for space

doreen massey

Presenting an impassioned argument for revitalising our imagination of space, Doreen Massey takes on some well-established assumptions from philosophy, and some familiar ways of characterising the twenty-first century world, and shows how they restrain our understanding of both the challenge and the potential of space.

The way we think about space matters. It inflects our understandings of the world, our attitudes to others, our politics. It affects, for instance, the way we understand globalisation, the way we approach cities, the way we develop, and practice, a sense of place. If time is the dimension of change then space is the dimension of the social: the contemporaneous co-existence of others. That is its challenge, and one that has been persistently evaded. ***for space*** pursues its argument through philosophical and theoretical engagement, and through telling personal and political reflection. Doreen Massey asks questions such as how best to characterise these so-called spatial times, how it is that implicit spatial assumptions inflect our politics, and how we might develop a responsibility for place beyond place.

This book is 'for space' in that it argues for a reinvigoration of the spatiality of our implicit cosmologies. ***for space*** is essential reading for anyone interested in space and the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities. Serious, and sometimes irreverent, it is a compelling manifesto: for re-imagining spaces for these times and facing up to their challenge.

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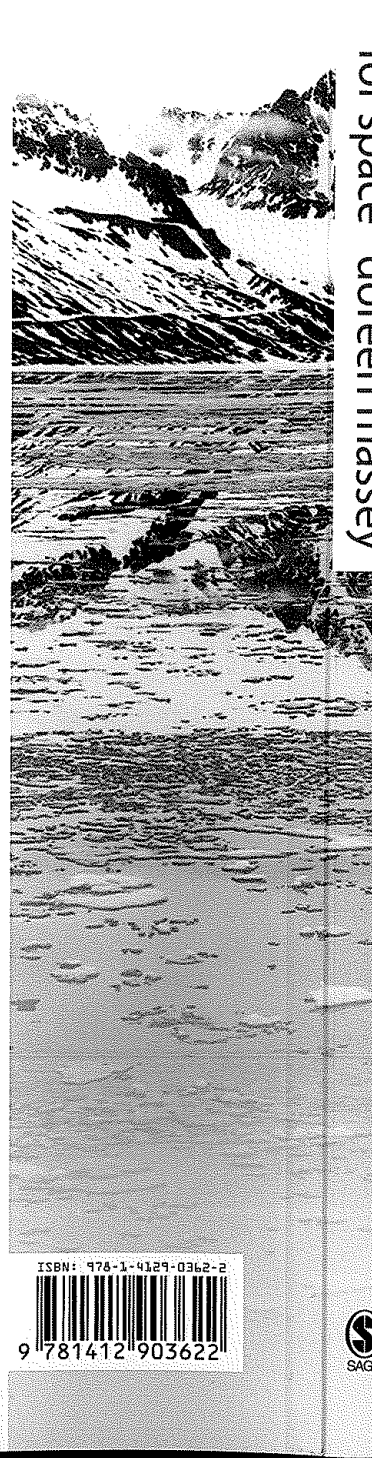

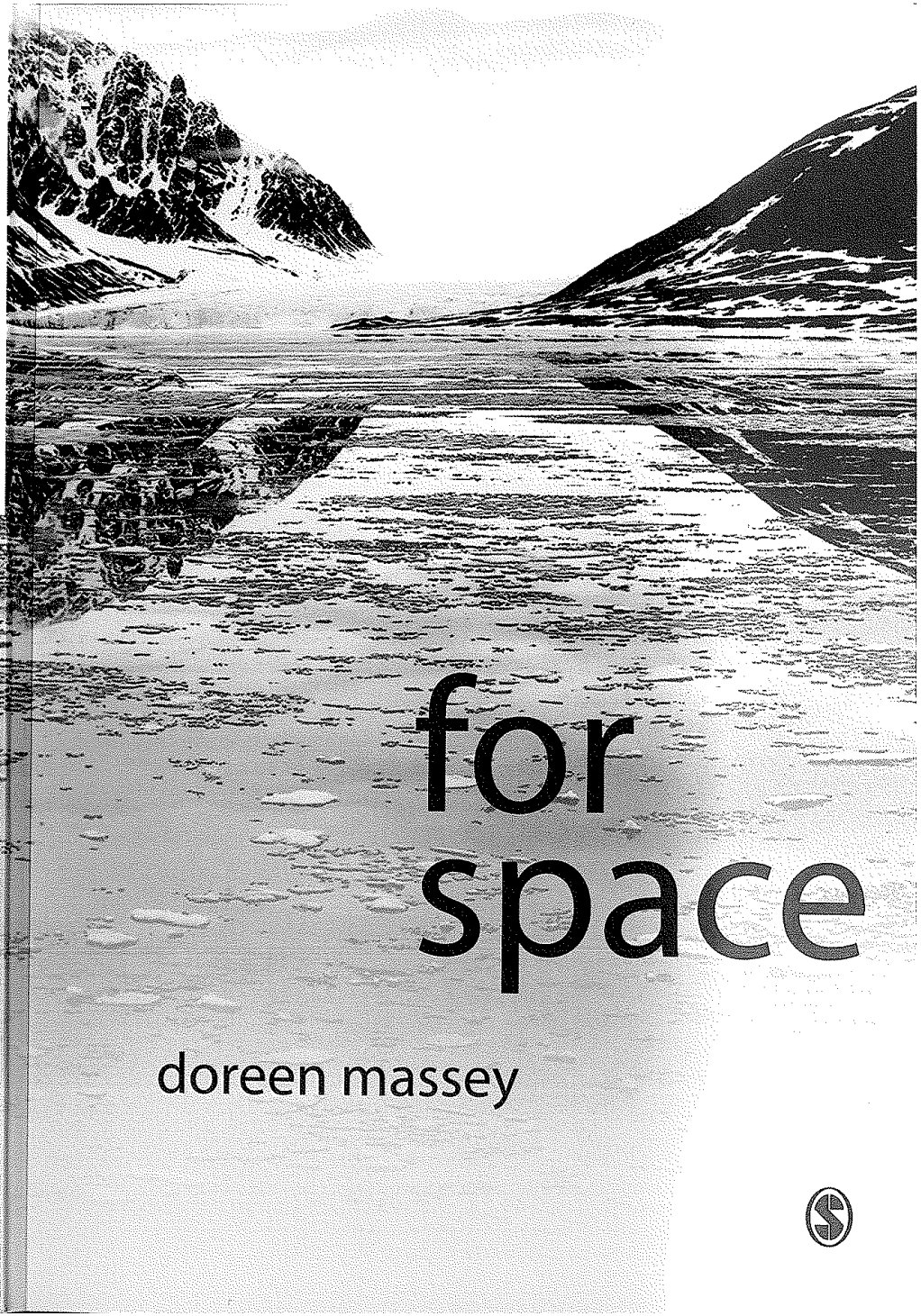

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Contents

Acknowledgements vii

Part *One* Setting the scene 1

Three ruminations 3

1 **Opening propositions** 9

Part *Two* Unpromising associations 17

2 **Space/representation** 20

(A reliance on science? 1) 31

3 **The prison-house of synchrony** 36

The 'spaces' of structuralism 36
After structuralism 42

4 **The horizontalities of deconstruction** 49

5 **The life in space** 55

Part *Three* Living in spatial times? 61

6 **Spatialising the history of modernity** 62

(A reliance on science? 2) 72
(Representation again, and geographies of knowledge production 1) 74

7 **Instantaneity/depthlessness** 76

8 **Aspatial globalisation** 81

9 (Contrary to popular opinion) Space cannot be annihilated by time 90

10 Elements for alternatives 99

Part *Four* Reorientations 105

11 Slices through space 106

Falling through the map 106
The chance of space 111
Travelling imaginations 117

(A reliance on science? 3) 126

12 The elusiveness of place 130

Migrant rocks 130
The event of place 138

(Geographies of knowledge production 2: places of knowledge production) 143

Part *Five* A relational politics of the spatial 147

13 Thrown togetherness: the politics of the event of place 149

14 There are no rules of space and place 163

15 Making and contesting time-spaces 177

Notes 196

Notes to Part *One* 196
Notes to Part *Two* 196
Notes to Part *Three* 198
Notes to Part *Four* 199
Notes to Part *Five* 202

Bibliography 204
Index 217

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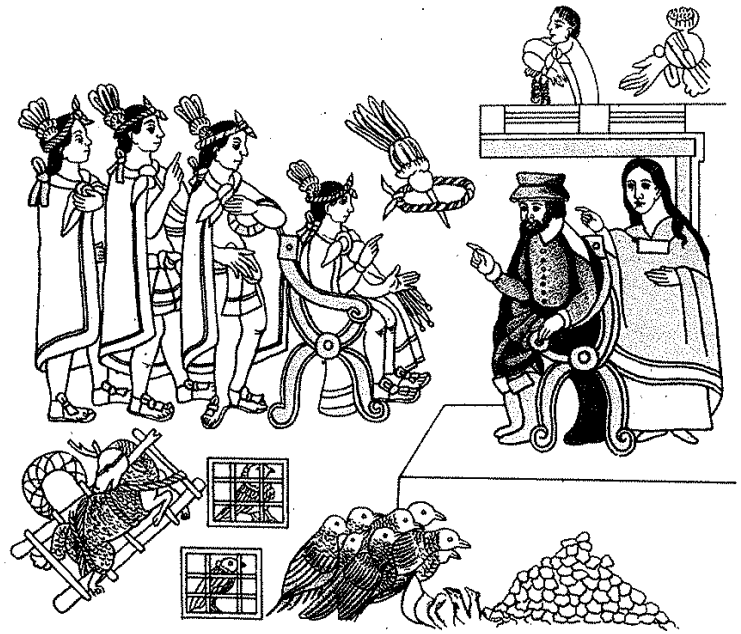


Tenochtitlan. Tierra del nopal. Entrada de Hernan Cortes, la cual se verificó el 8 de Noviembre de 1519.

Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Part *One*
Setting the scene

I've been thinking about 'space' for a long time. But usually I've come at it indirectly, through some other kind of engagement. The battles over globalisation, the politics of place, the question of regional inequality, the engagements with 'nature' as I walk the hills, the complexities of cities. Picking away at things that don't seem quite right. Losing political arguments because the terms don't fit what it is you're struggling to say. Finding myself in quandaries of apparently contradictory feelings. It is through these persistent ruminations – that sometimes don't seem to go anywhere and then sometimes do – that I have become convinced both that the implicit assumptions we make about space are important and that, maybe, it could be productive to think about space differenly.

Three ruminations

1 The armies were approaching the city from the quarter named the reed or crocodile – the direction in which the sun rises. Much was known about them already. Tales had come back from outlying provinces. Tax gatherers from the city, collecting tribute from conquered territories, had met up with them. Envoys had been despatched, to engage in talks, to find out more. And now neighbouring groups, chafing against their long subordination to the Aztec city, had thrown in their lot with the strange invaders. Yet in spite of all these prior contacts, the constant flow of messages, rumours, interpretations reaching the city, the approaching army was still a mystery. ('The strangers sat on "deer as high as the rooftops". Their bodies were completely covered, "only their faces can be seen. They are white, as if made of lime. They have yellow hair, although some have black. Long are their beards."'[1]) And they were arriving from the geographical direction which, in these time-spaces, was held to be that of authority.

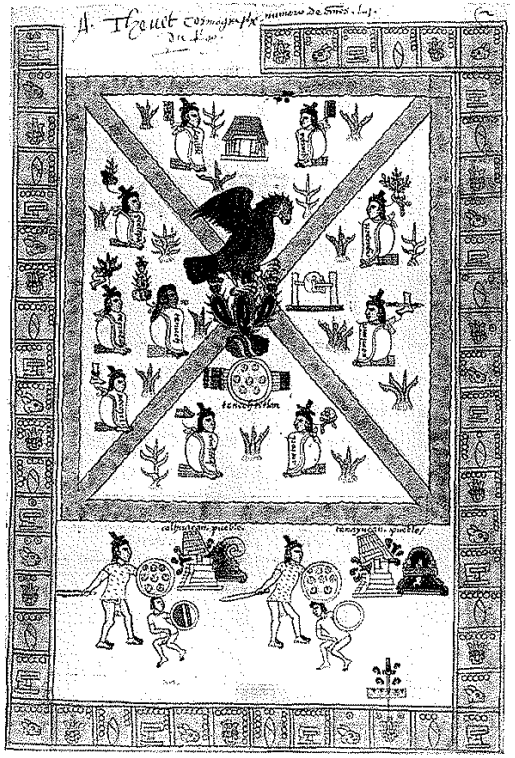


figure 1.1a *Tenochtitlán – Aztec depiction*
Source: The Bodleian Library

It was also the Year One Reed, a year of both historical and cosmological significance: a particular point in the cycle of years. Over past cycles the city had become mightily successful. It was only a few cycles ago that the Mexica/Aztecs had first set up in this huge high valley. They had arrived from the direction of the flint and after long wanderings; an uncultivated people in the eyes of the cities already established around the lake. But since their arrival, and the founding of this city Tenochtitlán, the Aztecs had piled success upon success. The city was now the biggest in the world. Its empire now stretched, through conquest and continual violent subordination, to the ocean in two directions.

Thus far the Aztecs had conquered all before them. But these armies approaching now are ominous. Empires do not last for ever. Only recently Azcapotzalco, on the edge of the lake, had been brought down after a brief blaze of glory. And Tula, seat of

the revered Toltecs, now lies deserted, as do the ruins of Teotihuacan. All these are reminders of previous splendours, and of their fragility. And now these strange invaders are coming from the direction of acatl; and it is the Year One Reed.

Such things are important. Coincidences of events form the structures of time-space. For Moctezuma they add to the whole wretched conundrum of how to respond. It could be a moment of crisis for the Empire.[2]

The men in the approaching army could hardly believe their eyes when they first looked down upon the city. They had heard that it was splendid but this was five times the size of Madrid, in the changing Europe which they had left behind just a few years ago. And these voyages, originally, had set out towards the west in the hope of finding the east. When, some years before, Cristobal Colón had 'headed across the great emptiness west of Christendom, he had accepted the challenge of legend. Terrible storms would play with his ships as if they were nutshells and hurl them into the jaws of monsters; the sea serpent, hungry for human flesh, would be lying in wait in the murky depths. ... navigators spoke of strange corpses and curiously carved pieces of wood that floated in on the west wind ...'[3] It was now the Year of Our Lord 1519.[4] This small army, with Hernán Cortés at its head and its few horses and its armour, had sailed from what their leaders had decided to call Cuba at the beginning of the year, and now it was November. The

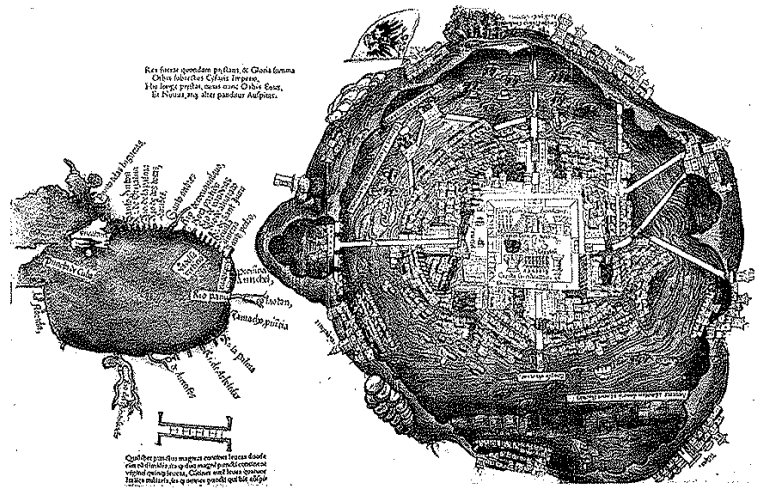


figure 1.1b *Tenochtitlán – Spanish depiction*
Source: The Newberry Library

journey from the coast had been hard and violent, with battles and the making of alliances. Finally, now, they had heaved to the top of this pass between two snow-capped volcanoes. To Cortés' left and high above him, Popocatepetl steamed endlessly. And below him, in the distance, lay this incredible city, like nothing he had ever seen before.

There were to be two years of duplicitous negotiation, miscalculation, bloodshed, rout, retreat and readvance before Hernán Cortés, Spanish conquistador, conquered the city of the Aztecs, Tenochtitlán, which today we call la ciudad de México, Mexico City, Distrito Federal.

The way, today, we often tell that story, or any of the tales of 'voyages of discovery', is in terms of crossing and conquering space. Cortés voyaged across space, found Tenochtitlán, and took it. 'Space', in this way of telling things, is an expanse we travel across. It seems perhaps all very obvious.

But the way we imagine space has effects – as it did, each in different ways, for Moctezuma and Cortés. Conceiving of space as in the voyages of discovery, as something to be crossed and maybe conquered, has particular ramifications. Implicitly, it equates space with the land and sea, with the earth which stretches out around us. It also makes space seem like a surface; continuous and given. It differentiates: Hernán, active, a maker of history, journeys across this surface and finds Tenochtitlán upon it. It is an unthought cosmology, in the gentlest sense of that term, but it carries with it social and political effects. So easily this way of imagining space can lead us to conceive of other places, peoples, cultures simply as phenomena 'on' this surface. It is not an innocent manoeuvre, for by this means they are deprived of histories. Immobilised, they await Cortés' (or our, or global capital's) arrival. They lie there, on space, in place, without their own trajectories. Such a space makes it more difficult to see in our mind's eye the histories the Aztecs too have been living and producing. What might it mean to reorientate this imagination, to question that habit of thinking of space as a surface? If, instead, we conceive of a meeting-up of histories, what happens to our implicit imaginations of time and space?

2 The current governments in the UK and the USA (and plenty of other current governments besides) tell us a story of the inevitability of globalisation. (Or rather, although they do not of course make this distinction, they tell us a story of the inevitability of that particular form of neoliberal capitalist globalisation which we are experiencing at the moment – that duplicitous combination of the glorification of the (unequally) free movement of capital on the one hand with the firm control over the movement of labour on the other. Anyhow, they tell us it's inevitable.) And if you

point to differences around the globe, to Moçambique or Mali or Nicaragua, they will tell you such countries are just 'behind'; that eventually they will follow the path along which the capitalist West has led. In 1998 Bill Clinton delivered himself of the reflection that 'we' can no more resist the current forces of globalisation than we can resist the force of gravity. Let us pass over the possibilities of resisting the force of gravity, noting merely that this is a man who spends a good deal of his life flying about in aeroplanes .... More seriously, this proposition was delivered unto us by a man who had spent much of his recent career precisely trying to protect and promote (through GATT, the WTO, the speeding-up of NAFTA/TLC) this supposedly implacable force of nature. We know the counter argument: 'globalisation' in its current form is not the result of a law of nature (itself a phenomenon under dispute). It is a project. What statements such as Clinton's are doing is attempting to persuade us that there is no alternative. This is not a description of the world as it is so much as an image in which the world is being made.

This much is now well established in critiques of today's globalisation. But it is perhaps less often made explicit that one of the crucial manoeuvres at work within it, to convince us of the ineluctability of this globalisation, is a sleight of hand in terms of the conceptualisation of space and time. The proposition turns geography into history, space into time. And this again has social and political effects. It says that Moçambique and Nicaragua are not really different from 'us'. We are not to imagine them as having their own trajectories, their own particular histories, and the potential for their own, perhaps different, futures. They are not recognised as coeval others. They are merely at an earlier stage in the one and only narrative it is possible to tell. That cosmology of 'only one narrative' obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue.

And so again: what if? What if we refuse to convene space into time? What if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories? What kinds of conceptualisation of time and space, and of their relation, might that give on to?

3 And then there is 'place'. In the context of a world which is, indeed, increasingly interconnected the notion of place (usually evoked as 'local place') has come to have totemic resonance. Its symbolic value is endlessly mobilised in political argument. For some it is the sphere of the everyday, of real and valued practices, the geographical source of meaning, vital to hold on to as 'the global' spins its ever more powerful and alienating webs. For others, a 'retreat to place' represents a protective pulling-up of drawbridges and a building of walls against the new invasions. Place, on this reading, is the locus of denial, of attempted withdrawal from

invasion/difference. It is a politically conservative haven, an essentialising (and in the end unviable) basis for a response; one that fails to address the real forces at work. It has, undoubtedly, been the background imagination for some of the worst of recent conflicts. The upheavals in 1989 in various parts of old communist Europe brought a resurgence, on a new scale and with a new intensity, of nationalisms and territorial parochialisms characterised by claims to exclusivity, by assertions of the home-grown rooted authenticity of local specificity and by a hostility to at least some designated others. But then what of the defence of place by working-class communities in the teeth of globalisation, or by aboriginal groups clinging to a last bit of land?

Place plays an ambiguous role in all of this. Horror at local exclusivities sits uneasily against support for the vulnerable struggling to defend their patch. While place is claimed, or rejected, in these arguments in a startling variety of ways, there are often shared undergirding assumptions: of place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home', a secure retreat; of space as somehow originarily regionalised, as always-already divided up.[5] And more than that again, they institute, implicitly but held within the very discourses that they mobilise, a counterposition, sometimes even a hostility, certainly an implicit imagination of different theoretical 'levels' (of the abstract versus the everyday, and so forth), between space on the one hand and place on the other.

What then if we refuse this imagination? What then not only of the nationalisms and parochialisms which we might gladly see thereby undermined, but also of the notion of local struggles or of the defence of place more generally? And what if we refuse that distinction, all too appealing it seems, between place (as meaningful, lived and everyday) and space (as what? the outside? the abstract? the meaning*less*)?

It is in the context of worrying away at questions such as these that the arguments here have evolved. Some of the moments that generated the thinking here I have written about before – 1989, the conflicts of class and ethnicity in east London, the elusive Frenchness of sitting in a Parisian café – but they have persisted, and crop up again here pushed a little further. Encounters with the apparently familiar but where something continues to trouble, and unexpected lines of thought slowly unwind. Most of all, the arguments which follow took shape, theoretically and politically, in the context of the perniciousness of exclusivist localisms and the grim inequalities of today's hegemonic form of globalisation; and in the face of the difficulties, too, of responding. It was wrestling with the formulation of these political issues that led to the prising open of their, often hidden, ways of conceiving of space.

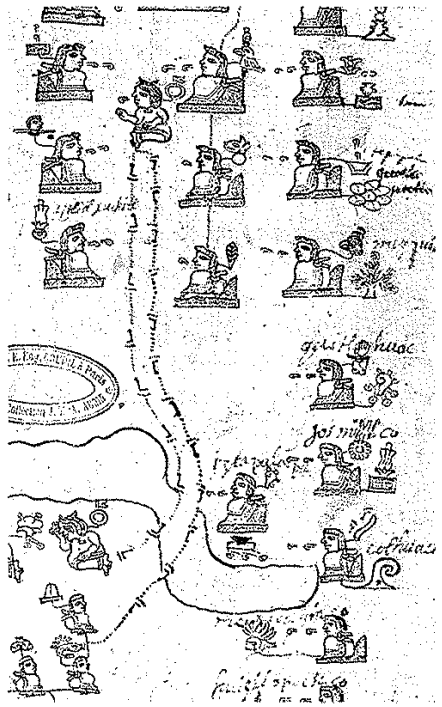


figure 1.2 *Aztec footsteps in the Codex Xolotl*

Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France

In the Year One Reed/Year of Our Lord 1519, among the many aspects of radical otherness that came face-to-face in the Valley of Mexico was the manner of imagining 'space'. Cortés carried with him aspects of an incipient version of present Western imaginations at the beginning of their triumphal progress; but imaginations still embedded in myth and emotion. For the Aztecs, too, though very differently, gods, time and space were inextricably linked. A 'basic aspect of the Aztec world view' was 'a tendency to focus on things in the process of becoming another' (Townsend, 1992, p. 122) and 'Mexica thought did not recognise an abstract space and time, separate and homogeneous dimensions, but rather concrete complexes of space and time, heterogeneous and singular sites and events. … "place-moments" ["lugares momentos"]' (Soustelle, 1956, p. 120; my translation).

The Codex Xolotl, a hybrid construction, tells stories. Events are linked by footsteps and dotted lines between places. 'The manuscript is read by locating the origin of the footprints and deciphering the place signs as they occur on these itineraries' (Harley, 1990, p. 101). Whereas the general assumption about Western maps today is that they are representations of space, these maps, as were the European mappae mundi, were representations of time and space together.

The imagination of space as a surface on which we are placed, the turning of space into time, the sharp separation of local place from the space out there; these are all ways of taming the challenge that the inherent spatiality of the world presents. Most often, they are unthought. Those who argue that Moçambique is just 'behind' do not (presumably) do so as a consequence of much deep pondering upon the nature of, and the relationship between, space and time. Their conceptualisation of space, its reduction to a dimension for the display/representation of different moments in time, is one assumes, implicit. In that they are not alone. One of the recurring motifs in what follows is just how *little*, actually, space is thought about explicitly. None the less, the persistent

associations leave a residue of effects. We develop ways of incorporating a spatiality into our ways of being in the world, modes of coping with the challenge that the enormous reality of space throws up. Produced through and embedded in practices, from quotidian negotiations to global strategising, these implicit engagements of space feed back into and sustain wider understandings of the world. The trajectories of others can be immobilised while we proceed with our own; the real challenge of the contemporaneity of others can be deflected by their relegation to a past (backward, old-fashioned, archaic); the defensive enclosures of an essentialised place seem to enable a wider disengagement, and to provide a secure foundation. In that sense, each of the earlier ruminations provides an example of some kind of failure (deliberate or not) of spatial imagination. Failure in the sense of being inadequate to face up to the challenges of space; a failure to take on board its coeval multiplicities, to accept its radical contemporaneity, to deal with its constitutive complexity. What happens if we try to let go of those, by now almost intuitive, understandings?

1
opening propositions

This book makes the case for an alternative approach to space. It has both the virtue, and all the disadvantages, of appearing obvious. Yet the ruminations above, and much that is to come, imply that it still needs elaborating.

It is easiest to begin by boiling it down to a few propositions. They are the following. *First*, that we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. (This is a proposition which will come as no surprise at all to those who have been reading recent anglophone geographical literature.) *Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality. Multiplicity and space as co-constitutive. *Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.

Now, these propositions resonate with recent shifts in certain quarters in the way in which progressive politics can also be imagined. Indeed it is part of my argument, not just that the spatial is political (which, after many years and much writing thereupon, can be taken as given), but rather that thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political. Some of these possibilities can already be drawn out from the brief statement of propositions. Thus, although it would be incorrect, and too rigidly constraining, to propose any simple one-to-one mapping, it is possible to elucidate

from each a slightly different aspect of the potential range of connections between the imagination of the spatial and the imagination of the political.

Thus, *first*, understanding space as a product of interrelations chimes well with the emergence over recent years of a politics which attempts a commitment to anti-essentialism. In place of an individualistic liberalism or a kind of identity politics which takes those identities as already, and for ever, constituted, and argues for the rights of, or claims to equality for, those already-constituted identities, this politics takes the constitution of the identities themselves and the relations through which they are constructed to be one of the central stakes of the political. 'Relations' here, then, are understood as embedded practices. Rather than accepting and working with already-constituted entities/identities, this politics lays its stress upon the relational constructedness of things (including those things called political subjectivities and political constituencies). It is wary therefore about claims to authenticity based in notions of unchanging identity. Instead, it proposes a relational understanding of the world, and a politics which responds to that.

The politics of interrelations mirrors, then, the first proposition, that space too is a product of interrelations. Space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations. More generally I would argue that identities/entities, the relations 'between' them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive. Chantal Mouffe (1993, 1995), in particular, has written of how we might conceptualise the relational construction of political subjectivities. For her, identities and interrelations are constituted together. But spatiality may also be from the beginning integral to the constitution of those identities themselves, including political subjectivities. Moreover, specifically spatial identities (places, nations) can equally be reconceptualised in relational terms. Questions of the geographies of relations, and of the geographies of the necessity of their negotiation (in the widest sense of that term) run through the book. If no space/place is a coherent seamless authenticity then one issue which is raised is the question of its internal negotiation. And if identities, both specifically spatial and otherwise, are indeed constructed relationally then that poses the question of the geography of those relations of construction. It raises questions of the politics of those geographies and of our relationship to and responsibility for them; and it raises, conversely and perhaps less expectedly, the potential geographies of our social responsibility.

Second, imagining space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity resonates with the greater emphasis which has over recent years in political discourses of the left been laid on 'difference' and heterogeneity. The most evident form which this has taken has been the insistence that the story of the world cannot be told (nor its geography elaborated) as the story of 'the West' alone nor as the story of, for instance, that classic figure (ironically frequently itself essentialised) of the white, heterosexual male; that these were particular stories among many (and that their understanding through the eyes

of the West or the straight male is itself specific). Such trajectories were part of a complexity and not the universals which they have for so long proposed themselves to be.

The relationship between this aspect of a changing politics (and manner of doing social theory) and the second proposition about space is of a rather different nature from in the case of the first proposition. In this case, the argument is that the very possibility of any serious recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity itself depends on a recognition of spatiality. The political corollary is that a genuine, thorough, spatialisation of social theory and political thinking can force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell. The imagination of globalisation as a historical queue does not recognise the simultaneous coexistence of other histories with characteristics that are distinct (which does not imply unconnected) and futures which potentially may be so too.

Third, imagining space as always in process, as never a closed system, resonates with an increasingly vocal insistence within political discourses on the genuine openness of the future. It is an insistence founded in an attempt to escape the inexorability which so frequently characterises the grand narratives related by modernity. The frameworks of Progress, of Development and of Modernisation, and the succession of modes of production elaborated within Marxism, all propose scenarios in which the general directions of history, including the future, are known. However much it may be necessary to fight to bring them about, to engage in struggles for their achievement, there was always none the less a background conviction about the direction in which history was moving. Many today reject such a formulation and argue instead for a radical openness of the future, whether they argue it through radical democracy (for example Laclau, 1990; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), through notions of active experimentation (as in Deleuze and Guattari, 1988; Deleuze and Parnet, 1987) or through certain approaches within queer theory (see as one instance Haver, 1997). Indeed, as Laclau in particular would most strongly argue, only if we conceive of the future as open can we seriously accept or engage in any genuine notion of politics. Only if the future is open is there any ground for a politics which can make a difference.

Now, here again – as in the case of the first proposition – there is a parallel with the conceptualisation of space. Not only history but also space is open.[6] In this open interactional space there are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not, for not all potential connections have to be established), relations which may or may not be accomplished. Here, then, space is indeed a product of relations (first proposition) and for that to be so there must be multiplicity (second proposition). However, these are not the relations of a coherent, closed system within which, as they say, everything is (already) related to everything else. Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established,

and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. *For* the future to be open, space must be open too.

All these words come trailing clouds of connotations. To write of challenging the opposition between space and place might legitimately provoke thoughts of Heidegger (but that is not what I mean). Talking of 'difference' can engender assumptions about othering (but that is not what I am getting at). Mention of multiplicities evokes, among others, Bergson, Deleuze, Guattari (and there will be some engagement later with that strand of thought). A few preliminary clarifications might help.

By 'trajectory' and 'story' I mean simply to emphasise the process of change in a phenomenon. The terms are thus temporal in their stress, though, I would argue, their necessary spatiality (the positioning in relation to other trajectories or stories, for instance) is inseparable from and intrinsic to their character. The phenomenon in question may be a living thing, a scientific attitude, a collectivity, a social convention, a geological formation. Both 'trajectory' and 'story' have other connotations which are not intended here. 'Trajectory' is a term that figures in debates about representation that have had important and abiding influences on the concepts of space and time (see the discussion in Part *Two*). 'Story' brings with it connotations of something told, of an interpreted history; but what I intend is simply the history, change, movement, of things themselves.

That bundle of words difference/heterogeneity/multiplicity/plurality has also provoked much contention. All I mean at this point is the contemporaneous existence of a plurality of trajectories; a simultaneity of stories-so-far. Thus the minimum difference occasioned by being positioned raises already the fact of uniqueness. This is, then, not 'difference' as opposed to class, as in some old political battles. It is simply the principle of coexisting heterogeneity. It is not the particular nature of heterogeneities but the fact of them that is intrinsic to space. Indeed it puts into question what might *be* the pertinent lines of differentiation in any particular situation. Nor is this 'difference' as in the deconstructive move of spac*ing*: as in the deconstruction of discourses of authenticity, for instance. This does not mean that such discourses are not significant in the cultural moulding of space; nor that they should not be taken to task. Romances of coherent nationhood, as in the third rumination, may operate on precisely such principles of constituting identity/difference. David Sibley (1995, 1999) among others has explored such attempts at the purification of space. Indeed, they are precisely one way of coping with its heterogeneities – its actual complexity and openness. But the point at issue here is another one: not negative difference but positive

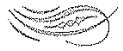
heterogeneity. This links back to the political argument against essentialism. Insofar as that argument adopted a form of social constructionism which was confined to the discursive, it did not in itself offer a positive alternative. Thus in the particular case of space, it may help us to expose some of its presumed coherences but it does not properly bring it to life. It is that liveliness, the complexity and openness of the configurational itself, the positive multiplicity, which is important for an appreciation of the spatial.

This book is an essay on the challenge of space, the multiple ruses through which that challenge has been so persistently evaded, and the political implications of practising it differently. In pursuit of this there is inevitable engagement with many other theorists and theoretical approaches, including many whose explicit focus is not always on spatiality. They are referenced in the text. But it is perhaps important to say now that my argument is not simply in the mould of any one of them. I have not worked from texts on space but through situations and engagements in which the question of space has in some way been entangled. Rather, my preoccupation with pushing away at space/politics has moulded positions *on* philosophy, and on a range of concepts. The debates about heterogeneity/difference and social constructionism/discourse are cases in point. Equations of representation with spatialisation have troubled me; associations of space with synchrony exasperated me; persistent assumptions of space as the opposite of time have kept me thinking; analyses that remained within the discursive have just not been positive enough. It has been a reciprocal engagement. What I'm interested in is how we might imagine spaces for these times; how we might pursue an alternative imagination. What is needed, I think, is to uproot 'space' from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness ... liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape.

There has, as is often now recounted, been a long history of understanding space as 'the dead, the fixed' in Foucault's famous retrospection. More recently and in total contrast there has been a veritable extravaganza of non-Euclidean, black-holey, Riemannian ... and a variety of other previously topologically improbable evocations. Somewhere between these two lie the arguments I want to make. What you will find here is an attempt to awaken space from the long sleep engendered by the inattention of the past but one which remains perhaps more prosaic, though none the less challenging, than some recent formulations. That is what I found to be most productive. This is a book about ordinary space; the space and places through which, in the negotiation of relations within multiplicities, the social is constructed. It is in that sense a modest proposal, and yet the very persistence, the apparent obviousness, of other mobilisations of 'space', point to its continuing necessity.

There are many who have pondered the challenges and delights of *temporality*. Sometimes this has been done through the lens of that strand of anthropocentric

philosophical miserabilism which preoccupies itself with the inevitability of death. In other guises temporality has been extolled as the vital dimension of life, of existence itself. The argument here is that space is equally lively and equally challenging, and that, far from it being dead and fixed, the very enormity of its challenges has meant that the strategies for taming it have been many, varied and persistent.



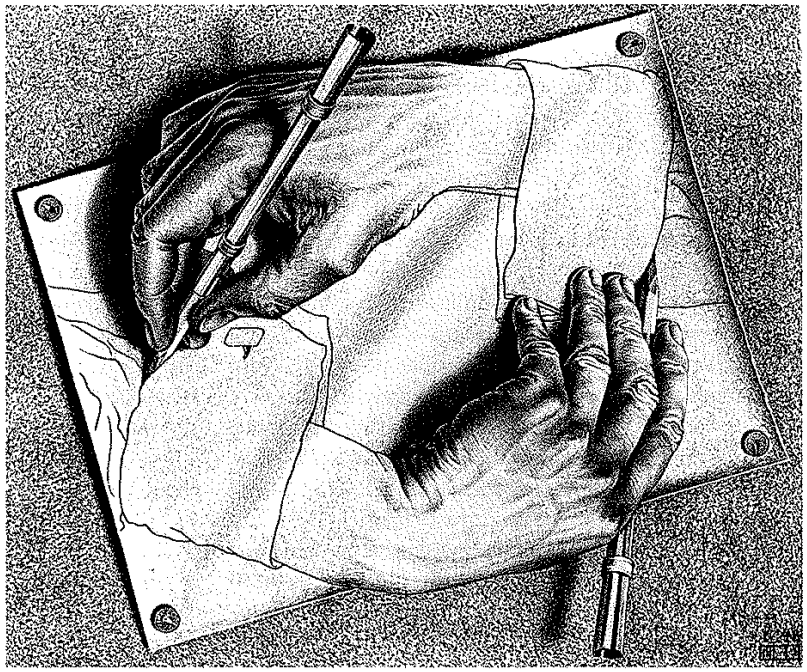
When I was a child I used to play a game, spinning a globe or flicking through an atlas and jabbing down my finger without looking where. If it landed on land I'd try to imagine what was going on 'there' 'then'. How people lived, the landscape, what time of day it was, what season. My knowledge was extremely rudimentary but I was completely fascinated by the fact that all these things were *going on now*, while I was here in Manchester in bed. Even now, each morning when the paper comes, I cast my eye down at the world's weather (100°F and cloudy in New Delhi, 46 and raining in Santiago; 82 and sunny in Algiers). It's partly a way of imagining how things are for friends in other places; but it's also a continuing amazement at the contemporaneous heterogeneity of the planet. (I wrote this book under the working title of 'Spatial delight'.) It was, possibly still is, all appallingly naive, and I have learned at least some of its dangers. The grotesqueness of the maps of power through which aspects of this 'variety' can be constituted; the real problems of thinking about, and still more of appreciating, place; how much more easy it is for some than for others to forget the simultaneity of those different stories; the difficulty simply, even, of travelling. (The telling of the voyages of discovery in a way that holds 'the discovered' still; the version of globalisation which dismisses others to the past ...) None the less it seems important to hold on to an appreciation of that simultaneity of stories. It sometimes seems that in the gadarene rush to abandon the singularity of the modernist grand narrative (the singular universal story) what has been adopted in its place is a vision of an instantaneity of interconnections. But this is to replace a single history with no history – hence the complaint, in this guise, of depthlessness. In this guise, the 'spatial turn' were better refused. Rather we should, could, replace the single history with many. And this is where space comes in. In that guise, it seems to me, it is quite reasonable to take some delight in the possibilities it opens up.

Part *Two* addresses some of the imaginations of space that we inherit from a range of philosophical discourses. This is not a book about philosophy but at this point it engages *with* some strands of philosophy in order to argue that

from them are derived common readings and associations which may help to explain why in social and political life we so often lend to space the characteristics we do. Part *Three* takes up a range of ways in which space is articulated in social theory and in practical-popular and political engagements, in particular in the context of debates about modernity and capitalist globalisation. In neither of these Parts is the primary aim one of critique: it is to pull out the positive threads which enable a more lively appreciation of the challenge of space. Part *Four* then elaborates a range of further reorientations concerning both space and place. Throughout the book, strands of the relevance of these arguments to political debate are developed, and Part *Five* turns to these directly. This book, then, is not 'for space' in preference to something else; rather it is an argument for the recognition of particular characteristics of space and for a politics that can respond to them.

A number of subthemes weave their way *sotto voce* through the Parts. Some of these have their own headings. The series called 'A reliance on science?' questions some elements of the current relation between natural and social sciences broadly conceived. 'The geography of knowledge production' weaves a story of the connection between certain modes of practising science and the social and geographical structures in which they are set (indeed, more strongly, through which they are constituted). In both of these spheres, it is proposed, not only are there implicit spatialities but also there are both conceptual and political links to the wider argument of the book.

Other themes persistently surface as part of the more general thesis. There is an attempt to go beyond the specifically human. There is a commitment to the old theme that space matters, but also a questioning of some of the ways in which it is commonly thought to do so. There is an attempt to work towards a groundedness that – in an age in which globalisation is so easily imagined as some kind of force emanating always from 'elsewhere' – is vital for posing political questions. There is an insistence, relatedly, on specificity, and on a world neither composed of atomistic individuals nor closed into an always-already completed holism. It is a world being made, through relations, and there lies the politics. Finally, there is an urge towards 'outwardlookingness', towards a positivity and aliveness to the world beyond one's own turf, whether that be one's self, one's city, or the particular parts of the planet in which one lives and works: a commitment to that radical contemporaneity which is the condition of, and condition for, spatiality.



Part *Two*
Unpromising associations

Henri Lefebvre points out in the opening arguments of *The production of space* (1991) that we often use that word 'space', in popular discourse or in academic, without being fully conscious of what we mean by it. We have inherited an imagination so deeply ingrained that it is often not actively thought. Based on assumptions no longer recognised as such, it is an imagination with the implacable force of the patently obvious. That is the trouble.

That implicit imagination is fed by all kinds of influences. In many cases they are, I want to argue, unpromising associations which connotationally deprive space of its most challenging characteristics. The influences to be addressed in this Part derive from philosophical writings in the broadest sense of that term. Part *Three* will take up more practical-popular and social-theoretical understandings of space, particularly in the context of the politics of modernity and capitalist globalisation. The aim of both Parts is to unearth some of the influences on hegemonic imaginations of 'space'. What follows immediately, then, is an attempt to draw out some particular threads of argument which exemplify ways in which space can come, through significant philosophical discourses, to have associated with it characteristics which, to my mind at least, disable its full insertion into the political. This is not a book about philosophy; the arguments here are particular and focus solely on how some commonly accepted positions, even if not directly concerned with space, have reverberations none the less for the way in which we imagine it. The particular philosophical strands addressed here serve as exemplars. They revolve around Henri Bergson, structuralism and deconstruction: a selection made both because of their significance as strands of thought and because in their wider arguments they have, in different ways, much to offer the kind of project this book is engaged in. In other words, they are engaged with because of their promise rather than their problems.

None of these philosophers has the reconceptualisation of space as their objective. Most often, and in the context of wider debates, temporality is a more pressing concern. Over and again space is conceptualised as (or, rather, assumed to be) simply the negative opposite of time. It is indeed, I want to argue, in part that