peoples essentially constituted proto-ethno-national communities who, despite a period of Ottoman “occupation” lasting between 150 and 400 years depending on the region, successfully retained their essential integrity because there was very little political, economic, cultural, or religious association or interaction between the Ottomans and the various indigenous cultures.

Thus, some scholars of Croatian history have interpreted late medieval and early modern references to the term “Croatian” as exclusively providing evidence of an ethnic consciousness, and argue that the past thousand years can, therefore, be characterized as a struggle for a self-governing Croatian state.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, some Hungarian historians have imagined Hungarians as a singular, unchanging, ethno-linguistic, cultural community existing from before the Ottoman invasion up to the present day.<sup>16</sup> For example, while Dávid and Fodor acknowledge that borders are generally places of mediation, linkage, and transfer, they argue that the Ottoman-Habsburg borders were an exception and deny that any long lasting interaction between communities in the area occurred.<sup>17</sup> However, the evidence of a variety of early modern Ottoman and other sources challenges this view and provides support for the argument that in such liminal zones, although local linguistic and religious identities endured, relationships, connections, and allegiances did not exclusively orient around loyalty to a particular religion, language, or state, but were instead based on geographical location, occupation, shared practices and customs, kinship, loyalty to a local lord, or economic interest. Tales, muster records, and personal and official correspondence all attest to the existence of integrated and diverse border communities where interaction, synthesis, and co-operation existed not only among Ottoman subjects of different religious, linguistic, and cultural groups, but also between inhabitants from different states in the Habsburg-Ottoman border region.

I do not think it is particularly helpful to anachronistically impose nation-state spatial imaginaries with their concomitant emphasis on ethno-cultural, linguistic, and religious homogeneity on to early modern conceptions of geopolitical space. For reasons that I elucidate in the conclusion, I argue that it may be more useful (and congruent with current interpretations of extant sources) to conceive of the early modern Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands not as a divisive line, or “locus of separation,” but as a “transitional zone of interaction,” a space where integration and co-operation was possible.<sup>18</sup> It was, in the words of Stein, “a socially and economically dynamic zone of

transition, where different people and states met and interacted” and formed “a joint community of sorts.”<sup>19</sup> This frontier was a contested, heterogeneous space, a “middle ground”: a space between empires, which at times permitted and encouraged political cooperation and ethno-cultural and religious interaction.

### **Ethno-cultural symbiosis**

The specific conditions brought about by the existence of the frontier between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans necessitated particular state responses. This, together with the fact that communities on both sides of the border lived similar agrarian or military lives, helped to create both a shared environment and a joint set of cultural, economic and military practices which, because communities of practice tend to engender shared beliefs, norms, ideologies, and identities, led to a degree of communal inclusivity and the imagination of common identities.<sup>20</sup> However, identity in the border zone was often complex and transient, with individuals sometimes simultaneously identifying with a multiplicity of quite diverse communities, and also changing allegiances and identities when convenient or pragmatic to do so. The Ottoman Empire was a poly-ethnic, multi-faith, Islamic empire with substantial Christian and Jewish minority populations. Although key personnel in the military-administrative structure were generally Muslim and spoke Ottoman Turkish, loyalty and service to the state, rather than ethnicity, religion or native language was the main criteria for assimilation into official conceptions of Ottoman selfhood.<sup>21</sup> There were therefore numerous Greeks, Slavs, Italians, Hungarians, and Armenians employed in the sultan’s service as diplomats, soldiers and administrators, some of whom did not convert to Islam, but retained their Christian or Jewish faith. Ambitious men in the early modern Mediterranean often shifted their allegiance to rulers with whom they did not share an ethnic or religious identity, and were also prepared to change their religion and create a new ethno-cultural identity in order to further their own careers.<sup>22</sup>

There was therefore a considerable amount of fluidity inherent in early modern conceptions of identity. This potential mobility between identities was, however, particularly prevalent in culturally and geographically liminal places such as the Habsburg-Ottoman marches and the Maghreb.<sup>23</sup> The allegiances of Balkan border communities did not orient exclusively and deterministically around loyalty to a single religion, language, or state. Instead, more fluid communities

formed around the plural fulcrums of class, locale, shared practices, work, opposition to a particular “other,” or allegiance to a sovereign, lord, or commander. Moreover, identities, like the border itself, were not fixed and immutable, and individuals would often simultaneously identify with a multiplicity of different, and often contradictory, groups or collectivities.

One such example is the French and Walloon mercenaries employed by the Habsburgs in the frontier fortress of Papa during the Habsburg-Ottoman Long War of 1593–1606, who mutinied over the failure of the Habsburgs to pay them and offered their service to the Ottomans. Ottoman military records show that these soldiers not only fought alongside Ottoman soldiers in the subsequent Ottoman capture and defense of Nagykanizsa castle, but they also elected to remain in Ottoman service for many more years and fought as part of Ottoman armies in Moldavia, on the Hotin campaign, and against the Safavids and Cossacks. One of the French captains from Papa converted to Islam in the winter of 1600–1601 and was rewarded with command of the *sancak* [sub-province] of Semendire. However, despite his conversion he retained his command over the Papa mercenaries and shifted between his now plural identities as an Ottoman Muslim and as a French commander in his relations with the Ottoman state and the men under his command respectively.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, evidence from Ottoman campaign treasury account books shows that during this same war, Christian Hungarians, Poles, Transylvanians, and some Habsburg Austrians were paid by the Ottomans for military service. In particular, the latter were involved in the Ottoman attempt to recapture Esztergom from the Habsburgs in 1605.<sup>25</sup> Such disregard of conventional religious antipathies and the political interests of one’s home state are also exemplified in the case of the English, Protestant Captain John Smith, who during this war fought for the Catholic Habsburgs despite the fact that they were essentially the enemy of not only his religion, but also his country.<sup>26</sup>

Not only Christian European mercenaries fought for the Ottomans on this border though; the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, interdenominational Ottoman border garrisons provide ample evidence of more permanent alliances. Despite early modern imperial Ottoman rhetoric that Christians were not permitted to fight in the Ottoman army, the presence of Christian (Orthodox and Catholic) *sekban* soldiers in the Ottoman military has been noted by a number of authors.<sup>27</sup> Pakalın, in particular, refers to the large number of Christian *sekban* soldiers

among the Ottoman forces besieging Vienna in 1683.<sup>28</sup> Stein, through an analysis of military registers and rolls, has also demonstrated that Christians were a significant and important presence in the Ottoman border fortresses on the Habsburg-Ottoman marches from the fifteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century. Christian soldiers in these garrisons were predominantly organized into *martolosan*, *sekban*, and *müsellem* units. A quarter of non-janissary troops in the Pest and Esztergom garrisons in 1550 were from *martolosan* units, and sometimes the percentage was as much as a third in smaller fortresses. Even by the 1650s, *martolosan* units still comprised 27 percent of the garrison at Pest and 8 percent at Esztergom, while in 1683 they represented 10 percent at Győr. Similarly, the 1621–1622 *defter* [register MM5820] lists two *martolosan* units of 31 and 34 men in Nagykanizsa Castle.<sup>29</sup> These soldiers not only undertook garrison duties in the fortresses, but they also accompanied their Muslim comrades on raids across the frontier and shared the proceeds.<sup>30</sup> Although these predominately Christian units were commanded by Muslims, this situation should not be understood as one divided by ethnicity—that is, Muslim Turks commanding Christian Hungarians—because, as Stein has shown, many of the Muslims were newly converted local people.<sup>31</sup> This conversion of local soldiers to Islam also explains the increasing Islamification of these traditionally Christian units. By the seventeenth century, some of the *martolosan* units were composed of up to 50 percent Muslim soldiers. That this Islamification does not reflect the incorporation of the border regions into more secure central rule and the subsequent substitution of Christian Balkan soldiers by more “loyal” Turkish Muslim ones is illustrated in the prevalence of “convert” names among the Muslims in these units. Six of the seventeen Muslim *martolosan* in the province of Buda had the name “Ibn Abdullah”; a name commonly adopted by converts.<sup>32</sup> It appears therefore that these units became Muslim through conversion and the newly converted soldiers wished to continue to fight and work alongside their Christian comrades. The conversions among *martolosan* indicate that religion was not necessarily a strong determiner of community allegiance and identity. Instead, shared occupations, languages, cultural traditions and practices, or loyalty to a local commander seem to have been more important as criteria of identity. This is not to say that Christian soldiers did not also identify with the Christian community, but rather that they also imagined themselves as participating in other communities to whom they may have had stronger ties.

The *Gazavat-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa* [the Campaigns of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha] is a corpus of manuscripts that describes the Ottoman capture of Nagykanizsa castle from the Habsburgs in 1600, and their subsequent successful defense of the castle against a Habsburg retaliatory siege in 1601.<sup>33</sup> A number of manuscript re-inscriptions in the corpus depict complicated depictions of border identities, which reflect those outlined above.<sup>34</sup> Despite outwardly affirming imperial Ottoman rhetorics, which posit a religiously dominated cartography of difference and violence, they implicitly imagine conceptions of identity where self and other, friend and enemy, do not unproblematically map onto Muslim-Ottoman and Christian-Habsburg-Hungarian. Whereas Hegy and Dávid have argued that the Ottoman presence in Hungary amounted to little more than a military occupation with the castles “bristling with Ottoman soldiers” and “almost no civilian Muslim population,” the Nagykanizsa *gazavatname* [campaign narrative] illustrates that many audiences did not conceive of such an actual and ontological divide between a Muslim military presence in garrisons, and non-Muslim, non-Ottoman-Turkish-speaking civilians.<sup>35</sup> For example, the Ottoman *gazavatname* manuscripts describe in some detail a counter-intelligence ploy by the Ottoman commander, Tiryaki Hasan Pasha during the Habsburg counter siege of the castle in 1601. He commands his deputy Kara Ömer Ağa to pass some enemy prisoners through “the middle of the hundred and fifty *bandur*, and the five hundred Hungarian cavalry” present in Nagykanizsa, and ensure that the prisoners hear the soldiers speaking Hungarian.<sup>36</sup> The “escape” of the prisoners is then facilitated and they subsequently erroneously inform the Habsburg camp that the Ottomans have effected a secret alliance with the Hungarian and Croatian forces employed in the Habsburg army. What is relevant here is that the narrative suggests there were soldiers in the garrison, fighting for the Ottomans, who spoke Hungarian (and also maybe Croatian) and who may have previously been employed by the *ban* [commander] of Croatia and thus formerly associated with the Habsburg Empire. In manuscript O.R.12961, the captured Habsburg soldiers are made to walk among groups of different Hungarian speakers, but this time the Hungarians are described as soldiers, commanders, and notables, suggesting that Hungarian-speakers were integrated into the Ottoman military-administrative structure at all levels: “the Hungarian soldiers who previously brought the provisions and munitions from the castles of Bubofça, Berzince and Sigetwar were commanders and *ayan* [notables]. The Pasha had not given them permission

to go and they were dwelling in the castle."<sup>37</sup> In the same manuscript Tiryaki Hasan Pasha commands his men to "put the peasants who brought the provisions which came to us from Bubofça in soldiers' uniforms and also put some of the people of Islam in Hungarian clothing and let them speak Hungarian together," suggesting that there are both Hungarian-speaking converts to Islam, and Christian Hungarians involved in some way with the Ottoman garrison of Nagykanizsa.<sup>38</sup>

The inclusion of indigenous Balkan residents in the Ottoman concept of self is also indirectly implied through the blurred ethnic and cultural origins of a number of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha's important deputies and commanders. Not only is Osman, the spy, fluent in "Frenk, and Austrian and Hungarian and Croatian," but when dressed in Frenkish (western European) garments he looks so "real" that he even manages to convince Tiryaki Hasan Pasha who exclaims "where did you catch this Frenk?"<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Kara Ömer Ağa is commanded by Tiryaki Hasan Pasha to feed misinformation to the enemy commanders by convincing captured enemy prisoners—who will later be allowed to escape—that he is a secret Christian ally who was kidnapped by the Ottomans as a young boy and enslaved.<sup>40</sup> Paradoxically, for both Kara Ömer Ağa and Osman to be fluent in the required languages and knowledgeable of the relevant cultural mores and customs to the extent that they can trick the enemy, they must in effect really be "one of them." In other words, they would have had to have lived in this border area for some time, be native speakers of the local languages, and knowledgeable of local Christian practices. Tiryaki Hasan Pasha's key deputies are therefore essentially being presented as local, possibly originally Christian, inhabitants of the border area who might have retained their Christian faith, but more probably had converted to Islam. While these claims that indigenous Balkan peoples and other European Christians were part of the Ottoman military is convenient from a narrative point of view because it facilitates the stratagems employed by Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, the presence of Christian mercenaries and soldiers in Ottoman garrisons during this war is confirmed by the example of the Papa mutineers discussed above, as well as the non-Muslims listed in the *martolosan* units in the 1621–1622 register.<sup>41</sup> Lastly, many of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha's stratagems for surviving the Habsburg siege of Nagykanizsa in 1601 rely on there being a level of mutual mistrust between the besieging Habsburg forces and their Hungarian and Croatian allies, something which the defections of the Papa garrison also attests to.<sup>42</sup>

For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century audiences of these *gaza-vatnames*, especially O.R.12961, the imagination of the Habsburg-Ottoman border zone as a culturally, religiously, and linguistically mixed space where non-Muslims, recent converts, and speakers of Hungarian and Slavic languages could identify to some extent with the Ottoman state, either via employment in the Ottoman military-administrative structure or through loyalty to a local border commander such as Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, made sense; it reflected their reality. The border zone was perceived by these audiences, and also attested to by other early modern sources, as a *middle ground* where people of different religions and ethno-linguistic backgrounds could, and did, interact. This perception of the frontier and the people living there was however, something that changed in subsequent centuries, as both the circumstances and the dominant discourse for apprehending and constructing geo-political space altered.<sup>43</sup>

### Politically liminal spaces

The rhetorical imagination of space in Ottoman imperial pronouncements and commands is one where juridico-military power is coterminous with linear, fixed cartographic borders as articulated in treaties and on maps. However, the authority of early modern states, unlike that of the modern nation-state, did not diffuse in a uniform and equal manner from the center to the clearly demarcated and linear edges of the territory; central imperial Ottoman and Habsburg political power was not co-extensive throughout the liminal border space. Instead, the “uneven and incomplete control” of empires radiated from imperial politico-military hubs in an asymmetrical manner towards porous and amorphous borders.<sup>44</sup>

Sources suggest that the Habsburg-Ottoman-Hungarian border zone existed largely outside the sphere and rhetoric of central imperial authority and that consequently, border communities developed, co-existed, and integrated according to local conditions rather than the political and religious dictates of the center. Therefore, although imperial commands frequently forbade border commanders from engaging in cross-border raids and the collection of taxes from communities living on the other side of the border, the authority of these imperial rescripts was largely rhetorical: they did not possess the power actually to affect in a consistent manner the actions of border commanders who continued to engage in such activities.<sup>45</sup> Effective

power was therefore in the hands of marcher lords on either side of the border and there is evidence that there existed between them a sense of shared values reflecting both the particularities of the local geo-political context and a common social status and occupation, which often transcended factional, religious, or imperial divisions and animosities. Through the constant exchange of letters, presents, and envoys, these local commanders negotiated and implemented protocols of conduct and a code of practices beneficial to themselves and their clients, which was often at variance with the dictates of the central authority.<sup>46</sup> For example, despite Habsburg and Ottoman imperial treaties forbidding cross-border raiding in times of peace, such raids were essential to the local economy of the border region. Therefore, commanders and notables from both sides attempted to regulate the practice to ensure its continuation. In 1649, the chief janissary *ağa* of Nagykanizsa complains in a letter to Count Adam Battyány at Körmend that eighty Ottoman soldiers have been captured by the Habsburgs. He suggests an exchange of prisoners and threatens to contact the Count's superiors in Vienna if he does not agree, but at no time does he argue that such raids, which in fact violated the peace treaties between the two empires, should stop.<sup>47</sup> Another practice vital to the local economy, involving cross border co-operation and often against imperial orders, was the collection of taxes from communities across the border. Elites from both sides attempted to collect taxes from peasants in lands that they had previously held, but had now been captured by the other side. Local Ottoman authorities often tolerated the collection of taxes by Habsburg agents from peasants in Ottoman territories because, in return, they received one percent of the total collected sum.<sup>48</sup> This practice of double taxation not only facilitated "some sort of commonality" between the Habsburg and Ottoman commanders and troops involved in the collection, but it also bound the peasants on both sides of the border together in a "single frontier community."<sup>49</sup>

This independence of border commanders from central command is also alluded to in some of the *Gazavat-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa* manuscripts. Manuscript O.R.700 locates the siege of Nagykanizsa not as an exemplification of the ideological conflict between Christendom and Islam, but in terms of Hungarian local politics. Although Tiryaki Hasan Pasha is to some extent presented as distanced from the official military-administrative system in all the manuscripts by virtue of his apparent voluntary retirement from a position as governor of

Buda, in O.R.700, this distance from imperial hierarchies of power and networks of traditional authority is reinforced through his reluctance to accept praise, gifts, and robes of honor, and his preference for bestowing rewards on his men from his own possessions rather than by requesting administrative positions and monetary rewards for them from the imperial center.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, in O.R.700, Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, rather than being incorporated into, and therefore subject to, imperial structures of dependency and power, acts as a regional kingmaker. He crowns Zirinoğlu, a local Hungarian lord who is described in the *Gazavat-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa* manuscripts as allied with the Habsburgs during their retaliatory siege of Nagykanizsa in 1601, as king of Hungary: “he [Hasan Pasha] caused him to be invested with a robe of honor. Again he said, ‘you are the Hungarian King’ and he put a document in his hand.”<sup>51</sup> After he has crowned Zirinoğlu, the narrator comments, “And he [Hasan Pasha] sent him [Zirinoğlu] away with glory because the Hungarian people are always very much inclined to and supportive of the side of Islam.”<sup>52</sup> Although this coronation is a fictitious event, as mentioned above there is considerable documentary evidence that border commanders from both sides operated outside imperial networks of power and instead forged bonds of friendship and loyalty with one another.<sup>53</sup> The crowning of Zirinoğlu as King of Hungary can be read as an exaggerated instance of such local networks of power and authority. It may also indicate the culturally heterogeneous nature of the implied audience: the heroes of this narrative are those of “both sides,” not only the Ottoman, Muslim Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, but also the local Christian, Hungarian Zirinoğlu, who gains much of his prestige from being literally “the son of Zirin,” who was the acclaimed and celebrated Hungarian defender of Szigetwar Castle during the ultimately successful Ottoman siege in 1566.<sup>54</sup>

The environment of the frontier did not only create a middle ground between fortress commanders and local lords, it also united the garrison soldiers and peasants who inhabited and farmed the land. The consistency and longevity of “tours of duty” of the garrison soldiers helped to integrate them into local economic and sociocultural networks.<sup>55</sup> Such acculturation was facilitated by the participation of the military in civilian commercial networks. Ottoman forts along the border region in particular flourished as market centers for a variety of cross-border products and drew customers from across the Habsburg border.<sup>56</sup> Manuscript O.R.12961 demonstrates the closeness

of links between the garrison occupants and the rural population. The *gönüllü ağası* [commander of the locally recruited troops] is depicted as a local inhabitant as he acts as a guide in the border area for Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, and he also mentions that his brother has a farm in the border region.<sup>57</sup>

The border also offered a variety of economic opportunities to settlers and migrants from both sides: adventurous young men from diverse communities were attracted to the Habsburg-Ottoman marches because of the availability of arable land, a reduced tax burden, the need for skilled workers, and the chance to volunteer as a *sekban* or *gönüllü* soldier in a border garrison with the prospect of eventually being awarded a more permanent, salaried military position.<sup>58</sup> Habsburg official documents attest to the financial opportunities available in the marches and the flexibility of border communities. A report to the Aulic War Council in 1718 suggests that the Habsburgs were concerned about Christian peasants settling in Ottoman lands because the Ottomans were generally offering lower taxes and longer periods of tax exemption. However, much more seriously, they were concerned that these Christian Habsburg subjects, having moved to Ottoman lands might fall upon hard times and resort to cross-border raiding against their former compatriots.<sup>59</sup> Lastly, local communities on both sides smuggled goods across the border area with no regard for existing imperial treaties or orders.<sup>60</sup>

Bracewell describes a similar environment existing on the Croatian borderlands surrounding Senj on the Adriatic coast. Here, the Christian Uskoks were nominally engaged in a holy war against the Muslim Ottomans: raiding their territory, burning settlements, and enslaving or ransoming the local population. However, in practice, the situation was more complex and the Uskoks' interactions with both border Muslims and Christians were prescribed more by the exigencies of the frontier locality and common interests than imperial or state pronouncements, or the rhetorics of holy war. That religious difference was not the only motivating criteria behind Uskok raids and military endeavors is evidenced by their persecution of Christians living in Ottoman lands as well as the Muslims.<sup>61</sup> As on the Hungarian marches, in the border areas around Senj, when the interests of local Uskok and Ottoman commanders coincided they often acted independently of orders from the imperial center. In 1588, the Ottoman government proscribed the practice of ransoming Ottoman captives from the Uskoks in an attempt to decrease Uskok raids by removing

a key financial incentive. However, as the exchange of captives was a critical part of the frontier economy, the local commanders on each side were reluctant to implement this decree and instead concluded an independent agreement that culminated in an exchange of gifts and a ceremony joining the two commanders as blood brothers.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, there was often collaboration between local Ottoman commanders and Uskoks on the matter of border raids. Ottoman officials in Karin agreed to permit the Uskoks to cross their territory without hindrance in order to raid other Ottoman settlements and even agreed to mislead any Ottoman troops sent to pursue the raiders in exchange for a guarantee that the Uskoks would not raid Karin.<sup>63</sup> The Uskoks and Ottoman *ağas* [commanders] inhabited a *shared world*; they possessed a common language and participated in a culture with shared concepts of honor, heroism, vengeance, and ties of kinship. There is therefore considerable evidence that depicts the Ottoman-Habsburg marches as a multi-lingual, religiously diverse, culturally complex space with a degree of local political autonomy. A place where Christians and Muslims, Austrians, Greeks, Hungarians, Serbs, and Turks did not live isolated in separate proto nation-states, but were involved in intersecting, complicated economic and political alliances, and networks, more often centered on regional, rather than imperial, loci of power.

However, I do not wish to simply replace one imagination of geopolitical and cultural space with another. I do not occupy a privileged position outside of discourse from which I can construct a description of the border that corresponds to an objective, mind-independent reality. I cannot argue that my reading of the sources has allowed me (un)mediated access to such a reality. Instead, I am telling a story that both coheres with the sources and practices of twenty-first century academic history writing, and explicitly and reflexively references the interpretative frameworks I bring to my reading. Although the case study in this article is focused on a specific space—the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands—the main argument I want to make is historiographical, not historical. Said has argued for “the constitutive role of space in human affairs.”<sup>64</sup> That is, the stories we tell imply conceptions of space that in turn both affect and reflect the explicatory metanarratives within which we situate ontologies of difference. I do not believe that historical narratives and our interest in them are fundamentally concerned with the establishment of what really happened in the past. Instead, their impetus is presentist, ontological,

and justificatory; they help us to imagine identities, and work to legitimize our current beliefs, actions, institutions, and socio-economic and political relationships. This being the case, deconstructing the implied spatialities present in historical narratives can be very informative about the preferred explanatory frameworks and ideological and political perspectives within which a work was produced and consumed. The way we think about space is not only central to how we narrate the past; it is also fundamental to our conceptions of the present. Of course, I research and write my historical narratives in accordance with the disciplinary rules of the profession and genre protocols of history, but I also write with a conscious aim of telling stories that will contribute to the building of better societies.<sup>65</sup> In very basic terms, the fact that I inhabit, and write within, a heterogeneous, multi-cultural, pluralistic context, and that I believe reciprocal tolerance, increased communication, and understanding for difference and diversity will ultimately make our world a better place means I have a propensity to employ non-Eurocentric, postcolonial, or *shared world* interpretative paradigms when constructing my narratives.<sup>66</sup> If one reads the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands through a nation state, orientalist or Eurocentric teleological lens as a place of contestation and conflict, the conceptualization of imperial and religious interactions in the early modern period is more likely to be envisaged within a *clash of civilizations* interpretative framework that necessarily foregrounds the inevitability of cultural and civilizational conflict and irreconcilable difference. Although Huntington offered his *clash of civilizations* thesis as “a more meaningful and useful lens through which to interpret international developments than any alternative paradigm,” his thesis has been criticized both on empirical grounds, and with regard to his conception and use of the term civilization.<sup>67</sup> I would argue that not only in the context of current international relations, but also with regard to the narration of our pasts, it is more useful, while still being congruent with academic *praxis* and the extant sources, to imagine this border zone as a space where plural, heterogeneous, ethno-cultural communities imagined multiple overlapping identities for themselves, and were invested in intersecting, complicated economic, and political alliances and networks, rather than as a divisive space between fundamentally different and hostile civilizations. A *shared world* explanatory metanarrative, which problematizes over-simplistic ontological notions of civilization and culture, and places explanatory emphasis on contextual factors rather

than superficial generalizations about cultural difference, not only coheres with the extant sources, but is also potentially more heuristically beneficial if one seeks a world in which there is greater understanding and tolerance.

## Notes

### Key to unpublished primary sources in the text and references

#### *Cambridge: University library*

O.R.700, *Tarihi-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa*, [The History of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha] fols 76b-107b (1187 H./1773–4 C.E.)

#### *Istanbul: Millet Kütüphanesi*

A.E.Tar.187, *Tarih-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa*, [The History of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha] fols 1b-61a

#### *London: British Library*

O.R.12961, *Hikaye-i Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Paşa*, [The Story of Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Pasha] fols 1b-95a (1203 H./1789 C.E.)

1. For the phrase “clash of civilizations” see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, (September 1990) accessible online <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643/> (last accessed May 30, 2014). Both articles imagine the existence of a putatively homogeneous Western and Islamic civilization that are not only culturally incompatible, but are intrinsically hostile toward each other.
2. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x–xi; see also Daniel Power and Naomi Standen, “Introduction,” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasia Borderlands 700–1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).
3. White, *The Middle Ground*, xi.
4. *Ibid.*, ix.
5. See Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton, *Doing History* (London: Routledge, 2011), especially Chapter 6 for more on antirepresentationalism and its use in the context of historical narratives, and of course the work of Rorty especially Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
6. One of the most articulate critiques of foundationalist or realist epistemology is Wilfred Sellars. He attributed the term “the myth of the given”

- to the view that we can have knowledge of the world distinct from, and separate to, the conceptual processes and interpretative frameworks that facilitate perception. Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume I: The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 253–329. See also Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, intro. Richard Rorty and study guide by Robert Brandom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
7. Paul Stock, "History and the Uses of Space," introduction to this book.
  8. Santa Arias, "The Geopolitics of Historiography from Europe to the Americas," in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Barney Warf and Santa Arias (London: Routledge, 2009), 122–136, 124.
  9. Worldmaking refers to Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1978). See Robert J. Mayhew, "A Tale of Three Scales: Ways of Malthusean Worldmaking," chapter 9 of this book for a more in-depth discussion of Goodman.
  10. Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 175–192, 176.
  11. *Ibid.*, 182. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 1st ed. (London: Verso, 1991, 1983), 6 quoting Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), 169.
  12. Jo Guldi, "The Spatial Turn in History," <http://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/the-spatial-turn-in-history/index.html> (last accessed May 12, 2014).
  13. See Umit Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) for a concise explanation of three main theories or approaches to nationalism.
  14. John E. Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 114f; and Power and Standen, *Frontiers in Question*, 24f.
  15. John A. Fine, *When Ethnicity did not Matter in the Balkans. A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 12–15.
  16. Geza Dávid and Pal Fodor, "Introduction," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, ed. Geza Dávid and Pal Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2000), xi–xxvii, xviii, and xix–xx; Lajos Fekete, *Budapest a törökörban* [Budapest Under Turkish Rule] (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1944), 308, quoted in Geza Dávid, and Pal Fodor, "Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 305–350, 318f.; Geza Dávid, "Administration in Ottoman Europe," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age. The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London: Longman, 1995), 71–90, 83 and 85–87; Klara Hegyi, *Török berendezkedés Magyarországon*, [Ottoman Administration in Hungary] (História Könyvtár, Monográfiák 7 (Budapest:

- MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1995), quoted in Dávid and Fodor, "Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History," 320. For a detailed discussion of Hungarian historiography on this topic see Claire Norton, "Narrating the 'Yoke of Oppression' Twentieth-Century Hungarian Scholarship of the Ottoman-Hungarian Borderlands," in *Nationalism, Historiography and the (Re)Construction of the Past*, ed. Claire Norton (Washington: New Academia Press, 2007), 187–200. M. R. Hickok, *Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth Century Bosnia* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), xi, and 114f.; and Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kısve Bahası Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670–1730* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 65 also discuss nationalist historiography and the back-projection of twentieth-century identities in Slavic, Bosnian, and Bulgarian contexts. See also Claire Norton, "Nationalism and the Re-Invention of Early-Modern Identities in the Ottoman-Habsburg Borderlands," *Ethnologia Balkanica* 11 (2008): 79–101 for a discussion of nationalism and its effect on Balkan histories especially in the context of nineteenth-century Ottoman and twentieth-century Turkish histories of the region.
17. Dávid and Fodor, "Introduction," xii, xviii, xix–xx.
  18. Mark Stein, *Guarding the Frontier: Ottoman Border Forts and Garrisons in Europe* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 6. To this extent it resembles an earlier Ottoman frontier region, that of the Byzantine-Ottoman frontier in Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which Colin Heywood, "The Frontier in Ottoman History," in *Frontiers in Question*, ed. Power and Standen, 228–250, 233 described as a "zone of passage and interaction and a political barrier."
  19. Stein, *Guarding the Frontier*, 156.
  20. Joseph, *Language and Identity*, 65.
  21. See Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) for a good introduction to the Ottoman Empire and its rather heterogeneous nature. Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (London: John Murray, 2005), for examples of the integration of members of elite conquered families into the Ottoman administrative-military hierarchy.
  22. Christine Isom-Verhaaren, "Shifting Identities: Foreign State Servants in France and the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Early Modern History* 8, nos. 1–2 (2004): 109–34. While non-Muslims could attain relatively high status in the Ottoman administrative system, conversion to Islam was considered desirable if one wanted to attain high office. See Isom-Verhaaren's discussion of Hüseyin, the *subaşı* of Lemnos and Christoph von Roggendorf.
  23. The conversion and acculturation of peoples in the liminal spaces of the wider Mediterranean World are explored in a variety of works including: Nabil Matar *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) especially Chapter 3; Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002) Claire Norton, "Lust, Greed, Torture and Identity: Narrations of Conversion and the Creation of the Early Modern 'Renegade,'" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29, no.2 (2009): 259–268; "Conversion to Islam in

- the Ottoman Empire," *Wiener zeitschrift zur geschichte der neuzeit* 7, no.2 (2007): 25–39; Eric R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).
24. Caroline Finkel, "French Mercenaries in the Habsburg-Ottoman War of 1583–1606: The Desertion of the Papa Garrison to the Ottomans in 1600," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no.3 (1992): 451–471, 465–468.
  25. Finkel, "French Mercenaries," 452.
  26. John Smith, *The True Travels, adventures and Observations of Captain John Smith, In Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629* [...] (London: Slater, 1630) cited in F. Pichler, "Captain John Smith in the Light of the Styrian Sources," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (1957): 332–354.
  27. Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, *Stato militare dell' Imperio Ottomano*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Gosse et al., 1732), 1: 85, quoted in Mark Stein, "Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Forts and Garrisons on the Habsburg Frontier (Hungary)," unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Chicago, 2001, 152; and Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), III: 146.
  28. Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, "Sembân," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* 10 (1966): 325–327, 326.
  29. Stein, *Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Forts*, 147–149.
  30. *Ibid.*, 145
  31. *Ibid.*, 147.
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. Nagykanizsa castle is located just south of Lake Balaton in what is today Hungary.
  34. See Claire Norton, "Plural Pasts: The Role of Function and Audience in the Creation of Meaning in Ottoman and Modern Turkish Accounts of the siege of Nagykanizsa," unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2005, Chapters 3 and 4 for a detailed discussion and analysis of the manuscripts in the corpus. A more cursory discussion can be found in Claire Norton, "'The Lutheran is the Turks' Luck': Imagining Religious Identity, Alliance and Conflict on the Habsburg-Ottoman Marches in an Account of the Sieges of Nagykanizsa 1600 and 1601," in *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie in der Neuzeit. Akten des internationalen Kongresses zum 150-jährigen Bestehen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Wien, 22.-25. September 2004*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Erg. Bd. 49, ed. Marlene Kurz, Martin Scheutz, Karl Vocelka and Thomas Winkelbauer (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 67–81; and Norton, "Nationalism and the Re-Invention of Early-Modern Identities."
  35. See Klara Hegyi, *Egy világbirodalom végvidékén* [On the Borders of a World-Empire] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1975) quoted in Dávid and Fodor, "Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History," 319. Quotes from Dávid, "Administration in Ottoman Europe," 87–88.

36. Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, A.E.Tar.187 fol.18r, all translations by the author. The quote is from ms. A.E.Tar.187, but the other manuscripts in the corpus contain very similar versions of this event. The various manuscripts describe the forces allied with the Habsburgs as Hungarian and Croatian, but presumably this is being used here not as an ethnic descriptor, but more as a geographical or political identity and describes troops fighting for commanders who rule over estates in Croatia or Hungary. The word *bandur* or *pandur* has been used to describe a great variety of military units at different times, but it is generally understood to refer to Croatian troops who were associated with the office of the *ban* of Croatian, Dalmatia, and Slavonia and who were also employed in the service of the Habsburg Austrians. For references to *pandur* troops see Ferenc Szakály, "The Early Ottoman Period, Including Royal Hungary, 1526–1606," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter. F. Sugar (New York: Indiana University Press, 1990), 83–99, 96; Kurt Wessely, "The Development of the Hungarian Military Frontier Until the Middle of the Eighteenth Century," *The Austrian History Yearbook* 9–10 (1973–1974): 55–110, 77; and Géza Pálffy, "The Origins and Developments of the Border Defence System against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (Up to the Early Eighteenth Century)," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, ed. Dávid and Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 3–69, 11.
37. London, British Library, O.R.12961, fol.56v
38. *Ibid.*, fol.46v.
39. Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, A.E.Tar.187 fol.31v.
40. *Ibid.*, fol.18v.
41. See Finkel, "French Mercenaries," 452 and 465–468; Stein *Guarding the Frontier*, 92. Stein 147–149 also cites other sources that attest to the presence of Christian *martolosan* soldiers as part of the permanent Nagykanizsa garrison.
42. Hasan Pasha has captured Habsburg prisoners passed through Hungarian-speaking soldiers and civilians in the castle and then allows them to escape with the hope that they will inform the Habsburg commander that the Ottomans are allied with the Hungarians. This stratagem works and the Habsburg commander curses the untrustworthy Hungarians and vows to kill all the Hungarian soldiers who are allied him with him in besieging the castle. The Hungarians, however, are informed of this and escape taking with them all the pack animals. See Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, A.E.Tar.187 fols 34b-35b and 40b.
43. Norton, "Nationalism and the Re-Invention of Early-Modern Identities," and Claire Norton, "The Remembrance of the Siege of Kanije in the Construction of Late Ottoman and Modern Turkish Nationalist Identities," *Parergon* 21, no.1 (2004): 133–153 explore the affect that Ottoman proto-national and modern Turkish nation-state cartographies have had on the remembrance of this border space in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ottoman and Turkish histories and popular accounts of the sieges.
44. The quote is from Lauren Benton and Jeppe Mulich, "The Space between Empires: The Global Phenomenon of Microregions in the Early Nineteenth Century," this volume; although they are discussing a later period, their

- categorization of imperial space is still useful. The idea of power asymmetrically radiating from imperial politico-military hubs is from Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 19.
45. See below n.47 and 48.
  46. See Lajos Fekete, *Türkische Schriften aus dem Archive des Palatins Niklaus Esterházy 1606–1645* (Budapest: Esterházy Miklós nádor iratai, 1932), for a very friendly letter between the Ottoman governor of Buda and Johann Molard in 1618 which refers to the exchange of present and ambassadors.
  47. Peter Sugar, "The Ottoman 'Professional Prisoner' on the Western Borders of the Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Études Balkaniques* 7 (1971): 82–91, 82 cites the letter located in the Hungarian National Archives, Budapest: Batthyany Family Archives, Collection No. P1313, Fascicle 249, Document 226a.
  48. Gustav Bayerle, *Ottoman Tributes in Hungary: According to Sixteenth Century Tapu Registers of Novigrad* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 22.
  49. Stein *Guarding the Frontier*, 25–26.
  50. A. Jones, and P. Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3 have argued that the bestowal of gifts of robes, swords, and other items, figures an individual in a subordinate position in that their acts are available to be judged worthy or unworthy by those in power and rewarded accordingly. See Norton, "Plural Pasts," 180–184 for a longer discussion of gift giving and how Tiryaki Hasan Pasha asserts his independence from imperial structures of authority and power.
  51. Cambridge University Library, O.R.700 fol. 107r.
  52. *Ibid.*
  53. Sugar, "The Ottoman 'Professional Prisoner,'" 82; and Ludwig Fekete, *Türkische Schriften*, 21.
  54. The historical referent for Zirinoğlu is probably György Zrínyi, captain-general of the border fortresses around Nagykanizsa in the late sixteenth century. He was also the son of Miklós Zrínyi who achieved mythic status as a Hungarian hero when in 1566 he died leading a last desperate charge from Szigetwar castle against the Ottoman sultan, Süleyman I. Pálffy, "The Origins and Developments of the Border Defense System," 38 and 46.
  55. Stein *Guarding the Frontier*, Chapter 3 especially 74 and 77 describes how the commanders of the *azeb* units in Nagykanizsa castle served there throughout the 1650s.
  56. *Ibid.*, 26–27 and 137–138.
  57. London, British Library, O.R.12961 fols 14r-v.
  58. Stein *Guarding the Frontier*, 93–97.
  59. Report by Petrasch to the Aulic War council in 1718 cited in Wessely, "The Hungarian Military Frontier," 91. Finkel, "French Mercenaries," 452 also mentions that the Ottomans tried to encourage those living in the border lands to settle in their region with tax incentives.
  60. Bayerle, *Ottoman Tributes*, 22.
  61. Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 188.

62. Ibid., 182. There were often also familial ties between the Uskoks and Ottoman state officials. In 1588 an Ottoman delegation in Venice requested that six captured Uskoks not be executed because one of them was a close relative of an eminent Ottoman captain, *ibid.*, 181.
63. Ibid., 184–186.
64. Said, “Invention, Memory, Place,” 180.
65. By “better” I simply mean “better by my lights” as Richard Rorty might say. For other historians who consider that one of the most important functions of history is as a means of reflecting upon, and improving our society see Joan W. Scott. “History-writing as Critique,” and Beverley Southgate “*Humani nil alienum: the quest for ‘human nature,’*” both in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London: Routledge, 2007), 19–38 and 67–76; David Harlan, “Ken Burns and the Coming Crisis of Academic History,” *Rethinking History* 7 (2003): 169–192; Hayden White, “The Burden of History,” in Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 27–50; Jocelyn Létourneau, *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec*, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).
66. For an introduction to non-Eurocentric history see John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012); J. M. Blout, *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000). See also Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). I take the phrase *shared world* from Greene, *Shared World*.
67. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 14 quoted in Bruce M. Russett, John R. Oneal, and Michaelene Cox, “Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu? Some Evidence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no.5 (2000): 583–608, 584. Articles such as those by Russett et al. argue that “contiguity, alliances, and relative power, and liberal influences of joint democracy and interdependence, provide a much better account of interstate conflict” (583) than civilizational differences. In contrast Edward Said, “The Clash of Ignorance,” *The Nation* (October 2001) available online <http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance#> (last accessed May 30, 2014), and Amartya Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value,” *Journal of Democracy* 10, no.3 (1999): 3–17 challenge Huntington’s categorization of communities into Islamic and Western civilizations arguing that this classification ignores the dynamic interdependency, interaction, and diversity of cultures.

# 5

## A Space between Two Worlds: St. Petersburg in the Early Eighteenth Century

*Paul Keenan*

### Introduction

In May 1703, Tsar Peter I of Russia is alleged to have led a small military foray to the Baltic coastline, near the mouth of the river Neva. Accounts of this occasion, both contemporary and retrospective, vary considerably on the precise chronology of the decision-making process and the question of whether the tsar himself was actually present.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the precise details, the area was claimed (or, some argue, reclaimed) in the name of Russia and plans were made to build a fortress in order to consolidate the Russian presence.<sup>2</sup> This foundation and the associated myths, which have been explored by many writers and historians over the intervening centuries, feature in most discussions of St. Petersburg's history.<sup>3</sup> One such myth, which presents Peter creating his new city out of nothing, in a wilderness, was essentially poetic license on the part of later writers such as Vasiliï Trediakovskii and Aleksandr Pushkin.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the area was the site of a Swedish fortress known as "Nienschants," the town of Nien, with a population of around four thousand, and a number of smaller settlements nearby that existed before the city was founded.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, given the paucity of usable stone in the region, the ruins of the old fortress likely provided material used in the initial stage of St. Petersburg's construction, particularly in the foundations of buildings.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the veracity of such images, the mythology suggests that the question of space has been central to the presentation of St. Petersburg throughout its history. The importance of the "spatial turn" for studies concerning the Russian empire has been a relatively

recent phenomenon, even if space was a frequent subject of interest and comment for scholars throughout its history.<sup>7</sup> Much of the recent scholarship on space in Russia, which has often exemplified the interdisciplinary nature of such endeavors by blending historical, geographical, and literary methodologies, has tended instead to focus on the modern period.<sup>8</sup> Yet there is much to be gained from a spatial approach to earlier periods, especially since it provides another avenue by which to approach a context like Russia, where the archival and documentary base is relatively limited, compared to its Western European contemporaries. For example, Kivelson's innovative work on seventeenth-century maps and their presentation of the Muscovite polity has highlighted the importance of spatial considerations for ruler, elite and subjects in Russia.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the sheer extent of the Russian empire, not to mention its diversity, presented successive rulers with considerable challenges that they sought to tackle throughout the imperial period.<sup>10</sup>

The specific case of St. Petersburg, a city of considerable interest for Russians and foreigners alike because of the aforementioned mythology and what it represents, is frequently considered in such scholarship, drawing on the well-established work by Lotman on the semiotics of the city.<sup>11</sup> Such approaches have prompted excellent recent work on the literary presentation of the city and its various spaces, albeit largely focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>12</sup> The eighteenth century, particularly pre-Catherine II, has remained rather more difficult to analyze in this respect, although a notable exception is Ageeva's monograph on the city during Peter I's reign, in which she devotes a chapter to St. Petersburg's space(s).<sup>13</sup> This chapter will approach this understudied period by means of an exploration of St. Petersburg's creation and subsequent early development as a series of overlapping spaces. These spaces were both physical and symbolic in nature since, in the early modern period, it is generally unwise to attempt to separate the two. The city cannot be understood as purely a physical project—it had, and I argue that it had to have, significance beyond that in order to justify the very real costs involved.

Peter I's decision to found anything at all in swampy terrain on the Baltic coast, with its long winters and frequent floods, seems strange. Indeed, even leaving aside the issue of the suitability of the terrain, there was also the question of its position—on the edge of Russian territory bordering the Swedish empire, Russia's opponent in the Great Northern War (1700–1721). The vulnerability of the new settlement

to being (re)captured by Swedish forces—it was attacked twice in its first year—meant that the construction of fortifications was prioritized from the outset of the project.<sup>14</sup> Yet, in spite of its tenuous and uncertain situation, within fifteen years, St. Petersburg became the center of both the state administration and the Russian court—over the course of the next century, it became a major European city. The question of what Peter I was attempting to create in 1703—whether a fortress, port, or city—is discussed in Section 1, but there can be little doubt that St. Petersburg subsequently became the most visible and enduring of all of his endeavors. While the tsar expressed a desire to found a new city already in the 1690s and he introduced some “new” practices in his other “capital” Moscow during this period, St. Petersburg was nevertheless a Petrine innovation; its existence owed everything to its founder’s efforts. As a result, the city has often been portrayed as a physical manifestation of the wide-ranging goals of the reforming tsar.<sup>15</sup>

The remote geographical location of the new city had an impact on its populace and therefore on the development of its attendant spaces. Its relative isolation from Russia’s heartland, centered on Moscow, can be interpreted as having motives beyond Peter I’s evident naval and commercial interests. For example, Shaw has drawn attention to Dodgshon’s work on the impact of geographical space on social change in examining Petrine Russia, particularly, the tendency of early modern societies toward inertia, whether in terms of their cultural attitudes or their social and political institutions. Dodgshon argues that social change was more likely to occur successfully in areas where it is likely to encounter the least resistance.<sup>16</sup> Shaw links this approach to Peter’s decision to situate a new city on the very edge of Russian territory, and thereafter to ensure that both key institutions and social groups moved to the new city in considerable numbers. This endeavor was the tsar’s attempt to separate the two most conservative groups in Muscovite society—the nobility and the clergy—from their traditional center, Moscow, and thereby undermine any possible efforts on their part to resist his wider reform agenda.<sup>17</sup> The challenge for Peter I and his immediate successors was to ensure that this “new” space of St. Petersburg was accepted, both by its intended inhabitants and by the wider populace. A key element in this process, and the focus of Section 2, was the decision to invest St. Petersburg with its own religious and ceremonial significance in order to minimize open opposition.

St Petersburg's location and intended function explicitly reflected a desire for Russia to engage more extensively with northern Europe—militarily, commercially, and culturally—than had been the case in previous centuries. This role for the city led to one of its abiding characterizations—as Russia's “window on Europe.” Section 3 examines St. Petersburg as a space in which the relationship between Russia and (the rest of) Europe can be explored, particularly in its chosen models and physical appearance. These elements are also discussed in Section 4, which views St. Petersburg's foundation through the prism of Peter I's stated intent to create a planned, “well-ordered” city with input from foreign architects. As such, St. Petersburg represented a “new” space within Russia, albeit on its north-eastern frontier.<sup>18</sup> While the implementation of the various attendant measures was necessarily both complex and only partially realized by Peter I's death in 1725, it once again highlights the need to consider the plan (or ideal) alongside the reality of the city.

### **Section 1: St. Petersburg's intended function**

Beginning with its location, one of the tsar's desired outcomes from the foundation of a new settlement on the Baltic coastline was to establish a new port. This had two principal advantages. Firstly, such a port could act as a base for the development of a naval component to Russian military operations in the region. Secondly, the Baltic Sea was a thriving commercial network that had the potential to develop Russia's mercantile revenues. The only major port under Russian control when Peter came to power in the 1680s was Arkhangel'sk in the far north. Although it was an important conduit for Russia's engagement with the wider world—including the valuable English and Dutch trade in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—its development potential was limited by its location. Foreign ships could only access it through the White Sea, which was a hazardous route for much of the year and was frozen during the winter months.<sup>19</sup> St. Petersburg's establishment and subsequent legislation to channel foreign trade through the new port, at the expense of Archangel'sk, signaled a confirmed Russian interest in the Baltic, with its established connections to Dutch, north German, and British trade routes.

It was, however, not the only initial option. To the south, the former Ottoman fortress of Azov, captured by Peter in the campaign of 1696, presented other possibilities. It had the advantage of an ice-free

port—the Neva delta was still frozen for several months a year—and it could be reached by the river Don. However, its potential utility, particularly in terms of trade, was limited by the fact that the Ottoman Empire controlled the straits both of Kerch and of Constantinople, limiting access to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean respectively.<sup>20</sup> An immediate challenge to this Ottoman dominance seemed unlikely as there was little interest in Peter's proposal for a renewal or extension of the Holy Alliance against the Ottomans, which was one of the reasons for his "Grand Embassy" in the late 1690s.<sup>21</sup> The Austrians, in particular, had largely achieved their aims, which would be confirmed in the Peace of Karlowicz (1699), and the leading European powers instead turned their attention to the issue of the succession to the Spanish throne, which carried the threat of an increased Bourbon domination of Western Europe.<sup>22</sup> This point, when considered alongside plans of several northern European neighbors to attack Swedish holdings on the Baltic, realigned Russian strategy from its southern frontier to the north-west for the next two decades.

The military situation in which St. Petersburg was founded naturally led to an interest in the defensibility of the site and the central positioning of both the Sts. Peter and Paul fortress, and the Admiralty boatyard (later fortress). It also had an influence on the tsar's stated interest in regulation and "good order." This reflected a wider European emphasis on these themes in urban planning, which Peter had observed on the Grand Embassy, particularly during his visit to Amsterdam.<sup>23</sup> There were a number of common traits between the features stressed in military design and those considered important in a "regular" early modern city. The question of what the "ideal city" should look like became the focus of architectural treatises from the early sixteenth century onwards. The two major archetypes for contemporary writers—the classically inspired rectangular plan with its streets organized in a grid pattern and the radial plan with its streets emanating from a central point—reflected the military and political concerns of their intended patrons.<sup>24</sup> It found expression in both treatises and a considerable body of legislation throughout this period, such as the Spanish Laws of the Indies (issued in 1573 and later collected in a revised edition of 1681).<sup>25</sup> This existing discourse on the subject, reflected in both written and graphic materials in Peter's library, and his personal experience of several European cities in the late 1690s, can explain his list of points drawn up for inclusion in any prospective plan for the construction of St. Petersburg. The list

included the need for broad, straight streets in a regular pattern and an integrated canal system to aid transport and communications.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, there is the question of St. Petersburg's role as a seat of government and, owing to the nature of Petrine rule, a residence for the tsar and his close advisers (it is difficult to describe the groups around Peter as a traditional court structure in the contemporary European sense). This question relates to a potentially thorny issue, raised by scholars subsequently, of whether Peter initially intended to make St. Petersburg the capital of Russia at the expense of Moscow. There is no easy answer. Peter himself referred to his new city in correspondence as the "capital" (*stolitsa*) as early as September 1704.<sup>27</sup> However, Hughes has persuasively argued that there was no single piece of legislation that can be said to mark such a transfer.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the tsar's devotion to and presence in his new city, as often as other commitments would allow, is clear from its foundation onwards. Peter's efforts to move all the major organs of government to St. Petersburg, such as the relocation of the Senate to the city in late 1713, also played an important role in the shaping of the city's space and its cultural life. Both factors affected the status of the city and its inhabitants. Its role as the tsar's principal residence ensured that the city was the venue for many important celebrations, barring coronations (which remained in Moscow until the fall of the Romanov dynasty), and other cultural innovations.<sup>29</sup> This role had, in turn, had a physical effect on the appearance of the city, both in terms of its architecture and its space.<sup>30</sup>

This decision can also be viewed as an attempt to create a Russian version of the German *residenzstadt*, that is to say, a town which owes its existence to the presence of the ruler and their court. The role of such *residenzstädte* is to reflect the wealth, status and, ultimately, power of their ruler in both material and symbolic terms.<sup>31</sup> Louis XIV's palace and garden complex at Versailles presents a high profile, influential example of a *residenz* created anew, on the site of an old hunting lodge, and one that was deliberately located beyond the *stadt* of Paris.<sup>32</sup> While it was undoubtedly one of the most impressive examples of its type, Versailles was not as dominant an influence as traditionally suggested. The Bourbon's main dynastic rivals, the Austrian Habsburgs, provided an alternative with their more austere but equally significant *residenz*, based around the Hofburg palace in Vienna.<sup>33</sup> Given Russia's position among the second-rank powers in this period, a better source of comparison can be found amongst the

myriad German courts of this period that sought to adapt such symbolic capital to their own circumstances.<sup>34</sup> In particular, Prussia, with its claim of a royal title in 1701 and attendant investment in Berlin to reinforce this claim, proves an interesting comparison with Russia in this period.<sup>35</sup>

Russia's new prominence on the (northern) European stage in the aftermath of its victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War centered attention on St. Petersburg, where the tsar was granted the title *imperator* by the Senate as part of an extended period of celebrations.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the active promotion of St. Petersburg's status did not end with Peter I's death in 1725. Rather, the cultivation of the image of St. Petersburg as the seat of power and authority within the Russian empire gathered pace in the decades that followed, while continuing to draw on the rhetorical tradition established by the chief Petrine publicists, led by Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich. It was arguably as important to support Russia's imperial claims with reference to the Classical past—in other words, a rhetorical and symbolic language in common with the rest of Europe—as it was to establish its religious standing in the eyes of the traditional Orthodox population of Russia.

## **Section 2: St. Petersburg between heaven and earth (and hell)**

Given the decision to found a new city and the nature of the hardships endured by its early population, the image of St. Petersburg was of paramount concern to Peter. Contemporary documents attest to the tsar's considerable enthusiasm, not to say fervor, to push ahead with the construction of his new city.<sup>37</sup> In Peter's letters to contemporaries, in particular, to Aleksandr Menshikov (governor of Ingria, and later, St. Petersburg itself), the city was often described as a "paradise."<sup>38</sup> At the same time, however, the city's image had to be carefully considered, since it had wider implications for Peter's credibility as tsar. The obvious comparison for most contemporaries to make was with Moscow, which put St. Petersburg at a serious disadvantage in terms of spiritual and historical legitimacy. If the populace came to view the tsar's new city as illegitimate or indeed unholy in some way, it might have serious repercussions on the perception of Peter himself and his suitability as ruler.<sup>39</sup> To combat this image problem, there was a strong drive to endow the new city with spiritual symbolism

and to justify its status by establishing precedent. Prokopovich and other Petrine publicists sought to exploit the legendary link between the region and the apostle St. Andrew, who had, according to legend, blessed the “northern lands” during his travels across Europe.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, St. Andrew was the brother of St. Peter, and this not only provided a credible link with the tsar and the name of his new city, but also established an important connection with the other city of St. Peter—Rome. Given Peter’s imperial ambitions and the prevalence of Classical imagery in official celebrations, it is not difficult to see why Rome was an important choice to establish the legitimacy of St. Petersburg. The naming of the city and the central position occupied by the Sts. Peter and Paul fortress, including its titular church (later cathedral), within the city—in both physical and ceremonial terms—was a crucial part of this process. In symbolic terms, this was also reflected in the new city’s coat of arms (devised by Franz Santi in the early 1720s), with its explicit reference to the crossed keys of St. Peter.<sup>41</sup> The link between the two cities can be associated with the conscious effort made by leading Petrine clerical writers to present St. Petersburg, rather than Moscow, as the site of the “third Rome”; an important strand of Orthodox religious ideology and worldview.<sup>42</sup>

Another of Rome’s successors, Constantinople, provided further precedent for St. Petersburg, since it had been founded by Constantine the Great as the new capital city of the recently Christianized Roman Empire of the East.<sup>43</sup> It is also significant that St. Andrew played an important part in Constantinople’s claim to legitimacy, since it was alleged (almost certainly for political motives) that he had anointed the first bishop of the region during his extensive travels. As a result, in 357AD, St. Andrew’s remains were removed from their original resting place in Patras and reburied in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople upon the orders of Constantine’s son, the emperor Constantius II.<sup>44</sup> St. Andrew was adopted as the patron saint of the Russian navy and his feast day then incorporated into the state calendar, neatly fusing a religious and military celebration.

St Aleksandr Nevskii provided another important source of legitimization for the new city, and was also a useful political choice for Peter, especially because of the saint’s famous victory against the Swedes on the Neva in 1240. The connection between Aleksandr Nevskii and the new city was strengthened when Peter moved the saint’s feast day from November 23 to August 30, to coincide with the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Nystadt in 1721.

His remains were then moved from Vladimir to the newly built St. Aleksandr Nevskii monastery in 1723.<sup>45</sup> The ceremonial interment of the remains in the monastery's church took place the following year on 30 August, and the celebrations reflected the importance of the event for the new city. The Imperial party and other dignitaries sailed up the Neva river to the monastery and the ships provided a cannon salute following the ceremony, while the guests dined with the tsar. There were illuminations to commemorate the event, both for the court and throughout the city, and other celebrations continued on August 31.<sup>46</sup> The St. Aleksandr Nevskii monastery subsequently became one of the major focal points of the city's religious ceremonies. The importance of both saints to the city was reflected in the fact that both feast days—August 30 for St. Aleksandr Nevskii and November 30 for St. Andrew—became established and important occasions in the court calendar, with major public celebrations in St. Petersburg under Peter I and his successors.<sup>47</sup>

The manner in which the city was depicted, both in print and in other media, can provide some interesting material to explore the symbolic presentation of St. Petersburg, both to a domestic and an international audience. The desire of Peter and his publicists to highlight the city's symbolic significance can be seen in the work of a contemporary engraver, Aleksei Zubov. His "Panorama of St. Petersburg" (1716) shows the city as a continuous coastline, between an open skyline and a busy river foreground.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the city's main architectural features, it depicts Peter I and Catherine in one of the boats on the Neva. According to Kaganov, this depiction of the city should be considered alongside the imagery used by Feofan Prokopovich, likening the city to the ship of St. Peter, as part of the wider efforts to present the city as both a sacred space and a source of calmness in an otherwise wild (in the sense of uncontrolled) environment.<sup>49</sup> The same series—that was printed and sent to foreign courts—incorporated miniatures of other Zubov engravings to date, including the Summer Gardens. This project, planned from very early in the city's existence, can be seen as a physical and symbolic reference to the Garden of Eden, with its cultivation in a hostile climate and exotic plants imported from all parts of the empire and abroad.<sup>50</sup>

In 1717, upon his return from the (largely unsuccessful) diplomatic mission to the court of Versailles, Peter I was presented with a bronze engraving of Zubov's façade of St. Petersburg and a plan of the city. The occasion was marked by an oration by Gavriil F. Buzhinskii, a cleric

serving with the Russian Navy, entitled “In Praise of St. Petersburg and its founder, the emperor Peter the Great.”<sup>51</sup> This work was not widely disseminated until the second half of the eighteenth century, but nevertheless highlights several themes echoed by other writers on St. Petersburg later in the eighteenth century. These themes included the strategic deployment of Classical allusions, the scale of Peter’s achievement in creating this new city, and the comparison between Russia and other neighboring countries.<sup>52</sup> While reflecting an idealized version of the nascent city, such literary versions of St. Petersburg presented a clear argument about the city’s significance, and proved influential in shaping the discourse on the city in the following two centuries.<sup>53</sup>

Not all contemporary opinions of St. Petersburg were quite so positive in their assessment of the new city. The marshy terrain in which it was constructed and the initial plans to locate the central parts of the city on one of the three large islands that dominated the area made St. Petersburg’s construction a very tricky proposition. Flooding was a very real problem for much of the city’s first century of existence, and critics of Peter’s ambitious project highlighted the ominous Biblical connotations of such natural phenomena. With uncanny timing, one such critic prophesied in 1721 that the sea would swallow St. Petersburg, shortly before a serious flood actually hit the city.<sup>54</sup> The damp atmosphere caused considerable problems for buildings in the city and led to a regular cycle of repairs on most of the major buildings, which displayed structural problems almost to their foundations. One contemporary commented, “It has been wittily enough said, that ruins make themselves in other places, but that they were built in Petersburg”<sup>55</sup> This contributed to the expense of living in the city, which was a common complaint of many wealthier inhabitants. Similarly, it is possible that Peter’s periodic references to the city as a “paradise” (noted above) may, on occasions, have been a reflection of his distinctive sense of humor.<sup>56</sup>

The city acquired a distinctly un-Eden-like infamy among contemporaries. It was considered by some as a city built on bones, due to the large number of workers who died in the poor working conditions during the construction process.<sup>57</sup> This view also featured in foreign accounts of life in the early city. For example, the Danish envoy Just Juel, who lived in the city in 1709–1710, gives a figure of 60,000 casualties from work on “Hare” island and a further 40,000 that died working on Kronstadt.<sup>58</sup> Friedrich Christian Weber, a Hanoverian member of the English embassy in the city between 1714

and 1719 and again in 1721, uses a figure put forward by another German traveler to the city (albeit in 1710–1711) of 100,000 casualties.<sup>59</sup> Sir Francis Dashwood, writing about his visit to St. Petersburg in 1733, quoted the figure of 300,000 deaths during the building of both St. Petersburg and Kronstadt.<sup>60</sup> While I am inclined to agree with the authoritative historian of early St. Petersburg, Sergei Luppov, that the numbers given by foreigners were undoubtedly exaggerated, the exact number of deaths caused by disease and squalid working conditions has been somewhat difficult to establish, not least due to the lack of accurate information.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that this impression struck foreign observers and also made the transition into peasant songs and stories perhaps indicates that the reality of the situation was not as important as the image created.<sup>62</sup> The link drawn between the city and its “unnatural” construction manifested in a series of rumors and myths that arose about the city in the aftermath of its creation. From a religious standpoint, Old Believers, and those who saw a sinister motive behind Peter I’s reforms of the Orthodox Church, referred to the new city in terms akin to Sodom or Gomorrah, with the heavy implication that it would suffer a similar fate.<sup>63</sup> The prevalence of floods in the region, combined with the Biblical implications of such a natural occurrence, led some to conclude that this was the ultimate fate for the city: to be consumed by the seas.<sup>64</sup>

That being said, St. Petersburg was hardly unusual in the problems that it faced because of its physical location. Disease was a perennial problem for urban centers across the continent during this period—even without the specter of plague, unsanitary conditions and cramped living conditions were breeding grounds for many infectious diseases.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, towns along the north German coastline faced the threat of very destructive flooding from the North Sea, which claimed the lives of thousands of inhabitants in a similar period to St. Petersburg’s construction.<sup>66</sup> There are many factors involved in this resentment, not least, the costs of the transfer to the new city, both in lives and in monetary terms, but it is important to remember that the imbuing of the new city with symbolic capital could cut both ways.

### **Section 3: St. Petersburg between Russia and Europe**

The use of the term “Europeanization,” or the roughly equivalent “Westernization,” has prompted considerable debate on the applicability of such concepts to Russia in this period. A number of important

contributions have developed the debate by questioning some of its basic assumptions. Firstly, when comparing Russia to a broadly defined region, be it Europe or “the West,” one must question what that region meant to contemporaries, rather than applying it retrospectively.<sup>67</sup> Of course, this was not just a discussion about Russia in the early modern period, although its peripheral status certainly led to greater scrutiny in the eyes of some contemporaries.<sup>68</sup> Secondly, by studying the process in more specific detail, scholars have drawn attention to very important questions about the dating of its origins, the areas that it affected, and the extent of its impact.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Cracraft, one of the authors to contribute to this debate and for whom the process is the bedrock of his research on Russian culture on the Petrine era, provides a brief, working definition of “Europeanization” in his most recent monograph “assimilation or, more appropriately, appropriation in some degree of European cultural practices and norms.”<sup>70</sup>

The Russian state’s territorial gains between the fifteenth and late seventeenth century had affected its geographical position, stretching it across the northern part of two continents—Europe and Asia. In both cases, these terms were loosely defined at best. For example, the generally acknowledged eastern boundary of Europe had been gradually shifting in that direction anyway—from the Don river in the fifteenth century to the Ural mountains in the eighteenth century.<sup>71</sup> During the eighteenth century, Russia itself gained a voice in this debate and positioned itself clearly within the European world. The revised boundary was proposed on the basis of the differences between the physical geography on either side of the mountains by both Philip Johann von Strahlenberg, a Swedish officer and prisoner-of-war in Russia, and Vasilii N. Tatishchev, a Russian geographer and proponent of the Petrine legacy.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, although Russia stretched across both continents, its political center and main strategic interests lay on the European side of this divide. While it enjoyed extensive contact with Asian powers throughout this period, there was a clear sense of separation from them, particularly on religious grounds. Similarly, in dealing with Siberia and their maritime explorations from the late eighteenth century, there are many similarities between imperial attitudes in Russia and in other European cases.<sup>73</sup>

The example of Europe is frequently highlighted as an influence on Peter I’s thinking about his new city. It has already been noted in relation to its intended function, either as a fortified port or as a ruling city, but the architectural appearance and various institutions

also drew on existing models, in one form or another. The cities that Peter himself visited during the Grand Embassy of 1697–1698 provide a natural starting point for his inspiration, including Königsberg, Amsterdam (specifically Zaandam), London, and Dresden. Several precedents existed that were subsequently used as a basis for comparison for St. Petersburg, despite a lack of discernible influence on Peter I or any of his close advisers in the city's early existence. For example, the comparison drawn between St. Petersburg and Venice by some commentators, owing to the city's waterways and canals, was not shared by Italian visitors to the city during the eighteenth century.<sup>74</sup> According to some contemporary observers, Peter's preferred model was Amsterdam—a seaport built on international trade.<sup>75</sup> Another source of inspiration was the various architectural and fortificatory treatises in the Kremlin library, which were added to during the tsar's aforementioned travels with extensive purchases.<sup>76</sup>

The next step was to put these plans into action, which began very early in the city's existence. Almost as soon as the earthworks for the fortifications had been dug, Peter was ordering plans from his military engineers for the fortress itself. More extensive planning was hindered by the exigencies of war, with Russia's position on the Baltic the subject of a series of successful campaigns and sieges under Fieldmarshal Boris P. Sheremetev. It was only with the victory at Poltava that Peter himself was convinced that the city was properly established and could turn his attention to its overall design. From this point onward, there was a move to commission unified plans for certain sections of the city, such as the Admiralty, or for the city as a whole, in line with Peter's desired features and, crucially, financial constraints. The desired features of the "regular" Baroque city, as discussed above, were reflected in the well-known plan submitted by the French architect Jean LeBlond in 1716. It was based largely on developing Vasil'evskii Island, thus reflecting another of Peter's initial ideas for the center of his new city, with a geometric pattern of streets and canals, surrounded by extensive fortifications in the contemporary French "Vauban" style.<sup>77</sup> As noted above, the geographical situation of the city and the enormous expense that such a plan would have incurred made it impossible to adopt fully, especially since construction work in the city was already well underway by the time that Le Blond arrived in Russia. Nevertheless, some elements were retained, as shown by the canal/street grid that was developed on Vasil'evskii Island from the middle of the eighteenth century onward.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, one must consider the hiring of foreign personnel to design and build new structures. This process had a long and quite distinguished history in Muscovy, including the Italian work on the Kremlin palaces and churches in the sixteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Their input can be seen in a number of construction projects, notably in Moscow, during the second half of the seventeenth century, which is discussed in the next section. The existing foreign specialists in Russia, such as those residing in the Foreign Quarter in Moscow, were put to work on the new project in its various guises. The Admiralty shipyard, the fortifications, the nascent Summer Gardens, the housing for the social and commercial elite who were required to move to the city by a series of laws, all bore the influence of contemporary European styles. Newly recruited personnel, hailing largely from central and northern Europe, either hired during the Grand Embassy or subsequently, arrived steadily, and were joined by the first generation of Russians trained in a similar style, like Mikhail Zemtsov.<sup>80</sup> The quality and success rate of these individuals varied considerably. Some, like Domenico Trezzini and his son, were dominant figures for the next half century.<sup>81</sup> Others, like Georg Johann Mattarnovy and Andreas Schlütter, had established reputations at other courts, like that of Prussia.<sup>82</sup> What is significant is that it established St. Petersburg as a destination for individuals with such skill sets, in common with the other court cities of the region.

#### **Section 4: St. Petersburg between “old” and “new”**

Moscow has traditionally been contrasted to St. Petersburg, both in literature and in historical scholarship.<sup>83</sup> It is not difficult to see why this should be the case. Moscow was essentially a medieval city, with its Kremlin at the center of both the city and ceremonial court life. It was also the center of Russian Orthodoxy. The cathedrals of the Kremlin and several major monasteries, both in the city and its immediate environs, played an important part in the celebration of the major religious feasts of the Orthodox year, and therefore, the court calendar. It was the seat of the tsar and most of the major Russian noble families who owned estates and palaces in or near the city. By contrast, St. Petersburg was a “new” city, with no history or tradition, and was built on territory that was only really Russian on the strength of Peter’s justifications prior to the Great Northern War. However, the conclusion that Moscow was a conservative and Orthodox “old” capital and St. Petersburg was the progressive and

secular “new” capital is overly simplistic. For example, many of the important early developments in relation to Russian art and architecture during Peter’s reign occurred in Moscow, and some of these will be discussed below. On the other hand, Moscow was still very much a seventeenth-century city, and this may have limited the scope of Peter’s plans. Granted, it is very difficult to speculate about how Peter might have ruled Russia if he had chosen to concentrate his efforts on Moscow, but given his European orientation, naval interests, and palpable dislike of Muscovite tradition, it is also difficult to see how he could have remained there.<sup>84</sup>

The physical and conceptual spaces of Moscow and St. Petersburg were distinct. Originally as its fortress, the Kremlin provided Moscow with a strongly defined physical center, while at the same time representing the enclosed space and hierarchy at the heart of Muscovite society.<sup>85</sup> The surrounding city emanated outwards in a series of concentric circles, beginning with the Kremlin and *Kitai-gorod*, followed by *Belyi-gorod* and then the outer *Zemlianoi-gorod*. Each of these areas of the city was distinguished by a set of walls or earthworks, which also restricted movement and access.<sup>86</sup> By contrast, the center of St. Petersburg was shifted several times during the first two decades of construction. Although the Sts Peter and Paul fortress along with Trinity Square provided important early focal points for the city, the structured developments planned by foreign architects for Gorodskoi Island and, subsequently, Vasil’evskii Island, were ultimately scrapped for reasons of expense.<sup>87</sup> Another major influence on the city’s space was the physical presence of the Neva River and the city’s other waterways, which contributed to the difficulties in planning and building the city. However, the geography of the city and the lack of a single defined center during the Petrine period also contributed to the open nature of its space, again in contrast to Moscow, and this has been linked to Peter’s dislike of enclosed areas.<sup>88</sup> The layout of St. Petersburg presupposed a different organization of space and their related activities.

St Petersburg’s status as a “new” city presented Peter with a number of possibilities that were limited by the established nature of Moscow. These possibilities generally reflected Peter’s own preferences, in terms of location, planning, and architectural style. Most of the city’s major building projects had foreign architects and the European-style planning of the city, together with the geographical features of the area it was founded in, gave it a very different feel from other Russian

cities. However, the emphasis on St. Petersburg should not be seen as evidence that Moscow was relegated to obscurity. Several aspects of the new city's architectural and planning innovation had already been implemented in Moscow. For example, Fedor Golovin's palace and its gardens (completed in 1702) were in the European style, and Mikhail Gagarin's mansion on Tverskaia ulitsa (finished in 1707) was modelled on an Italian villa.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, a number of decrees that were intended to introduce order and regularity to Moscow's appearance preempted similar decrees later issued in St. Petersburg, and continued after the latter's foundation. In 1699, house owners were instructed to keep the area in front of their houses clean.<sup>90</sup> In 1709, owners of properties near the Kremlin and *Kitai-gorod* were ordered to build houses along the main and side streets, rather than in the middle of their property, in order to create a continuous façade.<sup>91</sup>

The intended regular appearance of the new city was also the subject of a number of laws. For example, the type of houses that should be built by different groups in society and what sort of materials they should use was legislated for from 1714 onwards. House plans were commissioned from the architect Domenico Trezzini for groups such as "common" (*podlye*) and "notable" (*imenitye*) people.<sup>92</sup> There was also an attempt to legislate as to where in the city they should be located, depending on their role in society. For example, a 1712 decree ordered noble families to build houses along the Neva beside Peter's Winter Palace, while the merchants and artisans were instructed to build on Vasil'evskii Island.<sup>93</sup> But, in both cases, such laws proved difficult to enforce. Trezzini's house plans were only for those who could afford to build such houses and only really applied to the façade of buildings in highly visible parts of the city, such as the banks of the main waterways.

The decree on the location of houses was reissued in March 1720 and it proved very difficult to make people move to certain parts of the city, notably Vasil'evskii Island.<sup>94</sup> For example, Bergholz visited the island in March 1725, having already noted elsewhere in his diaries that the development in the city (he writes admiringly about the newly established Nevskii prospekt) when he returned after a four-year absence in 1721, and described the considerable number of stone houses standing empty, since the nobles who owned them had houses elsewhere in the city.<sup>95</sup> This remained the case in the 1730s when both Lady Rondeau and Sir Francis Dashwood remarked upon these fine but empty houses, as well as the fact that, although the

island was supposedly the commercial center of the city, many merchants did not live there. Dashwood links this phenomenon to the existence of a pontoon bridge to the Admiralty side, which was not constructed until after Peter I's death in 1725.<sup>96</sup>

The speed with which St. Petersburg was established also caused the implementation of Peter's requirements to be haphazard at best, not helped by the inhospitable climate and the forcible manner in which the city was populated. For example, many of the city's poorer inhabitants lived in wooden houses behind the unified, riverside stone façade that its founder desired. This began to change in the aftermath of major fires around the Admiralty in the summers of 1736 and 1737 that destroyed the existing wooden buildings in the area and allowed for a major overhaul. The "Commission for Construction" was established in St. Petersburg in mid-1737 to regulate construction of streets and squares so as to ensure a more unified appearance to the central parts of the city.<sup>97</sup> One of the leading architects on the Commission was Petr M. Eropkin, who had been sent to study architecture in Amsterdam and several Italian cities by Peter I between 1716 and 1724. Upon his return, Eropkin was a prolific architect and worked on building projects throughout the city, including several imperial residences.<sup>98</sup> He drafted a manuscript treatise on architecture, "Duty of the Architectural Expedition" (*Dolzhnost' arkhitekturnoi ekspiditsii*), several sections of which have been linked to the influence of Andrea Palladio's famous "Four Books of Architecture" (*I quattro libri dell'architettura*, 1570).<sup>99</sup>

While Eropkin was arrested and executed for political conspiracy in 1740, the Commission succeeded in establishing five separate administrative areas for the city and consolidated the three-pronged street pattern emanating from the Admiralty fortress as the central axis of St. Petersburg.<sup>100</sup> Further fires in central St. Petersburg during the late 1740s cleared yet more of this ramshackle housing and allowed further development to take place, in particular, the establishment of Nevskii propekt as the city's main arterial route. By the middle of the eighteenth century, St. Petersburg had achieved a degree of organization and cohesion that was singularly lacking by the end of its founder's life in 1725.<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusion

In drawing some conclusions about the spaces of the early city, it is worth examining one of the major monuments to the city's early

decades. Peter I's daughter, Empress Elizabeth, commissioned Mikhail Makhaev in 1746 to make a series of sketches of St. Petersburg in preparation for a set of engravings to accompany a new map of the city to commemorate its founding in 1753. He used a large optical cabinet, set up on various high points around the city (the Triumphal Gates on Nevskii prospekt, the observatory in the *Kunstkammer*), to project an image onto a sheet of paper which could then be drawn around. Interestingly, he was advised by the theatrical set designer, Giuseppe Valeriani, who checked each stage of the sketch and advised him on the use of architectural plans for accuracy.<sup>102</sup> The production of the new "general" map of the city was overseen by John Truscott, a Russian-born Englishman who was an adjunct in the Geographical Department of the Academy of Sciences.<sup>103</sup> The resulting map consisted of a set of nine engraved sheets, which were then bound together with Makhaev's engravings to form an album with the title "A Plan of the Capital City St. Petersburg, with Pictures of its Most Important Perspectives."<sup>104</sup>

There are a number of significances to be drawn from this particular publication, which reflects a number of the points previously discussed. Firstly, and most obviously, the development and situation of the city can be seen clearly and bears comparison with earlier maps of the city. For example, one of the earliest printed maps of the city (Figure 5.1), a version of which accompanied Weber's account of Russia under Peter the Great in its various translations across Europe, shows two sides of St. Petersburg.<sup>105</sup> The (purely projected) development of Vasil'evskii Island can be contrasted with the limited, patchy, and shoreline construction elsewhere in the city. Truscott's map has a more cohesive series of focal points within the city, between the major fortifications and the major residences, on either side of the river. Secondly, there is the question of dissemination. The album was distributed amongst Russian and foreign dignitaries during the anniversary year.<sup>106</sup> However, it has been suggested that this helped to fix the image of the city in the minds of its viewers and can be linked to the creation, not to say implicit control of its spaces. The images in the album were reengraved for a number of other formats, allowing its views of the city to be more widely disseminated. For example, small-scale reproductions of cityscapes were produced for use with optical equipment, such as a "magic lantern" or *camera obscura*, which was a form of entertainment at fairs and in private homes throughout the early modern period.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, there is considerable symbolic capital invested in the 1753 album, particularly in the imagery employed in the two engraved

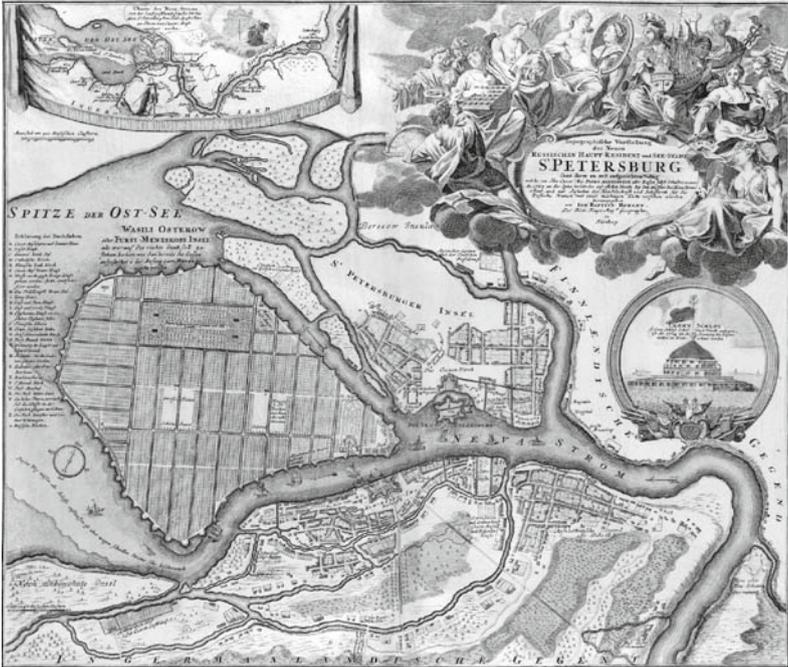


Figure 5.1 Johann Baptist Homann, *Topographische Vorstellung der Neuen Russischen Haupt-Residenz und See-Stadt St. Petersburg* (1719–1723); one of the earliest printed maps of St. Petersburg.

cartouches. The top right panel (figure 5.2) displays the two-headed imperial eagle atop the city's coat of arms (discussed above) and surrounded by a series of allegorical items representing Russia's military and the scientific achievements. The bottom left panel (figure 5.3) has a monument to the empress being inscribed by muses, with two telling monuments in the background—the Twelve Colleges building (the main administrative organ of the empire) with a statue of Peter I in front of it. With the significance of the date and the ruler's relationship with the city's founder, it very much reflects a continuity of purpose. Similarly, by placing an emphasis on the ruling and imperial title of the city, the aim of establishing St. Petersburg, and therefore Russia, on the larger map of Europe was served. Alongside the plans commissioned for the new city, discussed in sections 3 and 4, the album brings to mind Lefebvre's spatial triad of linked aspects, specifically the



Figure 5.2 **Top right** cartouche from Ivan F. Truskott, Ivan Sokolov, and Mikhail I. Makhaev, *Plan stolichnogo goroda Sankt-Peterburga s izobrazheniem znatneishikh onogo prospektov* (1753) (detail). The image shows a two-headed imperial eagle atop the St Petersburg's coat-of-arms.

“representations of space.”<sup>108</sup> That the city never quite matched the order and extent of development represented on such maps and plans mattered less than the affirmation of its official status.

Another of Lefebvre’s triad, ‘spaces of representation,’ is equally resonant with scholarship on eighteenth-century Russia and highlights the importance of spatially-aware approaches for further study of this early period. Wortman’s seminal work on the ‘scenarios of power’ deals with one such set of spaces surrounding the ceremonial activities of Russia’s imperial rulers and their families.<sup>109</sup> My own work on the activities of the Russian court deals with both the spaces



Figure 5.3 **Bottom left** cartouche from Ivan F. Truskott, Ivan Sokolov, and Mikhail I. Makhaev, *Plan stolichnogo goroda Sankt-Peterburga s izobrazheniem znatneishikh onogo prospektov* (1753) (detail). The image shows a monument to Empress Elizabeth being inscribed by muses.

and the skills that such spaces required of those who were entitled (or expected) to inhabit them.<sup>110</sup> What is more difficult for this early period is the third element of the triad, “spatial practices,” or the way in which spaces were perceived and responded to by their inhabitants. Such views have been explored during a later period, for which there is considerably more material, whether literary or personal in nature, and there is even the possibility of interviews for the relatively recent past.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, detailed archival studies of previously underused materials, such as legal cases, has provided a window into some aspects of St. Petersburg life, such as property disputes.<sup>112</sup>

To my mind, further work along these lines could yield more information on the tricky issue of the everyday or lived experience of St. Petersburg's spaces during this foundational period. Similarly, the link made between planning or descriptive material and physical location, at the heart of an impressive recent digital project on the city, while complicated by the relative dearth of surviving early buildings, could be made both possible and productive for the eighteenth century by combining data through a dynamic mapping system.<sup>113</sup>

By the end of this early period in St. Petersburg's existence, in the early 1760s, Empress Catherine II bemoaned the poor state of the ruling city that she "inherited" after her accession to the Russian throne. To remedy this perceived inadequacy, she quickly moved to establish a commission to coordinate construction in both St. Petersburg and Moscow in December 1762.<sup>114</sup> While her expressed view is typical of Catherine's self-presentation as the driving force behind the reinvigoration of the Petrine legacy, both symbolically and physically in the case of St. Petersburg, it nevertheless belies the considerable achievements of her predecessors. Their work was foundational in establishing St. Petersburg as a credible and viable residence from which to rule the growing Russian empire. This process combined the importance of establishing a symbolic justification for the transfer of power to the new city, particularly, to promote a positive domestic image of a very costly project, and as an encapsulation of Russia's desire to be considered as part of the international order. That St. Petersburg became a significant destination for diplomats, merchants, and travelers from the 1760s onwards highlights the success of this process.

## Notes

1. A forensic discussion of this debate, which examines the views of both contemporaries and subsequent historians alongside the available evidence, is presented in: Aleksandr M. Sharymov, *Predystoriia Sankt-Peterburga. 1703 god. Kniga issledovaniia* (St Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2004), Book 2, Part 2, 493–710.
2. Russia's historical claim to the territory that it conquered during the Great Northern War was formally established in Petr Shafirov, *A Discourse Concerning the Just Causes of the War between Sweden and Russia: 1700–1721*, ed. and trans. William E. Butler (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1973). This justification can be seen in other eighteenth-century accounts of the city's foundation. See, for example: Andrei I. Bogdanov, *Opisanie Sanktpeterburga, 1749–1751* (St Petersburg: Academy of Sciences Press, 1779), 30–32.

3. The elements within this mythology are discussed critically in: Wladimir Berelowitch and Olga Medvedkova, *Histoire de Saint-Petersbourg* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1996), 22–27 and Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 201–211.
4. “There, by the billows desolate, / He stood, with mighty thoughts elate, / And gazed; but in the distance only / A sorry skiff on the broad spate / Of Neva drifted seaward, lonely. / The moss-grown miry banks with rare / Hovels were dotted here and there / Where wretched Finns for shelter crowded; / The murmuring woodlands had no share / Of sunshine, all in mist beshrouded.” Aleksandr S. Pushkin, *The Bronze Horse*, trans. Waclaw Lednicki (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1955), 140.
5. Petr N. Stolpianskii, *Peterburg: Kak voznik, osnovalsia i ros Sankt-Piterburkh* (St. Petersburg: Nauchno-izdatel'skii tsentr NeGA, 1995), 19–20.
6. The importance of stone in the city's construction is discussed in: Sergei P. Luppov, *Istoriia stroitel'stva Peterburga* (Moscow: Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 111–113.
7. The recurring significance of “space” for Russia in historical and contemporary terms is the focus of Jeremy Smith, ed., *Beyond the Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture* (Helsinki: SHS, 1999).
8. Two recent review articles provide a good introduction to the current scholarship: Nick Baron, “New Spatial Histories of Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Surveying the Landscape,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no.3 (2007): 374–400; Malte Rolf, “Importing the “Spatial Turn” to Russia: Recent Studies on the Spatialization of Russian History,” *Kritika* 11, no.2 (2010): 359–380.
9. Valerie A. Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 6–12.
10. A useful overview to this theme is: Mark Bassin, “Geographies of Imperial Identity,” in *The Cambridge History of Russia. Volume 2: Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. Dominic Lieven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 45–63.
11. A convenient translation of this work is provided in: Iurii M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 191–202.
12. See, for example, Julie Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityshape* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
13. Olga G. Ageeva, “Velichaiishii i slavneishii bolee vsekh gradov v svete”—*grad sviatogo Petra: Peterburg v rusском obshchestvennom soznanii nachala XVIII veka* (St Petersburg: BLITs, 1999).
14. James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 174–175.
15. See, for example, the classic Christopher Marsden, *The Palmyra of the North: The First Days of St. Petersburg* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), 22–24 and the more recent W. Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight: St. Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 22.
16. Robert A. Dodgshon, *Society in Time and Space: A Geographical Perspective on Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). My thanks to Denis Shaw for this reference.

17. Denis J. B. Shaw, "St Petersburg and Geographies of Modernity in Eighteenth-Century Russia," in *St. Petersburg, 1703–1825*, ed. Anthony Cross (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7.
18. Denis J. B. Shaw, "'A Strong and Prosperous Condition': The Geography of State Building and Social Reform in Peter the Great's Russia," *Political Geography* 18 (1999): 1005–1009.
19. For an overview of the difficulties, navigational and geographical, faced by foreign ships in the region in the early modern period, see: Kit Meyers, *North-East Passage to Muscovy: Stephen Borough and the First Tudor Explorations* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005), especially Chapter 6.
20. Robert E. Jones, "Why St Petersburg?," in *Peter the Great and the West: New Perspectives*, ed. Lindsey Hughes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan/SSEES, 2001), 191–193.
21. M. S. Anderson, *Peter the Great*, 2nd edn. (London: Longman, 1995), 40–41.
22. Derek McKay and Hamish M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648–1815* (London and New York: Longman, 1983), 54–58.
23. The relationship between the tsar and the Dutch influence on his new city is covered extensively in: Sergei B. Gorbatenko, *Novyi Amsterdam: Sankt-Peterburg i arkhitekturnye obrazy niderlandov* (St Petersburg: Pechatnyi dvor, 2003).
24. Martha D. Pollak, *Turin, 1564–1680: Urban Design, Military Culture, and the Creation of the Absolutist Capital* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 24–26.
25. Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 114.
26. Luppov, *Istoriia stroitel'stva*, 23–24.
27. Afanasii F. Bychkov, ed., *Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikago* (St Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1893), 3: 161–162.
28. Hughes, *Russia*, 211.
29. The city's role as the seat of the Russian court and its role as a center of cultural life in this period are explored in more detail in: Paul Keenan, *St Petersburg and the Russian Court, 1703–61* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
30. Moisei S. Kagan, *Grad Petrov v istorii russkoi kul'tury* (St Petersburg: Slavia, 1996), 17.
31. See, for example, Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), Chapter 2, especially 78–82 and 108–113.
32. T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29–33.
33. For Vienna's redevelopment in a period contemporary to the creation of St. Petersburg, see John Spielman, *The City and Crown: Vienna and the Imperial Court, 1600–1740* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1992), 185–203.
34. A useful overview of this area, including a critique of the traditional Francophile view, is: Peter H. Wilson, *Absolutism in Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2000), 66–73.
35. The Prussian case is handled expertly in Christopher M. Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (London: Penguin,

- 2007), Chapter 4. It has also been the subject of a very useful edited collection of contemporary documents: Karin Friedrich and Sara Smart, eds., *The Cultivation of Monarchy and the Rise of Berlin: Brandenburg–Prussia, 1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).
36. "Reliatsiia o zakliuchenii mira so Shvetsii...30 October 1721," *Zakonodatel'nye akty Petra I*, ed. Nikolai A. Voskresenskii (Moscow-Leningrad: Akademii nauk SSSR, 1945), 1: 157–162.
  37. A useful overview of the sheer number of men and materials deployed in the initial years of construction is provided by Cracraft, *Petrine Revolution in Russian Architecture*, 176–179.
  38. See, for example, he refers to it in such terms (using *paradiz* and *rai*) in a letter to Menshikov on April 7, 1706: Afanasii F. Bychkov, ed., *Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikago* (St Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1900), 4: 207.
  39. Shaw, "St Petersburg," 14.
  40. John L. Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London and New York: Longman, 1995), 21.
  41. Stephen L. Baehr, *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 50–51.
  42. Iurii M. Lotman and Boris A. Uspenskii, "Echoes of the Notion 'Moscow the Third Rome' in Peter the Great's Ideology," in *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 57–58.
  43. Jones, "Why St Petersburg?," 200.
  44. Warren T. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 39–40.
  45. Hughes, *Russia*, 276–277.
  46. Friedrich W. von Bergholz, "Dnevnik kamer-iunkera Fridrikha-Vil'gel'ma Berkhgol'tsa, 1721–1725 (ch. 3 and 4)," in *Iunost' derzhavy*, ed. Viktor P. Naumov (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Dubova, 2000), 246–249.
  47. Simon Dixon, "Religious Ritual at the Eighteenth-Century Russian Court," in *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture on Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael Schiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 217–248.
  48. These images are reproduced in: Mikhail S. Lebedianskii, *Graver Petrovskoi Epokhi Aleksei Zubov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1973).
  49. Grigorii Z. Kaganov, *Sankt-Peterburg: Obrazy Prostranstva*, 2nd edn. (St. Petersburg: Izd. Ivana Limbakha, 2004), 26–30.
  50. Baehr, *Paradise Myth*, 69.
  51. Gavriil F. Buzhinskii, "V pokhvalu Sankt-Peterburga i osnovatel'ia, gosudaria imperatora Petra Velikogo," in *Pol'noe sobranie pouchitel'nykh slov...*, ed. Nikolai I. Novikov (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1784), 1–36.
  52. Buckler, *Mapping*, 68–70.
  53. For other examples, see: *Sankt-Peterburg, Petrograd, Leningrad v russkoi poezii. Antologiiia*, comp. Mikhail I. Sinel'nikov (St Petersburg: Limbus, 1999).
  54. Petr P. Karatygin, *Letopis' Peterburgskikh navodnenii 1703–1879 gg.* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A. S. Suvorina, 1888), 8–11.

55. Francesco Algarotti, *Letters from Count Algarotti to Lord Hervey and the Marquis Scipio Maffei...Containing the State...of the Russian Empire* (London: Johnson and Payne, 1769), 1: 77.
56. Hughes, *Russia*, 210.
57. A deconstruction of this myth, with comparative figures for other construction projects in the same period, is presented in: Ageeva, *Velichaiishii*, 78–81.
58. Just Juel, “Zapiski datskogo poslannika v Rossii pri Petre Velikom,” in *Lavry Poltavu*, ed. Viktor P. Naumov (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Dubova, 2001), 153.
59. Friedrich Christian Weber, *The Present State of Russia* (London: W. Taylor, 1722), 1: 300.
60. Francis Dashwood, “Sir Francis Dashwood’s Diary of his Visit to St. Petersburg in 1733,” ed. Betty Kemp, *Slavonic and East European Review* 38 (1959–60), 203.
61. Luppov, *Istoriia*, 94. For a detailed discussion of the debate, see Evgenii V. Anisimov, *Iunyi grad* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2003), 105–111, which looks both at contemporary documents and previous historical analyses of the number of casualties.
62. Kagan, *Grad Petrov*, 15–18.
63. James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 241–242.
64. Ageeva, *Velichaiishii*, 86–87.
65. An overview is provided by: Christopher R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City, 1450–1750* (London and New York: Longman, 1995), 127–130.
66. David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 44–46.
67. At two different ends of the eighteenth century, useful introductions to this question of Russia and Europe in this period are provided by Paul Bushkovich, *Peter the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47–51, and Janet Hartley, “Is Russia Part of Europe? Russian Perspectives on Europe in the Reign of Alexander I,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 33, no.4 (1992): 369–385 (especially 369–372).
68. For a discussion of “Europe” in the early modern period, see Peter Burke, “Did Europe Exist before 1700?,” *History of European Ideas* 1 (1980): 1–29.
69. These issues, albeit with a varying focus on several conceptual frameworks, are the subject of a series of contributions from leading scholars in: *Slavic Review* 41, no.4 (1982): 611–638.
70. James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 308.
71. W. H. Parker, “Europe: How Far?,” *The Geographical Journal*, 126, no.3 (1960): 278–286.
72. Mark Bassin, “Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space,” *Slavic Review* 50, no.1 (1991): 6–7.
73. See the contributions by Wortman and Allman in: *Russia Engages the World, 1453–1825*, ed. Cynthia Whittaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 91–117 and 139–161.
74. For one such view, see: Weber, *Present State*, 1:190. A more critical view is explored in: Maria di Salvo, “What did Francesco Algarotti see in Russia,”

- in *Russian Society and Culture and the Long Eighteenth Century: Essays in Honour of Anthony G. Cross*, ed. Roger Bartlett and Lindsey Hughes (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 72–81.
75. See, for example, Charles Whitworth, *An Account of Russia as It Was in the Year 1710* (London: Strawberry Hill, 1758), 126.
  76. Lindsey Hughes, “Russia’s First Architectural Books: A Chapter on Peter the Great’s Cultural Revolution,” in *Russian Avant-Garde Art and Architecture*, ed. Catherine Cooke (London: Academy Editions, 1983), 4–13.
  77. Iurii A. Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg*, trans. Eric Dluhosch (Athens, GA: Ohio University Press, 1969), 12.
  78. James H. Bater, *St. Petersburg: Industrialisation and Change* (London: Arnold, 1976), 21–22.
  79. See, for example, Dmitrii Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 73–104.
  80. Cracraft, *Petrine Revolution in Russian Architecture*, 161–169.
  81. Konstantin V. Malinovskii, *Dominiko Trezini* (St. Petersburg: Kriga, 2007).
  82. Konstantin V. Malinovskii, *Khudozhestvennyye svyazi Germanii i Sankt-Peterburga v XVIII veke* (St. Petersburg: Kriga, 2007), 34–55.
  83. See, for example: Vladimir N. Toporov, *Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury: izbrannye trudy* (St Petersburg: Iskusstvo SPb, 2003), 7–22; Sergei B. Smirnov, *Peterburg–Moskva: summa istorii* (St Petersburg: Izd. RGPU im. A. I. Gertsena, 2000), 11–36.
  84. Shaw, “St Petersburg,” 12.
  85. Lindsey Hughes, “The Courts of Moscow and St. Petersburg, c. 1547–1725,” in *The Princely Courts of Europe, 1500–1750*, ed. John Adamson (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 302.
  86. For a detailed description of early modern Moscow, see: Adam Olearius, *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, trans. Samuel H. Baron (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), 112–7.
  87. Ageeva, *Velichaiishii*, 217.
  88. Hughes, “The Courts,” 302.
  89. Hughes, *Russia*, 204–205 and 209.
  90. *Pol’noe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii. Pervoe sobranie* (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1830) [hereafter *PSZ*], vol. 3, no.1684 (March 16, 1699), 613.
  91. *PSZ*, 4, no. 2232 (May 12, 1709), 452.
  92. These sketches are reproduced in: Irina I. Lisaevich, *Pervyi arkhitektor Peterburga* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1971), 48.
  93. *PSZ*, 4 no.2540 (6 June 1712), 840–841.
  94. Hughes, *Russia*, 215–217.
  95. Bergholz, in *Iunost’ derzhavy*, 272.
  96. Dashwood, “Diary,” 202 and 206.
  97. *PSZ*, 10, no.7323, (July 10, 1737), 216–217.
  98. “Petr Eropkin,” *Zodchie Sankt-Peterburga. XVIII vek* (St Petersburg: Lenizdat, 1997), 156–190.
  99. Although unpublished, this work was influential in the period after Eropkin’s death—it was completed by Eropkin’s colleagues Mikhail Zemtsov and Ivan Korobov, who then promoted it during the reign of Elizabeth.

100. An overview of these plans can be found in: Sergei V. Sementsov et al., ed., *Sankt-Peterburg na kartakh i planakh pervoi poloviny XVIII veka* (St Petersburg: Eklettika, 2004), 186–187.
101. Shvidkovskii, *Russian Architecture*, 208–209.
102. Mariia A. Alekseeva, *Mikhailo Makhaev: Master vidovogo risunka XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2003), 66–74.
103. Sementsov et al. (eds), *Sankt–Peterburg na kartakh*, 182–99.
104. The map is shown in detail, with explanatory notes, in Sementsov et al., *Sankt–Peterburg na kartakh*, 217–394. The engravings are reproduced in: Galina N. Komelova, ed., *Vidy Peterburga i ego okrestnostei sere diny XVIII veka. Graviury po risunkam M. Makhaeva* (Leningrad: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1968).
105. *Topographische Vorstellung der neuen russischen Haupt–Residenz und See–Stadt St. Petersburg*, Johann Baptist Homann (Nuremberg, 1718).
106. The British Library holds at least one copy of the full album, which was part of the Royal Collection: *Plan stolichnago goroda Sankt Peterburga = Plan de la Ville de St. Pétersburg, en neuf feuilles; avec dix–sept vues; dessinées et gravées sous la direction de l’Academie des Sciences a St. Petersbourg*—BL Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.112.76.5.
107. John Hammond, *The Camera Obscura: A Chronicle* (Bristol: Adam Hilger, 1981).
108. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38–39.
109. Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
110. Keenan, *St. Petersburg*, Chapters 3 and 4.
111. This sense of location is a central theme in: Catriona Kelly, *St Petersburg: Shadows of the Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014). For an excellent selection of essays on related themes, including some insightful views of the (re)presentation of the city during its tercentenary celebrations, see Helena Goscilo and Stephen M. Norris, eds., *Preserving Petersburg: History, Memory, Nostalgia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).
112. This approach is exemplified by: Ol’ga E. Kosheleva, *Liudi Sankt–Peterburgskogo Ostrova Petrovskogo Vremeni* (Moscow: OGI, 2004).
113. “Mapping St Petersburg: Experiments in Literary Cartography,” Last Modified March 31, 2011. <<http://www.mappingpetersburg.org/site/>>.
114. *PSZ*, 16, no.11723 (December 11, 1762), 127–128.

# 6

## The Spaces of Science and Sciences of Space: Geography and Astronomy in the Paris Academy of Sciences

*Michael Heffernan*

### Introduction

The emergence of a modern social and political consciousness was enabled in part by a post-Renaissance re-imagining of space as a fundamental physical parameter that could be measured empirically by new techniques of survey and calculation, in ways that linked a knowable earth to the wider universe. The ability to imagine and make sense of an external spatial environment ranging far beyond the individual's immediate sensory surroundings challenged traditional Aristotelian and Judeo-Christian views about the nature of the earth and its relationship to a larger cosmos. To be modern was to be conscious of relative spatial location, to be able to interpret this knowledge in terms of the diverse factors (environmental, economic, social, and political) that influenced spatial divisions and variations, and to be aware of how these spatial differences shaped individual and collective sensibilities.<sup>1</sup>

The early-modern re-conceptualization of space as a category of experience and knowledge has been examined in several national and institutional contexts and, as the other essays in this volume amply demonstrate, part of a wider "spatial turn" that has influenced most areas of the humanities and social sciences.<sup>2</sup> Much of this work has drawn inspiration from Henri Lefebvre's pioneering attempts in the 1970s to analyze the social production of space and by a subsequent fin-de-siècle re-theorizing of (post) modernity in distinctively spatial terms during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

For Lefebvre, space is produced through complex inter-relationships between what he called the “spatial practices” of everyday life, the “representations of space” contained in textual, visual, and cartographic depictions of an external world, and those new “representational spaces” that encapsulated changing economic, social, and political conditions. While these different forms of space cannot be neatly ordered into a simple historical sequence, Lefebvre’s more thoughtful critics have sought to connect his arguments to different phases of modernity, notably, with reference to his tantalizing commentary on the shift “from absolute space to abstract space.”<sup>4</sup>

An awareness of space as a complex, socially produced character has engendered a significant disciplinary re-alignment within the humanities and social sciences in recent years. Previously distinct disciplines, including social and political history, the history of science and technology, and historical geography, now find common cause in investigating how multiple spaces were produced, represented, and consumed in the early-modern period, notably, in the larger cities.<sup>5</sup> An intriguing consequence of this has been the re-interpretation of what might be called the “spaces of space,” specifically, those scientific associations and related arenas in which new conceptualizations of space were debated and investigated throughout the early-modern period. According to David Livingstone, the often work-a-day locations within which science was practiced, performed, and communicated (the library, the laboratory, the field, the lecture theater) may have had a greater impact on the history of scientific achievement than has previously been acknowledged, despite the emerging rhetoric that science was by definition a universal, transcendent, and placeless endeavor determined by a replicable scientific method that was essentially placeless.<sup>6</sup>

A similar spatial theme has been examined in several related works by Charles Withers, often in collaboration with Livingstone, who has likewise emphasized how geography, the new science of space, can be viewed as simultaneously the source and outcome of some of the major intellectual trends of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> In his analysis of geography’s place among the self-consciously enlightened sciences, Withers emphasizes the many creative spaces within which this new discipline was fostered, including the learned societies and trading companies that sponsored geographical exploration and survey; the universities and educational establishments where geography was taught and studied; the publishers where geographical works acquired

a new, and often overtly political registers; and the social, epistolary networks of the “Republic of Letters” through which geographical knowledge was circulated and exchanged.<sup>8</sup>

Drawing on this still emerging body of work, this chapter considers a specific “space of space,” the Paris Academy of Sciences, during the early eighteenth century, when an important debate took place about the meaning and utility of terrestrial space as an arena of scientific calculation and political governance. The Paris Academy of Sciences was arguably the most prestigious scientific society of the period and the model, together with the Royal Society of London, for most of the scientific associations established around the world during the 1700s.<sup>9</sup> The debate involved some of the Academy’s leading astronomers, mathematicians, and geographers, and hinged on an epistemological dispute about the characteristics and significance of space as a scientific category. More specifically, the debate focused on the most appropriate way to classify and organize the measurement and analysis of the earth’s fundamental spatial form. Should this important activity, which had obvious commercial and political significance, be conducted under the auspices of a previously hegemonic science of astronomy or was it more sensibly developed as a new and distinctive scientific version of geography?<sup>10</sup>

This dispute, eventually resolved by a partial re-organization of the Academy’s disciplinary and organizational structures in favor of the new science of geography, reveals how the earth’s spatial structure, previously understood as a manifestation of external forces shaped by the hand of God, was increasingly interpreted in secular terms as the outcome of natural forces interacting with human activity. The decision to recognize the relationship between the natural world and its human inhabitants as worthy of separate scientific investigation, and to classify this problematic under the heading of “geography” rather than “astronomy,” reflected a subtle movement for political reform within the prevailing regime of French absolutism.

In examining how this debate unfolded within the Academy and at the French Royal Court, this essay draws on Michel Foucault’s discussion of the episteme: the modern categories of scientific knowledge established during the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> According to Foucault, the classificatory models through which we make sense of the world reveal more about the operation of social, cultural, and political power than the fundamental categories of nature that these systems supposedly reflect. Epistemic structures of knowledge facilitate

the analysis, manipulation, and control of both nature and society, argued Foucault, partly because these systems determine how truth is distinguished from falsehood through the application of scientific criteria and methods of assessment. The reformulation of space as a scientific category within the Academy, an organization established precisely to define scientific practice, was part of the larger early-modern re-imagining of terrestrial space as an arena shaped by economic, social, and political processes, and was amenable to rational, scientific analysis.<sup>12</sup>

### The scientific order of the Paris academy

The Academy's archives and publications provide a unique resource to consider how space was reconceptualized in early-modern science. Although this specific question has not been considered before, the Academy has been extensively investigated by historians of science, particularly during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic First Empire.<sup>13</sup> Founded in 1666 by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's "contrôleur-général," the Academy was one of several official organizations established to continue the work of earlier, independent learned corporations that sought to ensure French cultural and intellectual hegemony across the arts and sciences; a process initiated in 1635 with the establishment of the Académie Française, guardian of the French language.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the Royal Society of London, established six years earlier as a private and amateur association, the Paris Academy was a professional and official association, intimately interconnected with the official political culture of Ancien Régime absolutism.<sup>15</sup> The Crown provided the Academy's accommodation and paid the salaries of the 41 men elected to its ranks during the seventeenth century, a roll call that included Giovanni Domenico Cassini, Christiaan Huygens, Jean-Félix Picard, and Jean Richer.<sup>16</sup> These men, arguably science's first professionals, initially conducted their activities at secret, twice-weekly sessions in the Royal Library, with occasional forays to the new Observatory south of the city. Various known as *La Compagnie*, *L'Assemblée* or "those who meet in the Royal Library," they produced irregular, anonymous publications.<sup>17</sup>

This closed ethos was transformed in 1699 when Abbé Jean-Paul Bignon, the royal librarian and the Academy's president, produced a written constitution that sought to balance academic freedom, public utility, and political responsibility while rejecting religious

and political dogma.<sup>18</sup> Academicians, henceforth selected by their peers subject to royal approval, were required to pursue research, adjudicate on the originality of scientific inventions, and attend the Academy's meetings in the Louvre where *mémoires* were discussed in polite exchanges governed by elaborate rules of etiquette and ritual. Election to the Academy provided an entrée to the cafés, salons, and theaters of the Parisian "republic of letters," and was a coveted, often lucrative, mark of social and intellectual status. Every six months, proceedings were opened to the public and *éloges* to recently deceased academicians were read aloud by the permanent secretary, a position occupied by just four individuals during the eighteenth century: Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (whose tenure extended from 1697 to 1740), Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan (1741–1743), Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy (1744–1776), and Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet (1776–1793).<sup>19</sup> It is a measure of the permanent secretary's prestige that Voltaire lobbied unsuccessfully for the post in 1741 and 1743.

The Academy retained a broadly Cartesian perspective, evident in its formal and systematic internal organization. This was quite distinctive from the resolutely inductive and Baconian Royal Society of London, which steadfastly refused to categorize its activities and publications. The Paris academicians were allocated to one of six primary sciences, three mathematical sciences (astronomy, geometry, and mechanics), and three physical sciences (anatomy, botany, and chemistry), and further divided into three hierarchical classes: the *pensionnaires* (three for each science, plus the secretary and the treasurer), the *associés* (two for each science, plus eight overseas correspondents), and the *élèves* (selected by *pensionnaires* and re-named *adjoints* in 1716).<sup>20</sup> The president and vice-president were drawn from ten *honoraires* who were not required to be actively engaged in science.

These disciplinary divisions were also evident in the 93 volumes of the Academy's annual publication, the *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences (HARS)*, published between 1699 and 1790 and described by one historian as "the century's single most prestigious and important scientific series."<sup>21</sup> Aimed at specialists and the wider public, each *HARS* volume was divided into two, separately paginated sections, the longer, second section containing *mémoires* selected by the Academy's publications committee and the shorter, opening section containing brief, often untitled *histoires* written by the Academy's

secretaries to summarize otherwise difficult scientific research.<sup>22</sup> While the *mémoires* were unclassified, the *histoires* were organized into the six primary sciences plus about a dozen minor subjects; a format that persisted until 1782. The *HARS* reveals, therefore, both the nature of the science conducted within the Academy and the organizing structures it used to communicate with the reading public.

The 3,400 *HARS mémoires*, written by more than 150 academicians and ranging in length from one page to 155 pages, are among the earliest scientific articles.<sup>23</sup> They include reports on pioneering work in all the major sciences, alongside numerous examples of what Daston has called the “preternatural history” of inexplicable “marvels” and “curiosities,” from “monstrous” children and deformed adults to talking dogs and curiously long-lived toads.<sup>24</sup> Around 2,000 of these *mémoires* were classified into the Academy’s primary sciences prior to 1782, and these provide a revealing insight into the association’s self-image. Astronomy was easily the dominant science, accounting for a third of all classified *mémoires*.

Astronomy’s dominance was partially explained by the Academy’s initially capacious definition of its remit to include the exploration, survey, and measurement of the earth itself. Most of the Academy’s generously funded overseas expeditions, from Richer’s voyages to Cayenne in 1672–1673 to Le Gentil’s “transit of Venus” explorations in the Indian Ocean during the 1760s, were defined as exercises in astronomy on the grounds that they involved celestial calculations to determine the dimensions of the earth and the solar system. More contentiously, perhaps, reports on the Academy’s topographic map-making were likewise defined as astronomy, including the project to construct a national map of France, initiated by Jean Picard in 1679 and continued through the eighteenth century by four generations of the Cassini family of astronomers, who oversaw the first triangulation of the Paris meridian published in 1720, the 18-sheet “carte des triangles” that appeared in 1744, and the 180-sheet edition printed after the Revolution.<sup>25</sup> Although 16 percent of the Academy’s eighteenth-century publications focused on cartography, navigation, survey, fixing latitude and longitude, and the size and shape of the earth (more than twice the percentage devoted to the same topics in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in the same period), just 52 of these *mémoires* (3%) were defined as anything other than astronomy. In this case, the alternative designation was geography, a minor subject roughly equivalent to algebra, optics, and acoustics.<sup>26</sup>

Astronomy's dominance over geography was repeatedly explained in terms that reveal the Academy's penchant for Jesuit cosmology and Cartesian geometry. As the primary, enabling science, astronomy allowed the "perfection" of geography, the scientific status of which was constrained by an epistemology that privileged vertical, celestial observation over horizontal, terrestrial measurement. Geography was the study of the earthly manifestations of astronomical calculation, the music of the spheres played out on the surface of the globe.

### Space, science and patronage: Guillaume Delisle

The dozen or so *mémoires* defined as geography by Fontenelle prior to 1730 indicate the Academy's limited, essentially historical, vision of geography; a continuation of the humanist commonplace that the subject was the "eye of history" (*historiae oculus geographia*), a relationship proposed a century earlier by Ortelius.<sup>27</sup> Most of these *mémoires* compared the geographical knowledge of classical civilizations with that of modern science, an older tradition of inquiry that had acquired contemporary relevance as a result of the *querelle* between the *anciens*, who believed the modern world could merely emulate the achievements of classical antiquity, and the *modernes*, who insisted that the eighteenth century had already surpassed ancient civilization. This lingering dispute, initiated by the confident modernist claims of Charles Perrault's *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687) and Fontenelle's *Digression sur les anciens et modernes* (1688), provided the rationale for the Academy's definition of geography as a specialized form of historical inquiry that demonstrated the superiority of modern science over that of the classical world.<sup>28</sup>

Eight of the twelve early eighteenth-century geographical *mémoires* were presented by Guillaume Delisle, an Academy astronomer elected as *élève* to Cassini I in February 1702. Delisle was better known as a cartographer, a trade he inherited from his father Claude who began the family map business while employed as a history tutor at the French Court alongside Nicolas Sanson, France's leading seventeenth-century cartographer. Delisle *père* had educated several young nobles, including Louis XIV's nephew, Philippe, later duc d'Orléans. The Delisle atelier, located from 1707 on the Quai de l'Horloge, was renowned for the quality and accuracy of its maps, a stoutly defended reputation that involved intriguing legal disputes with rival mapmakers about the provenance and ownership of geographical knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

Shortly after his election to the Academy, Delisle was recruited as a geography tutor at Court, an engagement Fontenelle later described as “the most glorious event in his life.”<sup>30</sup> His position was transformed by the death of Louis XIV in 1715, when the crown passed to the Sun King’s five-year old great grandson. The Court, overseen by the aforementioned duc d’Orléans who ruled as Regent until his death in 1723, moved from Versailles to Paris, the orphan Louis XV residing in the Palais des Tuileries, surrounded by his nurses and servants. Delisle and his fellow tutors were now confronted with the urgent task of educating the young King himself, under the watchful eye of his guardian, André-Hercule de Fleury, the Bishop of Fréjus. Delisle’s thrice-weekly geography lessons, for which he prepared dozens of maps, proved extremely popular.<sup>31</sup> Although many of his exercises espoused the traditional historical view of geography, Delisle also introduced contemporary material, notably, in his lessons on European rivers. These were printed in a small volume, *Cours des principaux fleuves et rivières de l’Europe*, the gilt-edged pages of which were typeset by Louis himself in the summer of 1718 in a private workshop constructed so he might learn the rudiments of the book trade. This rare volume traces the routes of 47 European rivers, its child-like prose reinforcing the conceit that the author was Louis rather than Delisle.

The *Cours* dealt with a central motif in the mythology of Louis’s predecessor. The Sun King was often depicted as an Apollonian force of nature in his own right, sweeping across the Rhine at the head of his armies in 1672, uniting the Atlantic and the Mediterranean by the Canal du Midi, and re-configuring the rivers around Versailles to ensure the palace’s fountains functioned precisely as required.<sup>32</sup> And yet Delisle’s geographical lessons made no reference to Louis XIV’s costly and often unsuccessful fluvial adventures, emphasizing instead how Europe’s rivers formed an integrated natural system that facilitated peaceful commercial exchange. By downplaying the Sun King’s ability to bend nature to his will, the *Cours* was making a carefully considered political critique of the style of absolutism that had developed under the preceding monarchy. The vulnerable young King was presented to the Court as an enlightened monarch-in-the-making, his authority based not on the domination of nature but on reasoned scientific knowledge.

On July 1, 1718, as Louis was printing the first section of the *Cours*, Delisle was promoted to *associé astronome* in the Academy.<sup>33</sup> On August 24, he was designated *premier géographe du Roi* on a generous

annual pension of 1,200 livres, a new position that set him apart from the handful of cartographers permitted to use the honorific title *géographe ordinaire du Roi*.<sup>34</sup> Delisle's promotions reveal the esteem in which he was held by the Regent, the Duc d'Orléans; his father's former pupil and a firm believer in scientific reason.<sup>35</sup> With his position now secure, Delisle persuaded 18-year old Philippe Buache, a trainee architect who had recently won an Académie Royale d'Architecture prize, to work as his assistant.<sup>36</sup> The two men forged an impressive partnership, generating a mass of new cartography facilitated by Buache's part-time employment at the Naval Ministry's new Dépôt des Cartes, Plans et Journaux, where he helped compile a central archive of maritime maps and charts.<sup>37</sup>

Delisle died of "apoplexy" on January 26, 1726, struck down on a Parisian street aged 51.<sup>38</sup> He left a widow, Marie, and nine-year-old daughter, Charlotte. Marie now assumed center stage, revealing in the process an impressive commercial nous that had been sadly lacking in her rather cerebral husband, as well as a canny ability to negotiate a secure path through the rococo world of courtly patronage, nepotism, and venality.<sup>39</sup> On February 4, 1726, she wrote to Bignon, her late husband's close friend, then restored as Academy president, seeking his intervention with the Comte de Maurepas, the Academy's youthful vice president and the secretary of the Maison du Roi, who had overseen Delisle's promotions in 1718.<sup>40</sup> Bignon was entreated to:

Bring to the attention of the Court the pain of a family afflicted with the loss of its leader, one who did not leave matters in a state one would have wished for but, if I dare say so, in a most pitiable condition. Assistance is given on a daily basis to unfortunate widows of those who have served the State and in my case, my husband had the honor to work usefully for the King and the State. He has even left several very interesting works, all ready for publication, which will never appear unless I receive assistance.<sup>41</sup>

A 400 livre annual pension was agreed to, on the assumption that Delisle's workshop and valuable copperplates could be sold. However, Marie was determined to continue the family business with Buache's support, though his services were in demand elsewhere. Her main rival was Delisle's ambitious younger brother, Joseph-Nicolas, who had been elected to the Academy as "élève astronome" in 1714. The

younger Delisle had been invited by Peter the Great to direct the new observatory in St. Petersburg, and hoped to recruit Buache as his assistant.<sup>42</sup> Marie wrote to Bignon on March 10, insisting that Buache's constitution would not tolerate "the temperature of a country that only those who are born there can bear."<sup>43</sup> Bignon, by now convinced that Buache was Delisle's natural replacement, persuaded Maurepas to block the appointment.

On March 16, Bignon wrote at length to Maurepas, suggesting a new Academy position in geography. When preparing the 1699 constitution, Bignon claimed to have assumed that "the astronomers of this Academy would give particular application to Geography." This had failed to materialize, despite the best efforts of Delisle, an astronomer who became "the most famous geographer in the universe." According to Bignon, "experience shows these two sciences cannot be combined in the same person to the level of perfection that each demands" because both require specialist, time-consuming attention. This was the primary reason, Bignon revealed, why Delisle, "despite all his abilities as a geographer," had never been promoted to pensionnaire status as an astronomer. His pension as "premier géographe du Roi" had been offered "in place of a pension from the Academy and in recompense for his extensive works":

These reflections prompt the thought that it would be very useful to establish in the Academy some recompense for geographers who are under the control of astronomers; and this establishment would be still better at present since the late M. Delisle having left a prodigious number of memoirs and collections to assure the perfection of geography, that those who would be admitted into the Academy under the title of geographer would be able to benefit from these resources to complete what premature death prevented the late M. Delisle from achieving in the manner in which he would have wished.<sup>44</sup>

Bignon's proposal met with predictable resistance from Cassini II, who put forward his cousin and fellow astronomer Giacomo Filippo Maraldi as Delisle's replacement. Maraldi, already a prominent member of the Academy with almost 90 *HARS mémoires* to his name, including the annual meteorological reports, was ideally qualified, and a license awarding him a 1,000 livre pension and the title "géographe ordinaire du Roi" was issued on May 11, 1726.<sup>45</sup> Although Maraldi's

position was inferior to that of his predecessor, whose status as “premier géographe” expired with him, the decision to nominate another astronomer as Delisle’s replacement at Court suggests a skepticism about geography’s potential as an independent science. In his otherwise celebratory *éloge* to Delisle, Fontenelle expressed this view with characteristic condescension, gently mocking geographers as dogged artisans who undertake the necessary but tedious scrutiny of navigation logs and travel accounts: “What a boring, and fatiguing discussion! It really is necessary to be a born Geographer to be engaged in this.”<sup>46</sup>

Bignon’s campaign received a warmer reception in other quarters. In his spirited defense of the Academy’s subvention, threatened by austerity measures introduced when Cardinal Fleury assumed full ministerial powers in 1726, René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, the Academy’s leading naturalist, stressed the social utility of previously unrecognized sciences, including geography without which he claimed commerce, navigation, national defense, and even safe and reliable travel would be impossible.<sup>47</sup> Encouraged by Réaumur, Bignon wrote to Maurepas in March 1728, enclosing a report prepared several months earlier by Marie and a family friend, Nicolas Fréret. This outlined Delisle’s work-in-progress at the time of his death and identified Buache as the only person who “by his natural abilities, and by the knowledge that he has of Monsieur Delisle’s principles, would be able to conserve and even perfect Geography.”<sup>48</sup> In his covering letter, Bignon suggested promoting Buache to “géographe ordinaire du Roi” and converting Marie’s allowance into a 1,200 livre pension in his name. The King should then sponsor a marriage between Buache and eleven year-old Charlotte, binding Buache to a strategically important family business. This would:

Rescue the family of a scholar who worked only for the utility of the Nation and for the glory of the sciences throughout his life, as one more concerned with the advancement of Geography than his own interests.<sup>49</sup>

A license specifying these terms was issued to Buache on May 20, 1728, and the title “premier géographe du Roi” was revived for him shortly afterwards.<sup>50</sup> Buache’s marriage to Charlotte took place a few weeks later, the certificate signed in the presence of the King.<sup>51</sup> When Maraldi died on December 1, 1729, the way was clear for Buache to

replace Delisle in the Academy as a geographer rather than an astronomer.<sup>52</sup> To ensure his selection, Buache wrote a detailed report to Maurepas on his work at the Dépôt des Cartes, Plans et Journaux.<sup>53</sup> On May 22, 1730, the Academy announced the new position of “adjoint géographe,” the first modification to its 1699 constitution, and Buache’s nomination was confirmed on June 10.<sup>54</sup>

## Making a space for a science of space: Philippe Buache

Buache’s early career as an academician was inauspicious. He published just four *mémoires* during the 1730s and 1740s: a discussion of a Delisle map showing the travels of Alexander the Great, an account of a new compass, and two reports on the 1740 floods.<sup>55</sup> These represented a significant departure from Delisle’s historical-educational approach, but drew no comment from the Academy secretaries, Fontenelle and Dortous de Mairan, neither of whom seemed willing to re-consider the scope of geography, despite the decision to recognize its separate status.

Buache’s hesitant start may have been due to personal difficulties. Charlotte, by then pregnant, died in late 1730, provoking anguished guilt.<sup>56</sup> Determined to honor his commitment to Marie, he concentrated on his commercial work, re-organizing the workshop and opening a new shop on the Quai de la Mégisserie in 1737. After Marie’s death in 1745, he successfully challenged her family for control of the company and then married Elizabeth Mirmont, a relative of the architect Robert Pitrou, for whom he had previously worked.<sup>57</sup>

The opportunity to undertake scientific research improved when Michel-Étienne Turgot, the “prévôt des marchands” of Paris, commissioned Buache to study the city’s vulnerability to flooding.<sup>58</sup> His work on the Seine, eventually extending over three decades, provided data for the two *mémoires* on the December 1740 floods and the accompanying maps showing the extent and depth of flood waters, illustrations that demonstrated how poor drainage and road design had exacerbated the crisis. Although Buache’s *mémoires* on Newfoundland (1736), France and its seas (1737), the ecclesiastical divisions of France (1743), the equatorial oceans between Africa and the Americas (1745), and the global meridian (1746) were rejected by the Academy’s publication committee, mindful of the cost of printing the manuscript maps on which they were based, contemporary descriptions of his

innovative bathymetric charts, since lost, suggest he had begun to develop a more ambitious theory of mountain ranges and river basins as the determining physical structures of the globe.<sup>59</sup>

Buache's ideas seem to have been influenced by a bitter dispute within the Academy about the shape of the earth. According to Cassini II's surveys of the Paris meridian, a given measure of latitude in northern France covered a slightly shorter distance than the same measure in the south. This implied the earth was a spheroid elongated at the poles, a discovery that contradicted earlier calculations by Huygens and Newton that suggested the earth was flattened at the poles, the latter supplying detailed workings in the third edition of his *Principia* (1726). Although Joseph-Nicolas Delisle suspected the accuracy of the meridian survey, and may have decided to leave for St. Petersburg as a result,<sup>60</sup> the contradiction between Cassini's "ground truth" and Newton's calculations highlighted the Academy's aversion to the theory of gravitational attraction, which was sometimes dismissed as a cabalistic, faintly occult idea, less plausible than the Cartesian view of planetary motion propelled by vortices of invisible matter.<sup>61</sup>

However, Newton had several allies among younger academicians. The most vocal was Buache's near contemporary, Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, who used the dispute about the earth's shape to launch a personal campaign against Cassini II.<sup>62</sup> Backed by influential friends, including Voltaire, Maupertuis persuaded the Academy and the Naval Ministry to support two expeditions to survey meridian lines in Lapland and Peru to settle the matter.<sup>63</sup> The polar expedition, led by Maupertuis, Alexis-Claude Clairaut, and the Swedish astronomer Anders Celsius, departed in the spring of 1736 and completed its work the following year.<sup>64</sup> The equatorial expedition, led by Charles-Marie de La Condamine and Louis Godin, left earlier and continued into the mid-1740s.<sup>65</sup> Although the Lapland results vindicated Newton, the controversy persisted for some years, sustained by the absence of the Peruvian expedition and Cassini II's stubborn refusal to admit defeat, even after his son, Cassini de Thury (Cassini III), acknowledged his father's errors.<sup>66</sup>

Maupertuis triumphantly presented his results in several forms, *La Figure de la Terre* (1738) aimed at his scientific colleagues and the anonymous satire *Examen désintéressé des différens ouvrages qui ont été faits pour déterminer la figure de la terre* (1740) intended for his literary friends.<sup>67</sup> His most controversial account, published anonymously in

1740, emphasized the importance of his findings for navigation and trade. The title of this work, *Éléments de Géographie*, was chosen to infuriate Cassini II, who had recently published a 640-page volume under the title *Éléments d'Astronomie* (1740). *Éléments de Géographie* implied the shape of the earth was a geographical question, too important for a coterie of Academy astronomers whose errors, left uncorrected, would have had disastrous commercial implications.<sup>68</sup> Although *Éléments de Géographie* was re-issued under the author's name in 1742 with Academy approval, Maupertuis's behavior had alienated senior academicians, including some who originally welcomed his evidence.<sup>69</sup> When he left to direct the Berlin Academy of Sciences in 1745, few mourned his departure, Grandjean de Fouchy's uncharacteristically critical éloge following his former colleague's death in 1759 pointedly remarking that *Éléments de Géographie* was not a work of geography.<sup>70</sup>

Buache realized this controversy provided a new rationale for geography within the Academy, though he was anxious not to associate himself too closely with Maupertuis for fear of alienating the Cassinis. The maps he presented to the Academy sought to transcend the dispute, visualizing the globe as a malleable, architectonically robust sphere comprising interlocking river basins divided by mountain chains. This complex surface configuration was more important than the earth's general shape, Buache implied, though no less amenable to scientific analysis.

Buache began to collaborate with younger academicians inspired by similar ideas, specifically Jean-Étienne Guettard, an "adjoint botaniste" elected in 1743. In February 1746, Guettard delivered a mémoire based on a "carte minéralogique" prepared by Buache, showing a band of underlying chalk across northern France and southern England.<sup>71</sup> This image, one of the earliest geological maps, caused a stir in the Academy by emphasizing how rival nation states shared common subterranean foundations made visible by science. Grandjean de Fouchy saw the implications of this new kind of geography:

Hitherto Geography's sole objective has been to describe the surface of the terrestrial globe, and to mark upon it the different divisions to which it is susceptible, either by reference to the heavens, or by reference to the different limits of Empires that have successively divided it. We have reviewed this year a geographical work of an entirely other kind. It is no longer a question of dividing the

different regions of the earth, according to the limits of Empires & their provinces, but relative to the different materials that they contain within themselves.<sup>72</sup>

Stung by criticism from one of the Academy's rising stars, the botanist Georges-Leclerc de Buffon—who explicitly rejected the idea of geography as a science of the earth's structural characteristics—Guettard and Buache produced two further *mémoires* in 1751 and 1752 identifying mineralogical affinities between France and Egypt and the Americas and Switzerland.<sup>73</sup>

In November 1752, Buache delivered his most famous *mémoire*, blending his ideas into a general theory of the earth as a sphere held in shape by interlocking mountain chains that functioned like the beams of a great building, snaking north-south and east-east across land-masses and ocean floors alike; an image that reveals his architectural training as well as the influence of Maupertuis and Guettard. This lecture, delivered in a public session chaired by the Academy's new president, Chrétien-Guillaume de Malesherbes, included two maps, one showing (somewhat inaccurately) the undulations of land and sea bed across northern France and southern England, the second, a planisphere indicating real and predicted mountain ranges curving across land masses and ocean floors arranged around the North Pole, which was depicted at the center of a "mer glaciale."<sup>74</sup> The influence of Buache's 1752 *mémoire*, which later extended into political debates about the role of "natural" regions in the administrative geography of France, has been examined elsewhere.<sup>75</sup> Suffice to say that the *mémoire* secured Buache's position in the Academy and opened, in Grandjean de Fouchy's words, "a new career for Geography." No longer limited to descriptions of the "ancient limits of a Kingdom or an Empire that no longer exists," geography had become a science of the earth's dynamic physical characteristics.<sup>76</sup> Encouraged by this reception, Buache presented new *mémoires* comparing river basins in different parts of the world as well as a plan, sadly unrealized, for a giant relief globe, almost three meters in diameter, to be constructed under the dome of the Palais de Luxembourg; a model of which he later used in the geography classes he re-established at Versailles in 1755 where his pupils included three future monarchs.<sup>77</sup>

Buache's success was tainted almost immediately, however, by a damaging controversy involving Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, who had returned from St. Petersburg in 1746. On April 8, 1750, Delisle

presented a speculative *mémoire* on the possibilities of a North West passage between Hudson Bay and the Pacific based on unpublished musings by his late brother Guillaume and dubious Russian information, accompanied by a new map by Buache.<sup>78</sup> Although the *mémoire* was rejected by the Academy's publication committee, an extended version was published independently in June 1752, provoking an angry reaction from skeptical cartographers in France and Britain.<sup>79</sup> Buache's collaboration with Delisle collapsed under this scrutiny as each blamed the other for the errors of which they were both accused. Many of Buache's subsequent publications, in the *HARS* and elsewhere, were attempts to defend his reputation, his theory used in an increasingly cavalier manner to predict the configuration of unmapped regions in the Arctic, the Antarctic, the Americas, and the "terres australes."<sup>80</sup> Although he remained a contentious figure, the controversies with which Buache became associated did not jeopardize, and may even have enhanced, his position within the Academy. Geography's status was certainly bolstered by Buache's public profile. The majority of the 52 *HARS mémoires* classified as "géographie" appeared after Buache had consolidated his position. This was sufficiently secure by 1770 for him to determine the selection of his nephew, Jean-Nicolas Buache de La Neuville, as his successor.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

The decision of the Paris Academy of Sciences to recognize geography's independent status—and the subsequent attempts to develop a new scientific rationale for this project within the Academy—reveal wider changes in the conceptualization of space as an object of scientific inquiry in early-modern Europe, while also illustrating the politics of scientific patronage at the time. Terrestrial space, previously interpreted within the Academy in terms of celestial calculation, could henceforth be analyzed and interpreted on its own terms, as a complex, variable but ultimately secular category of natural knowledge and inquiry. There was a subtle political agenda lying behind this maneuver, foreshadowed by the treatment of nature in Delisle's lessons for the young Louis XV. Delisle championed a self-consciously enlightened absolutism, distinctive in tone and style from the preceding era of Louis XIV. Where the Sun King's power had been revealed by costly and often futile attempts to dominate nature, his great-grandson was to be trained to understand and acknowledge

the transcendent power of the physical environment. Geography, as taught by Delisle and as subsequently promoted within the Academy by Buache, provided a simple, visually appealing way to communicate to the King, the Court, and a wider reading public, the truth of the Baconian aphorism that “nature to be commanded must be obeyed.”<sup>82</sup>

And yet this development was itself facilitated by systems of patronage that sustained the most traditional forms of Ancien Régime absolutism. The idea that geography could function as an independent science of space was promoted by powerful individuals in the Academy and at the French Royal Court, who were able to exploit the networks of personal friendship and family allegiances that encircled the King, the power lines of early eighteenth-century scientific patronage. Buache’s initially unconvincing attempts to establish a scientific rationale for geography within the Academy were transformed by a larger dispute between Maupertuis and the advocates of Newtonian mathematics on one side, and the dynastic community of Jesuit-trained, Cartesian astronomers led by Cassini II on the other. Maupertuis’s victory in this dispute provided an opportunity for Buache to advance geography’s case and resulted in a significant re-configuration of the Academy’s epistemological structures as cartography, survey, and other forms of scientific practice previously defined as astronomy were re-allocated to the new science of geography establishing, arguably for the first time, the conceptual terrain on which the modern discipline would later be enacted. The debate within the Paris Academy of Science about space as an object of scientific inquiry demonstrates once again how science can simultaneously critique and reinforce the structures of power on which it is dependent.

## Notes

1. See Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and more generally Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Derek Gregory, *Explorations in Critical Human Geography: The Hettner Lecture, University of Heidelberg 1997* (Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg, 1998), 45–70; and David Warren Sabean and Malina Stefanovska, eds., *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012). For a recent related work, see Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

2. Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds., *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009).
3. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).
4. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 229–291. See also David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 201–247; Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) 66–90; Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 348–416 and, more generally, Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2004); Andrew Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006); and Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
5. See, for example, Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680–1780* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).
6. David Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
7. Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). See also David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers, eds., *Geography and Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
8. See also Paul Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science: Geographies of Scientific Culture and Improvement in Georgian England* (London: I B Tauris, 2010); Robert J. Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography: The Political Languages of British Geography 1650–1850* (London: Palgrave, 2000); Robert J. Mayhew, “Geography Books and the Character of Georgian Politics,” in *Georgian Geographies: Essays in Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) 192–211; Robert J. Mayhew, “Mapping Science’s Imagined Community: Geography as a Republic of Letters, 1600–1800,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005): 73–92; Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers, eds., *Geographies of the Book* (London: Ashgate, 2010).
9. See, for general context, James E. McClellan, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
10. For more on French geography in the eighteenth century, see Numa Broc, *La géographie des philosophes: géographes et voyageurs français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions Ophrys, 1974) and Anne Godlewska, *Geography Unbound: French Geographic Science from Cassini to Humboldt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For related studies on debates about geography’s scientific credentials in other national contexts before, during and after the Scientific Revolution, see Charles W. J. Withers, “Geography,

- science and the Scientific Revolution," in *Geography and Revolution*, ed. David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 75–105 and Lesley B. Cormack, *Charting an Empire: Geography at the English Universities 1580–1620* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
11. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). See also Charles W. J. Withers, "Encyclopaedism, Modernism and the Classification of Geographical Knowledge," *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS 21 (1996): 275–298 and Richard Yeo, "Classifying the Sciences," in *The Cambridge History of Science. Vol. 4: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 241–262.
  12. See also Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. and trans. C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon Press, 1980).
  13. Éric Brian and Catherine Demeulenaere-Douyère, eds., *Histoire et mémoire de l'Académie des Sciences: guide de recherches* (Paris: Éditions Tec&Doc, 1996); Maurice Crosland, *Science Under Control: The French Academy of Sciences, 1795–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Charles C. Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France at the End of the Old Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Charles C. Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Roger Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: The Paris Academy of Sciences, 1666–1830* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971); Dorinda Outram, "The Ordeal of Vocation: The Paris Academy of Sciences and the Terror, 1793–5," *History of Science* 21 (1983): 257–273; and David J. Sturdy, *Science and Social Status: The Members of the Académie des Sciences, 1666–1750* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995).
  14. David S. Lux, *Patronage and Royal Science in Seventeenth-Century France: The Académie de Physique in Caen* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); David S. Lux, "Colbert's Plan for the Grande Académie: Royal Policy toward Science, 1663–67," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 12 (1990): 177–118; Roche 1978; Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Frances A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Warburg Institute, 1947).
  15. Pascal Brioiist, "The Royal Society and the Académie Des Sciences in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century," in *Anglo-French Attitudes: Comparisons and Transfers between English and French Intellectuals since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Christophe Charle, Julien Vincent, and Jay Winter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 63–77. See also David S. Lux and Harold J. Cook, "Closed Circles and Open Networks? Communicating at a Distance during the Scientific Revolution," *History of Science* 36 (1988): 179–211.
  16. James E. McClellan, "The Mémoires of the Académie Royale Des Sciences, 1699–1790: A Statistical Overview," in *Les publications de l'Académie*

- Royale des Sciences de Paris (1666–1793) Tome II: Étude Statistique*, ed. Robert Halleux, James E. McClellan, Daniela Berariu, and Geneviève Xhayet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 7–36 and Alice Stroup, *Royal Funding of the Parisian Académie Royale des Sciences during the 1690s* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 77, Part 4, 1987).
17. Mario Biagioli, "Etiquette, Interdependence, and Sociability in Seventeenth-Century Science," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1996): 193–238, quotation on p. 218. See also Guy Meynell, "The Académie des Sciences at the rue Vivienne, 1666–1699." *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences* 44 (1994): 22–27.
  18. Robin Briggs, "The Académie Royale Des Sciences and the Pursuit of Utility," *Past and Present* 131 (1991): 38–88; Christiane Demeulenaere-Douyère and Éric Brian, eds., *Règlement, usages et science dans la France de l'absolutisme à l'occasion du troisième centenaire du règlement instituant l'Académie Royale des Sciences (26 janvier 1699)* (Paris: Éditions Tec & Doc, 2002); and Marie-Jeanna Tits-Dieuaide, "Les savants, le société et l'État: à propos du 'renouveau' de l'Académie royale des sciences (1699)," *Journal des Savants* 1 (1998): 79–114; Alice Stroup, "Science, politique, et conscience aux débuts de l'Académie royale des sciences," *Revue de synthèse* 114 (1993): 423–453.
  19. Charles B. Paul, *Science and Immortality: The Éloges of the Paris Academy of Sciences (1699–1791)* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).
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  21. James E. McClellan, "The mémoires of the Académie Royale des Sciences," 7. See also Robert Halleux, James E. McClellan, Daniela Berariu, and Geneviève Xhayet, eds., *Les publications de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris (1666–1793) Tome I: Description bibliographique* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001).
  22. On the Academy's publications committee, an early example of academic "peer review," see James E. McClellan, *Specialist Control: The Publications Committee of the Académie Royale des Sciences (Paris) 1700–1793* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 93, Part 3, 2003).
  23. See, for more on this, Alan G. Gross, Joseph E. Harmon, and Michael S. Reidy, *Communicating Science: The Scientific Article from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
  24. See, for example, Albert Cohen, *Music at the French Royal Academy of Sciences: A Study in the Evolution of Musical Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Frederic L. Holmes, "Chemistry in the Académie Royale des Sciences." *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences* 34 (2003): 41–68; Claire Salomon-Bayet, *L'institution de la science et l'expérience du vivant: méthode et expérience à l'Académie Royale des Sciences, 1666–1793* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978); and Alice Stroup, *A Company of Scientists: Botany, Patronage and Community at the Seventeenth-Century Parisian Royal Academy of Sciences* (Berkeley and Los Angeles:

- University of California Press, 1990). On those forms of early science that were initially acknowledged by the Academy and subsequently marginalized, see Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 93–124; Lorraine Daston, "The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe," *Configurations* 6 (1998): 149–172; Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998). On the Academy's alchemical research, see Margaret C. Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 41–65.
25. Monique Pelletier, *Les cartes de Cassini: la science au service de l'État et des régions* (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 2002) and Josef Konvitz, *Cartography in France 1660–1848: Science, Engineering, and Statecraft* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). The Cassini dynasty began with Giovanni Domenico Cassini, often identified as Cassini I, who was recruited in 1669 from the Panzano observatory in Bologna. The family's control of the Paris Observatory continued under Giovanni's son Jacques (Cassini II), grandson César-François Cassini de Thury (Cassini III), and first grandson Jean-Dominique (Cassini IV). Cassini II's report on the first survey of the Paris meridian appeared as an appendix to the 1718 *HARS* under the title *De la grandeur et de la figure de la terre: suites des mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1720).
  26. Richard Sorrenson, "Towards a History of the Royal Society in the Eighteenth Century," *Notes & Records of the Royal Society of London* 50 (1996): 29–46.
  27. Robert J. Mayhew, "Geography as the Eye of Enlightenment Historiography," *Modern Intellectual History* 7 (2010): 611–627.
  28. Joan DeJean, *Ancients Against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1997); Marc Fumaroli, *La querelle des anciens et des modernes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); and Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 389–392.
  29. Numa Broc, "Une affaire de plagiat cartographique sous Louis XIV: le procès Delisle-Nolin," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences et de leurs Applications* 23 (1970): 141–153; Nelson-Martin Dawson, *L'Atelier Delisle: l'Amérique du Nord sur la table à dessin* (Québec: Sillery, 2000), 30–37; and Mary Sponberg Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography: Making and Marketing Maps in Eighteenth-Century France and England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 106–110.
  30. Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, "Éloge de M. Delisle," *HARS* 28 (1726): *Histoires* [hereafter H] 75–84, p. 82.
  31. Michel Antoine, *Louis XV* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 73–74.
  32. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Chandra

- Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering: Technology and Territoriality on the Canal du Midi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
33. Sturdy, *Science and Social Status*, 205–208.
  34. Archives Nationales [hereafter AN] O<sup>1</sup> 62 fol. 183 v. 184.
  35. Christiane Demeulenaere-Douyère and David J. Sturdy, eds., *L'Enquête du Régent, 1716–1718: sciences, techniques et politique dans la France pré-industrielle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).
  36. Philippe Buache, "Discours sur l'architecture en général, et des parties qui sont nécessaires à former un bon architecte" [1718], in Archives de l'Académie des Sciences [hereafter AAS], Dossier Buache.
  37. Monique Pelletier, "Buache et le Dépôt des Cartes, Plans et Journaux de la Marine," in *Mappae Antiquae: Liber Amicorum Günter Schilder*, eds., Paula van Gestel-van het Schip and Peter van der Krogt (Houten: HES & DG Publishers, 2007), 563–78; Christine Marie Petto, *When France Was King of Cartography: The Patronage and Production of Maps in Early Modern France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); and Marco Petrella, "Guillaume Delisle's *Carte du Duché de Bourgogne*: The Role of Central and Peripheral Authorities in the Construction of a Provincial Territory in France in the Early 18th Century," *Journal of Map and Geography Libraries* 5 (2009): 17–39.
  38. Fontenelle, "Éloge de M. Delisle," 84; AAS Dossier Delisle.
  39. See Christine Marie Petto, "Playing the Feminine Card: Women of the Early Modern Map Trade," *Cartographica* 44 (2009): 67–81. For the general political context in which scientific patronage was negotiated, see William Doyle, *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) and for more women and gender in French science in this period, see Vesna Crnjanksi Petrovich, "Women and the Paris Academy of Sciences," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (1999): 383–390 and Mary Terrall, "Gendered Spaces, Gendered Audiences: Inside and Outside the Paris Academy of Sciences," *Configurations* 3 (1995): 207–232.
  40. For a fascinating commentary on Maurepas's complex relationship with the French crown, see Robert Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communications Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 31–36.
  41. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Manuscrits Français [hereafter BNF MSF] 22226, fol. 269–270, veuve Delisle to Bignon, February 4, 1726. This letter, in corrected modern French, appears in Dawson, *L'Atelier Delisle*, 73.
  42. AN O<sup>1</sup> 69 fol. 184–185. See also John H. Appleby, "Mapping Russia: Farquharson, Delisle and the Royal Society," *Notes & Records of the Royal Society* 52 (2001): 191–204 and Marie-Anne Chabin, "Moscovie ou Russie? Regard de Joseph-Nicolas Delisle et des savants français sur les États de Pierre le Grand," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 28 (1996): 43–56.
  43. BNF MSF 22226, fol. 271–272, veuve Delisle to Bignon, March 10, 1726. This letter, in corrected modern French, appears in Dawson, *L'Atelier Delisle*, 76.
  44. BNF MSF 22234 [microfilm 22425], fol. 20v–21, Bignon to Maurepas, March 16, 1726. This letter, in corrected modern French, appears in Dawson, *L'Atelier Delisle*, 91.

45. AN O<sup>1</sup> 70, fol. 145.
46. Fontenelle, "Éloge de M. Delisle," 77.
47. René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Réflexions sur l'utilité dont l'Académie des sciences pourroit être au Royaume, si le Royaume luy donnoit les Secours dont elle a besoin" (late 1726), in AAS, Dossier Réaumur, Folder I, of II. See also Éric Brian, *La mesure de l'état: administrateurs et géomètres au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 83–87 and E. Maindron, *L'Académie des sciences* (Paris: Alcan, 1888), 95–100.
48. BNF MSF 22226, fol. 264–265, Bignon to Maurepas [enclosing report from veuve Delisle and Fréret to Fleury], March 1728.
49. BNF MSF 22226, fol. 265–266, Bignon to Maurepas, March 1728.
50. AN O<sup>1</sup> 72, fol. 175.
51. See Dawson, *L'Atelier Delisle*, 81.
52. Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, 1729 "Éloge de M. Maraldi," *HARS* 31 (1729): H116–120.
53. BNF Cartes et Plans [hereafter BNF CP] Ge.DD.2334/1, Buache to Maurepas, January 1730.
54. AAS Dossier Buache. The circumstances of Buache's election were never forgotten. Grandjean de Fouchy included a rather tasteless and ribald joke, about his arranged marriage to a virgin bride, even in his éloge to Buache. See Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, "Éloge de M. Buache," *HARS* 75 (1772): H135–150.
55. Buache wrote to Maurepas on June 22, 1732 requesting money to construct his new compass. See BNF MSF 22226, fol. 273–274.
56. BNF MSF 22226, fol. 261–261v, Buache to Bignon, November 6, 1730; BNF MSF 22235, fol. 49v, Bignon to Buache, November 6, 1730.
57. Sponberg-Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography*, 98 and 110.
58. Isabelle Backouche, *La trace du fleuve: la Seine et Paris (1750–1850)* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2000), 99–102; Numa Broc, "Un géographe dans son siècle: Philippe Buache (1700–1773)," *Dix-huitième Siècle* 3 (1971): 223–235, p. 230; and Lucie Lagarde, "Philippe Buache, 1700–1773," *Geographers: Bio-Bibliographical Studies* 9 (1985): 21–27, esp. p. 21.
59. On Buache's unpublished mémoires, see the untitled notes by the Permanent Secretaries in Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan, *HARS* 43 (1741): H141–142; Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan 1743 *HARS* 45 (1743): H154; Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy 1754 *HARS* 47 (1754): H76–80; Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy 1746 *HARS* 48 (1746): H107 as well as the information on Buache in AAS *Procès-verbaux: table des rapports de l'Académie des Sciences 1699–1793*.
60. John L. Greenberg, "Degrees of Longitude and the Earth's Shape: The Diffusion of a Scientific Idea in Paris in the 1730s," *Annals of Science* 41 (1984): 151–158, esp. pp. 152–153.
61. J. B. Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
62. See John L. Greenberg, *The Problem of the Earth's Shape from Newton to Clairaut: The Rise of Mathematical Science in Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Fall of "Normal" Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

- 1995) and Mary Terrall, *The Man Who Flattened the Earth: Maupertuis and the Sciences of the Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
63. See, for example, Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, "Sur la figure de la terre et sur les moyens que l'astronomie et la géographie fournissent pour la déterminer," *HARS* 35 (1733): Mémoires [hereafter M]153–164 (no date of presentation).
  64. Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, "La figure de la terre déterminé par Messieurs de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, qui ont mesuré le degré du méridien au cercle polaire," *HARS* 39 (1737): M389–466 (delivered on November 13).
  65. Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
  66. César-François Cassini de Thury, "De la méridienne de Paris, prolongée vers le Nord, & des Observations qui ont été faites pour décrire les frontières du Royaume," *HARS* 42 (1740): M276–292 (delivered on November 12). His full report, an appendix to the 1740 *HARS* volume, was titled *La méridienne de l'Observatoire Royal de Paris, vérifiée dans toute l'étendue du Royaume par de nouvelles observations* (Guérin, Paris). See Irène Passeron, "La form de la terre, est-elle une preuve de la vérité du système newtonien?" In *Terre à découvrir, terres à parcourir: exploration et connaissance du monde au XIIe.-XIX siècles*, ed. Danielle Lecoq and Antoine Chambard (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 129–45.
  67. Terrall, *The Man Who Flattened the Earth*, 154–160.
  68. *Ibid.*, 164–8.
  69. Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, *Éléments de Géographie* (Paris: Martin, Coignard et Guerin, 1742).
  70. Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, "Éloge de M. Maupertuis," *HARS* 61 (1759): H259–276, esp. p. 268; Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, "Éléments de Géographie," *HARS* 44 (1742): H113–114. See also Terrall, *The Man Who Flattened the Earth*, 231–269, 362.
  71. Jean-Étienne Guettard, "Mémoire et carte minéralogique sur la nature & la situation des terrains qui traversent la France & l'Angleterre," *HARS* 48 (1746): M363–392 (delivered on February 19).
  72. Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, no title, *HARS* 48 (1746): H105–108, p. 105.
  73. Buffon's views were expressed in his *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roi: Tome Premier* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1749), 204–228. On Buffon, see Emma Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Guettard's mémoires were titled "Mémoire sur les granits de France, comparés à ceux d'Égypte," *HARS* 53 (1751): M164–210 (delivered on June 9) and "Mémoire sur la comparaison du Canada avec la Suisse, par rapport à ses minéraux," *HARS* 54 (1752): M189–220, 323–360, 452–438 (delivered on June 7). See also George Kish, "Early Thematic Mapping: The Work of Philippe Buache," *Imago Mundi* 38 (1976): 129–36 and Isabelle Laboulais, "Inventorier et cartographier les ressources minérales en France des années 1740 aux années 1830," in *Naissances de*

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74. Philippe Buache, "Essai de géographie physique où l'on propose des vues générales sur l'espèce de charpente du globe, composée de chaînes de montagnes qui traversent les mers comme les terres; avec quelques considérations particulières sur les différens bassins de la mer, & sur sa configuration intérieure," *HARS* 54 (1752): M399–416. The two maps are titled *Carte physique et profil du canal de la Manche et d'une partie de la Mer du Nord, où se voit l'état actuel des profondeurs de la mer* and *Planisphère physique où l'on voit du pôle septentrional ce que l'on connoit de terres et mers; avec les grandes chaînes de montagnes qui traversent le globe*. The handwritten original of Buache's mémoire is in AAS Dossier Buache.
75. See, on this topic, Numa Broc, *Les montagnes vues par les géographes et les naturalistes de langue française au XVIIIe. siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1969), 47–70; Bernard Débarbieux, "Mountains: Between Pure Reason and Embodied Experience: Philippe Buache and Alexander von Humboldt," in *High Places: Cultural Geographies of Mountains, Ice and Science*, eds Denis Cosgrove and Veronica della Dora (London: I B Tauris, 2009), 87–104; Bernard Débarbieux and Gilles Rudez, *Les faiseurs de montagnes: imaginaires politiques et territorialites, XVIIIe.-XXIe. siècle* (Paris: CNRS, 2010); Lucie Lagarde, "Philippe Buache: cartographe ou géographe?," in *Terre à découvrir, terres à parcourir: exploration et connaissance du monde au XIIe.-XIX siècles*, ed. Danielle Lecoq and Antoine Chambard (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 147–166; and Isabelle Laboulais, "Le système de Buache, une "nouvelle façon de considérer notre globe" et de combler les blancs de la carte," in *Comblant les blancs de la carte: modalité et enjeux de la construction des savoirs géographiques (XVIIIe.-XXe. siècle)*, ed. Isabelle Laboulais (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2004), 93–115.
76. Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, "Sur les chaînes de montagnes du Globe terrestre," *HARS* 54 (1752): H117–124, p. 124. Only a proportion of Buache's diverse work appeared in the *HARS*. His contributions on earthquakes, including a map, since lost, showing 612 places that experienced aftershocks in the wake of the Lisbon earthquake of November 1755 and an early attempt to devise a measure of earthquake intensity, were never published, though they are mentioned in BNF MSF 20236–20237.
77. Buache's geography lessons, prepared for Louis XV's grandsons, the Duc de Bourgogne, the Duc de Berry (later Louis XVI), the Comte de Provence (later Louis XVIII) and the Comte d'Artois (later Charles X), survive in BNF CP, Ge.EE.92 under the title *Explication et usage des cartes dressées pour l'Institution géographique et historique de Mgr. le duc de Bourgogne en 1756*; and in the Bodleian Library MSS C21 (252) under the title *Explication des Cartes et Découvertes présentées pour l'Institution Historique et Géographique de Monseigneur le Duc de Berry (8 Mai 1765)*. The smaller globe is discussed in Philippe Buache, "Observations géographiques et physiques, où l'on donne une idée de l'existence de terres antarctiques, & de leur mer glaciale intérieure; avec quelques remarques sur un globe physique en relief, d'un

- ped de diamètre, qui sert de modèle pour celui de neuf pieds mémoire," *HARS* 59 (1757): M190–203 and in BNF CP, Ge.FF.13732/1 *Explication du globe physique en relief présenté au Roi le 6 novembre 1757*. See also Ludovic Drapeyron, *Les deux Buache et l'éducation géographique de trois rois de France (Louis XVI, Louis XVIII, Charles X) avec documents inédits* (Paris: Delagrave, 1888).
78. The mémoire is discussed in Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, no title, *HARS* 52 (1750): H142–154.
79. Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, *Explication de la carte des nouvelles découvertes au nord de la Mer du Sud* (Paris: Desaint et Saillant, 1752). See also Lucie Lagarde, "Le passage de nord-ouest et la Mer de l'Ouest dans la cartographie française du 18e. siècle: contribution à l'étude de l'oeuvre de Delisle et Buache," *Imago Mundi* 41 (1989): 19–43; and Glyn Williams, *Voyages of Delusion: The Northwest Passage in the Age of Reason* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 239–286.
80. See, for example, Philippe Buache, *Considérations géographiques et physiques sur les nouvelles découvertes au nord de la Grande Mer, appelée vulgairement la Mer du Sud* (Paris: Ballard).
81. On his retirement in 1770, Buache's pension was reduced to 600 livres per year. After his death in 1773, this amount was paid to his wife. His nephew, who inherited his titles, was paid a much-reduced pension of 500 livres. AN O<sup>1</sup> 116, fol. 1140; AN O<sup>1</sup> 120 fol. 277.
82. Francis Bacon, "Aphorism III," in *Novum Organum: Book 1—Aphorisms Concerning the Interpretation of Nature and the Kingdom of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878 [1620]), 11.

# 7

## The Space between Empires: Coastal and Insular Microregions in the Early Nineteenth-Century World

*Lauren Benton and Jeppe Mulich*

In 1808, Thomas Maitland, the recently appointed British Governor of Ceylon, instructed his envoy to explain to the government in London that Ceylon was unlike other British colonies. The British controlled only a ring of territory, “a narrow stripe of land on the sea coast all round the island,” while the Kingdom of Kandy occupied the island’s center.<sup>1</sup> With the colony’s “enemies” encircled, the British could afford to neglect the aging fortifications along the coast that had been designed to ward off attacks from the sea. Given “the state of the navies of our enemies,” Maitland explained, there was no threat from the outside.<sup>2</sup> Yet British naval power had not created a British lake around the island. Proximate seas remained crowded with small craft carrying goods and people between Ceylon and South Indian ports.<sup>3</sup> Maitland was painting a picture of a politically plural region on land and sea over which Britain exercised ascendant, but still imperfect, power.

Maitland was recognizing a spatial pattern that was unusual without being entirely novel. Land-sea formations that were politically plural had many counterparts in the early nineteenth century, and also a complex history. For centuries, empires had assembled uneven and incomplete control over irregular and interconnected territories and maritime spaces—some extending along coastal, riverine, and sea corridors; some encompassing parts of islands linked to estuaries and straits; and some conjoining patches of sea and land around ports or other enclaves.<sup>4</sup> The imagination of land-sea connections reflected strategic

realities. Prospects for the survival of colonial ventures depended heavily on the placement of settlements within maritime circuits and on conditions of competition and violence on the ocean. Where many polities were trading from the same small region, merchants and their sponsors vied for and sought to protect access to the sea.

Surprisingly, given their ubiquity, the literature on the spatial histories of European empires offers a sparse vocabulary for labeling interpolity microregions spanning land and sea.<sup>5</sup> The field of borderlands history has mainly focused on interpolity relations on land. Classic examples of borderland regions are the zones of imperial contact and conflict in interior regions of the Americas, in particular, the lands wherein English and Spanish, or American and Spanish, influences commingled, such as northern Florida or the vast region that is now the southwestern United States.<sup>6</sup> Recent histories have cautioned against assumptions that such zones featured cultural hybridity or were shaped mainly by inter-imperial rivalries; North American Indian polities did more than fill the space between empires, and violence, as much as negotiated relations and communication, punctuated encounters.<sup>7</sup> The territorially fragmented quality of imperial projects meant, too, that borderland regions were not always places of intense contact but often spaces in which enclaves and corridors under the control of different polities coexisted for long periods without overpowering entanglements.<sup>8</sup>

Maritime histories have also moved from an early emphasis on easily flowing communications and cultural exchange toward a more spatially focused analysis of the construction of regional regimes, as well as the formation of maritime networks centered on particular ports or islands.<sup>9</sup> At a transregional scale, oceanic circuits have been studied in relation to production and trade of commodities, as well as in connection to movements of coerced labor.<sup>10</sup> Social historians, meanwhile, have traced the circulation of port inhabitants in and out of maritime occupations, in patterns that created familial and commercial ties across settlements and that often turned seemingly isolated towns into cosmopolitan hubs.<sup>11</sup>

Though maritime and borderland histories have tended to develop along parallel, separate paths, they have arrived at a similar vantage point from which the history of empires becomes a story of fluid networks of interpolity movement and violence. The similarities in approach open the possibility of analyzing recurring spatial patterns of politically plural microregions spanning land and sea. While

such formations have existed throughout world history, the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century mark a period of special salience for such formations internationally. Global imperial warfare, the intensification of privateering, and the growing volume and variety of long-distance trade in these decades created militarized sea spaces adjacent to most colonial ports. Ascendant British naval power, an increasingly important force in the period, fortified British visions of hegemony without producing, in most places, effective control over coastal or island regions. The presence and power of the British navy, in fact, often led to the proliferation of small craft engaged in local trade and, in some places, created or perpetuated political divisions on land. The resulting set of coastal and insular microregions attracted new international attention, an odd sequel in many cases to their image as marginal and strategically unimportant. In a period of uncertainty about the outcome of political upheavals and war, many of these same microregions came to be associated with political experiments such as free ports and confederations.

In these and other ways, microregional spaces became a well-known fact of life for early nineteenth-century political actors. Groups and individuals living or operating within these zones understood that they belonged to an unusual category of spatial formation, even if observers did not have specific terms to describe the spatial environments they were encountering. The merchant mariner who readily crossed imperial borders in order to get the best price for his goods, the plantation owner who bought imported slaves on a neutral island only to smuggle them into British territory, the captive who fled the colony of one empire for the possibility of obtaining a facsimile of freedom in another, the privateer who sailed with three different flags and four different letters of marque in case he would get caught by the wrong imperial cruiser, the imperial official who corresponded simultaneously with his sponsors at home and with political rivals in his colonial neighborhood—all these actors understood their scope of action as extending across political boundaries and, often, across geographic borders such as ocean straits and mountain ranges. Politically plural space fostered politically adaptive people, and vice versa. Like Maitland, many colonial sojourners in such zones knew they were observing a distinctive spatial formation, but they did not have readily available categories to label what they were seeing and experiencing.

The resulting cross-polity interactions and entangled interests did have some familiar legal referents, even while posing novel

challenges. European and indigenous actors were familiar with jurisdictional complexity and conflict, and they understood, too, that subjects could claim the protection of their sovereign, as well as the extension of their sovereign's jurisdiction when inside other polities.<sup>12</sup> Whereas such claims became increasingly formalized in treaties proscribing extraterritoriality in the late nineteenth century, in the early nineteenth century, jurisdictional arrangements were more varied and fluid.<sup>13</sup> Legal border crossing—the pursuit of claims in multiple polities as well as the strategic referencing of standards or procedures from other legal systems—operated simultaneously to tie the parts of microregions together and to lay bare for imperial officials the necessity of legal consolidation in individual empires.<sup>14</sup> In the early nineteenth century, such tendencies were magnified by maritime connections and acute, port-centered conflicts over property traded across the seas.

This chapter analyzes the characteristics, and wider political imprint, of coastal and insular microregions at the turn of the nineteenth century. First, we consider maritime trends and the entanglement of imperial and local shipping in areas that began to take the shape of recognized microregions. We then examine cross-polity movements and alliances on land and sea that knitted these interpolity zones together. Finally, we offer some observations on the relation of coastal and insular microregional formations to the emergence of political experiments in the period. Our analysis highlights in particular the examples of the Leeward Islands, the Gold Coast, the Río de la Plata region, and Mauritius and the Seychelles Islands. These and other cases in the first decades of the nineteenth century illustrate the ways that militarized seas, expanding trade, and incomplete but aspirational British political dominance produced a thickening of cross-polity relations and spawned territorial-maritime microregions whose political pluralism raised their international profile and confounded imperial policy.

### **Crowded coastal waters**

The history of European empires at the turn of the nineteenth century is in no small part a story of maritime competition. Rivalries centered on islands, coastal zones, and sea routes that formed the connective tissue of transoceanic movement, transportation, and trade. While competition over such spaces, and the imperial entanglements it produced, were characteristic of the entire period of overseas colonialism,

the decades at the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century marked a transformative moment.

The shift is easiest to grasp by considering previous patterns of maritime-coastal political relations. In the history of the Atlantic, the Newfoundland fisheries represent a particularly well-documented example of maritime entanglements prior to the late eighteenth century. Basque, French, Portuguese, and English agents competed over the lucrative North Atlantic cod fisheries and engaged with one another and with Indians to carve out zones to which they might return seasonally. Success depended crucially on access to coastal strips on which fishermen might erect the structures required for drying the cod.<sup>15</sup> Here and elsewhere in North and South America, Indians played key roles in knitting together networks of coastal communications across proximate settlements.<sup>16</sup> Politically plural coastal microregions included the area comprising New Netherland and New England and, much further south, the Río de la Plata region, where Spanish and Portuguese agents laid competing claims while inserting themselves in a region dominated by Guaraní and Charrúa groups.<sup>17</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, European and Afro-European traders sized up sea access and river routes and formed arrangements with African polities to establish and preserve coastal trading posts. A handful of enclaves traded hands but remained central to microregional trading regimes. For example, in the area of the Gulf of Guinea referred to by Europeans as the Gold Coast, trade to the sea flowed through a small number of trading settlements for several centuries and coexisted with shifting configurations of land-based power.<sup>18</sup> The river and sea approaches supplied multiple landing places and opened possibilities for traders from rival European sponsors to negotiate separately with locals to establish trading networks. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, British, Danish, Dutch, and Swedish agents built a range of new fortifications along the coast, adding political complexity. These agents sought alliances with various Fante polities to set up forts far enough from their rivals' trading posts so that they could trade unhindered and also maintain access to the sea.<sup>19</sup> Eurocentric narratives of the region's history cite the African disease environment as a barrier to European influence and settlement before the nineteenth century. But high European mortality was only one factor among many giving rise to the region's political pluralism. Cross-polity trade and credit networks functioned extremely well, and at low cost, in generating markets bridging land-based and

maritime-oriented exchange.<sup>20</sup> Political pluralism changed shape, but it retained and even tightened its hold on the region.

Analysis of spatial trends in many of these examples helps us to highlight the importance of the decades at the turn of the nineteenth century in creating more tightly integrated but still politically plural microregions. While patterns of competition and entanglement continued, the turn of the century witnessed two interrelated changes: a gradual intensification of trade and a consolidation of political and military power on land. That power was not always European. On the West African coast, the large Asante Empire, hitherto primarily an inland polity, forced Europeans on the coast to acknowledge its political power in the region. Through a series of local wars, including with the Fante in 1806 and the Akim-Akwapim Alliance in 1814–1816, the Asante established their political authority and eventually forced British agents from the African Company of Merchants to sign a treaty partially recognizing Asante claims to much of the coastal territory and to authority over its African inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> This change in the balance of power, reaffirmed through subsequent clashes throughout the 1820s and a peace treaty in 1831, played an important part in the elimination of many land-based operations under the purview of European powers, producing a zone of fewer large polities jockeying for control of coastal access.<sup>22</sup>

Increased patrols by British naval ships cruising to apprehend slave-trading vessels, even when combined with political consolidation on land, did not eliminate the diversity of flags sailing in West African seas. Indeed, British anti-slavery strategies created new incentives for ships to carry multiple flags, and the shifting regulatory framework opened new opportunities for trade, as well as the formation of new companies, in ports.<sup>23</sup> In other regions, too, the numbers and relative strength of European rivals on land diminished in this period without translating into a monopoly of control for the British on land and sea. In Newfoundland, for example, the consolidation of English power following the Seven Years' War marked a shift toward describing imperial holdings in North America as territorially extensive, without however eliminating rivalries over fishing rights.<sup>24</sup>

There is evidence that the rise of British power on land and sea often produced more intricate patterns of political control on land and, at the same time, a proliferation of small craft operating in proximate seas. In Mauritius and Seychelles, for example, light patrols

to intercept slave traders after the 1807 Abolition Act encountered a busy trade in small boats, and officials recorded a sharp growth in the slave populations of Seychelles between 1810 and 1815, and of Mauritius between 1814 and 1818.<sup>25</sup> Small craft landed slaves at night along beaches, where they were met by locals and distributed to markets. Sir Robert Farquhar, governor between 1810 and 1823, requested additional forces to curb the trade, and commissioners described "a general disposition in the inhabitants in favor of the slave trade."<sup>26</sup> Here and elsewhere, the British Abolition Act produced a short-term windfall for traders in coastal and insular microregions.<sup>27</sup>

A microregion that illustrates this pattern with special clarity is that of the Leeward Islands, a chain of islands stretching from the Virgin Islands in the northwest to Dominica in the southeast. British, Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Swedish empires claimed islands in this group, and the small islands lay within such a short distance from one another that ships could easily sail between the most distant of them in a day or two. In some island clusters, such as the Danish and British Virgin Islands in the west, the distances were shorter, and slaves or fugitives could sometimes escape by swimming or drifting on small craft to neighboring islands. Following the end of the American Revolution, the volume of intercolonial trade passing through the Leewards grew rapidly, generating a denser tangle of inter-imperial connections and higher stakes for control of land and sea. Port cities such as Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas and Oranjestad on St. Eustatius came to be favored by traders of multiple nationalities, and the goods that were transshipped here were transported under a growing number of national and imperial flags. This development paralleled important changes in the regional balance of naval power. As a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars and British abolition of the slave trade, British naval ships were regularly cruising the waters around the busy ports. British forces also occupied, for varying amounts of time, several of the islands in the region, including those of the Danish West Indies.

The result was a tightly networked, politically plural colonial region in which British power on the seas made possible British incursions of capital and sojourning across islands, including those nominally in the hands of other empires. As in Mauritius, growing British naval power created greater incentives for traders to use small craft and avoid detection, though many were nonetheless apprehended. An inquiry into the fate of prize slaves in Tortola in the early 1820s

recorded dozens of captures of small craft and found evidence of a robust contraband trade in slaves and other goods between British ports and other islands.<sup>28</sup>

Rising British maritime power influenced the creation and evolution of another type of land-sea microregion in the Río de la Plata region. After the British attack on Montevideo and Buenos Aires in 1805, the threat of British invasion hung over the messy process of jockeying for political power after Spain fell to Napoleon's forces. In a region where the port Colonia del Sacramento had changed hands multiple times between the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and where Brazilian ranchers descended without much friction into nominally Spanish lands of the eastern bank of the Río de la Plata, political control appeared to be up for grabs. The area has been described by historians as a classic cattle frontier or as a borderland region in which control depended on the ability of charismatic caudillos to muster troops from among a mixed-race population of gauchos.<sup>29</sup>

Yet the region was an odd cattle frontier—one in which sea and river power mattered. Both the government of the United Provinces, formed in Buenos Aires, and the breakaway provincial government created by José Gervasio Artigas on the eastern bank, or Banda Oriental, began to issue privateering commissions as they positioned themselves to fend off imperial enemies. For Artigas, the most important objective was to disrupt the communications and trade of the Portuguese as they advanced on the Banda Oriental. Captains sailing out of Buenos Aires began to offer their services to Artigas, a trend that was slow to change even after it became clear that captured ships and their goods could not be taken to Buenos Aires prize courts to be condemned and sold.<sup>30</sup> The search for maritime advantage paralleled a struggle on the part of British merchants to establish rights to “free navigation” on the Río de la Plata. Like Artigas, Paraguay's José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia sought to consolidate his power by placing tight controls on trade, a policy continually challenged by the actions of ports down river to disrupt river traffic, sometimes by seizing valuable cargo heading toward Asunción.<sup>31</sup> The hinterlands could not sustain viable polities without controlling ports, and the defense of ports was impossible without the capacity to militarize the seas.

As in other regions, Britain's naval power operated as an important force in the Río de la Plata region without moving toward formal, or even exclusive, British hegemony. In the years after the defeat of Artigas, Britain brokered the creation of a new state, the República

Oriental del Uruguay, and rejected overtures from local elites, with the support of influential British merchants, to assume a more formal role as protecting power over the new state.<sup>32</sup> Britain also rebuffed demands by Francia that it guarantee free navigation on the Paraná River. Even when commercial losses by British merchants created pressures for more direct action, the British government instructed its commissioner, Ouseley, to resist the temptation to seize territory other than the island of Martín García, at a strategic point at the mouth of the Paraná River; he was to pursue an agreement to open river ports only if “the opportunity of furthering any collateral object of importance should offer itself.”<sup>33</sup> Many merchants, as well as most officials in London, regarded the political and legal pluralism of the region as compatible with the goal of expanding commercial opportunities.

Debates about the political qualities of microregions did make a difference in heralding their newly recognized geopolitical and economic importance. Neither the Leeward Islands nor the Río de la Plata had excited much commentary in the years before 1800. Now, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Leewards attracted regular notice in the House of Commons and in the British press, while the Río de la Plata entered for the first time into the high diplomacy of the United States and Britain.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, the control of coastal or island settlements depended on the balance of power in newly militarized proximate seas. We can think of such microregions as representing a series of hotspots in which thickening networks of local exchange, continual imperial attacks on land and sea, and the competition for commercial hegemony among a set of nearby ports created a single geopolitical target for empire-states.

### **Inter-imperial networks**

The global significance of land-sea microregions in part reflected the sheer density of inter-imperial networks operating in these spaces. Such networks formed both across European colonies and between colonies and local polities, integrating a plurality of actors into regionally imbedded structures of exchange and interaction. Intercolonial trade, especially the transport and sale of contraband goods, defined regional commercial ties, and shared perceptions of security motivated political coordination and engagement.

Security concerns drove polities to cooperate across political boundaries. Such concerns could be internal as well as external, the

shape of cooperation depending on the nature of the threat posed to the reigning social order. In regions with significant slave populations, the primary fear was one of internal rebellion and insurgency, whereas regions where European outposts and colonies existed alongside larger indigenous polities saw a different dynamic, one that tied together foreign and regional polities in alliances of necessity and opportunity.

On the Gold Coast, inter-imperial cooperation gradually came to characterize the relation between European imperial agents over the course of the eighteenth century. Old rivalries did not cease to exist, but direct military confrontations were being abandoned in favor of more indirect methods of conflict. This shift resulted in a wave of small-scale proxy wars between local African polities supported by various European agents. Such conflicts emerged alongside persisting attempts to gain favor with local leaders at the cost of rivals. Regardless of their relative positions of strength, European companies on the coast were wholly dependent on good relations with African leaders in order to facilitate trade, secure profits, and guarantee the safety of their agents. These conditions created multiple layers of formal and informal networks, both between different European groups and between Africans and Europeans. Some forts and *entrepôts* became so linked to local polities that the rise and fall of the political position of one directly affected the relative power of the other. The relationship between the Dutch West India Company and the Elmina illustrates this pattern. While the Elmina had benefited from their close ties to the dominant European empire on the coast in the eighteenth century, the rise of British power and the parallel decline of Dutch traders toward the end of the century led to a loss of political and legal privileges. As the Elmina saw their regional political power diminishing, the rival Fante, with their closer ties to the British, gained influence.<sup>35</sup> The Dutch Castle Elmina proved impenetrable to assaults by Africans on several occasions, but the contingent of soldiers stationed there was similarly unable to dominate locals by military means.<sup>36</sup> Such stalemates often made negotiation and treaty making the primary strategy of interaction employed by the companies, strengthening ties between imperial agents and African polities as the latter jockeyed to retain control of links between the sea and hinterland sources of captives.<sup>37</sup>

The Leeward Islands illustrate a related but different set of cross-polity alliances in the face of threats to colonial order. Here, fear of rebellions led to intercolonial networks taking on the task of

providing mutual security, despite the perpetual imperial rivalries of the period. The large number of enslaved laborers used in agricultural production instilled no small amount of fear in white planters, who faced a series of slave uprisings and reported numerous alleged conspiracies.<sup>38</sup> Fears of colonial instability led to a peculiar situation of improvised independence from the metropole in matters of security and organized violence. Rather than being turned towards external threats, such as inter-imperial warfare, the scarce and often undermanned military resources present on the islands were instead focused on the internal threat of slave revolts. When faced with a threat too serious for local garrisons or militias to handle, governors and magistrates would often turn to neighboring colonies for help—even when those colonies did not belong to the same empire. This was the case on the Danish island of St. John in 1733, when French troops and Swiss mercenaries from Martinique put a violent end to a protracted slave uprising there.<sup>39</sup> An alleged 1831 slave conspiracy on Tortola proved that even the islands belonging to the British Empire relied on their smaller neighbors in such matters.<sup>40</sup> Since authorities on British St. Christopher responded to requests from the governor of Tortola with “no sympathy or aid,” the governor instead asked the Danish commander of St. Thomas for help. Commander Rhodes responded favorably, dispatching an armed brig and a large contingent of soldiers and ordering them to stay in Tortola until “the local planters’ fears ha(d) subsided.”<sup>41</sup>

A different set of networks, driven less by imperial magistrates than by commercial actors, facilitated the widespread and long-lived inter-imperial contraband trade. This illicit commerce was especially pronounced in the Americas, where circumvention of trade restrictions was commonplace in almost all local trade between colonies of different empires, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>42</sup> Regional smuggling became a force of integration in its own right, creating enduring networks between different groups of people across formal borders and tying colonial, imperial, and extra-imperial actors in relationships of mutual benefit. Such trade-based networks often came to shape inter-imperial communities, as was the case in the zone between the Dutch islands of the Leeward Antilles and the coast of the Spanish Main.<sup>43</sup> These microregional networks were not static and strictly spatially bounded phenomena but rather dynamic structures that external and mobile actors could manipulate, provided they were familiar with the geography and locally specific practices.

While formally illicit contraband trade was the de facto way of conducting business in the Caribbean during much of the early colonial period, such practices gradually began changing around the turn of the nineteenth century. A new type of contraband trade emerging in the first decade of the nineteenth century was the illegal transportation of slaves. The slave trade, previously one of the primary activities connecting the African coast and the Caribbean colonies, was abolished first by the Danish Empire in 1803 and then in 1807 by the British, who began pressuring other European empires to follow suit.<sup>44</sup> With British naval patrols leading the growing militarization of the waters around coastal trade hubs, slave traders took to transporting their human cargo in smaller and more maneuverable vessels, often enlisting or buying the aid of local magistrates and harbor masters in the process. The Leeward Islands became a key site of the transshipment of slaves, and the British vice-admiralty court at Tortola operated as a source for the distribution, mainly to local planters, of “prize slaves” seized from captured ships.<sup>45</sup>

In Mauritius and Seychelles, a similar combination of trade in slaves carried on by small craft and the local distribution of captured slaves produced a thickening of ties across islands. Hostility to the British colonial authorities was widespread among the predominantly Francophone planters and traders, not least when it came to the issue of the slave trade abolition.<sup>46</sup> The stream of contraband subsided only when the sanctioned importation of “free” labor from Africa and Asia became more profitable than illegal slave importation in the 1830s.<sup>47</sup> As in the Leeward Islands, the illegal slave trade thrived on the existing inter-imperial networks of contraband traders and with the help of local officials willing to circumvent their own imperial directives to further the trade.

In all these cases, the intensification of trade across the small regions corresponded to significant cross-polity negotiation and collaboration without producing regional political consolidation. Rather than merely creating pressures toward imperial expansion, political pluralism provided the structures and incentives for contraband and other forms of unregulated border crossing. Practices of exchange and diplomacy encompassed the sea. Access to ports motivated political jockeying along the Gold Coast and in the Río de la Plata, and traffic between islands, or between islands and continental coasts, sustained and benefited from political differences, as in the Leeward Islands or at Mauritius and Seychelles. Meanwhile, these tightly knitted

formations mattered more—strategically and politically—than they ever had before to observers in distant imperial centers.

### **Political experiments**

One reason that such microregions mattered was that they featured in a global discourse of political experimentation. It is tempting to collapse the early nineteenth century into the revolutionary period of the end of the eighteenth century or to subsume it into a European story of war before 1815 and a balance of power in the middle decades of the century. But we must remember that contemporaries did not have a settled model of an interstate order, which would allow them to imagine the wide variety of political arrangements as mere variants of a prelude to a world of nation-states or declining empires. In a period marked by an explicit discourse of legal and political experimentation, the political complexity of microregions nurtured attempts to create political arrangements that made sense out of interpolity politics across land and sea.

Federations represent a key example of political innovation, and microregions were especially propitious sites for their formation. In the Leeward Islands, British colonial legislatures briefly referred to the islands as a federation within the empire. The General Assembly and Council of the Leeward Islands at St. Christopher passed a key piece of legislation in 1798, the Leeward Islands Slave Amelioration Act, designed to stave off intervention by Parliament by asserting the colonies' capacity to regulate slavery.<sup>48</sup> Although the General Assembly never met again and its business devolved to local island assemblies, imperial officials continued to encourage the ideal of an effective regional administration. The conceptualization of the British Leeward Islands as a confederation might have aided in signaling the capacity of the Empire to absorb new entities, as it did in 1807 when the Danish islands were brought under British rule for several years.

Here and elsewhere in the Atlantic world, confederation was appealing to local elites because it implied simultaneously a degree of autonomy from metropolitan rule and the possibility for a federated entity to operate within or alongside empires. Such possibilities were clearly articulated in the Río de la Plata region, where provincial leaders embraced the confederation model both in Buenos Aires, which became the seat of the United Provinces government, and in the Provincia Oriental, where Artigas worked to solidify alliances with Entre Ríos and Santa Fe

to form a confederation with its own international standing. Artigas's instructions to the delegates from the Provincia Oriental in 1813 as they planned to attend a regional constitutional assembly reveal multiple political purposes.<sup>49</sup> The document could be regarded as a typical declaration of independence in that it both pronounced the ties linking the colonies to the Spanish monarchy dissolved, and established the existence of the Provincia Oriental as a sovereign entity.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, the instructions repeated constitutional language intended to outline the limits of power assigned to the confederation of provinces. Paraphrasing the US Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of Massachusetts, Article 11 stated that the Provincia Oriental "retains its sovereignty, liberty, and independence, all power, jurisdiction, and right that is not expressly delegated by the Confederation to the United Provinces joined at the Congress."<sup>51</sup> The variant of federalism embraced by Artigas was designed to fit within a world of empires and a region of new polities, and to set up the Provincia Oriental with a sovereign capacity that might persist within and beside alternative political formations.<sup>52</sup>

The same flexibility implied by confederation also appears to have guided the Fante in organizing multiple small polities into a political association on the Gold Coast. The strategy responded both to pressures and incursions by the Asante Empire and to the growing British presence on the coast, and it enabled the Fante to organize in opposition to European power and to persist within and alongside British and Asante spheres of influence.<sup>53</sup> Multiple experiments with confederation preceded the founding of the Fante Confederation in 1868, an event often represented as the key moment of Fante political organization, but that formalized longer-standing tendencies and took place, ironically, at a moment of consolidating British legal authority on the coast.<sup>54</sup>

The insertion of these and other microregions in maritime circuits created not only conditions for confederations but also pressures to recognize ports as particular kinds of political entities. This pattern highlights the effects of British maritime hegemony as a force that operated not only to recognize but also sometimes to create political diversity inside microregions. Ports such as Elmina on the Gold Coast or Montevideo in the Río de la Plata region could be nominally under non-British political control while operating in still-contested political and maritime zones. The situation nurtured political experiments aimed at the control and administration of ports.

Consider the example of St. Thomas in the Leeward Islands and its creation as a free port. Efforts to mark the island as a free port began under the Danish government, which adopted free port legislation in the 1760s, partly in recognition of the island's existing role as a home to polyglot and multi-national trade communities, many involved in smuggling and sea raiding. This change in status allowed colonial authorities to focus their efforts of collecting tariffs on those goods and shipments that were not subject to free importation, in effect leading to potentially higher colonial revenue than under the stricter trade laws prior to 1764, which had proven almost impossible to implement.<sup>55</sup> The move toward free port status on St. Thomas was a gradual one and was only solidified after the period of British occupation ended in 1815. Legislative acts that had from the outset been inspired by the perceived best practices of British colonies were supported and refined under British rule, and when the islands were returned to Danish authorities, most of the new procedures instituted by the occupying empire continued in force.<sup>56</sup>

The free port thrived commercially precisely because of the low level of Danish imperial involvement in colonial affairs. This condition of shallow sovereignty meant that rather than seeing the island and its inhabitants as direct subjects of the Danish king, to be controlled to the same extent as those of other national territories, imperial authorities were to a large degree content with exercising only a nominal political control over the movement of goods and peoples, while profiting from the transactions taking place in this space. This ambiguous territoriality was useful for various actors who utilized the free port for their own ends, either as a space for trading or as a geopolitical and maritime buffer zone between the colonies of other rival empires.

Such experiments reflected and were supported by the characteristics of microregions that we have already highlighted: they comprised politically plural regimes on land, networks of control and cooperation that extended across polities, and intense awareness of and economic connections to maritime affairs involving both agents of distant empires and local shipping. The loose and layered structure of confederations presented opportunities to assemble political communities with the capacity for integration, to name and hold buffer zones between land and sea powers, and to allow micropolities to pursue their own negotiations with other powers in the region without abandoning strategically valuable alliances. The conditions

creating such opportunities also tended, at times, to isolate ports and to highlight their anomalous status within confederations and empires. Such dimensions of legal and political complexity contributed to the reputation of interpolity microregions as global hotspots in the period.

## Conclusion

The histories recounted here strike against the standard notion of a shift away from a maritime imagination of empire toward a territorial focus during the long nineteenth century. The microregions we describe were not strictly maritime zones but hybrid land-sea spaces, for the most part removed from narratives of continental expansion and consolidation. Their central role in imperial politics urges us to consider the importance of the larger maritime context of phenomena that have typically been treated as separate, such as Latin American republicanism, geopolitical strategies of European empires in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, and the eruption of a set of regional conflicts, such as the Fante-Asante war, in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Although microregions earned the reputation of global hotspots precisely because of their volatility, our analysis uncovers, too, many pressures operating to preserve political and legal pluralism. Political actors across the globe were familiar with the layered sovereignty of empires, and even as they participated in political experiments of various kinds, they demonstrated a high tolerance for rampant border crossing, arrangements of partial sovereignty, and the anomalous status of territorial enclaves, especially ports. At the same time, new configurations of land and sea power did not just derive from imperial strategies but also drew empires in, while creating novel opportunities for local polities to expand their influence. Some of the conditions that gave rise to the interpolity regions discussed in this chapter were peculiar to the early nineteenth century—for example, regionally unchallenged British naval power and increased incentives for contraband trade—but the patterns we have analyzed also fit within a longer chronology. Our findings suggest that narratives of a global politics dominated by either the continuities of empires or the proliferation of nation-states must give way to the recognition of a broader variety of political configurations with varying stability and degrees of international recognition that defy traditional political modeling.

Microregions encompassed microgeographies. As the forces shaping regionalism and global integration in the early nineteenth century unfolded along politically patchwork and polyglot coasts and archipelagos, and in crowded estuaries, harbors, and proximate seas, they produced complex geographies that mapping efforts have yet to capture and that tend to fall outside models of borderland regions.<sup>57</sup> Tracing networks of political, economic, and legal connections across polities highlights, in particular, the role of ports as sites for the articulation of maritime and territorial politics. The exercise also draws attention to the actions of port city inhabitants in opposing rival regional interests and composing regional alliances. Set against an earlier history of ports as nodes within long-distance trading networks, our analysis of microregions points to the possibility of narrating world history through the study of constellations of ports, as well as through analysis of the shifting relationships of ports to both hinterlands and distant political forces. This new world history narrative should reserve a chapter for coastal and insular microregions of the early nineteenth century, when areas previously regarded as imperial backwaters surged to positions of global importance and generated new patterns of cross-polity cooperation and conflict.

## Notes

1. Maitland's Instructions to Johnston, The National Archives of Britain (henceforth TNA) Colonial Office (CO) 54/31, 102.
2. Letter, Lord Castlereagh to Governor Thomas Maitland, June 11, 1807, TNA CO 54/62, 180.
3. Even supposedly land-locked Kandians had access to ports and sponsored voyages to the South Indian shores. Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
4. Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2–5.
5. Though see Jeppe Mulich, "Microregionalism and Intercolonial Relations: The Case of the Danish West Indies, 1730–1830," *Journal of Global History* 8, no.1 (2013): 72–94.
6. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104, no.3 (1999): 814–840. It is worth noting that a central work in North American borderlands history, Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1991]), analyzed culture and violence in a region defined by water

- routes and trade, although White did not highlight land-water spaces in his analysis.
7. Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 5–6; Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
  8. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 37–38.
  9. For example, see Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Lauren Benton, “Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no.4 (2005): 700–724.
  10. Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
  11. Michael Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); John N. Miksic, *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013); Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*.
  12. Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Chapter 2; Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, Chapter 1.
  13. On extraterritoriality in the late nineteenth century, see Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1938* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013); Pär Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, Chapter 6.
  14. See, for example, Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, “Magistrates in Empire: Convicts, Slaves, and the Remaking of Legal Pluralism in the British Empire,” in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850*, ed. Lauren Benton and Richard Ross (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 173–198.
  15. Peter E. Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
  16. Andrew Lipman, “The Saltwater Frontier: Indians, Dutch, and English on Seventeenth-Century Long Island Sound” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010).
  17. *Ibid.*; and on imperial conflicts in the Río de la Plata region, Lauren Benton, “Possessing Empire: Iberian Claims and Interpolity Law,” in *Native Claims: Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500–1920*, ed. Saliha Bellmehssous (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19–40.
  18. Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A Study of the African Reaction to the European Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 24; John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 71–72.
  19. This was not a static set of players. Several chartered companies were forced out by rivals within a few decades, as was the case with both the

- Swedish Africa Company in 1663 and the Brandenburger Africa Company in 1717. See Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011).
20. On the diversity of patterns of African polities and their relation to credit networks related to slaving, see Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
  21. "The 'Bowdich' Treaty with Ashanti, 7 September 1817," printed in *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807–1957*, ed. George E. Metcalfe (London: The University of Ghana, 1964), 46–47; Thomas E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: John Murray, 1819).
  22. "The Peace Treaty with Ashanti, 27 April 1831," printed in Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents*, 133–134. Not surprisingly, securing European free trade on the coast had a prominent place in this treaty. For more on the consequences for other empires, see, for example, Georg Nørregård, *Danish Settlements in West Africa, 1658–1850* (Boston, MA: Boston University Press, 1966), 190–195.
  23. See, for example, Padraic Scanlan, "MacCarthy's Skull: The Abolition of the Slave Trade in Sierra Leone, 1790–1823" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2013).
  24. Some accounts place the shift even earlier. See Dale Miquelon, "Envisioning the French Empire: Utrecht, 1711–1713," *French Historical Studies* 24, no.4 (2001): 653–770.
  25. Richard B. Allen, "Licentious and Unbridled Proceedings: The Illegal Slave Trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles during the Early Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 42, no.1 (2001): 91–116.
  26. Quoted in "Slave Trade at the Mauritius," in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies*, Vol. XXVIII (London: Parbury, Allen, & Co., 1829): 140–144, 142.
  27. Lauren Benton, "This Melancholy Labyrinth: The Trial of Arthur Hodge and the Boundaries of Imperial Law," *Alabama Law Review* 64, no.1 (2012): 104; Scanlan, "MacCarthy's Skull."
  28. TNA, CO 318/82, 1–4.
  29. For example, Silvio R. Duncan Baretta and John Markoff, "Civilization and Barbarism: Cattle Frontiers in Latin America," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no.4 (1978): 587–620; Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, Chapter 6.
  30. When the United States acted to restrict the entry of South American privateers in US ports in 1817, the raiders began to offload booty at sea from Portuguese-flagged vessels and, increasingly, to take their captures to courts in Venezuela and the Caribbean, especially at Juan Griego and Angostura. Kevin Arlyck, "Plaintiffs v. Privateers: Litigation and Foreign Affairs in the Federal Courts, 1816–1825," *Law & History Review* 30, no.1 (2012): 245–278; Sean T. Perrone, "John Stoughton and the *Divina Pastora* Prize Case, 1816–1819," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no.2 (2008): 215–241.

31. British merchants wrote detailed, if biased, narratives of river trade politics: J. P. Robertson and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on South America; Comprising Travels on the Banks of the Paraná and Rio de la Plata* Vol. I (London: John Murray, 1843); J. P. Robertson and W. P. Robertson, *Francia's Reign of Terror, Being the Continuation of Letters on Paraguay*, Vol. III (London: John Murray, 1839). On British policy in the region, see John Cady, *Foreign Intervention in the Rio de la Plata, 1838–50* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929).
32. TNA Foreign Office (FO) 6, 70; Cady, *Foreign Intervention*, 95.
33. Aberdeen to Ouseley, February 30, 1845, TNA FO 6, 102.
34. For an example of this new interest, see the lengthy debates in Parliament over the Tortola Free Port Bill and the political economy of the western Caribbean. HC Debate May 5, 19, 22–23, 1806, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 1st series, vols. 6–7.
35. Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989), 155–158.
36. *Ibid.*, 136–151.
37. Edward Keene, “The Construction of International Hierarchy: A Case Study of British Treaty-Making Against the Slave Trade,” *International Organization* 61 (2007): 311–339.
38. Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 94–99; Neville A. T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies* (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 1992), 34–40.
39. See Aimery P. Caron and Arnold R. Highfield, eds., *The French Intervention in the St John Slave Revolt of 1733–34* (Christiansted: Bureau of Libraries, Museums and Archeological Services, 1981), 8–10, 26–34.
40. Florence Lewisohn, *Tales of Tortola and the British Virgin Islands* (Chicago: N.p., 1966), 57; Kay Larsen, *Dansk Vestindien, 1666–1917* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1928), 232.
41. John P. Knox, *A Historical Account of St. Thomas* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852).
42. See Wim Klooster, “Inter-imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600–1800,” in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 171–180.
43. The dynamics of this integration in the case of Curaçao has been described in detail in Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).
44. Philip D. Morgan, “Ending the Slave Trade: A Caribbean and Atlantic Context,” in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*, ed. Derek R. Pearson (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 101–128; Seymour Drescher, “Emperors of the World: British Abolitionism and Imperialism,” in *Abolitionism and Imperialism*, 129–149.
45. Lauren Benton, “Abolition and Imperial Law, 1780–1820,” *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*, 39, no.3 (2011): 355–374; Benton, “This Melancholy Labrynth.”

46. Marina Carter and Hubert Gerbeau, "Covert Slaves and Coveted Coolies in the Early Nineteenth Century Mascareignes," *Slavery and Abolition* 9, no.3 (1988): 194–208; Allen, "Licentious and Unbridled Proceedings."
47. Carter and Gerbeau, "Covert Slaves," 203–205.
48. "An Act more effectually to provide for the Support, and to extend certain Regulations for the Protection of Slaves, to promote and encourage their Increase, and generally to meliorate their Condition," in *The Laws of the Island of Antigua: Consisting of the Acts of the Leeward Islands, Commencing 8th November 1690, Ending 21st April 1798; and the Acts of Antigua, Commencing 10th April 1668, Ending 7th May 1804*, Vol I. (London: Samuel Bagster, 1805), No. 36, 20–43. It was often referred to as the Melioration Act.
49. Hector Miranda, *Las Instrucciones del año XIII* (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1910), 411–417. The 20 articles include text paraphrasing passages from a variety of US documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitutions of Virginia and Massachusetts, and the US Constitution.
50. On declarations of independence as a distinctive genre, see David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
51. Miranda, *Las Instrucciones del año XIII*, 413. Our translation.
52. For more on Artigas's brand of constitutionalism, see Lauren Benton, "Una soberanía extraña: La Provincia Oriental en el mundo atlántico," *20/10: El Mundo Atlántico y la Modernidad Iberoamericana, 1750–1850*, 1 (November 2012).
53. James Sanders, "The Expansion of the Fante and the Emergence of Asante in the Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 20, no.3 (1979): 349–364.
54. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 12.
55. Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Chamber of Customs 400, Miscellaneous Information 1760–1848, VII, "Angaaende oen St Thomas som frihavn, og toldvæsenet deri [Concerning the isle of St Thomas as a free port, and the customs associated therewith]".
56. Mulich, "Microregionalism and Intercolonial Relations," 89–90.
57. Digital technologies may yet succeed in capturing the variety and intensity of cross-polity connections in microregions.

# 8

## Space, Sympathy, and Empire: Edmund Burke and the Trial of Warren Hastings

*Andrew Rudd*

The vast physical spaces of empire created fundamental difficulties for any conceptualization of a unified imperial entity. As studies of the imperial experience in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have increasingly discovered, these difficulties manifested themselves at an administrative level (particularly so in the period before the invention of the telegraph) and at a personal level, as the gulfs between imperial outposts sundered families, delayed correspondence, and rendered worryingly fragile the networks of communication on which the far-flung British empire depended for its day-to-day survival.<sup>1</sup> In the case of British India, the focus of this chapter, orders sent by ship from London by the government or the East India Company sometimes reached their destination only after the intended recipient had died. Horace Walpole, writing in his commonplace book in 1786, observed a military blunder occasioned by such a lapse of communication:

One of the great mischiefs of our possessions in India is the vast Distance. At the End of the Last War with France, two naval Engagements by Land, one by Sea, for which fourscore Officers & 2000 Soldiers were slain happened, before an account of the peace could reach India.<sup>2</sup>

As the example from Walpole indicates, any suggestion that Britain's empire was at this time a honed administrative machine would be very wide of the mark. But what were the effects of spatial distance on the imaginative construction of empire? How might logistical imperfections at the level of material space be analogous to emotional

responses to events around the imperial polity, if such a thing could be said to exist? Was there any conscious acknowledgment of how these categories stood in relation to each other, metaphorically or otherwise? Modern studies have explored efforts to conceive of empire as an imagined political community, but with noble exceptions (notably, the work of Paul Carter and, more recently, Eric Hayot), less attention has been paid to efforts to project emotionally and imaginatively across the oceans and landmasses of physical reality.<sup>3</sup>

That such an effort was made, sometimes heroically in the face of perceived physical constraints on the imagination, is the main argument of this chapter, which examines Edmund Burke's conduct at the trial (1788–1795) of Warren Hastings. Hastings was the erstwhile Governor-General of British India, who stood accused of committing “high crimes and misdemeanours” in his far-flung office. His trial, held in Westminster Hall before the House of Lords, saw some of Burke's most brilliant speeches in his capacity as leading manager of the prosecution and was at the time regarded as a test of the moral integrity of British government in India.<sup>4</sup> It was also, I will suggest, a test of the very possibility of empire as a community bound together by common laws, ideas, and values, despite the physical remoteness between its constituent parts. The trial illustrated the difficulty of representing British India given the acknowledged primacy of the proximate and the faraway in contemporary moral philosophy, to which Burke contributed with *Philosophical Enquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). I argue that Burke's model of imaginative sympathy and its outworking in his speeches on the East India question were his most sustained attempt to span the literal and constructed spatial gulfs between Britain and India. As well as discussing the spatial element in formulations of imaginative sympathy, the chapter also examines how perceptions of distance could be manipulated figuratively to elicit and direct sympathy onto (in Burke's account) the downtrodden Indian victims of Hastings's misrule, or (in Hastings's account) the pragmatic agent on the ground, beset with uninformed meddling from remote bureaucrats. Burke's efforts to portray an empire knit together by sympathy were ultimately a failure and a vindication of David Hume's maxim that a statesman speaking of “distant ages and remote nations” wins less regard than the patriot serving his own country, for the former “affects us with a less lively sympathy” on account of the “obscure” nature of his cause.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the trial was arguably the most ambitious attempt ever

mounted to surmount distance through the deployment of rhetoric and imagination. The chapter concludes with a glance at the frustrations that often face NGOs, charities, and supranational bodies today as they seek to incite concern for distant objects, despite our unprecedented ability to transmit emotionally affecting images across the globe; a power that was not available to Burke.

I wish to begin with a clarification of the sense in which the term “sympathy” will be used throughout this chapter and how it came to be involved in the intractable problem of physical distance. Sympathy may briefly be described as the faculty of mind whereby a person can enter into the thoughts and feelings of another through the exercise of imagination. It is distinct from sensibility, the underlying capacity to feel, and the moral sentiment, the currency in which emotions and ideas are transferred. The roots of this formulation of sympathy are generally traced back to the moral philosophy of the mid eighteenth century, notably the writings of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as Francis Hutcheson, Hume, and Adam Smith. Sympathy depended first and foremost on the awakening of “interest” in an object and consequently, the objects most powerfully generative of sympathy were those that struck at the vitals of the sense of self. Sympathy most commonly appears in writing from this period in the context of the one-to-one encounter between a spectator and another person who is usually experiencing some form of bodily or emotional distress and so elicits a corresponding sympathetic feeling in the beholder, who, crucially, is invariably physically present. The physical separations engendered by empire obviously complicated this dynamic. Lord Byron’s contention that they are sincerest “who are strongly acted on by what is nearest” nicely captures the human tendency to be absorbed by the near-at-hand, should we allow ourselves to be distracted in this way.<sup>6</sup>

Early treatises on sympathy shared a distinctively skeptical view of the mind’s ability to project imaginatively across physical space that arguably compromised Britain’s encounter with India from the very outset. Eighteenth-century moral philosophers remarked upon two qualities of sympathy that, if followed to their logical conclusions, placed any attempt to conceive of a remote and culturally different nation such as India in doubt. Cultural difference was one of these, but spatial distance too was felt to circumscribe the effective boundaries of civil society.<sup>7</sup> Hume argued that the domain of imaginative sympathy was properly limited to the nation state, something he tended

to regard as coterminous with the polity itself. Yet the expansion of empire and the physical transportation of one's compatriots to distant corners of the world caused him to examine what happened to sympathy on the global stage. In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), Hume gives the example of a West India merchant contemplating his plantations across the Atlantic, and his personal stake in their welfare. David Armitage has described this as the earliest attempt to fabricate an "epistemology of empire," that is, to show how "action at a distance—specifically, action at an *imperial distance*—could excite the passions and create intellectual connections."<sup>8</sup> However, the example occurs as part of a wider and more skeptical discussion about the diminution of moral sentiments across space as well as time. Hume in fact states that "a *West-India* merchant will tell you, that he is not without concern about what passes in *Jamaica*; tho' few extend their views so far into futurity, as to dread very remote accidents." The *relative* diminution of ideas over space as opposed to time can hardly be taken as a positive endorsement of an imperial epistemology.

Adam Smith, in the sixth edition of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (published in 1790 although written in 1760), similarly gives the brutally frank example of the hypothetical destruction of the Chinese empire in an earthquake to illustrate the extent to which we are trapped within ourselves and, by extension, our geographical circuit. He suggests that a "man of humanity in Europe, who had no sort of connection with that part of the world" might express platitudes on the disaster and voice philosophical reflections, but

when all these humane sentiments had been once fairly expressed, he would pursue his business or pleasure, with the same ease and tranquillity, as if no such accident had happened. . . . If he was to lose his little finger to-morrow, he would not sleep to-night; but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren.<sup>9</sup>

Hayot uses Smith's example as the paradigmatic example of an inhabitant of a part of the world, distant enough precisely not to excite emotion, and so capable of being hypothesized about in the philosophical abstract.<sup>10</sup> Yet this analysis overlooks the extent to which Smith held that the attainment of sympathy with a suffering individual represented the perfection of humanity. This tragic-heroic strain of sympathy reoccurs in Smith's insistence that no matter how unlikely

we are to succeed, the attempt to fulfil the biblical injunction “love thy neighbor” remains the highest duty of humankind. The disposition to universal beneficence Smith ascribes to the presence of the impartial spectator, the “vicegerent of God within us,” who corrects the human fault of solipsism (166). The impartial spectator explains why the “active principles,” which are “generous” and “noble,” are capable of “counteracting the strongest impulses of self-love.” Yet the “benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart” is a mere “feeble spark”; a vast effort is required to project its rays far beyond the self (137).

British India, in the decades leading up to the trial of Hastings, was taking on an ever greater significance in British national life, but its distance from the seat of government was recognized as a problem in numerous respects. The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II’s grant of *diwani* (the right to raise revenues) in 1765 effectively handed the East India Company a license to govern. But according to whose traditions should British India be governed? Worryingly for some in Britain, under Warren Hastings (Governor-General of Bengal between 1772 and 1773 and the first Governor-General of India from 1773 to 1785), the colonial administration upheld Mughal customs such as the ritual exchange of gifts and titles and the sponsorship of “heathen” religious festivals.<sup>11</sup> The alleged corruption of Company servants, dubbed “nabobs” (after the Persian word *nawab*, or deputy of the Mughal Emperor), led to accusations that some Britons were “going native” and taking on the aspect of Oriental despots. Successive measures were enacted by the government in London to bind the Company to centralized control. Lord North’s Regulating Act of 1777 established a Supreme Council based in India charged with supervising the affairs of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, while William Pitt’s East India Act of 1784 created a Parliamentary Board of Control to scrutinize the Company’s own Board of Directors in London. Some in Britain favored a form of government that preserved ancient Indian laws, usages, and customs, while others maintained that it was more just for India to be governed according to British principles.<sup>12</sup>

Nine thousand miles and a six-month sea voyage away, British India was considerably desynchronized from its overseers in London. The East India Company demanded meticulous bookkeeping among its employees—partly in an attempt to preserve information over the gulf of distance and time—and officials on the ground were inevitably forced to rely on their own initiative when the vicissitudes of war

and politics threatened Britain's interests. For all practical purposes, the structure of empire resembled a dull elephantine nervous system: a network was in place but impulses passed around it with extreme sluggishness.<sup>13</sup> The nabob controversy of the latter half of the eighteenth century well illustrated how domestic worries continually trumped overseas concerns for British audiences. Some contemporary authors such as William Cowper recognized that serious crimes committed in India went unpunished because they happened far away. In Book I of *The Task* (1783–1784), he observed that, “Thieves at home must hang; but he, that puts / Into his overgorged and bloated purse / The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.”<sup>14</sup> Yet most commentators have recognized that anti-nabob polemic always contained a strong domestic element; for example, nabobs were cast in the familiar satiric guise of hated manifestations of new money, brazenly attempting to elevate trade above title.<sup>15</sup> Fears about the malign domestic influence of nabobs reached their peak during the 1784 general election, when sixty members of the so-called “Bengal Squad” crossed the floor over the controversy surrounding Fox’s East India Bill and precipitated the collapse of the Fox-North Ministry.<sup>16</sup> Samuel Foote’s satirical play, *The Nabob*, staged at the Haymarket Theatre in 1772, similarly portrayed the titular Sir Matthew Mite principally as a domestic menace, importing Oriental customs (such as establishing a seraglio complete with eunuch guards), inflating prices through extravagant spending, and seeking to debauch British women.<sup>17</sup>

This sense of nabobs as a threat to the British way of life would complicate Burke’s attempt to harness sympathy for people suffering in faraway India. His newly-awakened horror at nabob depredations in India explains his *volte-face* on East India Company politics between 1773, when he opposed the Regulating Act as an attack on chartered rights, and 1781, when he joined the House of Commons Select Committee charged with considering how “the greatest Security and Advantage to this Country and . . . the happiness of the Native Inhabitants may be best promoted,” (as Burke described its remit in his correspondence).<sup>18</sup> Where he had formerly regarded the East India Company as a bastion of mercantile freedom against royal patronage, what he later referred to as “this cursed Company” came to embody the ways in which institutional intrigue in Britain bore malefic consequences thousands of miles away.<sup>19</sup> At the level of representation, Burke’s aspiration was to transcend the insularity of anti-nabob invective to engage sympathy for the distant Indian victims of

colonialism directly. With his reputation as an exponent of rhetoric, he was seemingly well placed to redefine imaginative engagement with a problematically obscure object such as India and bring life to what he saw as the pathos and tragedy unfolding in a distant land under the colonial yoke.

Burke's own contribution to moral philosophy, his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), is strikingly more optimistic about the physical outward scope of the sympathetic imagination than the comparatively skeptical accounts of Hume or Smith. The treatise, published when Burke was only 28, entered an already crowded field of enquiry into ideas of taste, judgment, the sublime, and the operations of the passions. Nonetheless, it seems to have provided a yardstick for Burke's belief in imaginative sympathy that remained with him throughout his career.<sup>20</sup> The *Philosophical Enquiry* identifies notably fewer barriers to the workings of imagination than either Hume or Smith, instead insisting that "it is by [sympathy] that we enter into the concerns of others; that we are moved as they are moved, and are never suffered to be indifferent spectators of almost anything which men can and do suffer."<sup>21</sup> This is more akin to the modern concept of empathy, for it involves actively insinuating oneself into the life of another person rather than detachedly speculating as to how we might feel in the same situation.<sup>22</sup> Burke locates the individual spectator within a divinely ordained web of sympathy: "as our Creator has designed we should be united by the bond of sympathy, he has strengthened that bond by a proportionable delight; and there most where our sympathy is most wanted, in the distresses of others" (42). In other words, we willingly incline our footsteps toward a scene of suffering, inasmuch as we are prompted to do so by innate feelings of compassion. The idea of sympathy as a universal bond recurs in Burke's speeches at the trial of Hastings, where he would adapt it to the geographical demands of a widespread empire.

Burke's refusal to concede the barriers of distance or cultural difference in the case of India marks out his position from that of either Hume or Smith. This was partly due to two factors, which Burke felt made India unique. Firstly, Britain had personal connections there through the officials of the East India Company, who as fellow nationals, naturally animated the passions of their kinsmen and women. The British public's failure to take note of the alleged crimes of these individuals was, Burke felt, a sympathetic anomaly, for a sense of national moral responsibility

properly ought to apply to them. Only the geographical remoteness of the East India Company's servants protected them from scrutiny. In his speech on Fox's East India Bill of December 1, 1783, Burke denounced "the desperate boldness of a few obscure young men" who believed they could plunder the wealth of India unobserved.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, it behooved Britons to regard the native inhabitants of British India as fellow subjects since, under the various constitutional settlements imposed on India from 1765 onwards, Britain held a duty of care toward the Indian population in its charge. Burke maintained that it was both idle and morally wrong to submit to the arbitrary barrier of distance, but was willing to concede that representation of India required an exceptional affective intensity "for it is an arduous thing to plead against abuses of power which originates from your own country, and affects those whom we are used to consider as strangers" (3:403).

Appeals to the passions to create connections over barriers of geography and culture mark all of Burke's thought on India from around 1781 onward; notably, his speeches in the House of Commons on Fox's East India Bill and on the Nabob of Arcot's debts (February 28, 1785). India's sheer alterity in relation to late eighteenth-century Britain, furthermore, meant that "the very names of the sufferers are so uncouth and strange to our ears, that it is very difficult for our sympathy to fix upon these objects" (5:403). Mark Salber Phillips has distinguished between what he calls Burke's "distanciative" and "approximate" rhetorical devices, calculated to manipulate the emotions of his auditors in contrasting ways by calibrating physical distance.<sup>24</sup> This is an important insight, for it shows how sympathy could be predicated according to a sense of scale as well as the more straightforward measure of distance. Emphasizing the experiential differences between subject and object could lessen the flow of sympathy between them; conversely, it could cultivate esteem and foster objective historical understanding, as Hume understood. Accentuating points of connection, on the other hand, increased the emotional intensity of an imaginative encounter and so facilitated sympathy. What Phillips calls Burke's "blatant presencing effects," for example, his vivid rendition of sexual violence in his opening speech to the House of Lords, were moments when the classic spectator-object relationship of presence was employed. Burke's reconstruction of the glories of Indian civilization must therefore be read as attempts to span multiple gulfs of temporality and spatial and geographical difference through varying configurations of sympathy that depended

on the rhetorical manipulation of perspective; techniques we still find in charitable campaign publicity today.

How far removed from this ideal was the disdain for India among young Company servants, whom Burke described as “birds of prey and passage” who “roll in one after another; wave after wave . . . with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting,” who have neither the social acumen nor the intellectual maturity required to discharge the responsibilities of office. Among these whelphish adventurers, who “drink the intoxicating draught of authority before their heads are able to bear it,” Burke perceived an indifference to Indian society that he saw as tantamount to barbarism:

The natives scarcely know what it is to see the grey head of an Englishman. Young men (boys almost) govern there, without society, and without sympathy for the natives. They have no more social habits with the people, than if they still resided in England . . . Were we to be driven out of India this day, nothing would remain, to tell that it had been possessed, during the inglorious period of our dominion, by any thing [*sic*] better than the ouran-outang or the tiger. (3:402)

Here was a double breakdown of sympathy: in India itself, between the ruling official cadre and the people whom they are under chartered obligation to serve, and between the people of Britain and India more generally; between these last, Burke believed, there should be a degree of reciprocal affection that only the imagination can supply.<sup>25</sup>

The speech on Fox's India Bill reveals Burke's awareness of the difficulty of undertaking such a mammoth imaginative task, but also his refusal to concede the impossibility of doing so. He admits that ordinarily “the cries of India are given to seas and winds, to be blown about, in every breaking up of the monsoon, over a remote and unhearing ocean” but presents his own intervention as an imperfect but resolute corrective to collective failure of imagination in Britain (3:403). In what may be a deliberate allusion to the analysis of judgment in Hume's *Enquiry*, Burke acknowledged in his later speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts that “the scene of the Indian abuse is distant indeed,” but went on to dismiss the “optical illusion which makes a briar at our nose of greater magnitude, than an oak at five hundred yards distance” (3:488). If British legislators were to redeem themselves, Burke argued, they had to match the breadth of their

understanding to the magnitude of the empire, or else “at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimensions of our minds” (*ibid.*). In the speech on Fox’s India Bill, Burke compared the political geography of India with the contemporary Holy Roman Empire, equating the Nawab of Awadh with the King of Prussia, the Raja of Tanjore with the Elector of Bavaria, and so on. He declared that he intended to awaken sympathy by removing barriers to the understanding posed by exotic-sounding names and contrasted this technique with Hastings’s deliberate obfuscation of the situation:

It is an empire of this extent...that I have compared to Germany...not for an exact resemblance, but as a sort of middle term, by which India might be approximated to our understandings, and if possible to our feelings; in order to awaken something of sympathy for the unfortunate natives, of which I am afraid we are not perfectly susceptible, whilst we look at this very remote object through a false and cloudy medium. (3:390)

As well as offering a succinct diagnosis of his own rhetorical methods, this passage is important in revealing the association in Burke’s mind between graphic clarity and imaginative sympathy; in order to summon the requisite passions, the object of concern must be presented as it were before the eyes of an observer with the full force of immediacy, closing up the actual distance between them. To an extent, this was always the aim of classical oratory, but Burke was responding to the unique challenges posed by what, for his generation, was the ever expanding global stage upon which Britain suddenly found its political transactions enacted. His calls for ever greater exertions of imagination, seen by contemporary commentators as eccentric expressions of heightened sensibility, were, in some sense, an attempt to come to terms with the spatial hypertrophy of Britain’s imperial modernity.

Burke’s impeachment campaign and his rhetorical strategies in relation to British India culminated in Hastings’s trial before the Lords, which opened on February 13, 1788. Burke was appointed a manager of the prosecution, together with the Whig leader Charles James Fox, and fellow Whig MPs Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Charles Grey. Spurred on by his associates Sir Philip Francis (the probable author of the “Junius” letters and Hastings’s implacable rival on the Supreme Council of Bengal) and Burke’s shadowy “kinsman” William, Burke drafted 22 articles of charge, which for purposes of analytical clarity, he grouped under four headings: “Benares,” “Begums,” “Bribes,” and

“Presents.” The Benares charge concerned the alleged intimidation and unlawful arrest of the Raja, Cheit Singh, resulting in a popular uprising against the British in the city in 1780; the Begums charge involved allegations that Hastings had expropriated dowries belonging to the mother and grandmother of the Nawab of Awadh, and that his soldiers had tortured their household eunuchs; and the Bribes and Presents charges referred to assorted allegations of corruption and speculation, including the alleged judicial murder of an informer-turned-black-mailer, Raja Nandakumar. Numerous publications hostile to Hastings and the East India Company carried information relating to the allegations in the years preceding the trial and, to a critical eye, much appeared rotten in the state of Bengal. Burke certainly attempted to sway judicial and public opinion together through the sheer weight of evidence. Yet despite the legalistic minutiae upon which many of the charges hinged, Burke’s campaign against Hastings may also be considered as an attempt to redefine relations between Britain and its remote Indian dominions imaginatively, through the modulation of perceptions of space and the emotional connections generated thereby.

Sara Suleri has challenged the omniscient imagination to argue that Burke’s attempt to translate India into an idiom recognizable to fellow eighteenth-century Europeans was doomed to collapse into the unrealizable category of the sublime; something she associates with widespread contemporary perceptions of India as a “land of perpetual surplus.”<sup>26</sup> Burke’s speeches on India certainly employed a dialectic of sublime concealment and sympathetic engagement, which sought to generate vivid pictures out of gloomy obscurity. However, the visualization of suffering constitutes only a preliminary act of recovery to an attempt to expose colonial victims to sympathetic view. This tendency of the European imagination to grasp an object might be regarded as tantamount to virtual colonial possession, but Uday Singh Mehta, for one, has applauded what he calls Burke’s “conversation across boundaries of strangeness,” respect for local customs, and reluctance to impose a “grid of Enlightenment rationality” on the objects of his compassion.<sup>27</sup> Burke’s opening speech before the House of Lords (February 15, 1788) would appear to contradict this line of thought entirely. Addressed directly to the Lords who were trying Hastings’s case, the speech represents his most grandiose claim for the global reach of the sympathetic imagination:

Your lordships always had a boundless power and unlimited jurisdiction. You now have a boundless object. It is not from this

country or the other, that relief is applied for, but from whole tribes of suffering nations, various descriptions of men, differing in language, in manners, and in rights, men separated by every means from you. However, by the Providence of God, they are come here to supplicate at your Lordships' Bar; and I hope and trust that there will be no rule, formed upon municipal maxims, which will prevent the Imperial justice which you owe to the people that call to you from all parts of a great, disjointed empire. (6:277)

Burke is arguing here that with the acquisition of Indian territories, the polity of Great Britain has expanded, and the jurisdiction of the House of Lords, acting here in its capacity as a court of law, has expanded accordingly. The power of the Lords is "boundless" within the confines of the British state, but the object newly brought before them is boundless not because Britain has limitless territorial ambitions (as might be construed from this) but because the population of Britain's Indian dominions is now unimaginably vast. Suleri's Indian sublime raises its head, but Burke does not submit to it, seeing no cause for defeatism in the face of this vastness; rather the reverse, in fact. He evokes sympathy for India through the scale of the wrongdoing ("whole tribes of suffering nations") and the physical immediacy of individual victimhood ("they are come here to supplicate at your Lordships' bar"). Burke demanded an especial exertion of imagination to endow every Indian victim of Hastings's rule with a human face, as though each were standing face-to-face in Westminster Hall. In this passage, Burke seeks to reduce the seemingly innumerable claimants on British justice to the paradigm of a single spectator and a single victim: justice administered individually but repeated millions of times over. For this process to happen, the physical disconnection between spectator and object had to be reduced.

In this respect at least, Burke refused to be bound by the category of the sublime, as Suleri defines it. However, he also employed the more conventional associations of the sublime with obscurity and terror as a means of generating moral outrage. His primary means of doing this was to reconstruct horrific colonial crime scenes that drew on the ideas of terror first elucidated in the *Philosophical Enquiry*. Such crimes involved the sympathetic paradigm of victim (as object or sufferer) and villain (as author of the misdeed), into which role the late eighteenth-century figure of the nabob readily slipped. His earlier speeches can legitimately be construed as outworks of certain of his

aesthetic ideas in a political context. By 1788, the necessity of employing the rhetorical device of magnification in order to make Hastings's crimes comprehensible despite their remoteness from British day-to-day concerns was clear to him. With his co-manager Sheridan's assistance, Burke drew on a wide range of effects to create a spectacle that he hoped would, given sufficient force of presentation, effectively reproduce the scene of distant suffering before the assembled peerage.<sup>28</sup> Two contemporary cartoons published in 1788, shortly after the trial began, responded to Burke and Hastings's rhetorics of magnification and diminution. In the first, James Sayers accused Burke of exaggerating the charges by magnifying a "Benares flea," a "Begum wart" and "Begums' tears" into an elephant, a mountain, and an



Figure 8.1 James Sayers, *Galante Show*, engraving (London: T. Cornell, May 6, 1788). Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

ocean of tears respectively in his engraving *Galante Show: Redeunt Spectacula Mane* (May 6, 1788); audience members leaving the booth are seen commenting “finely magnified” and “poor ladies they have cried their eyes out” (figure 8.1).<sup>29</sup> Gillray responded only days later by showing Hastings reducing an elephant, a mountain, and a massacre by British soldiers into mice and molehills with a camera obscura (figure 8.2). This time the spectators are saying that the objects are “charmingly diminish’d.”<sup>30</sup> Clearly, neither party was to be trusted to give a faithful version of events and the juxtaposed images highlight the inverted rhetorical strategies of the pro-Hastings lobby and Burke’s fellow reformists. These images offer powerful testimony of how different scales and perspectives could alter a spectator’s view of moral problems and their geographical locations.



Figure 8.2 James Gillray, *Camera-Obscura*, engraving (London: S. W. Fores, May 9, 1788). Copyright: The Trustees of the British Museum.

As the readiness with which objects could be manipulated and inverted makes clear, the rhetorical potentialities of imaginative sympathy were acknowledged to be highly unstable. Through their theatrical reconstructions of distant events, Burke and Sheridan sought to direct sympathy onto the plight of India, and opprobrium onto Hastings. Burke saw this as a corrective process and insisted on the universal validity of certain principles of justice, particularly, the incompatibility of arbitrary power with the rule of law. Hastings had earlier used the notion of arbitrary power to defend himself during his trial before the House of Commons in 1786, arguing that in adopting this method of government he had simply been following centuries of Eastern tradition of rule by benign despotism.<sup>31</sup> Burke seized on this to protest against Hastings's "geographical morality," or abandonment of European moral norms outside Europe; an embryo moral relativism which he repudiated utterly. This line of defense was a concealing shroud, and "Mr. Hastings shall not screen himself under it" (6:346). Burke insisted that moral laws were uniform throughout the world as, moreover, was criminal culpability:

The laws of morality are the same every where, [and] there is no action which would pass for an action of extortion, of peculation, of bribery and of oppression in England, that is not an act of extortion, of peculation, of bribery and of oppression in Europe, Asia, Africa, and all the world over. (6:346)

Neither the King of England nor the Mughal Emperor, in Burke's view, was entitled to wield arbitrary power, still less a colonial governor answerable to Parliament. "Law and arbitrary power are at eternal enmity," he insisted, "I would as willingly try [Hastings] upon the law of the Koran, or the Institutes of Tamerlane, as upon the Common Law or the Statute Law of this Kingdom" (6:365), reinforcing his point with a lengthy extract from the *Institutes Political and Military written originally...by the Great Timur* (1783), which he had read during his involvement with the parliamentary select committee five years earlier.<sup>32</sup>

But Burke's moral universalism was not the totalizing system it seemed, for he spoke only of fundamentals and took care to preserve space for variety in local usages and customs; a hallmark of his political philosophy as a whole. By arguing for a common ground of human morality, however, he was able to extend the domain of

imaginative sympathy across the spaces of empire. Hastings, on the other hand, in Burke's view, fooled the British public into thinking that the ways of the East were inscrutable to Europeans, and that India was both physically inaccessible and culturally unreadable. The "geographical morality" defense denied imaginative sympathy its role of moral overseer of the community of empire. The persistent problem of obscurity in the contents of the charges, one of which hinged on the legal definition of the Indian landowning class, was addressed both through the rhetoric of magnification and by subsuming regional technicalities in more generalized, emotive versions of the crime. The Begums charge, for example, was announced as having "fraudulently alienated the fortunes of widows"; Hastings was accused of having "without right, title or purchase, taken the lands of orphans and given them to wicked persons under him" and, through his agent Devi Singh, of having "wasted the country" of three provinces, "destroyed the landed interest, cruelly harassed the peasants, burnt their houses, seized their crops, tortured and degraded their persons, and destroyed the honour of the whole female race of that Country." Hastings personally stood accused of "avarice, rapacity, pride, cruelty, ferocity, malignity of temper, haughtiness, insolence" and a general abandonment of morality unprecedented in a British public servant. "Do we want a cause, my Lords?" Burke railed at the Lords, "You have the cause of oppressed Princes, of undone women of the first rank, of desolated Provinces and of wasted Kingdoms" (6:457).

The charges were mapped into a cross between fairy tale and medieval romance, but this was a strategy for reducing alien and complex legalistic jargon with a view to attaining moral clarity and imaginatively summoning what was far away into immediate sympathetic presence. Burke, in a sudden swell of optimism, paused to reflect on the transports of sympathy these transformations may have helped to inspire:

I believe, my Lords, that the sun in his beneficent progress round the world does not behold a more glorious sight than that of men, separated from a remote people by the material bounds and barriers of nature, united by the bond of a social and moral community, all the Commons of England resenting as their own, the indignities and cruelties that are offered to all the people of India. (6:457–458)

Burke acknowledged the problem of spatial distance even as he marveled at the possibilities imaginative exertion could bring to the ministration of colonial justice. As Siraj Ahmed expresses it, "Burke hoped to enlist British civil society in the prosecution of the colonial government's crimes or, in other words, its salvation."<sup>33</sup> In his long closing Speech in Reply (delivered between May 28 and June 16, 1794) he confronted the question of remoteness in connection with the Begums charge, posing the rhetorical question of whether the House of Lords, "at nine thousand miles distance," was fit to be trying "the titles of women buried in the depths of Asia, buried in the depth of the Seraglio, concealed from human eye?" Hastings, he contended, had sought to "bury" his crimes in Oriental obscurity so opaque he never dreamed the British Parliament would dare try to penetrate it. Burke restated his determination not to founder in the sublime, arguing that nothing relating to Britain's duty of care should escape the eye of parliamentary scrutiny: "If we did not bring this case before you as the heaviest aggravation we should betray our trust as representatives of the Commons of Great Britain, which I hope we never shall" (7:459). Indeed Burke's lonely quest during the Hastings trial can be summarized as a struggle of sympathy against the sublime. His efforts to bring affective simplicity out of infinite complication were threatened on all sides by the limits of imagination, beyond which lay sublime obscurity. This led to critics labelling him as Quixotic for pursuing politics into the phantasmal realms of the mind. It can—and should—also be seen as a refusal to mystify the exercise of unchecked authority.

Burke may have rejected the impenetrability of the sublime as a barrier to sympathy, but elsewhere (and more opportunistically) he used the emotive qualities of obscurity coupled with gothic tropes as weapons against Hastings. As touched upon earlier, Burke drew on ideas of the sublime familiar from his *Enquiry*, comparing Hastings to such terrifying creatures as monsters, tigers, vultures, and even a vampire: he had "a heart blackened to the very blackest, a heart dyed deep in blackness, a heart corrupted, vitiated and gangrened to the very core" (6:275). Such was the vitriol of Burke's attack on Hastings that the editor of the pro-Hastings *Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq.*, one of several compendiums of eyewitness reportage published during and subsequent to the trial, included a "Curious Collection of Mr. Burke's Abuse of Mr. Hastings" as an appendix, while the satirist John Williams ("Anthony Pasquin") wrote in his *Authentic Memoirs*

of *Warren Hastings* that “had this furious, implacable, but *pitiable* man, existed in the remoter ages, and foamed and bellowed forth his malediction, similar to his present mode, his irrational ferocity would have drawn an exorcism from the church.”<sup>34</sup> Even his closest allies feared that Burke had gone too far in his use of gothic horror. One passage from his opening speech (February 18, 1788), which swiftly became notorious, recounted atrocities allegedly committed in the northern Bengalese district of Rangpur by Devi Singh’s minions (an episode not strictly related to the main charges at all); describing the seizure of land and property from tenants unable to pay exorbitant rents, Burke reconstructed a scene of sexual violence so graphic that Sheridan’s wife fainted in the public gallery of the House of Lords in a veritable climax of sentimental indignation. The passage reveals an artful interplay of sympathy for women and children and antipathy for their torturers, who subvert the intimate scenes of infancy into a locus of sexualized brutality:

They [the victims] were dragged out naked and exposed to the public view, and scourged before all the people... In order that nature might be violated in all the circumstances where the sympathies of nature are awakened, where the remembrances of our infancy and all our tender remembrances are combined, they put the nipples of the women into the sharp edges of split bamboos and tore them from their bodies. Grown from ferocity into ferocity, from cruelty to cruelty, they applied burning torches and cruel slow fires (My Lords, I am ashamed to go further); those infernal fiends, in defiance of every thing divine and human, planted death in the source of life, and where that modesty which more distinguishes man even than his rational nature from the base creation, turns from the view and dared not meet the expression, dared those infernal fiends execute their cruel and nefarious tortures where the modesty of nature and the sanctity of justice dare not follow them or even describe their practices. (6:421)

Burke trespassed upon the bounds of modesty himself in relating the torturer’s practices, invoking the sublime to sidestep representations that would be truly outrageous, even while they gleaned extra force from the semi-concealment of his account.

Of course, the power of violence to engage sympathy still figures in foreign news reportage in our own day. Ever since Burke wrote

that “pain is much stronger in its operation than pleasure,” and Adam Smith asked readers to imagine that “our brother is upon the rack,” bodily violence, torture, and death remained potent emblems of sympathetic identification in eighteenth-century moral philosophy and, by extension, the vocabulary of political investigation.<sup>35</sup> Work by Elaine Scarry and Susan Sontag has sought to account for the phenomenon of witnessing the spectacle of a victim in pain, an experience, Scarry and Sontag both agree, immeasurably intensified by the onset of modernity and the age of photographic and now digital reproduction.<sup>36</sup> Sontag remarks that Burke’s aesthetical formulation of suffering significantly came “at the beginning of modernity,” and perhaps we may count Burke as the forerunner of the modern war photographer who brings home the scenes of violence associated with tyrannical misrule overseas.<sup>37</sup> Burke’s position throughout the trial was that no British governor of a far-flung province should escape justice simply on account of the obscurity of colonial outposts, a scenario that would later become a familiar part of the narrative of empire (the most celebrated example of course being Joseph Conrad’s Mr. Kurtz). While Burke was a critic of British colonial practices as they were then constituted, he had no wish to relinquish any part of Britain’s territorial possessions, and in fact he and Hastings were merely arguing about the best method for making British India secure. Ralph Broome, a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and a supporter of Hastings, poked fun at the difference in argument between the two men in his satirical verse commentary on the trial, *The Letters of Simkin the Second, Poetic Recorder of all the Proceedings, upon the Trial of Warren Hastings* (1791):

[Hastings] according to BURKE, has been forming a plan,  
 To map geographical morals for man.  
 Who to shew us his great geometrical art,  
 Fit climates for virtues has drawn on a chart;  
 That virtues and vices, that duties and crimes,  
 May change with the latitudes, countries and climes.  
 Here EDMUND committed his honor and word,  
 To prove *moral geography* vastly absurd.<sup>38</sup>

Refusing to confine himself to the parochial concerns of the nabob controversy, Burke applied ideas of imaginative sympathy germinated in his *Philosophical Enquiry* to widen the horizons of British national consciousness. Ironically, it was Hastings whom imperial

historians have commonly viewed as “sympathetic” in his dealings with India through his adoption of indigenous forms of government, knowledge of local languages, and extensive patronage of Oriental scholarship he has acquired a reputation as a progressive and culturally tactful Governor-General. His own speech towards the end of the trial, which ruined him financially, reflects his own bitter sense of ingratitude on behalf of the mother country: “I gave you all, and you have rewarded me with confiscation, disgrace, and a life of impeachment” (June 2, 1791).<sup>39</sup> Indeed Hastings’s human presence in the courtroom significantly altered the flow of sentiment among the spectators. Suleri observes that Hastings appeared as the only human figure in the otherwise completely abstract plan of the courtroom included in the *History of the Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq.* (1794), a popular narrative version of the official transcript.<sup>40</sup> In her diary, Fanny Burney offered an Aristotelian account of his plight, albeit one tintured with the warm blush of sensibility:

What an awful moment this for such a man!—a man fallen from such height of power to a situation so humiliating—from the almost unlimited command of so large a part of the Eastern world to be cast at the feet of his enemies, of the great tribunal of his country, and of the nation at large, assembled thus in a body to try and judge him! Could even his prosecutors at that moment look on—and shudder at least, if they did not blush?<sup>41</sup>

Thus, even as Burke first advanced his vision, the problems of remoteness latent in eighteenth-century discussions of sympathy were played out across the spatial realities of empire. Any hopes for benign intervention were perhaps inevitably compromised by the contemporary unwillingness to look beyond the immediate geographical locale as well as European boundaries of understanding.

The physical limits of sympathetic engagement were, of course, by no means confined to the period under discussion here and offer much scope for fruitful future analysis. During the nineteenth century, the prevailing mental stance towards imperial locales was one of indifference, as Bernard Porter has shown; and remote philanthropic causes never excited the same level of emotion as deprivation in Britain itself, despite the often far greater pitch of suffering involved.<sup>42</sup> The history of distant suffering (e.g., James Vernon’s work on famine) has shown affect to be a highly spatialized phenomenon in both imperial and contemporary global conditions.<sup>43</sup> The work

of Jürgen Habermas forms a curious coda to Burke's campaign to impeach Hastings, insofar as Habermas attempted to revive Kantian ideas of transcendental ethics to create what he calls a "cosmopolitan transformation of the state of nature among states into a legal order"; effectively, an attempt to realize Kant's Enlightenment formula for "perpetual peace" in a modern supranational context.<sup>44</sup> It remains to be seen what the fate will be of the bodies to which such thinking gave rise (most obviously, the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, and the International Criminal Court) in the face of rising public skepticism towards imagined communities beyond the physical borders of the nation state; the outward limit of imaginative engagement according to Hume. Burke, of course, differed from Habermas in seeking to extend the emotional bonds of a single nation across all parts of the world over which it held sway.

Modern NGOs and charities, too, face the dilemma that where we stand physically in relation to other people affects what we feel toward them and consequently, how we behave toward them. The extreme pathos that marks much charitable publicity material can be seen as a reflection of the sheer difficulty of inciting emotion for people and places that are far away, despite placing harrowing images before the viewer's very eyes. Marshall Myers has argued in his study of the billions of charity letters that are sent in the United States annually, that without a concrete, proximate image upon which to fasten imaginatively, the emotions collapse into the gulf of separation between viewer and the object of pity.<sup>45</sup> This contemporary challenge bears all the hallmarks of Burke's paradoxical negotiation between the sympathetic sublime—that is, the need to raise the emotions to a level where they may transcend their immediate environment—and the sublime vastness of empire that exceeded comprehension and consequently, upon which emotion was unable to concentrate. In crude prototype, Burke broached these issues and found the imagination wanting; yet for him and others, it remained a fundamental human duty to make the effort nonetheless, lest "at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimensions of our minds," which would represent a radical failure of compassionate subjectivity.

## Notes

1. See for example, Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); Thomas L. Haskill's chapters on slavery and the physical expansion of

- the markets in Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (London: University of California Press, 1992); Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith, eds., *Geography and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); and Morag Bell, Robin Butlin, and Michael Heffernan, eds., *Geography and Imperialism 1820–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).
2. Horace Walpole, "Book of Materials," 3 vols. (1759–86), MS 49 2615, Lewis Walpole Library, 3:41.
  3. Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an Exploration of Landscape and History* (London: Faber, 1987). Eric Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) examines the emotional relation between "the West" and China and is an important forerunner for work in this area. See also Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750–1850* (London: Profile, 2010).
  4. See Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (London: Harvard University Press, 2006).
  5. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 11; David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch and L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 227.
  6. Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto 16, stanza 97.
  7. For a more complete consideration of cultural difference and imaginative sympathy in relation to British India, see my *Sympathy and India in British Literature, 1770–1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
  8. Armitage, *Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, 11. One precursor is found in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), where we are told that the Virginia plantation belonging to Moll's "husband" (actually brother) "turn'd to no account at this distance, compa'd to what it would do if he liv'd upon the spot." See *Moll Flanders*, ed. David Blewett (London: Penguin, 1989), 132.
  9. Smith, *Theory of Modern Sentiments*, 156. Subsequent references given in text.
  10. Hayot, *Hypothetical Mandarin*, 27.
  11. See Natasha Easton, "Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art, Gift and Diplomacy in Colonial India," in *Romantic Representations of British India*, ed. Michael Franklin (London: Routledge, 2006), 84–112.
  12. See Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: the British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), which argues that Hastings's rule was essentially predicated on an effort to reconstruct what was believed to be a lost Mughal constitution.
  13. See John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
  14. William Cowper, *Poetical Works* (London: Tegg, 1858), 174.
  15. For literary representations of nabobs, see Philip Lawson and Jim Phillips, "'Our Execrable Banditti': Perceptions of Nabobs in Mid-Eighteenth

- Century Britain," *Albion* 16 no.3 (1984): 225–241; James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); M. O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapter 5..
16. See Lucy S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 329–414 and C. H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784–1834* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), Appendix I.
  17. See Samuel Foote, *The Nabob; A Comedy, in Three Acts* (London: Cadell, 1778).
  18. Cited in Marshall's introduction to Burke, *Writing and Speeches*, ed. Paul Langford, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 5: 18.
  19. For Burke's early involvement with Indian affairs, see Marshall, *Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, 1–38 and Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997), 257–311.
  20. For a detailed reading of Burke's account of the emotions and their relation to human reason, see David Dwan, "Edmund Burke and the Emotions," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no.4 (2011): 571–593.
  21. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 41. Subsequent references given in text.
  22. See Philip Mercer, *Sympathy and Ethics: a Study of the Relationship between Sympathy and Morality with Special Reference to Hume's Treatise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 9.
  23. Burke, *Writing and Speeches*, 3: 427. Subsequent references given in text.
  24. Phillips, *Sentiment and Society*, 254.
  25. See Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
  26. Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (London: Chicago University Press, 1992), 28–30.
  27. Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 42, 21. See also Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 40–42.
  28. On Burke's visualization techniques, see Frans De Bruyn, "Burke and the Uses of Eloquence: Political Prose in the 1770s and 1780s," in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
  29. James Sayers, *Galante Show*, engraving (London: Cornell, May 6, 1788), BM 7313.
  30. [James Gillray], *Camera-Obscura*, engraving (London: Fores, May 9, 1788), BM 7314. Gillray's practice was to feign Sayers's initials (J.S.F.: "James Sayers fecit") in his satirical responses to specific works.
  31. See Marshall, *Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, 39–63. Hastings's detailed reply to the charges brought against him before the House of Commons were published as *The Answer of Warren Hastings, Esq. to the Articles Exhibited by the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses, in Parliament Assembled, in*

- the Name of Themselves, and of All the Commons of Great Britain* (London: Debrett, 1787).
32. *Institutes Political and Military written originally in the Mogul Language by the Great Timur*, trans. William Davy and Joseph White (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1783). On the relativism of Hastings's administration in Bengal, see Sudipta Sen, *Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India* (London: Routledge, 2002).
  33. Siraj Ahmed, "The Theatre of the Civilised Self: Edmund Burke and the East India Trials," *Representations*, 78 (2002): 28–55, 41.
  34. *The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq.* (London: Debrett, Vernor & Hood, 1796), 151–158; "Pasquin," *Authentic Memoirs of Warren Hastings* (London: Bew, 1793), 26–27. Debrett printed much of the extensive body of pro-Hastings commentary on the trial proceedings, for example *Letters of Albanus to the People of England, on the Partiality and Injustice of the Charges Brought against Warren Hastings, Esq.* (London: Debrett, 1786) and *An Appeal to the People of England and Scotland, in Behalf of Warren Hastings, Esq.* (London: Debrett, 1787).
  35. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 36; and Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 9.
  36. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003).
  37. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 87.
  38. Máire ní Fhlathúin, ed., *The Poetry of British India, 1780–1905*, 2 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 1: 27.
  39. Cited in Dirks, *Scandal of Empire*, 123. Hastings's defense speeches in the trial are reproduced in *The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq.* (London: Debrett, Vernor & Hood, 1796), 81–104.
  40. Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 57. Although it is a partisan account, Suleri uses *The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings* as the basis of her reading. See also the pro-Hastings *The Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq., Complete from February 1788, to June 1794; with a Preface* (London: Owen, 1794).
  41. Fanny Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay (1778–1840)*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 6 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1905), 3: 413.
  42. Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Culture, and Society in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
  43. James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
  44. Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, ed. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo de Grieff (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 201.
  45. See Marshall Myers, "The Uses of Pathos in Charity Letters: Some Notes towards a Theory and Analysis." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 37, no.1 (2007): 3–16.

# 9

## A Tale of Three Scales: Ways of Malthusian Worldmaking

*Robert J. Mayhew*

### **Spatial historiographies: Realism and production versus nominalism and narration**

What, exactly, can “space” do in an historical analysis? There is a very considerable body of work, notably, addressing the “historical geographies of science,” but also spreading more broadly into other arenas of political and intellectual history, which offers what might be called a “strong” program for the role of space in historical events.<sup>1</sup> This program, which tends ultimately to be grounded in the arguments about the production of space developed by Henri Lefebvre, suggests that space is not a “passive container,” a mere stage on which players make history, but is itself co-constitutive of that history, as an active participant.<sup>2</sup> As two of the most distinguished scholars who argue in this vein put it recently, “geography, like time and embodiment, is an essential thing.”<sup>3</sup> Their individual monographs have enunciated similar positions. David Livingstone in his benchmark survey of the geographies of science concludes that “the impact of place on science is inescapable.”<sup>4</sup> And for Charles Withers, it is clear that the answer to a question he poses at the opening of his study of nineteenth-century geography at the British Association for the Advancement of Science—whether “geography as a subject was altered in its nature, even in its content and meaning, by geography as setting”—is in the affirmative.<sup>5</sup> Both authors eschew environmental determinism in this regard: the argument that the climate or physical geography of a location determines its science; and yet it is apparent that both are taking space, place, and/or geography as a “real” entity which has the causal power to impact upon historical processes. In short, space is ontologically real and epistemologically efficacious, hence our ability

to trace its impact on the reception of Darwin, the construction of geography in nineteenth-century Britain and so forth.

And yet what is not clear to the present writer is that the case for an ontologically “real” space which can epistemologically “do” things in history has been made. Seen in a different light, what this by now substantial body of work in fact does is to show something that few historians would deny, but which they would not perhaps wrap in the philosophical assumptions made by adherents to the rubric of the historical geography of science: that historical entities, physical and discursive, are geographically differentiated. That entities and arguments vary over space, and that this affects historical patterns, processes, and change is clear, but this is no different from what the rubric of contextual sensitivity would tell any historian. No historian, surely, would gainsay the notion, for example, that ideas, scientific or otherwise, take on different meanings in different places in the light of the contexts, political, social, economic and so forth, in which they are received, nor that such ideas can be related to the contexts of the places in which they are forged. What they might deny is that this amounts to space, location, or place doing anything, rather than the more modest claim that contexts are geographically differentiated, however hard it might be to place boundaries or other markers of spatial delimitation around them. There is an intellectual rationale, then, for finding the historical scholarship which what I am calling the “strong” program for the spatiality of knowledge has produced entirely convincing, whilst simultaneously denying its conceptual claims about space and its role in the historical accounts they narrate. This contention can be seen as arguing for a reverse error to the one with which Lefebvre was preoccupied in *The Production of Space*. For where Lefebvre believed that semiology was erroneous in that it “transfer[red] onto the level of discourse, of language *per se*—i.e. the level of mental space—a large portion of the attributes and ‘properties’ of what is actually social space,” the suggestion here is that a realist spatial historiography has tended to ascribe to the physicality of space—space itself—that which is actually produced by historically-traceable social and intellectual conditions and contexts, things happening in space but not because of space as such.<sup>6</sup> From such a perspective, we might say that concepts of space—Lefebvre’s “mental space”—can act on the world, peoples’ spatial understandings driving their actions (which then affect the material world), just as assuredly as the socially-produced material world can affect mental space, but that space *per se* cannot achieve any such impact.

If one adheres to this position, one can move to a different understanding of what space is, which I would call a “nominalist” one, from which a different image of the role of space in historical enquiry emerges. In the radical nominalism of William of Ockham, the world is only composed of substances and qualities. This in turn means that many of the terms used in speech to order reality are not *ipso facto* realities, a notable example being that “place and time...are not distinct things.”<sup>7</sup> Likewise, for Ockham, “there is no such thing as motion over and above things.”<sup>8</sup> Or, as the later work of David Hume put the same point, “the ideas of space and time are...no separate or distinct ideas, but merely those of...manner or order.”<sup>9</sup> On this view, space, scale, place, and such like cannot “do” anything; they are merely logical devices for ordering our inquiries and to speak of place “acting” makes sense as a *façon de parler*, but not as a causal claim. On this basis, and moving into the arena of the philosophy of history, Reinhart Koselleck has argued that terms like space and place are, then, formal categories not “historical designations,” by which he means that they are “epistemological categories which assist in the foundation of the possibility of a history” but are not categories from which any of that history can itself be deduced.<sup>10</sup> And while the literature about the production of space on which the historical geographies of science rubric draws takes the reverse, realist view, other debates in geography, notably those about “scale,” have been polarized more productively around a realist and a nominalist understanding of the concept in question (albeit they tend not to use this binary from medieval philosophy to encapsulate the difference).<sup>11</sup> That said, and as has been clear by my casual elision of categories such as “space” and “scale” thus far, from a nominalist perspective, for all the differences between the tangled debates of geographers and social scientists more generally around space and scale, they are equally misleading in that both accord some epistemological reality to the categories under debate, rather than “junking the problematic” by seeing space and scale purely as ways of slicing up reality—of ordering events and objects. As such, this essay prefers to lump together spatial categories that have traditionally had different discursive dynamics—space, place, scale—as each is viewed as a narrative and conceptual ordering device performing a similar function.

On this basis, what, on a nominalist view, can space and related geographical concepts like scale do for actual, empirical historical enquiry? The answer is twofold. First, space can be seen to provide terms that “visualize” historical concepts and categories. Historical writing is replete with discussion of “networks,” “place,” “location,”

“migration,” and so on. While it is relapsing to realism to agree with Reinhart Koselleck that “time, as it is known, can only be expressed in spatial metaphors,”<sup>12</sup> as time can probably be expressed through all sorts of metaphorical webs, it certainly is the case that spatial terms have proved remarkably fruitful for recent historiography.<sup>13</sup> When Withers and Livingstone, for example, pose the question “how does science travel—within and between communities of practitioners, for example, or from ‘expert’ to ‘lay’ audience?,”<sup>14</sup> we should be clear that they are deploying a spatial term, “travel,” but in a purely visual or metaphorical sense: the inquiry involved in answering the question posed demands the conventional historical armory of contextual research. Secondly, and more ambitiously, spatial categories can be used from a nominalist perspective to order the reading experiences and to structure the narrative line a historian adopts. In Nelson Goodman’s modern nominalism, they can be a “way of worldmaking.” What Goodman means is that many coherent “truths” or stories can be told about a set of events, perceptions, or experiences. The web of contexts in which an event is enmeshed constructs not just how it is understood, the worldview in which it coheres, but constructs the event itself.<sup>15</sup> As Goodman comments in his most relevant example for our purposes:

The effect of weighting appears in the difference between two histories of the Renaissance: one that, without excluding the battles, stresses the arts; another that, without excluding the arts, stresses the battles. The difference in style is a difference in weighting that gives us two different Renaissance worlds.<sup>16</sup>

More generally, for Goodman, the ways in which we pull pre-existing worlds/narratives apart and put them back together makes new and different worlds across the arts and the sciences. Two of many axes around which this process of pulling apart and putting together can take place are time and space, both of which can be used to bring events or phenomena—which would be heterogeneous under a different worldview—into a coherent system of order. However, as Goodman affirms, “Whatever else may be said of these modes of organization, they are not ‘found in the world’ but *built into the world*.”<sup>17</sup> If this is the case, multiple coherent stories can be ventured for any given historical event or datum, and one of the ways in which such stories can be crafted is by slicing and recombining data from the past along different temporal or spatial lines: periodization, that traditional quandary for the historian, meshed with what we might call

“spatialization,” that traditional quandary of geographers about how to divide up space,<sup>18</sup> makes new worlds of historical understanding.

In the present essay, I want to operationalize a nominalist approach to spatial historiography by taking the spatial category of “scale” and interrogating how it can lead us to new readings—new “worldmakings” —of the arguments and reception of Thomas Robert Malthus and his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), notably as the history of social scientific inquiry has been less well served to date by readings inspired by the idea of historical geographies of knowledge than has been the history of physical scientific inquiry.<sup>19</sup> It will be suggested that the simple scalar trinity of local, national, and global can be used to build three different routes through both Malthus’s arguments in the *Essay*, and the ways in which his work has been received over the past two centuries.

### **Introducing Malthus: A Dickensian prelude**

Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) has established his place in the historical memory for his pioneering work of demographic-cum-social analysis, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). Malthus’s public life was fairly conventional for one of his era and social background: Cambridge followed by the cloth; with the second half of his life being spent as Professor of Political Economy at the East India Company’s training college of Haileybury. In this context, he produced six editions of the *Essay* in his lifetime, and also worked on many elements of the emergent inquiry of political economy, his definitive statement in this area being *Principles of Political Economy*, published in 1820. Malthus’s personal life was likewise conventional and blameless to the point where he provides little by way of sensational grist to the biographer’s mill, although Patricia James’s 1979 biography is a thorough act of diligent scholarly devotion to his shade.<sup>20</sup> By contrast with his life story, Malthus’s *Essay*, published anonymously, and his first venture into print, was a controversial success in its own age, arguing as it did that utopian visions of social progress inspired by the French Revolution would always be undercut by subsistence crises as population growth outpaced resource increases and on this basis advocating the removal of poor relief as engendering the “surplus” population it allegedly palliated.

The *Essay* was not just controversial in its own age but has proved remarkably durable in its impact over the past two centuries, seeing wave after wave of critique and condemnation, but also on the other hand, a chorus of appreciation. It seems apposite to open this essay

with reference to perhaps the most famous literary caricature of the work of Malthus, Charles Dickens's depiction of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (1843). In the opening stave of the book, Scrooge is visited by two "portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold" who ask him for a little Christmas charity for the poor. Scrooge replies that he already pays toward the local prison and the Union workhouses and that this is sufficient. When pressed that many would rather die than be consigned to the workhouse, Scrooge's infamous reply is couched in deliberately Malthusian terms:

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."<sup>21</sup>

Scrooge the Malthusian, of course, is then visited by three very temporal ghosts, those of past, present and future. In this essay I want to revisit Malthus and his reputation through the lens of three spatial scales—global, national, and local—arguing that very different constructions of the ideas and legacy contained in his work—in particular the first, 1798, edition of his *Essay*—have been built depending on which of these scales he is approached through. My argument will suggest that Malthus's *Essay* can be read as operating at each of these three scales at different points in the text with divergent rhetorical effects, and that his reception at each of these scales has been radically different. The survey contained here will be necessarily brief, a conspectus of spots in the complex skein of Malthus's work and in the rich history of the reception of Malthusian ideas over the past two centuries.<sup>22</sup>

## Global Malthus

In his *Essay on the Principle of Population* of 1798, Malthus, as is well known, argued that the mutual interactions of demographic change and resource—especially food—availability meant that population tended to outstrip food: population tended to increase at a geometric ratio, food production only at an arithmetic ratio. The possible outcomes of this interaction were either catastrophic population collapse by war, famine, or pestilence, Malthus's "positive" checks, or forms of voluntary or state-sponsored restraint such as delayed marriage and military service, his "preventive" checks. What is interesting from the present perspective is that Malthus repeatedly constructed these positions as being universal, as working at the global—perhaps even cosmic—scale and as operational throughout time. At some level Malthus

draws here on the broad tradition of natural law inquiry stretching back to Aquinas, but his specific sources for this universalizing rhetoric are more precisely locatable. In short, true to his Cantabridgian education, Malthus couched the argument of the *Essay* in quasi-Newtonian terms of the sort one also finds in Hume's *Treatise* before it or Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* shortly after it. Thus, setting up his argument, Malthus suggested that the ratios he was about to unfold were grounded in "two postulata," that "food is necessary to the existence of man" and that "the passion between the sexes is necessary, and will remain nearly in its present state," continuing that:

These two laws ever since we have had any knowledge of mankind, appear to have been fixed laws of our nature; and, as we have not hitherto seen any alteration in them, we have no right to conclude that they will ever cease to be what they now are.<sup>23</sup>

The language of laws of nature and mathematical universality peppers the text; the ratio of births to deaths are "operations of what we call nature" and have "been conducted almost invariably according to fixed laws" (*Essay*, 48); for the radical dissenter Richard Price to ignore the power of population to outstrip resource growth is "as astonishing, as if he had resisted the conclusion of one of the plainest propositions of Euclid" (*Essay*, 119). Examples could be multiplied, but one more will suffice, as it scandalized Malthus's readers for the apparently unchristian logic it bespoke in an ordained minister and led directly to the Dickensian caricature in Scrooge with which I opened:

It has appeared, that from the inevitable laws of our nature, some human beings must suffer from want. These are the unhappy persons who, in the great lottery of life, have drawn a blank. (*Essay*, 74)

To make good on this mathematical-cum-scientific claim as to the universal applicability of the "principle of population," Malthus embarked on a more empirical historical geography, arguing that core elements of the societal dynamics of civilizations throughout history and across space were designed to respond to the power of demographic expansion to outstrip resource increase. Thus in the 1798 edition of the *Essay*, Malthus engaged on a whistle-stop tour of savage and shepherd societies in Chapter 3 and of ancient societies in Chapter 4, before reaching civilized societies in Chapter 5 and new colonies in Chapter 6. The sequencing owed much to Malthus's reading of the stadial theories of the

Scottish enlightenment literati, notably Robertson, Hume and Ferguson, with their drive to find universal patterns of sequential societal change amidst the records of historians and travelers.<sup>24</sup> This was no marginal part of Malthus's argument. On the contrary, from the much-expanded 1803 edition of the *Essay* through to its final iteration in 1826, Malthus massively expanded this survey, which came to fill two books, the first of which treated "checks to population in the less civilized parts of the world, and in past times," as the heading had it, and the second of which treated "the different states of modern Europe" in a nation-by-nation sequence of twelve chapters.<sup>25</sup> Summing up his massive compilation of historical and geographical data, Malthus opined that:

In comparing the state of society which has been considered in this second book with that which formed the subject of the first, I think it appears that in modern Europe the positive checks to population prevail less, and the preventive checks more, than in past times, and in the more uncivilized parts of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, for Malthus the progress of civilization was precisely measured by this replacement of positive checks with preventive checks that demanded individual and collective regulation and restraint. This was the sequential or stadial component of his argument, and yet the need to respond to the core dynamics of the principle of population remained intact and inviolate across time and space, thereby amounting to a universal law for all the diversity of its societal manifestations. Here, then, lies Malthus's claim to be a pioneer of Enlightenment social science, bringing Newtonian simplicity to the study of society.

Obviously, Malthus's Universalist rhetoric can be undercut from a critical and spatial perspective. His stadial theory—that is, his theory of a uniform set of stages of social development through which all societies pass on their way from barbarism to civilization—encodes the "view from somewhere" of the European Enlightenment *literati*, and stadial theory as a whole has been critically examined by postcolonial scholarship.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Alison Bashford has shown the extent to which Malthus's work drew from subaltern voices in travel literature, especially in the expanded editions of the *Essay* published after 1803, whilst Karen O'Brien has shown in parallel that Malthus's historiography in his global tour of the population principle was unusually attuned to the gendered omissions from universal or stadial history of the role of women.<sup>28</sup> And these are not merely the findings of modern critical scholarship, with

Malthus himself commenting that the ubiquity of the principle of population had been obscured because “the histories of mankind that we possess, are histories only of the higher classes” (*Essay*, 15), of precisely those few individuals whose wealth and power allowed them to escape from the enduring demands of subsistence, which faced the majority. Malthus, then, simultaneously deployed, stretched, and questioned Enlightenment discourses of the global/universal in the *Essay*.

For all that his rhetoric has been questioned in modern scholarship, “global” Malthus, the thinker preoccupied with universal truths and their varied expression over time and space, has resurfaced at many points in the two centuries since he penned his *Essay*. For our purposes, I will focus on two well-known “Malthusian moments” when this scale of his analysis was reactivated in the reception of his ideas: the Darwinian moment of the 1850s and the “spaceship earth” moment of the 1960s. Writing to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859), the co-discoverer of evolution by natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace, highlighted three contexts he shared with Darwin that led to this set of ideas. Beetle collecting and travel need not concern me, but Wallace gave pride of place to their shared encounter with Malthus:

Both Darwin and myself...had our attention directed to the system of *positive checks* as expounded by Malthus in his “Principles of Population.” The effect of that was analogous to that of friction upon the specially prepared match, producing that flash of insight which led us immediately to the simple but universal law of the “survival of the fittest,” as the long sought *effective* cause of the continuous modification and adaptations of living things.<sup>29</sup>

Darwin made similar if more plain comments in his *Autobiography* about reading Malthus in 1838 “for amusement” but finding there “a theory by which to work.”<sup>30</sup> The Darwin industry has, of course, analyzed the Malthusian moment narrated here by both Darwin and Wallace in great detail and demonstrated that this is not a mere retrospective fabrication; the discovery of Darwin’s notebooks shows that Darwin did in fact read Malthus when he said he did,<sup>31</sup> while Wallace’s inspiration was always clear from his direct references to “geometrical ratios” in his pathbreaking “Ternate Paper,” “On the Tendencies of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type” of 1858.<sup>32</sup> Malthus is here imaged as the catalyst for the Darwinian revolution, but from a “scalar” perspective, note also

that the component of his ideas that creates the intellectual “friction” is the positive checks that transcend time and space, and thus allow for a universal law of the survival of the fittest. It was the global language of the laws of nature embedded in Malthus’s *Essay* that was drawn upon in the Darwin-Wallace idea complex. Moreover, this was no mere moment for Darwin and Wallace, a spark in 1858 that then disappeared. Darwin, for example, was still drawing heavily on Malthus when he published his most controversial work, *The Descent of Man*, in 1871, in which he applied the ideas of evolution by natural selection to human development. Praising the “ever memorable” *Essay* in a footnote,<sup>33</sup> Darwin went on to look at the positive checks which would have applied to early humans, only criticizing Malthus for overlooking the role and ubiquity of infanticide,<sup>34</sup> and made the centrality of Malthusian mechanisms, of the imbalance of demography and subsistence, in the selection of human variations plain:

The early progenitors of man must have also tended, like all other animals, to have increased beyond their means of subsistence; they must therefore occasionally have been exposed to the struggle for existence, and consequently to the rigid law of natural selection. Beneficial variations of all kinds will thus, either occasionally or habitually, have been preserved, and injurious ones eliminated.<sup>35</sup>

Malthus, then, had lain bare a universal, global dynamic which applied to the natural world as Darwin and Wallace had simultaneously realized, to the human world wherein Malthus had originally couched his arguments, and to the shadowy worlds of hominids and early humans by which Darwin and the Victorian anthropologists were fascinated.<sup>36</sup>

Moving forward a century, the 1960s saw two very different but equally global moments in the reception of Malthusian ideas. First, the 1960s saw the emergence of what has been perhaps the most influential way of reading Malthus academically of the past half century: Tony Wrigley’s attempt to characterize the “demographic system” implied by Malthus. Wrigley was also drawn to the universal in Malthus, to that transcending time and space, by which I mean here the systematic interrelationships between food and population variables implied in the *Essay*. Wrigley was and is interested in the feedback loops between resources and population that are implied by Malthus, these forming, *in toto*, a negative feedback system where increased population tends to lead to resource overuse, which in turn leads to population restriction in a homeostatic

regime. In his most influential formulation of this negative demographic regime, *Continuity, Chance and Change* (1988), Wrigley suggested that it applied across time and space to “advanced organic economies”: in other words, to all societies reliant for energy on sources fixed by the sun on an annual basis. Whilst the details of demographic adjustment will vary from example to example, all such societies, across time and space, will exhibit a variant of the negative feedback system between population and resources, which Malthus was the first to anatomize in 1798. And yet for Wrigley, and to ape *1066 and All That* for a moment, Malthus was “right but retrospective,” in that the negative feedback loops his *Essay* was predicated on held good across the gamut of earlier social formations, but were about to be decisively transcended by the use of mineral-based sources of energy: first in the form of coal in the nineteenth century, and then of oil and natural gas in the twentieth century. Such resources are not an annual stock determined by the fixing of the sun’s energy, but a stock created over geological time, which can be used at any rate which extractive technology allows. As such, negative Malthusian feedback loops could be jettisoned and replaced by “a new demographic order,” “the era of exponential growth.”<sup>37</sup> Wrigley, then, both looked to the potentially universal, the dynamics of a homeostatic demographic regime, and then historicized its applicability, the result being a demographic rereading of the narrative of the industrial revolution as the “great transformation” in human socio-economic history.<sup>38</sup>

Lest this makes it seem as if Wrigley has—by historicizing it—undermined Malthus’s universality, there is an interesting caveat he himself has added half a century after first formulating this problematic. In his most recent discussion of Malthusian themes in *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution* (2010), Wrigley has argued forcefully that such an era and order as that represented by his mineral-based economy cannot continue indefinitely:

We have been given an interval, brief in comparison with earlier periods in human history, in which to find a new balance. Access to fossil fuels has brought unexampled prosperity to three continents and is rapidly transforming two more. Continued dependence on fossil fuels, however, is a recipe for disaster... Since they are consumptibles they will become exhausted... But there is a more immediate problem. The release of gases which occur when fossil fuel is burnt causes temperatures to rise and may make conditions for life intolerable for much of the globe in decades rather than generations.<sup>39</sup>

And it was this insight which led a very different, “popular,” global Malthusian discourse to emerge at the same time as Wrigley’s academic one in the 1960s.<sup>40</sup> With the first images of the earth being beamed back from space, notably the Apollo 8 images of 1968,<sup>41</sup> came the argument from many that our earth is a small speck, a limited resource at a global scale, which was being recklessly overused by a rapidly expanding population. Buckminster Fuller’s *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969) was perhaps the most suggestively titled response to this new intimation of global limits and does mention Malthus. However, the most important Malthusian response was that by Stanford Professor of Biology Paul Ehrlich, whose *Population Bomb* (1968)—“the most famous population treatise since Malthus”—was the first of many books predicting that, on the global scale, the human population increase was unsustainable and would lead to social collapse, probably by means of positive rather than preventive checks.<sup>42</sup> This was, of course, a rather different “global” imaging of Malthus from those canvassed in Darwin and Wallace, in Wrigley, or indeed in Malthus himself. Where for all these thinkers Malthus was to be read as uncovering/hypothesizing universal laws that could be applied severally to the nations, regions, or ecosystems of the globe, for Fuller, Ehrlich, and others such as the authors of the infamous Club of Rome report, *The Limits to Growth* (1972), a global society was now a singular entity and it was exhibiting a rate of population growth that would outstrip resource growth. If this message was being advanced by ecologists and biologists, it was also closely tied with parallel discussions amongst economists, notably, development economists, whose concerns about a “hungry world” impacted on US and UN global food and aid programs.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the dynamic that Malthus had seen as universal but depicted as working on a nation-by-nation basis, was now projected as working on the scale of the globe as a whole. The global doomsday predictions of the 1960s, coupled with their criticism by such scholars as Julian Simon, accorded to the global Malthus of that age a notoriety he had not experienced since the age of Dickens, with Ehrlich’s book selling over two million copies while the *Limits to Growth* sold over ten million.<sup>44</sup> Malthus’s newfound notoriety as a global seer and doomsayer was codified at the end of the era in Michael Hart’s 1978 attempt to rank the most influential people of all time, which placed Malthus eightieth, one above John F. Kennedy.<sup>45</sup>

### National Malthus

If the reference to “the principle of population” in the title of the *Essay* pointed to its global, universal scale of rhetoric and argumentation, the

subtitle—"as it affects the future improvement of society. With remarks on the speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and other writers"—gestured toward a more parochial scale, both spatially and temporally. Temporally, this placed Malthus's *Essay* in the ambit of the maelstrom of debate about utopianism, which had been galvanized by the French Revolution, most notably, through William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). In terms of scale, it placed the *Essay* as an intervention in debates about the political, social, and economic responses that the British nation state should adopt in a post-revolutionary world.<sup>46</sup> In short, even if the principle of population was supposed to be global and transhistorical in its reach, it was its practical implications for policy and politics on the national scale that Malthus prioritized.

Again, this "national" Malthus can be found with ease in the *Essay*. In negative vein, the *Essay* is laced with ironic rebuttals and derisive critiques of the French Revolutionary experiment for its apparent hubris in trying to transcend the principle of population, these culminating in the attack on Condorcet's "attachment... to principles, which every day's experience was so fatally for himself contradicting" (*Essay*, 54). Malthus was in no doubt as to what the events of 1789 amounted to a decade later:

The human mind in one of the most enlightened nations of the world, and after a lapse of some thousand years, debased by such a fermentation of disgusting passions, of fear, cruelty, malice, revenge, ambition, madness and folly, as would have disgraced the most savage nation in the most barbarous age. (*Essay*, 54)

However, Malthus's main concern was not negatively with the putative recrudescence of the French nation, but positively with what the principle of population meant for his own nation in terms of policy. Here, Malthus devoted space to two main socioeconomic questions Britain faced. First, and perhaps less remembered, was his critique of Adam Smith's notion of wealth in Chapters 16 and 17 of the *Essay*. For Malthus, the true measure of the wealth of a nation was the comfort of its lower classes; something which, he argued, was predicated all but exclusively on agrarian production. Malthus's fear was that, while in Smithian terms the aggregate monetary wealth of Britain had increased in the second half of the eighteenth century, this had had "little or no tendency to better the condition of the labouring poor" (*Essay*, 110) as growth had been concentrated in commerce and manufacture, not in agrarian output. Indeed, as an increasing percentage

and absolute number of the laboring population had been employed in “close and unwholesome” manufacturing (*Essay*, 110), their quality of life—in the main, that meant their access to subsistence—had in fact diminished even if, in monetary terms, Britain had grown wealthier. Secondly—and, as we shall see, this was the “national” Malthus who was to be remembered in the ensuing decades—for Malthus, the workings of the principle of population meant that the system of state relief for the poor embodied in the Elizabethan Poor Laws was fundamentally misguided and urgently needed recasting. Malthus addressed this question in the notorious Chapter 5 of the *Essay*, arguing, above all, that the Poor Laws “create the poor which they maintain” (*Essay*, 33). As the Poor Laws offered state relief, they allowed people to have children whom they had no means of supporting and put those who were prudent at a relative disadvantage. For Malthus, the Poor Laws were an example of state hubris—“the wretched system of governing too much”<sup>47</sup>—as egregious as that exhibited in the French Revolution, because they demanded that sustenance be provided despite the superior power of population increase relative to the expansion of food production. As Malthus put this in a later edition of the *Essay*, this was:

as arrogant and as absurd as if it had been enacted that two ears of wheat should in future grow where only one had grown before. Canute, when he commanded the waves not to wet his princely foot, did not in reality assume a greater power over the laws of nature.<sup>48</sup>

Malthus advocated the total abolition of poor laws and their replacement by county workhouses, paid for by the nation, wherein the poor would be compelled to work (*Essay*, 36–37); this reflecting the attitude that “dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful” (*Essay*, 33).

Even in his own age, this “national” Malthus and his policy prescriptions were profoundly controversial. Above all, as Fredrik Jonsson has shown, where political economists such as Malthus and Joseph Townsend, whom Malthus has sometimes been accused of plagiarizing, viewed overpopulation in terms of natural history and the overtopping of a “natural” carrying capacity, others immediately responded by viewing it as “a function of land use, property relations, and state policy, rather than inadequate food production.” This debate was played out most powerfully in the Scottish Highlands, whose different geographical and intellectual location led to virulent debates about Malthus’s ideas in the context of clearances and sheep farming, far removed from Malthus’s life in southern England.<sup>49</sup>

Late eighteenth century Scottish debates in many ways anticipate the vituperative response to the “national” Malthus in the first half of the nineteenth century, which had two main strands of discursive response: that of the Romantics and that of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Looking to the Romantics first, their response to Malthus was one of all but unqualified hostility for the better part of half a century. While there were diverse lines of response in Coleridge, Hazlitt, Shelley, and Byron,<sup>50</sup> it was in the form of the future poet laureate Robert Southey that the romantic hostility to Malthus’s national prescriptions was laid bare most transparently. For Southey, writing in the *Annual Review* of 1804, Malthus’s success was a pure outcome of having written “the political bible of the rich, the selfish, and the sensual.”<sup>51</sup> And his bible encouraged those who were heartless to the poor in the name of respecting the principle of population: Malthus allowed the rich to see the laboring poor “as cattle,” a herd to be managed. And, in Swiftian vein, what better way to manage them than by castration? There would be the ultimate positive check: “The proceedings of government would be wonderfully facilitated, for John Bull has been at times a refractory animal, but John Ox would certainly be tractable.”<sup>52</sup> As the reference here made clear, Malthus was imagined by the Romantics not as patriotic, as working for the good of the nation as he framed himself, but as the vindictive apostle of the rich, of a partial not a national interest.<sup>53</sup> Southey also anatomized the central romantic contention about the falsity of Malthus’s argument with clarity; poverty is not the product of universal nature and her laws, but of self-interested social arrangements instituted by a nation’s corrupt governors:

All checks to population, till the power of production can be pushed no farther, and actual room for farther increase be wanting, must be attributed to error and ignorance in man, not to unerring nature and omniscient goodness.<sup>54</sup>

As we have seen, it was the argument that “actual room” for increase had been exhausted, which loomed as a specter for those haunted by images of “spaceship earth” in the 1960s. Reverting to Southey, he held his pen for another eight years before returning to the fray against Malthus and his allies, those he characterized as “voiders of menstrual pollution,”<sup>55</sup> with an even more spectacularly abusive attack in the influential *Quarterly Review* in 1812, which he was happy to reprint in his collected essays twenty years later. Much of Southey’s 1812 essay recycles material from eight years previously. And yet the essay is even

more aggressive and does make some new points. In terms of personal vituperation, Malthus is cast as a “philosophicide” advocating death<sup>56</sup> and, taking up on his epistolary image of Malthus as menstrual pollution but changing the angle of bodily attack, his work is dismissed as “a colliquative diarrhoea of the intellect.”<sup>57</sup> The area where the *Quarterly Review* essay moves Southey’s opposition forward, and does so in ways prescient of the Marxist critique of Malthus, was in his analysis of what would happen if Malthus’s ideas were adopted and how Britain should respond. If Malthus’s ideas were adopted, Southey argues that the poor will be left to starve. But where the social compact of the nation is broken, the poor and the dispossessed will have a Hobbesian “resort to the right of the strongest.”<sup>58</sup> And, having shown his readers this abyss into which Malthus’s reasoning would lead the nation, Southey painted a very different picture of the solution to the problem. The Christian injunction was that we should “replenish the earth and subdue it.” Malthus was mistaken because there were numerous lands that lay empty, where this injunction could be obeyed with due humility and reverence, and thus there was no real “population problem” to encounter in the foreseeable future:

Let the reader cast a thought over the map, and see what elbow-room there is for England. We have Canada with all its territory, we have Surinam, the Cape Colony, Australasia... It is time that Britain should become the hive of nations, and cast her swarms; and here are the lands to receive them.<sup>59</sup>

For Southey, this was a response consonant with “the laws and institutions with which Providence has favoured us above all others.”<sup>60</sup> Prefiguring the nationalist rhetoric of the age of high empire in mid-Victorian Britain, Southey portrayed the British nation as having a civilizing mission that would simultaneously short circuit the incipient class, Darwinian, or Hobbesian revolutions, toward which the logic of Malthus’s argument would lead. The choices Britain faced in Southey’s depiction were national disintegration under Malthus’s divisive aegis, or the propagation of nations under his own. Southey, then, advocated a very different principle of population from Malthus’s; that Britain should populate the empty world with new nations in its own image.

Southey’s Malthus, a national scourge, was of course very closely related to Dickens’s Malthusian Scrooge of thirty years later with whom we opened this essay. In both depictions, Malthus was the codification of greed and the abnegation of Christian charity, all in the name of a

transparently bogus law of nature. Malthus represented the self-interest of one group in the nation at the expense of national vitality. Malthus's actual critique of financial increment in the name of "true" agrarian wealth for the laboring classes was forgotten, whilst his strictures on the Poor Laws were foregrounded. Moving into the early-Victorian age when the so-called condition of England question galvanized public debate, Malthus was placed squarely on the side of the wealthy, with whatever violations to the texture of his argument this entailed.

From the discourse of political economy, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels performed a very similar move, reading Malthus at a national scale in order to condemn his logic as that of the self-interested bourgeoisie. Marx in particular was consistent and vituperative in his attacks on Malthus throughout his career, positioning him as "a true member of the English State Church... a professional sycophant of the landed aristocracy."<sup>61</sup> That Malthus represented this class had justifiably led to "the hatred of the English working class against Malthus."<sup>62</sup> Above all, Malthus was deluded or simply dishonest in depicting the principle of population as a law of nature; social laws were not invariant but related to the modes of production in which they were manifested, such that there is only a "law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production."<sup>63</sup> And herein Marx saw two positive features in Malthus's argument. Living in and reflecting on the most advanced capitalist economy to date, Malthus had firstly seen the cyclical, disharmonious nature of capitalism with its tendency to boom and bust, to glut and scarcity (this was mainly analyzed by Malthus in his later *Principles of Political Economy*),<sup>64</sup> and secondly, noted the ways in which this "cyclicity" led to periods when many of the poor could not find gainful employment.<sup>65</sup> But Malthus had ascribed this economic oscillation to the interaction of population and resources through fixed laws of nature, something Engels, in uncharacteristically Christian tones, dismissed as a "repulsive blasphemy against man and nature."<sup>66</sup> It was, on the contrary, capitalism that needed a "reserve army of workers" to function, not nature, nor any putative principle of population.<sup>67</sup> Malthus's false consciousness, then, came from observing elements of the malfunctioning of a capitalist mode of production accurately, but mistakenly ascribing them to nature not capitalism. And by ascribing to nature that which was produced by society, Malthus served the interests of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie: the narrow vision of national aggrandizement and not the progressive drive to socialist revolution. It was against this false ascription of the national and the capitalist to universal

laws of nature that Marx and Engels also reacted in their criticism of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection:

The whole Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence is simply the transference from society to animate nature of Hobbes's theory of the war of every man against every man and the bourgeois economic theory of competition, along with the Malthusian theory of population.<sup>68</sup>

Simply put, for Marx and Engels, both Malthus and Darwin were mistakenly imagining that their analyses worked at a universal or global scale as fixed laws across time and space, where both were in fact projections from the much more limited temporal and geographical scale of the national embodiment of early industrial capitalism, as evidenced in the Britain of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That Darwinian processes of species interaction could be imagined on very different models in different national spaces was also made clear by the example of Russia, a nation that read "Darwin without Malthus," such that species interaction was understood in terms of "mutual aid" by a whole host of writers of whom Peter Kropotkin was the most influential spokesman in the Anglophone world.<sup>69</sup> Such lines of criticism of Malthus, arguments that the Malthusian argument is a delusion on the scalar and temporal grounds that it mistakes the temporary national manifestations of capitalism for invariant global laws, or that it intentionally buttresses the parochial self-interest of the wealthy in the name of nature, continue to ramify down to the present, most notably in the Marxist tradition, where both E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and David Harvey in *Population, Resources and the Ideology of Science* (1974) rehearsed essentially the same thesis.<sup>70</sup>

### Local Malthus

The Marxist position from Marx onwards concerning what I have called "national" Malthus vacillates between seeing Malthus's erroneous vision as unintentional, a form of false consciousness, the projection of the everyday experience of industrial capitalism onto the canvas of nature, and framing it as an intended mystification serving the interests of the landed classes. In both variants, however, Marx and Engels clearly thought of Malthus's principle as "parochial" in the sense of being biased or overly ideological. Both variants also had

considerable currency in the nineteenth century: Nietzsche—“the incomparable diagnostician of nineteenth-century moral thought”<sup>71</sup>—aphorizing the false consciousness variant in characteristic style in his comment in *The Twilight of Idols* that “we must not confound Malthus with nature,”<sup>72</sup> and Hazlitt encapsulating the mystification variant in his comment, the venom and eloquence of which Marx could never match, that Malthus’s system was the “little, low, rankling malice of a parish-beadle, or the overseer of a workhouse . . . disguised in the garb of philosophy . . . in which false logic is buried under a heap of garbled calculations, such as a bad player might make at cribbage to puzzle those with, who knew less of the game than himself.”<sup>73</sup>

And yet there is another sense in which Malthus’s work in the *Essay* might be seen as “parochial”; that being the literal sense that it was “of the parish,” or, in other words, was driven by the local context Malthus experienced and which provoked him to put pen to paper in 1798. This “local” Malthus has not, unlike the global and national variants canvassed thus far, engendered a critical reaction in the reception of Malthus, only being signaled by Malthus’s biographer, Patricia James.<sup>74</sup> And yet in the text of the *Essay*, Malthus leaves clear indications of its more local origins. The “Preface” to the large quarto version of the *Essay* published in 1803 commented that its shorter predecessor had been “written on the spur of the occasion, and from the few materials that were within my reach in a country situation”<sup>75</sup>; a comment that remained in all the subsequent editions published in Malthus’s lifetime. The “spur” in question was elucidated in the “Preface” to the first edition itself:

The following essay owes its origin to a conversation with a friend, on the subject of Mr. Godwin’s essay on avarice and profusion . . . and the author at first sat down with an intention of merely stating his thoughts to his friend upon paper, in a clearer manner than he thought he could do in conversation. (*Essay*, i)

The “gentleman” in question was Malthus’s father, Daniel, and the “country situation” in which the book was written was his parental home at Albury in Surrey. Do these clues to a local element in the *Essay* lead to new ways of viewing the text? Do the more “parochial” origins of the *Essay* in time and space matter to its argument?

Attending to time first, the middle months of 1798 were not quiet ones for the English, and it seems likely that it is in the very specific context of these weeks and months in which Malthus wrote the *Essay*,

rather than in some underspecified context of “post-revolutionary reaction” that we can understand his book afresh. The aforementioned “Preface” to the first edition of the *Essay* is dated June 7, 1798. This was in fact a Thursday, and it came sandwiched amidst one of the most troubled moments in British history in the “long” eighteenth century. For it was in the last days of May and the first week of June that the Great Irish Rebellion reached its murderous climax, June 7 itself being the day when the County Antrim element of those events began and the day when the town of Wexford fell to the rebels.<sup>76</sup> As Thomas Pakenham notes, this was “the long dreaded day, when the French Revolution would spread to Ireland.”<sup>77</sup> While, on the other side of the Irish Sea, Malthus could not know of these events and their uncanny simultaneity with the completion of his counterblast against the radical excesses spawned by the French Revolution, he would have been aware of and embroiled in the climate of fear and paranoia of that summer, as were all of his class and intelligence. For a start, the English remained unclear where a French fleet under Napoleon’s charge had sailed to; they knew it had left from the port of Toulon on May 19, but were not to know that Napoleon was uninterested in the Irish question, preferring instead to concentrate on his Egyptian campaign.<sup>78</sup> Their fears were only exacerbated as their traditionally reliable wooden walls, the Royal Navy, had seen serious mutinies the previous year, “spectacular events” whose consequences were still reverberating through British political debate.<sup>79</sup> More generally, the wheels seemed to be coming off the wagon of British success: they had been repulsed from Haiti by the island’s liberator, Toussaint Louverture, in February and were facing serious insurrection in India, masterminded by the Sultan of Mysore.<sup>80</sup> Under the pressure of events, the British prime minister, William Pitt the Young, seemed to have been thrown into a slough of alcohol-fuelled despond, from which he had only emerged briefly to fight a duel in late May. As a response to this, and in an unprecedented show of loyalty, some 150,000 Englishmen had signed up as volunteers to defend their nation from Franco-Irish incursions.<sup>81</sup>

And, switching from the immediate events in time to the parochial in space, what of Malthus’s family home of Albury? At this time, Malthus had his first job as curate of St. John the Baptist church, in Okewood, Surrey. The curacy was a poor one, such that he still resided with his parents at nearby Albury, all of this within ten miles or so of the place of his upbringing, Westcott. We tend to associate rural Surrey with wealth; it is the epitome of the so-called “stockbroker Belt” where

executives seek rural refreshment from the rigors of life in the square mile of the City of London. Houses in Malthus's curacy of Okewood are advertised by estate agents today as in an "idyllic rural situation" and yet "not isolated" thanks to a wealth of transport options, the key one of which is that "journey times to Waterloo [Station are] from around 53 minutes."<sup>82</sup> One also gains a measure of the place in contemporary society by the fact that the "recreational opportunities" highlighted in the Okewood area include horse riding and polo. But if we associate Malthus's home, the rural flanks of the Weald in Surrey, with wealth, we must beware projecting this back two centuries onto the age in which Malthus travelled its byways. The rural beauties of the area were considerably compromised for contemporaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by blast furnaces that manufactured iron ordinance in the area, using and depleting the forests of the Weald in the process.<sup>83</sup> This industry's last embers were dwindling in the early decades of Malthus's life; a very graphic reminder that resources could be exhausted by usage, as Malthus was to argue in the *Essay*. However, their loss only pointed up the other thing he would have noted in Okewood: the preponderance of individuals engaged in the hard grind of subsistence farming, barely able to make ends meet. Rural Surrey was not the well-connected hub of a metrocentric transport network in Malthus's time; on the contrary, travelers such as Arthur Young in the 1760s noted the peculiarly dreadful nature of the Surrey roads, which left communities isolated and self-reliant. And in that isolation was unending labor and the persistent spectra of poverty. Taking the modern census district of the Mole Valley in which Okewood is located, and looking at the data for 1840, the first year we can penetrate in detail, some 21 percent of the population were engaged in agriculture (the figure was under 2% in 2000), and there were still 33 percent of people engaged in mining and allied activities. Likewise, in 1855, the infant mortality rate for the area was around 157 per 1000, nearly twice the national average, where the fertility rate was 162 per 1000, very much at the national average. As late as 1880, 36 percent of the population were aged 15 or less, around twice the present day figure, while those aged 65 or older amounted to only around 4 percent, a quarter of the current tally.<sup>84</sup> Simply put, life in rural Surrey was short for the vast majority who were engaged in industry and agriculture. The line between independence and poverty was one on which many teetered: in 1802–1803, more than 13 percent of the Surrey population was having its hardships eased by Poor Relief, the figure rising to upwards of 40 percent in some parishes.<sup>85</sup> If most of

these figures come from the mid-nineteenth century, projecting back half a century to Malthus's age, the figures are likely to have been more depressing still in the picture they would paint of agrarian poverty, of high birth rates, and of short life spans. What we see as the playground of the rich and famous was, in Malthus's age, the graveyard of the poor and industrious, of an agrarian and manufacturing labor force crippled by the burden of sustaining larger families than they could afford; and it was upon this that the *Essay* would famously focus.

And then, on a smaller scale still of the home rather than the parish, there is the "gentleman" whose conversation provoked the *Essay*: Daniel Malthus. Daniel was an admirer of and personally acquainted with Rousseau.<sup>86</sup> *Bienpensant* visions of unending social and personal improvement could be projected by William Godwin and ardently advocated in affluent parlors by the likes of Daniel Malthus, but they jarred disconcertingly with the realities Malthus saw on his travels around his Surrey curacy. Malthus was interested, as he put it in a letter to his father from Cambridge, in "what actually exists in nature,"<sup>87</sup> and the daily poverty he saw put the lie to utopianism. The following lines from the *Essay* crystallize the disjunction he must have felt in 1798 between experience and abstract theories of social improvement:

The sons and daughters of peasants will not be found such rosy cherubs in real life, as they are described to be in romances. It cannot fail to be remarked by those who live in the country, that the sons of labourers are very apt to be stunted in their growth, and are a long while arriving at maturity . . . a circumstance, which can only be attributed to a want either of proper, or of sufficient nutrition. (*Essay*, 29–30)<sup>88</sup>

Putting these two scales—the parish and the parlor—together with the tinderbox tensions of the middle months of 1798, one can build a new, "local" analysis of (or way of worldmaking for) the *Essay* and can envisage it as springing directly from the disjunction between utopian parlor politics and the harsh realities of the lives of Surrey's agricultural laborers, and as situated in the very real fears that radical incendiarism would spread from Ireland to the mainland, the drudgery of a life led in the incessant struggle to make ends meet leading to a yearning for a "short cut" to prosperity through revolution. The *Essay* tried to steer a middle course, wherein utopianism and revolution were delusions, but where a prudent restraint from and within marriage could mitigate the toil the laboring classes faced.

## Historiographical reflections: Nominalism, narration and space

I have tried to sketch three “scalar” versions of Malthus, each of which is intimated in his *Essay*, but each of which has a different reception history and imagines Malthus and his contribution in a different way. “Global” Malthus is imagined as Newtonian; as a pioneering social scientist, where that phrase is taken to betoken the desire to construct lawlike generalizations about the functioning of nature and society, and sometimes, as the founder of an empirical social science of demography. This is the Malthus who lit the evolutionary fuse and who, *mutatis mutandis*, inspired the doomsayers and their obituaries for spaceship earth a century later. “National” Malthus is imagined as a policy maker, the architect of the New Poor Laws of 1834, the foreteller of the Great Irish Famine, an apostle of competitive individualism. This is the Malthus who was reviled by Romantics and Marxists alike as the lackey of the aristocracy and/or bourgeoisie, and who is still criticized in this idiom by their modern inheritors. Finally, “local” Malthus is the clergyman and scholar, rooted in Surrey society, whose reflections on the poverty he witnessed there, in conjunction with his irritation at the niceties of the radical parlor conversations being conducted at the very moment when the British Isles were convulsed by revolutionary threats, led him to pen a devastating critique of polite doctrines of perpetual improvement, preferring instead to advocate prudent self-restraint as a more efficacious aid to those mired in the death-defying grind of eking out a living.

In the light of Goodman’s nominalism, my contention is that spatial categories—space, scale, network and so forth—amount to one way of weaving the web of a historical narrative, of making a coherent historical worldview to contextualize an object, moment, or person of historical interest, of disaggregating and rebuilding our stories about past societies. The present essay, for example, has taken the simple scalar trinity—local, national, global—and used it both to inform a mode of reading Malthus’s *Essay* and to provide an *entrée* to the reception history of that work. If my argument has any claims to merit, it can only be because such a scalar strategy of historical reading and narrativization develops new modes of Malthusian worldmaking, both textually in the *Essay*, and contextually in its reception. This “worldmaking” can be seen at two levels. On the one hand, it creates the coherent web/world of my essay itself. Material which, in other contexts, would have no thread to bind it—Southey and Surrey, Wrigley, and the doomsayers—gains

its meaning through the guiding scalar imaginary adopted. On the other hand, it creates a coherent and different way of approaching Malthus and his legacy. But deploying such a scalar strategy is precisely not on a nominalist account to claim that the three scales somehow *produce* either the different versions of the *Essay* we have discussed or the different receptions and reputations for Malthus and his *oeuvre*. It is also not to suggest that these are the only ways of worldmaking about Malthus, nor even that they are the only ways of conjoining spatial categories and Malthusian historiography, as is evidenced by Dennis Hodgson's fascinating depiction of the different versions of Malthus deployed in arguments in *antebellum* America between the North and the South, their respective modes of conjoining discourses of demography, race, and progress, imaging Malthus in very different ways.<sup>89</sup> Scale and other spatial categories cannot do anything as causal actors in a nominalist ontology of history; scale no more "makes" my three Malthuses than spatial divisions make Hodgson's two American Malthuses. Space and scale, place and network, travel and migration: all such spatial terms have been used in tremendously fruitful ways in a diverse array of historical enquiries over the past two decades, but spatial terms cannot produce history, let alone historical events. On the contrary, spatial terms allow for new narrative interpretations to emerge; for new modes of historical worldmaking to be constructed, using the traditional contextual and archival crafts of the historian as we trace the geographically distributed events of the past. Nominalist space leads to narrative history. Whilst this might sound more epistemologically and ontologically modest than recent theorizations of the role of space in historical enquiry, it is also, I suggest, a more accurate recapitulation of what those very works themselves, fascinating as they are, have achieved as substantive historical studies.

## Notes

1. The phrase "strong program" is a nod to the so-called strong program in the sociology of science developed by Barry Barnes and David Bloor. Their attention to social constructivism is one shared by scholars attending to the "historical geography of science." Some of the work emanating from this rubric in the history of sciences and its intellectual underpinnings is canvassed in Diarmid Finnegan, "The Spatial Turn: Geographical Approaches in the History of Science," *Journal of the History of Biology* 41 (2008): 369–388 and Richard Powell, "Geographies of Science: Localities, Practices, Futures," *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (2007): 309–327. For its broader ramification into other arenas of historical inquiry see Robert J. Mayhew, "Historical Geography, 2009–2010: Geohistoriography, the

- Forgotten Braudel and the Place of Nominalism," *Progress in Human Geography* 35 (2011): 409–421; and Robert J. Mayhew, "Geography Is the Eye of Enlightenment Historiography," *Modern Intellectual History* 7 (2010): 611–627.
2. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwells, 1991); Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
  3. Charles Withers and David Livingstone, "Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth Century Science," in *Geographies of Nineteenth Century Science*, ed. David Livingstone and Charles Withers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 3 (emphasis in original).
  4. David Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 186.
  5. Charles Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain, 1831–1939: A Study of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 3.
  6. Lefebvre, *Production*, 7.
  7. William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990), 139.
  8. J. Weisheipl, "The Interpretation of Aristotle's Physics and the Science of Motion," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 530.
  9. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 39–40. The Clarke-Leibniz debate over Newtonian physics rehearsed the same issues in the 1710s, with Leibniz adopting the nominalist view of space.
  10. Reinhart Kosselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 256–257.
  11. The geographical debates between a realist and nominalist conception of space are best displayed in the controversies sparked in the pages of *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* in 2005–2006 by Sallie A Marston, John Paul Jones III, and Keith Woodward, "Human Geography without Scale," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005): 416–432. These debates are well canvassed in Andrew Herod, "Scale: The Local and the Global," in *Key Concepts in Geography*, ed. Nicholas Clifford et al., 2nd edn. (London: SAGE, 2009): 217–236; and Andrew E. G. Jonas, "Scale and Networks: Part I" and John Paul Jones III et al., "Scale and Networks: Part II" both in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography*, ed. John Agnew and James Duncan (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011): 387–403 and 404–414.
  12. Kosselleck, *Futures Past*, 260; see also Reinhart Kosselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 6–7. A similar sense of the inescapability of spatial metaphors as a realist grounding for historical inquiry surfaces in Philip Ethington, "Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History," *Rethinking History* 11 (2007): 465–493.
  13. See John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of the Past: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) for an extensive use of spatial terminology/metaphors (signposted in the title) to address how historians practice their craft. For a more reflective and philosophical approach to the same topic, see now Mark Salber Phillips, *On Historical Distance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

14. Withers and Livingstone, "Thinking Geographically," 2.
15. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978); see also Goodman's *The Structure of Appearance*, 3rd edn. (Berlin: Springer, 1977).
16. *Ibid.*, 101–102.
17. *Ibid.*, 14 (emphasis in original). The claims in the previous sentences are made in Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 7–8 and 13–14.
18. Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) strongly revitalized this conceptual debate about spatialization. Having pulled apart the traditional geographical divisions we deploy, of course, Lewis and Wigen try to reconstruct them in their concluding chapter in ways they deem more in tune with socio-economic realities. From the present, nominalist, perspective theirs is but one further worldmaking whose claims to superiority only make sense within their own logic of unpicking and reassembling.
19. Although the emergent field of "global intellectual history" is partly remedying this for the history of social science, particularly in the areas of political thought, economics and law: see David Armitage, *The Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Darrin McMahon and Samuel Moyn, ed., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); and Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
20. Patricia James, *Population Malthus: His Life and Times* (London: Routledge, 1979).
21. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas writings*, ed. Michael Slater (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003), 38–39.
22. For extended analyses of Malthus's argumentation in the *Essay*, see Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), part III; A. M. C. Waterman, *Revolution, Economics and Religion: Christian Political Economy, 1798–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of Thomas Robert Malthus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). For more thorough histories of the reception of Malthus's ideas, see Kenneth Smith, *The Malthusian Controversy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951); Derek Hoff, *The State and the Stork: The Population Debate and US Policy Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); and Robert J. Mayhew, *Malthus: The Life and Legacies of an Untimely Prophet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
23. Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Vol. 1, in E. A. Wrigley and David Souden, eds., *The Works of Thomas Robert Malthus* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1986), 8. All subsequent references to the 1798 edition of the *Essay* are to this version, by page number, in the text.
24. For discussions of stadial theory, see: J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Volume 4: Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, eds., *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth Century Political Thought* (Cambridge:

- Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. Chapters 5 and 8; Robert Wokler, "Anthropology and Conjectural History in the Enlightenment," in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains*, ed. Christopher Fox et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 31–52; and Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni, eds., *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
25. Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. Patricia James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for The Royal Economic Society, 1989), 1: 9 and 148.
  26. *Ibid.*, 1:304.
  27. I allude, of course, to Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). See for postcolonialism, Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, eds., *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
  28. Alison Bashford, "Malthus and Colonial History," *Journal of Australian Studies* 36 (2012): 99–110; and Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 201–236.
  29. Andrew Berry, ed., *Infinite Tropics: An Alfred Russel Wallace Anthology* (London: Verso, 2003), 68–69.
  30. Charles Darwin, *Autobiographies*, ed. Michael Neve and Sharon Messenger (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), 2.
  31. On this relationship, see Sandra Herbert, "Darwin, Malthus and Selection," *Journal of the History of Biology* 1 (1971): 209–217; Peter Bowler, "Malthus, Darwin and the Concept of Struggle," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976): 631–650; and Robert M. Young, "Malthus and the Evolutionists: the Common Context of Biological and Social Theory," *Past and Present* 43 (1969): 109–145.
  32. The Ternate paper is reprinted in Berry, ed., *Infinite Tropics*, 52–62. See especially 53–54 for Wallace's deployment of Malthusian terms. The paper in which Darwin and Wallace jointly announced the core ideas of evolution by natural selection, also specifically styles its argument as "the doctrine of Malthus applied in most cases with tenfold force." See Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, "On the Tendency of Species to Form Varieties, and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection," (1858) in *Charles Darwin: Shorter Publications, 1829–1883*, ed. John van Whye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 282–296, quote at 284.
  33. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, ed. John Tyler and Robert May (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 131.
  34. *Ibid.*, 134.
  35. *Ibid.*, 136.
  36. For more on Malthus and Victorian anthropology, see George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 220–222; and Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 156–184. Malthus's role in Victorian debate more generally is addressed in Piers Hale, *Political Descent: Malthus, Mutualism and the Politics of Evolution in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

37. E. A. Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 67–68.
38. The phrase is, of course, Karl Polanyi's in *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York: Farrar & Reinhart, 1944). Wrigley's argument has proved enormously influential and structures the binary between a historical, "Malthusian," socioeconomic regime and an industrial one, which broke the Malthusian shackles offered in global economic histories by Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Edward Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers: How Economies Have Developed through Natural Resource Exploitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Oded Galor, *Unified Growth Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
39. E. A. Wrigley, *Energy and the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 247–248.
40. For this era in the reception of Malthus, see Björn-Ola Linnér, *The Return of Malthus: Environmentalism and Post-War Population-Resource Crises* (Isle of Harris: White Horse Press, 2003); Thomas Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012); and Ronald W. Greene, *Malthusian Worlds: U.S. Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999).
41. Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), Chapter 9.
42. Hoff, *State and Stork*, 165.
43. See Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Peter Donaldson, *Nature against Us: The United States and the World Population Crisis, 1965–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Richard Symonds and Michael Carder, *The United Nations and the Population Question 1945–1970* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); and Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), especially Part IV.
44. Sales figures for Ehrlich's Population Bomb are taken from: Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich, "The Population Bomb Revisited," *Electronic Journal of Sustainable Development* 1 (2009): 63–71. For the debate between Simon and Ehrlich, see Paul Sabin, *The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and Our Gamble over Earth's Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).
45. Michael F. Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* (New York: Carol Publishing, 1978).
46. Obviously there are debates over what, conceptually and historically, it means to talk of "nations" and nationalism in this era—see, for example, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson—but the nominalist scalar approach of this essay holds good regardless of one's position on these questions.
47. Malthus, *Essay*, ed. James, 1: 140.

48. *Ibid.*, 1: 361.
49. Frederik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 188–212, quote at 195. See also Philipp Lepenies, “Of Goats and Dogs: Joseph Townsend and the Idealisation of Markets—A Decisive Episode in the History of Economics,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 38 (2014): 447–457.
50. For Coleridge and Wordsworth on Malthus, see Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of “Culture”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. Chapter 1. For the Shelleys and Byron, see Margaret McLane, *Romanticism and the Human Sciences: Poetry, Population, and the Discourse of the Species* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. Chapters 3 and 4.
51. Robert Southey, “Review,” *Annual Review*, January 1804, reprinted in *Population: Contemporary Responses to Malthus*, ed. Andrew Pyle (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), 116–137, quote at 129.
52. *Ibid.*, 136; see also Robert Southey, *New Letters*, ed. Kenneth Curry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 1: 351.
53. On these popular images of English national identity at this time, see Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
54. Southey, “Review,” 128.
55. Southey, *New Letters*, 1: 357.
56. Robert Southey, *Essays, Moral and Political* (London: John Murray, 1832), 1: 149.
57. *Ibid.*, 1: 246.
58. *Ibid.*, 1: 94.
59. *Ibid.*, 1: 154.
60. *Ibid.*, 1: 155.
61. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* (1861–1863), cited in Ronald Meek, ed., *Marx and Engels on Malthus* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953), 116–117.
62. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels*, 123.
63. Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1 (1867), cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels*, 87–88.
64. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels on Malthus*, 124.
65. Engels, *Condition of the Working Classes in Manchester* (1845), cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels on Malthus*, 76–78.
66. Engels, *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* (1844), cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels on Malthus*, 60.
67. Engels, *Condition of the Working Classes in Manchester*, cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels on Malthus*, 78.
68. Engels, Letter to Lavrov, 1875, cited in Meek, *Marx and Engels on Malthus*, 176.
69. Daniel P. Todes, *Darwin without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Evolutionary Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). For more spatially varied readings of Darwin, see Ronald Numbers and John Stenhouse, eds., *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

70. Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963); David Harvey, "Population, Resources and the Ideology of Science," *Economic Geography* 50 (1974): 256–277. Thompson, in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, argued that "the Victorian bourgeoisie had constructed from bits of Adam Smith and Ricardo, Bentham and Malthus a cast-iron theoretical system . . . to justify and perpetuate exploitation," cited in Donald Winch, *Wealth and Life: Essays on the Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1848–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 376.
71. Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 90.
72. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 86–87. My thanks to Pepe Romanillos for drawing this quotation to my attention.
73. William Hazlitt, *Reply to the Essay on Population* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807), 19.
74. James, *Population Malthus*.
75. Malthus, *Essay*, ed. James, 1:1.
76. Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The Story of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London: Phoenix Press edition, 1992), 172.
77. *Ibid.*, 180.
78. *Ibid.*, 243–244; and Hugh Gough, "The Crisis Year: Europe and the Atlantic in 1798," in *The Irish Rebellion of 1798: A Bicentenary Perspective*, ed., Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 544–547.
79. Nicholas Rodger, "Mutiny or Subversion? Spithead and the Nore," in Bartlett et al., *Irish Rebellion of 1798*, 549.
80. See Raymond Postgate, *Story of a Year: 1798* (London: Prentice Hall, 1969), 179ff and 215–219.
81. Pakenham, *Year of Liberty*, 233.
82. Savills Estate Agents, Sales Particulars for Okewood Manor at: <http://residentialsearch.savills.co.uk/property-detail/287098>. Last accessed January 20, 2012.
83. Henry Malden, *A History of Surrey* (London: Eliot Stock, 1905), 260–277.
84. Data taken from "A Vision of Britain" website at: <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>. Last accessed July 9, 2014.
85. Malden, *History of Surrey*, 289–290.
86. James, *Population Malthus*, 10–14.
87. Malthus to Daniel Malthus, February 11, 1786, in John Pullen and Trevor Hughes Parry, eds. *T. R. Malthus: The Unpublished Papers in the Collection of Kanto Gakuen University Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41.
88. James, *Population Malthus*, 43 also draws attention to the possible local and experiential origins of this passage.
89. Dennis Hodgson, "Malthus' *Essay on Population* and the American Debate over Slavery," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009): 742–770.

# 10

## The Uses of Space in Early Modern History—An Afterword

*Beat Kümin*

This stimulating collection underlines the appeal that “space” continues to hold for a wide variety of scholars. Intersecting with a more general “cultural turn” across the humanities and social sciences, it has firmly established itself as an academic field. Ever more aspects are explored in special journal issues, conference proceedings, and essay collections, with urban society, religion, politics, and topography among those examined most recently.<sup>1</sup> There are monographic surveys illustrating how spatial perspectives can shed fresh light on classic historical themes like state building or confessional change and introductions aimed at a general audience.<sup>2</sup> Signs of institutionalization include theoretical schools, research clusters, and dedicated university positions.<sup>3</sup> The distinctive niche of this volume is a close focus on “uses,” both in terms of how space informs scholarly approaches in the present and how spatial perceptions served practical and ideological purposes in the past.<sup>4</sup> While the former represents one of the key questions of the field as a whole, the latter sets the challenging task of not only reconstructing *historical* ideas about space, but also tracing their application in specific periods, here particularly the centuries between c. 1500 and 1850.

Each of the preceding essays engages with distinct contexts, historiographies, and issues that deserve much more detailed attention than is possible in a short comment of this kind. Complementing the editorial introduction, however, the following four general aspects shall be discussed here: coverage, “uses,” conclusions, and wider issues.<sup>5</sup>

Starting with matters of *content*, disciplinary orientations range from archaeology to geography; religion to science; legal to cultural history. The scale of analysis is equally varied: local settings like houses, churches and cities; regional units in the Balkans, Caribbean, and West

Africa; Empires run by the British, Habsburgs, and Ottomans; even an ingenious combination of multiple levels (Mayhew). Even so, three themes stand out for me in this collection: the negotiation of gender relations (most prominently in the studies of English “domestic” and “religious” sites by Johnson and Flather), the limits of political control in early modern empires (demonstrated with particular reference to borderlands in Norton, and Benton and Mulich<sup>6</sup>), and the formation of period discourses (regarding the political, scientific, legal and demographic spheres in the contributions of Keenan, Heffernan, Rudd and Mayhew respectively). All authors rely on qualitative methods based on fresh interpretations of written, pictorial and material evidence—pamphlets, building plans, court records, correspondence, ego-documents—rather than attempts at quantification, visualization, or mapping.<sup>7</sup> As can be argued with reference to Geographic Information Systems, the latter have their specific merits (e.g., in terms of presenting vast amounts of complex data in two- or three-dimensional models), but they tend to be snapshots with a limited capacity to answer the questions many historians are particularly interested in: the dynamics of power relations, divergences in individual/social perceptions, shorter- and longer-term evolutions.<sup>8</sup> Conceptually, contributors prefer the “relational” constitution (as postulated by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz already around 1700) or “social production” model (variously defined by modern scholars like Henri Lefebvre and Martina Löw) to an “absolute” conception of space (in the tradition of Isaac Newton).<sup>9</sup> Yet there are different interpretations of the role of “things” and physical environments within this constitution process: Johnson ranks it highly, Mayhew not at all. For the former, corporal movements like sweeping and objects like talismans play important parts on their own; for the latter, space cannot “do” anything but visualizing *our* concepts and structuring *our* narrative. One conspicuous thematic absence is the notion of a structural transformation of the public sphere in this period, perhaps because it is so frequently addressed elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

Second, how is space *used* by these scholars as an analytical tool? Johnson and Flather zoom in on the microsites of homes and parish churches with particular emphasis on lived experience and spatial orderings. Rather than the fixed gender roles, linear developments and social hierarchies associated with early modern advice books and scholarly concepts like “patriarchy” and “separate spheres,” they find much female agency, contestation, and dynamic adaptation.<sup>11</sup> Building on Richard Rorty, Norton takes an anti-representationalist stance—“our concepts of space, the means by which we conceptualize, delineate,

and divide up geographical, territorial, and political space, are no more fundamental or 'given' than any of our other conceptual categories that we use to impose order on, and make sense of, the world"—to uncover the dynamic grass-roots loyalties and affiliations in the liminal zone between two European superpowers, producing evidence of multiple identities and situational alliances. This approach has many similarities to that forged by Benton and Mulich out of recent developments in borderland, maritime, and postcolonial historiographies. Keenan exemplifies how the study of landscapes and settlement planning can deepen our understanding of political regimes, while Heffernan examines spatial discourses for clues about the evolution and differentiation of modern academic disciplines. Rudd interrogates connections between individual perceptions of distant polities and diverging ideas of how they should be governed. Last but not least, Mayhew demonstrates how scalar analysis can help scholars uncover multi-layered spatial influences on their primary sources.

As for *period uses*, the contributions leave no doubt that space informed both experience and agency in early modern times. Women were acutely aware of their positioning within local society as well as of the tangible benefits of striving for a more prestigious pew in the key "public space" of the church.<sup>12</sup> Imperial governors fully recognized the "tyranny of distance" and the limitations it imposed on proactive rule. Traders, soldiers, landowners, and marginal groups in borderland zones and microregions knew who was officially in charge, but equally how political demarcations could be overcome through cross-border interactions and informal experiments. Members of the French scientific establishment—divided into vertical/celestial astronomy and horizontal/secular geography—clashed over the best possible representation of space on maps, not least with a view to gaining control over a discipline and its ruling establishment. Peter the Great, in turn, drew on personal travel experience to choose Amsterdam as the blueprint for Russia's new capital on the Baltic shore. Here, dogged determination transformed a naturally unsuitable landscape to convey a more "modern" political vision. The city's punctuation with churches and religious symbols, furthermore, reflected another source of inspiration: Rome. In studying the more or less contemporary historical figures of Warren Hastings, Edmund Burke, and Thomas Malthus, finally, we get an impression of how thinking on different scales—the local/parochial, territorial/national and imperial/global—shaped distinctive worldviews and different personal objectives.

Individually, the contributions thus arrive at a multitude of interesting findings. Taken together, one powerful *conclusion* prevails: “fluidity.” Proceeding beyond the level of governing elites and their official, published discourses, the authors uncover the inherent instability of spatial hierarchies, authorities, and identities; of gender spheres; political boundaries; regional networks; and the meanings associated with particular places. This message is powerful and well substantiated, but is it perhaps a little too strong and one-sided? In order to function, after all, societies need a minimum of agreed upon rules, established modes of communication, and (arguably) spatial demarcations. Whatever the opportunities for political transcendence and subversion in specific situations, the sheer territorial expanse of a country like Russia, the (comparatively) effective command of the waves by the British navy, and the distinct legal frameworks of individual towns and villages were “tangibles” to be reckoned with. Similar points could be made with regard to the spatial manifestations of economic and religious power.

With a view to current debates in the field as a whole, four wider *issues* shall also be briefly touched upon: the complex relationship between the material and immaterial dimensions; the vexed question of terminology; the specific place of “early modernity” in the history of space; and the “value added” by applying spatial approaches to the past in general.

The *material world* is by no means absent from these pages (dust and dirt in the English vernacular house; scuffles during church services; abject devastation of paupers in Malthus’s parish; the adverse terrain faced by the builders of St Petersburg), but on balance, engagement with representation, discourse and mental worlds is rather more extensive. This has previously been noted as a concomitant of the cultural turn and the integration of the two dimensions remains challenging.<sup>13</sup> Would it be helpful to, say, take account of the size, shape, and ornamentation of pews; the topographical location and interior layout of the Paris Academy of Science; the physical travel experiences of Burke and Hastings?

As for *terminology*, there have been numerous attempts to promote consistency and clarity across periods and disciplines. The most famous example is Lefebvre’s trilogy of ‘spatial practice,’ “representation of space,” and “representational space”; but many observers—including this writer—have found it somewhat difficult to disentangle.<sup>14</sup> Demarcations that are too rigid, for example, between an invariable/neutral physical “environment” and historicized/meaningful cultural “place” would surely be unsatisfactory, but so would the abandoning

of any attempt at enhancing clarity of expression, especially given the desirability of interdisciplinary exchange. In a fresh attack on the loose use of vocabulary in the field (and—rather as emphasized here by Mayhew—the lack of any evidence or conceptualization of the actual “agency” of space), Leif Jerram recently proposed a revised layering in which “space” refers to the “proximate disposition of things in relation to each other,” “site” to the “location of things on the earth’s surface” and “place” to “values, beliefs, codes and practices that surround a particular location.” In essence, he calls for a theoretically satisfactory accounting for “space” in the historical process or to stop using the term altogether.<sup>15</sup> However, should the location and disposition of objects not be classed as features of the *same* physical framework rather than as separate categories? My inclination, I fear, is toward yet another tripartite model: “location” for a specific position within a current or historical system of organization/measurement (for instance as defined by coordinates on a modern map or a position on the Ptolemean spheres); “place” for a location with a broadly accepted set of functions, furnishings and meanings (e.g., a church or market square, but also a metaphysical concept like Purgatory); and “space” for the relational situating of humans, environmental features, and objects in people’s minds. The first term thus refers to universally identifiable points, the second to social interpretations, the third to idiosyncratic imaginations. Such a model affords a certain agency to “things” (in that the presence/absence of, say, falling apples, or crucifixes affect the ways in which individuals like “Newton” or groups like “Christians” perceive their surroundings), thus helping us integrate the material, social, and mental components of space constitution. The search for the perfect solution, no doubt, continues.

What was particularly “*early modern*” about the practices and processes observed in this volume? This is naturally hard to assess given the (perfectly reasonable) limitation to one period, but there are numerous leads in the contributions: transformations wrought by the first mass/distance medium of print (Johnson); the enhanced socio-political significance of religious sites in the confessional age (Flather; Keenan); the widening of horizons through state formation and European expansion (Benton and Mulich; Rudd); growing interactions between local, regional and global concerns (Norton; Mayhew); clashes between metaphysical and secular views of the universe (Heffernan).<sup>16</sup> But how should we assess the “feel” of these centuries overall? In their afterword to a comparable collection, Marko Lamberg and Marko Hakanen characterize space as really “an obstacle

more than anything" in pre-industrial times.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, mobility and information flows have increased dramatically since, but from a period perspective, one could arguably make a stronger case for an age of opportunity and expansion. Cartographic campaigns, road-building programs, growth of trade, print technology, urban planning, postal connections, overseas territories—in all these senses, early modernity was overcoming traditional hurdles, at least in Europe.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, and most fundamentally, what can spatial approaches add to the study of *history as a whole*? My personal impression is "quite a lot": for a start, time and space form the two basic dimensions of human existence and to neglect one inevitably distorts the other.<sup>19</sup> Models of relational constitution help us to come to terms with idiosyncratic world-views; that is, to grasp how differently (say) Castilian peasants, merchants and priests would have imagined Columbus's mission when they saw him set sail from Palos on August 3, 1492, or—again, due to distinct positions, viewpoints, constellations, objects, contacts, networks, and horizons—how divergently French eye-witnesses must have experienced the storming of the Bastille nearly three centuries later. Envisioning a situational construction, in other words, allows historians to account for synchronic variations and thus the "fluidity" of space. Furthermore, returning to one of the collection's main concerns, spatial approaches illuminate relations between mind and matter. Through more or less conscious political and social processes, as Pierre Nora has argued, certain sites (as well as non-material entities) evolve capacities to evoke memories, values, and ideals in any community. Be they official monuments or private places, "things" can serve as gateways into the past.<sup>20</sup>

By addressing key issues, testing concepts, providing new insights, and provoking further questions, *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* advances the field in significant ways. Readers will form their own judgments on the collection's salient features, strengths, and impulses for future work, but I am sure that they will benefit from close engagement with the essays presented here.

## Notes

1. Peter J. Arnade, Martha C. Howell, and Walter Simons, eds., "The Productivity of Urban Space in Northern Europe," [special issue of] *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (2002); Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Beat Kümin, ed., *Political Space in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); Marko Lamberg, Marko Hakanen, and Janne Haikari, eds.,

- Physical and Cultural Space in Pre-industrial Europe: Methodological Approaches to Spatiality* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011).
2. Achim Landwehr, *Die Erschaffung Venedigs: Raum, Bevölkerung, Mythos 1570–1750* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2007); Susan Guinn-Chapman, *Religious Space in Reformation England: Contesting the Past* (London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2013). For interdisciplinary introductions see Denis Cosgrove, "Landscape and Landschaft: Lecture delivered at the 'Spatial Turn in History' Symposium (German Historical Institute, 19/2/2004)," *German Historical Institute Washington: Bulletin* 35 (2004): 57–71; Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann, eds., *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, 2nd edn. (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag für Kommunikation, Kultur und soziale Praxis, 2009); and Susanne Rau, *Räume: Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Nutzungen* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2013).
  3. Key theorists are discussed in Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, eds., *Thinking Space* (London: Routledge, 2000); space-focused research groups exist, for example, at University College London (<http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/graduate/research/space>) and the Technical University at Darmstadt (<http://raumsoz.ifs.tu-darmstadt.de/>; both accessed May 17, 2014). The University of Erfurt established a Heisenberg Chair for the "History and Cultures of Spaces in Modern Times" in 2009.
  4. See Paul Stock, chapter 1, "History and the Uses of Space," introduction to this collection.
  5. For the sake of brevity and consistency, reference to individual contributions will be made by author surnames, arranged in the sequence in which they appear in the volume.
  6. For a comparative conceptualization of obstacles facing large-scale authoritarian campaigns in different settings see J. C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
  7. In strong contrast to those in Lamberg et al., *Physical and Cultural Space*; see esp. Kari Uotila and Isto Huvila, "Virtual Landscape Modelling," in *Physical and Cultural Space*, ed Lemberg et al., 273–286.
  8. For recent attempts at a better integration of science and humanities perspectives, especially through "deep mapping," see David J. Bodenhamer, "Beyond GIS: Geospatial Technologies and the Future of History," in *History and GIS: Epistemologies, Considerations and Reflections*, ed. Alexander von Lünen and Charles Travis (Dordrecht: Springer e-book, 2013), Chapter 1, 1.3 (DOI: 10.1007/978-94-007-5009-8\_2; accessed May 3, 2014).
  9. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991); Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001); K. Friedrich, ed., *Die Erschließung des Raumes: Konstruktion, Imagination und Darstellung von Räumen und Grenzen im Barockzeitalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014); cf. Paul Stock, chapter 1, "History and the Uses of Space," of this book.
  10. Three of the latest examples, each with conceptual introductions, are Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Gerd Schwerhoff, ed., *Stadt und Öffentlichkeit in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne:

- Böhlau Verlag, 2011): Massimo Rospoche, ed., *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2012).
11. For a discussion of recent anthropological, geographical, sociological, and historical perspectives on gendered space see also B. Kümin and C. Osborne, "At Home and in the Workplace: A Historical Introduction to the Spatial Turn," in "At Home and in the Workplace: Domestic and Occupational Space in Western Europe from the Middle Ages," ed. B. Kümin and C. Osborne, *History & Theory* 52 (2013): 305–318.
  12. On late medieval precedents for such female agency, see Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), esp. Chapter 3. For further conceptual reflections on public spaces see Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff, eds., *Zwischen Gotteshaus und Taverne. Öffentliche Räume in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004).
  13. Ralph Kingston, "Mind Over Matter? History and the Spatial Turn," *Cultural and Social History* 7, no.1 (2010): 111–121. For case studies and conceptual guidance on material approaches, see Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, eds., *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010). A forceful case for the primary importance of the physical environment can be found in Christine Carpenter, "Political and Geographical Space: The Geopolitics of Medieval England," in *Political Space*, ed. Kümin, 117–134; ways in which the spatial and cultural turns could be distinguished more clearly in Stock's "History and the Uses of Space" above.
  14. T. Unwin, "A Waste of Space? towards a Critique of the Social Production of Space," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 25 (2000): 11–29. A useful survey of seminal taxonomies in Rau, *Räume*, 61–70.
  15. Leif Jerram, "Space: A Useless Category of Historical Analysis," in "At Home and in the Workplace," ed. Kümin and Osborne, 400–419.
  16. The challenge to religious images and truths was part of a wider anxiety about human sight and perception: S. Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
  17. Lamberg et al., eds., *Physical and Cultural Space*, 376.
  18. On the question of the wider global applicability of European periodization: Samuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter, eds., "Early Modernities," special issue of *Daedalus* 127 (1998); R. Dürr, ed., *Expansionen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005).
  19. J. May and N. Thrift, eds., *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (London: Routledge, 2001).
  20. P. Nora, "From lieux de mémoire to realms of memory," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. P. Nora and L. D. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Vol. 1, p. xviii. On another level, to end with a more specific example, a spatial distinction between "front-" and "back-stage" areas helps to explain why (architecturally and physically) identical rooms can prompt diametrically opposed forms of behavior: E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Allen Lane Penguin Press, 1969), Chapter 3, "Regions and Region Behaviour."

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# Index

- African continent, 136, 155, 156, 160, 162, 187, 227
- agency, space and, 2, 5–10, 24, 45–7, 58, 66, 153–4, 159–67, 176–7, 198–9, 220, 228–9, 231
- American continents, 22, 37, 136, 139–40, 152, 155, 156, 157, 161, 166, 220
- Anderson, Benedict, 7, 77, 224n46
- Annales* School, 3–4
- anti-representationalism, 76–9, 228
- archaeology, 20, 22–4, 30, 32, 37, 39, 227
- architecture, 4, 5, 6, 19–42, 48, 64, 100–2, 105, 108, 111–14, 133, 136, 139
- Asian continent, 108, 162, 187, 189, 191
- astronomy, 125–50, 229
- Atlantic Ocean, 132, 155, 163, 176
- Australasian continent, 140, 212
- Bacon, Francis, 129, 141
- Balkans, the, 77, 227
- Bloch, Marc, 3–4
- borders, 2, 8, 11–12, 13, 75–96, 98, 100–1, 108, 151–71, 183–4, 193, 228, 229
- Braudel, Fernand, 3–4
- Brewer, Daniel, 8
- Britain, 29, 100, 140, 198, 208–18, 230  
*see also* British Empire, England, Wales
- British Empire, 151–67, 173–96, 216, 228
- Buache, Philippe, 136–40
- Burke, Edmund, 13, 173–96, 229, 230
- Caribbean, 162
- cartography, 5, 6, 34, 76, 84, 98, 113–16, 118, 125, 130–3, 136, 138–40, 141, 167, 191, 212, 229, 231
- Cassini family, 128, 130–1, 134, 137–8, 141, 145n25
- Ceylon, 151
- charity, space and, 175, 193, 201–2, 212
- Christianity, space and, 11, 12, 33, 43–74, 75, 79–84, 86–7, 103–7, 125, 212–13, 231  
*see also* religion, space and
- churches, 8, 11, 20, 23–4, 43–74, 104, 105, 110, 216, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231
- cities, 1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 97–124, 126, 136, 157, 167, 227, 229  
*see also* urban space
- class, space and, 26–38, 43, 47–59, 80, 98, 106–7, 110, 129, 188, 205, 209, 212–14, 216, 218  
*see also* labor, space and
- classical civilisations, space and, 4, 24, 27, 101, 103, 104, 106, 131, 182, 229
- Cleaver, Robert, 26–7, 30, 35
- Condorcet, Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de, 129, 209
- Cosgrove, Denis, 7
- “cultural turn,” history and the, 2–5, 21, 76–9, 227, 230

- Danish Empire, 155, 157, 161, 162, 163, 165
- Darwin, Charles, 198, 205–6, 208, 212, 214
- Delisle, Guillaume, 131–6, 140–1
- demography, 197–226, 228
- Descartes, René, 129, 131, 137, 141
- digital humanities, 38–9, 71n19, 118, 171n57, 191, 228
- distance, space and, 13, 86, 153, 157, 167, 173–96, 229, 231
- Dod, John, 26–7, 30, 35
- domesticity, space and, 19–42, 43–7
- Dutch Empire, 155, 157, 160, 161
- East India Company, 173, 174, 177–80, 183, 201
- economics, space and, 7, 12, 21, 30–3, 43–4, 49–51, 59, 78–9, 86–9, 99–100, 110, 113, 125–7, 133, 135, 151–71, 201–18, 230
- education, space and, 126–7, 132–6, 139, 227
- emotion, space and, 13, 173–96
- empire, space and, 8, 11–12, 75–96, 97–124, 128, 138–9, 151–71, 173–96, 212, 216  
*see also* British, Danish, Dutch, French, Ottoman, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish Empires
- Engels, Friedrich, 211, 213–14
- England, 19–42, 43–74, 138, 139, 181, 187, 188, 210–19  
*see also* Britain
- Enlightenment, the, 6, 7, 125–50, 173–96, 204–5
- environmental determinism, 3–4, 10, 18n47, 140–1, 155, 197, 228, 230–1
- environmentalism, 206–8
- epistemology, space and, 5, 6, 8, 12–13, 13–14, 76–9, 88–90, 125–50, 176, 197–201, 219–20
- Euclid, 6, 203
- European continent, 6–7, 12, 80, 83, 98, 99, 100, 101–3, 107–12, 114–15, 132, 140, 152, 154–6, 159, 160, 163, 166, 176, 183, 187–8, 192–3, 204, 229, 231–2
- “Europeanization” of space, 98, 99, 107–12, 114–15
- everyday life, space and. *See* lived experience, space and
- Foucault, Michel, 4, 5, 127–8
- France, 80, 109, 125–50, 209, 201, 216, 229, 232  
*see also* French Empire
- French Empire, 128, 155, 157, 161, 216
- frontiers. *See* borders
- gender, space and, 9, 11, 14, 26–7, 29–33, 43–74, 180, 190, 204, 228, 234n11
- Geographic Information Systems. *See* digital humanities
- geography (discipline), 3–5, 7, 12–13, 46, 98, 108, 114, 125–50, 197–201, 203, 220, 220n1, 221n11
- geology, 137–40, 203
- geometry, 129, 131  
*see also* mathematical space
- global space, 13, 14, 151–71, 173–96, 202–8, 219, 222n19
- Gold Coast, 154, 155, 160, 162, 164
- Goodman, Nelson, 91n9, 200, 219
- Guldi, Joanna, 2, 3, 4
- Habermas, Jürgen, 193
- Habsburg Empire, 11–12, 75–96, 102
- Harley, J. B., 5
- Harvey, David, 4, 214
- Hastings, Warren, 173–96
- history (discipline), space and, 1–18, 20–1, 22–4, 37–9, 43–8, 66–7, 76–9, 88–90, 90n6, 96n65, 97–8, 115–17, 126–8, 197–201, 219–20, 227–32

- Hoskins, W. G., 4, 27–8
- houses, 19–42, 49, 51, 53, 112, 113, 228
- Hume, David, 174–6, 179–81, 193, 199, 203
- identity, space and, 11–12, 26–7, 29–33, 47–72, 77–84
- imperial space. *See* empire, space and
- India, 13, 151, 160, 173–96, 210
- Indian Ocean, 130, 151, 166
- infrastructure, space and, 97–124, 136, 231–2
- institutions, space and, 6, 12, 43–4, 75, 79, 82, 84, 85, 99, 108, 113, 125–50, 151, 163–4, 173, 177, 178, 227
- internationalism, space and, 89, 105, 109, 118, 153, 154, 164, 166, 193  
*see also* global space
- Ireland, 216, 218
- Islam, 12, 79–84, 86–7
- Jerram, Lief, 9, 231
- Judaism, 12, 79, 125
- Kant, Immanuel, 10, 193
- Kosselleck, Reinhart, 199, 200
- labor, space and, 26–7, 29–37, 43–7, 58, 87, 106–7, 126, 152–4, 161–2, 202, 209–11, 217–18  
*see also* slavery
- landscape, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 19–23, 24, 26, 97–124, 229
- law, space and, 13, 48–74, 77, 84–90, 110, 112–13, 117, 131, 153–4, 159, 160, 162, 163–7, 173–96, 203–6, 208, 210, 212–14, 228, 230
- Leeward Islands, 154, 157, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163
- Lefebvre, Henri, 4, 115–17, 125–6, 197, 198, 228, 230
- Leibniz, Gottfried von, 6, 228
- lived experience, space and, 1, 4, 6, 10, 11, 19–42, 43–74, 79, 83, 102, 106, 110, 113, 117, 126, 153, 178, 201–2, 214, 217–18, 228
- Livingstone, David, 126, 197, 200
- local space, 3, 11, 13, 14, 19–42, 43–74, 76, 78, 80–8, 153–7, 159–66, 183, 187, 192, 202, 214–19, 227, 229, 231
- Löw, Martina, 9, 228
- Malthus, Thomas, 201–26
- maps. *See* cartography
- maritime space, 108, 133, 151–71, 229  
*see also* Atlantic, Indian, Pacific Oceans, Mediterranean Sea
- Markham, Gervase, 29, 34–7
- Marx, Karl, 28, 213–14
- Massey, Doreen, 4, 46
- materiality, space and, 1–2, 3–4, 5–10, 11–14, 19–42, 44–5, 47, 58–9, 97, 98–100, 102, 106–13, 118, 173–6, 192–3, 197–201, 228, 230, 231, 234n13
- mathematics, space and, 6, 12, 125, 127, 129, 130–1, 137–41, 203
- Maupertuis, Pierre-Louis Moreau de, 137–8, 139, 141
- Mauritius, 154, 156, 157, 162
- Mediterranean Sea, 3, 79, 92n23, 101, 132, 166
- microregions, 13, 151–71, 229
- military space, 12, 76, 79–90, 97, 100–3, 109–10, 115, 135, 151–71, 173, 190
- modernity, space and, 5–6, 12–13, 14, 76–9, 107–10, 125–8, 182, 191, 230, 232
- monarchy, space and, 29, 97–124, 132–6, 140–1, 164, 187, 229
- morality, space and, 13, 33, 58, 63, 173–96

- narrative, space and, 5, 13, 14, 28–30, 43, 76–7, 88–9, 90n5, 155, 166–7, 191, 199–200, 207, 219–20, 228
- national space, 2–3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 29, 33–5, 37–8, 44, 75–9, 84, 88–9, 92n16, 125, 130, 135, 138, 157, 163, 165–6, 175–7, 179, 191–3, 202, 208–18, 224n46, 229
- networks, 2, 7, 12, 13, 58, 86, 88–9, 100, 125–50, 151–71, 173–96, 199, 219, 220, 230, 232
- Newton, Isaac, 6, 137, 141, 203, 204, 219, 228, 231
- nominalism, 199–201, 219–20, 221n11
- Nora, Pierre, 232
- Ockham, William of, 199
- Ottoman Empire, 11–12, 75–96, 100–1
- Pacific Ocean, 140
- Paris Academy of Sciences, 12, 127–50, 230
- perception, space and, 5, 9–10, 13, 46, 59, 84, 159, 173–96, 200–1, 227, 228, 229
- place, 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 22–4, 47, 49–51, 58–61, 66, 75–9, 84–90, 106, 126–7, 152, 153, 197–201, 220, 230–2
- politics, space and, 2, 7, 9, 11–12, 13, 14, 43–4, 46, 51, 52, 64–6, 75–9, 84–90, 100–3, 107–18, 125–8, 132, 139, 140–1, 151–71, 173–96, 197–8, 208–18, 227–32
- Portuguese Empire, 155, 158
- power, space and, 1, 4–5, 12, 43–8, 49–50, 63, 65, 66, 76–7, 84–8, 94n44, 102–3, 116–18, 127, 132–6, 140–1, 151–71, 173–96, 228, 230
- print culture, space and, 33–7, 38, 105, 113–18, 130, 132, 136, 185–7, 231, 232
- public space, 43–74, 98–100, 103–18, 128–30, 139, 141, 228, 229
- Ranke, Leopold von, 2–3
- religion, space and, 1, 10, 11, 12, 33, 43–74, 76–85, 86–7, 99, 103–8, 125, 128, 177, 227, 228, 230, 231  
*see also* Christianity, Islam, Judaism
- representation, space and, 1–2, 5–10, 11, 12, 23–4, 26, 37, 39, 45–6, 59, 76–9, 98, 100, 102–8, 110–18, 126, 173–8, 180, 181, 185–7, 190, 197–201, 229, 230
- Río de la Plata region, 154, 158–9, 162–4
- Romanticism, 211–14
- Royal Society (London), 127, 128, 129, 130
- rural space, 8, 19–42, 87, 216–17
- Russian Empire, 12, 97–124
- Said, Edward, 7, 77, 88
- scale, space and, 3, 13–14, 24, 27–8, 30, 33, 37–8, 152, 180, 185–7, 197–226, 227, 229
- science, space and, 6–7, 12–13, 125–50, 197–8, 200, 214, 218, 220n1, 227, 228
- Seychelles Islands, 154, 156–7, 162
- situatedness, space and, 1, 8, 10, 76, 88, 99, 107, 109, 164, 179, 215, 217, 229–32
- slavery, 152–4, 156, 161–2, 163, 193n1
- Smith, Adam, 175–7, 179, 191, 209
- society, space and, 2–14, 19–42, 43–74, 76, 77, 79–90, 98–100, 103–18, 125–8, 135, 152, 160, 174–5, 197–220, 227–32
- Soja, Edward, 4

- space
- agency and, 2, 5–10, 24, 45–7, 58, 66, 153–4, 159–67, 176–7, 198–9, 220, 228–9, 231
  - charity and, 175, 193, 201–2, 212
  - class and, 26–38, 43, 47–59, 80, 98, 106–7, 110, 129, 188, 205, 209, 212–14, 216, 218
  - classical civilisations and, 4, 24, 27, 101, 103, 104, 106, 131, 182, 229
  - definition of, 1, 6, 230–1
  - distance and, 13, 86, 153, 157, 167, 173–96, 229, 231
  - domesticity and, 19–42, 43–7
  - economics and, 7, 12, 21, 30–3, 43–4, 49–51, 59, 78–9, 86–9, 99–100, 110, 113, 125–7, 133, 135, 151–71, 201–18, 230
  - education and, 126–7, 132–6, 139, 227
  - emotion and, 13, 173–96
  - empire and, 8, 11–12, 75–96, 97–124, 128, 138–9, 151–71, 173–96, 212, 216 (*see also* British, Danish, Dutch, French, Ottoman, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish Empires)
  - epistemology and, 5, 6, 8, 12–13, 13–14, 76–9, 88–90, 125–50, 176, 197–201, 219–20
  - gender and, 9, 11, 14, 26–7, 29–33, 43–74, 180, 190, 204, 228, 234n11
  - global, 13, 14, 151–71, 173–96, 202–8, 219, 222n19
  - history (discipline) and, 1–18, 20–1, 22–4, 37–9, 43–8, 66–7, 76–9, 88–90, 90n6, 96n65, 97–8, 115–17, 126–8, 197–201, 219–20, 227–32
  - identity and, 11–12, 26–7, 29–33, 47–72, 77–84
  - infrastructure and, 97–124, 136, 231–2
  - institutions and, 6, 12, 43–4, 75, 79, 82, 84, 85, 99, 108, 113, 125–50, 151, 163–4, 173, 177, 178, 227
  - internationalism and, 89, 105, 109, 118, 153, 154, 164, 166, 193
  - labor and, 26–7, 29–37, 43–7, 58, 87, 106–7, 126, 152–4, 161–2, 202, 209–11, 217–18
  - law and, 13, 48–74, 77, 84–90, 110, 112–13, 117, 131, 153–4, 159, 160, 162, 163–7, 173–96, 203–6, 208, 210, 212–14, 228, 230
  - lived experience and, 1, 4, 6, 10, 11, 19–42, 43–74, 79, 83, 102, 106, 110, 113, 117, 126, 153, 178, 201–2, 214, 217–18, 228
  - local, 3, 11, 13, 14, 19–42, 43–74, 76, 78, 80–8, 153–7, 159–66, 183, 187, 192, 202, 214–19, 227, 229, 231
  - maritime, 108, 133, 151–71, 229
  - materiality and, 1–2, 3–4, 5–10, 11–14, 19–42, 44–5, 47, 58–9, 97, 98–100, 102, 106–13, 118, 173–6, 192–3, 197–201, 228, 230, 231, 234n13
  - mathematics and, 6, 12, 125, 127, 129, 130–1, 137–41, 203
  - military, 12, 76, 79–90, 97, 100–3, 109–10, 115, 135, 151–71, 173, 190
  - modernity and, 5–6, 12–13, 14, 76–9, 107–10, 125–8, 182, 191, 230, 232
  - monarchy and, 29, 97–124, 132–6, 140–1, 164, 187, 229
  - morality and, 13, 33, 58, 63, 173–96
  - narrative and, 5, 13, 14, 28–30, 43, 76–7, 88–9, 90n5, 155, 166–7, 191, 199–200, 207, 219–20, 228
  - national, 2–3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 29, 33–5, 37–8, 44, 75–9, 84, 88–9, 92n16, 125, 130, 135, 138, 157, 163, 165–6, 175–7, 179, 191–3, 202, 208–18, 224n46, 229

space—*Continued*

- perception and, 5, 9–10, 13, 46, 59, 84, 159, 173–96, 200–1, 227, 228, 229
- politics and, 2, 7, 9, 11–12, 13, 14, 43–4, 46, 51, 52, 64–6, 75–9, 84–90, 100–3, 107–18, 125–8, 132, 139, 140–1, 151–71, 173–96, 197–8, 208–18, 227–32
- power and, 1, 4–5, 12, 43–8, 49–50, 63, 65, 66, 76–7, 84–8, 94n44, 102–3, 116–18, 127, 132–6, 140–1, 151–71, 173–96, 228, 230
- print culture and, 33–7, 38, 105, 113–18, 130, 132, 136, 185–7, 231, 232
- public, 43–74, 98–100, 103–18, 128–30, 139, 141, 228, 229
- religion and, 1, 10, 11, 12, 33, 43–74, 76–85, 86–7, 99, 103–8, 125, 128, 177, 227, 228, 230, 231 (*see also* Christianity, Islam, Judaism)
- representation and, 1–2, 5–10, 11, 12, 23–4, 26, 37, 39, 45–6, 59, 76–9, 98, 100, 102–8, 110–18, 126, 173–8, 180, 181, 185–7, 190, 197–201, 229, 230
- rural, 8, 19–42, 87, 216–17
- scale, and, 3, 13–14, 24, 27–8, 30, 33, 37–8, 152, 180, 185–7, 197–226, 227, 229
- science, and, 6–7, 12–13, 125–50, 197–8, 200, 214, 218, 220n1, 227, 228
- situatedness, and, 1, 8, 10, 76, 88, 99, 107, 109, 164, 179, 215, 217, 229–32
- society, and, 2–14, 19–42, 43–74, 76, 77, 79–90, 98–100, 103–18, 125–8, 135, 152, 160, 174–5, 197–220, 227–32
- state, 3, 6, 9, 12, 13, 37, 38, 75–90, 97–124, 125–50, 151–71, 173–96, 209, 210, 227, 231
- sublimity and, 174, 179, 183–4, 189–90, 193
- symbolism, and, 1, 7, 9, 11–12, 23, 30–2, 37, 47–52, 58–64, 66, 98, 102–7, 114, 118, 229
- sympathy, and, 13, 173–96
- time, and, 6, 22, 46, 67, 173–8, 197–200, 204–7, 214, 215, 232
- Spanish Empire, 6, 101, 152, 155, 157, 158, 161, 164
- spatial history. *See* history, space and St. Petersburg, 97–124
- state, space and the, 3, 6, 9, 12, 13, 37, 38, 75–90, 97–124, 125–50, 151–71, 173–96, 209, 210, 227, 231
- sublimity, space and, 174, 179, 183–4, 189–90, 193
- Swedish Empire, 97, 98, 99, 101, 108, 137, 155, 157
- symbolism, space and, 1, 7, 9, 11–12, 23, 30–2, 37, 47–52, 58–64, 66, 98, 102–7, 114, 118, 229
- sympathy, space and, 13, 173–96
- territory, 1, 8, 76, 84–90, 98–9, 108, 110, 118n2, 151–4, 156, 159, 163–7, 184, 191, 212, 229–30, 232
- time, space and, 6, 22, 46, 67, 173–8, 197–200, 204–7, 214, 215, 232
- travel, 3, 26, 107, 109, 118, 130, 135, 173–96, 204, 217, 218, 220, 229, 230

United States of America, 152, 155,  
159, 169n30, 193  
urban space, 4, 8, 12, 23,  
28–9, 37, 97–124, 227,  
232  
Vidal de la Blache, Paul, 3

Wales, 37  
*see also* Britain  
Walsham, Alexandra, 48  
war, space and. *See* military, space and  
the  
Withers, Charles, 7, 126, 197, 200  
work, space and. *See* labor, space and