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*Uneven Development：Nature,Cpaital and the Production of Space*

Introduction

This book is about the geography of politics and the politics of geography.It therefore attempts to integrate two intellectual traditions which until very recently have enjoyed little serious cross-fertilization.If the work is theoretical in substance and exposition，it is quite immediate in motivation.For one can hardly look at the world today without perceiving that，at the hands of capital，the last two decades have witnessed an emergent restructuring of geographical space more dramatic than any before.Deindustrialization and regional decline，gentrification and extrametropolitan growth，the industrialization of the Third World and a new international division of labour，intensified nationalism.At the most basic level，the object of this work is unravel the theoretical logic driving this restructuring of geographical space.

The first tradition，that of academic geography，provides us with the Orthodox concepts of geographical space and the environment，as well as an analysis of spatial relations onthe surface of the earth.Long mesmerized by a peculiar brand of neo-Kantain historicism，academic geography relinquished its eighteenth-century garb in the 1960s in favour of a thoroughly nati-historical positivism.Though by no means unchallenged，an abstract conception of absolute space now dominantes this tradition；space（along with time）is a basic co-ordinate of reality，a field，an infinite，universal and unchanging box within which material events occur. According to this tradition，therefore，the restructuring of space makes no sense except as the product of the most universal physical forces and laws：human activity does not restructure space；it simply rearranges objects in space.Viewed through this set of philosophical lenses the symptoms of spatial restructuring appear as just so many separate processes at separate scales with very separate causes and explanations.Because the lenses are too crude，the real pattern is refracted in fragments.

The second tradition is that of the political analysis of capitalist society.By contrast with the geographical tradition，Marxist theory is explicitly historical，and this is one of its major strengths.Marxist theory attempts to explain the specific economic，political and social structure of society in a given period as the result not of supposedly universal forces（for example，human nature），but as the result of historically specific and contingent processes.It is not just that competition and the market，economic growth and the profit motive are historically contingent，but that the form they take changes and develops within the history of capitalism itself.A further strength of Marxist theory is its relational perspective which treats capitalist society as a coherent（if not always consistent）whole，rather than as an agglomeration of fragments. These strengths make this tradition particularly sensitive to the contemporary restructuring of capitalist society.But what it gains in historical sensibility it lacks in geographical sensibility，perhaps because，despite the holistic approach，Marxists have tended to accept the traditional bourgeois conception of space as quite separate from society.Only in the isolated cases of the analysis of the separation of town and country，and of the necessity of internationalism，does the Marxist tradition transcend this acquiescence tothe bourgeois conception of space. While this tradition has the theoretical wherewithal to comprehend the contemporary restructuring of geographical space，therefore，it has tended to lack the requisite geographical sensibility.

In an attempt more fully to comprehend the restructuring of geographical space，a number of researchers have begun to explorer the intersection between the geographical and the Marxist traditions.Broadly，the focus that is developing is upon the question：what is the geography of capitalism？What specific spatial patterns and processes characterize capitalist society，and how do they change with the further development of capitalism？In itself this represents a significant advance for both traditions.For geography it offers the possibility of putting the philosophical lenses into historical focus，thus opening up a whole new world in which human societies create their own geography. For marxism it offers the chance both to extend the jurisdiction of Marxist theory into the geographical sphere，and also to deepen it，in that even the natural and spatial substructure of the social landscape can then be comprehended from within Marxist theory.

Most of the emerging work on the geography of capitalism examines in some detail the process of uneven development，which has become a fasionable even faddish ideal in the last decade.So faddish，indeed，that like all fads it has been quickly trivialized. One can see，for example，howgeographers might treat uneven development as an ahistoricsl and universal process，little more than the inevitable result of the eternal impossibility of even development：‘everything develops unevenly.’Far more disturbing is to find Marxists，despite the historical acuity of their theory，submitting to the same trivialization.For uneven development is far too fundamental to the unfolding of capitalism for it to be passed over as a commonplace and added to the buzz-Word list of processes deserving only lip-service.The point is that uneven development is the hallmark of the geography of capitalism.It is not just that capitalism fails to develop evenly，that due to accidental and random factors the geographical development of capitalism represents some stochastic deviation from a generally even process. The uneven development of capitalism is structural rather than statistical. The resulting geographical patterns are thoroughly determinate（as opposed to‘determinist’）and are thus unique tocapitalism. At the most basic level，as I hope to show，uneven development is the systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital.

Occupying the common ground between the geographical and political traditions，a theory of uneven development provides the major key in determining what characterizes the specific geography of capitalism. Phrased this way，the question is essentially geographical.But one cannot probe too far into the logic of uneven development without realizing that something far more profound is at stake.It is not just a question of what capitalism does to geography but rather of what geography can do for capitalism. Thus in addition to the essentially geographical question，the theory of uneven development also addresses the political question：how does the geographical configuration of the landscape contribute to the survival of capitalism？From the Marxist point of view，therefore，it is not just a question of extending the depth and jurisdiction of Marxist theory，but of pioneering a whole new facet of explanation concerning the survival of capitalism in the twentieth century.From the vantage point of the geographical tradition，which especially in the United States today is grasping for all entrepreneurial opportunities，the result is no less dramatic.The popular geographical wisdom is that we live in a shrinking world，that cheap and sophisticated transportation systems have diminished the importance of geographical space and geographical differentiation，that traditional regional identities are being evened out--in short，that we are somehow beyond geography.What I argue here in the derivation of the theory of uneven development is that whatever the partial truths conveyed by the popular wisdom，the contrary is true. Geographical space is on the economic and political agenda as never before. The idea of the‘geographical pivot of history’takes on a more modern and more profound meaning than Mackinder could have imagined.

The idea of uneven development has a heritage in Marxist theory，and before proceeding with the task at hand，it is necessary to clarify where the present analysis fits in the context of the so-called ‘law’ of uneven development. Claiming an exclusive marxist pedigree for idea of uneven (and combined) development, Ernest Mandel has gone as far as to say that with the exception of Marx’s own work, no idea of explicitly Marxist origin has become so influential and widespread in bourgeois circles.3 There is a germ of truth in this even if it tends toward exaggeration. Yet in the Marxist tradition itself, this conception has not been well developed. It figured prominently in the political struggle between Trotsky and Stalin in the 1920s, especially in the debates over internationalism and ‘socialism in one country’. In the political concept which referred to the uneven development of class struggle and of the challenge to world capitalism. As with so many facets of twentieth-century Marxist thought, the pattern of response established in this period of emerging Stalinism has dominated later treatments of the process.

In fact, uneven development, as a discrete process, was first examined in any depth by Lenin, who tried to sketch some of the economic and geographic outlines of the process. Although he periodically referred to it in later analyses, this earlier suggestive work was never developed.4 After the revolution of 1905 the notion of uneven development came to be interpreted in terms of the immediate political question, whether socialist revolution was possible in the economically less advanced nations where the peasantry still outnumbered the working class and the emerging bourgeoisie was weak. This was the concept which Trotsky recovered and refined in his political fight against Stalin: thus today the ‘law of uneven and combined development’ is clearly associated with the Trotskyist tradition. With the defeat of Trotsky the concept fell into obscurity, but not before its economic and geographical content was completely displaced. Connected with Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, it survived in the trotskyist movement as a political term referring to the development of class relations and the anatomy of revolution.

If the attention paid to uneven development in the last decade or so owes something to this classical Marxist heritage, it owes a lot more to the general resurgence of interest in marxism which followed the 1960s as well as the geographical acuteness of the actual process. If the importance and structure of the process were not recognized 80 years ago this is because the geographical pattern of capital accumulation has changed abruptly since that period. Uneven development, in the strict sense implied in this work, is a truly twentieth-century phenomenon. Thus the derivation of a theory (as distinct form a law) of uneven development involves a second dialogue beyond that between geographical and political traditions. It also involves an historical dialogue between a theoretical analysis of capitalism derived in the nineteenth century and the reality of capitalism toward the close of the twentieth century.

The logic of uneven development derives specifically from the opposed tendencies，inherent in capital，toward the differentiation but simultaneous equalizatiom of the levels and conditions of production.Capital is continually invested in the built environment in order to produce surplus value and expand the basis of capital itself. But equally，capital is continually withdrawn from the built environment so that it can move elsewhere and take advantage of higher profit rates. The spatial immobilization of productive capital inits material form is no more or less a necessity than the perpetual circulation of capital as value.Thus it is possible to see the uneven development of capitalism as the geographical expression of the more fundamental contradiction between use value and exchange value.

The pattern which results in the landscape is well known：development at one pole and underdevelopment at the other.This takes place at a number of spatial scales. Dependency theory，centre-periphery theory，and the various theories of underdevelopment all capture something of this process. But their focus tends to be on the global scale alone，and the geographical dimensions of uneven development are poorly worked out. They do not，in short，offer a well-developed theoretical framework for understanding the geography of capitalism. Surprisingly，perhaps，the main barrier to understanding this geography comes less from our ignorance about the workings of capital and more from our deeply engrained and commonly held prejudices concerning space.A theory of uneven development must integrate space and social process at a number of levels，and yet our commonsense view of space as a field of activity or as a container makes it difficult to get beyond a rather mechanical internation of space and society；space is seen to‘reflect’society.A fundamental change of perspective is demanded here. For while we as theories may have drastic conceptual problems in achieving an internation of space and society，capital seems to achieve it in practice on a daily basis. What it achieves in fact is the production of space in its own image，and exploration of this idea will lead to a more complete internation of space and society in the theory of uneven development.For not only does capital produce space in general，it produces the real spatial scales that give uneven development its coherence.

The production of space，in fact，is premised on a more basic production process，one which sounds even more quixotic and which jars our traditional acceptance of what had hitherto seemed self-evident. The pruduction of nature not only provides a rather philosophical foundation for discussing the uneven development of capitalism，but it is a very real result of the development of this mode of production.What jars us so much about this idea of the production of nature is that it defies the conventional，sacrosanct separation of nature and society，and it does so with such abandon and without shame.We are used to conceiving of nature as external to society，pristine and pre-human，or else as a grand universal in which human beings are but small and simple cogs.But here agian our concepts have not caught up with reality. It is capitalism which ardently defies the inherited separation of nature and society，and with pride rather than shame.

In its constant drive to accumulate larger and quantities of social wealth under its control，capital transforms the shape of the entire world. No God-given stone is left unturned，no original relation with nature unaltered，no living thing unaffected.To this extent the problems of nature，of space and of uneven development are tied together by capital itself.Uneven development is the concrete process and pattern of the production of nature under capitalism.This will become more evident in the discussion of the production of nature which in some ways reduces itself to a discussion of use value，value and exchange value.There can be no apology for the anthropomorphism of this perspective：with the development of capitalism，human society has put itself at the centre of nature，and we shall be able to deal with the problems this has created only if we first recognize the reality.

The progression of the present work is straightforward.After considering the ideology of nature（chapter1）I attempt to lay out the rudiments of an alternative conception of the relation with nature，focusing on the production of nature（chapter2）.If these first twochapters appear somewhat abstract and not quite to the point，this is partly because of our customary dichotomy of nature and society，and I hope that it will not daunt the reader. In chapter 3,I discuss the relationship between nature and space and derive the powerful impetus within capital toward the production of space.In chapter 4，the focus is upon the basic processes of equalization and differentiation and their relationship to the accumulation and circulation of capital. This acts as the final foundation for chapter 5，which presents the general theory of uneven development. Here I rely heavily on the conclusions concerning space and nature from the earlier chapters，but also upon marx’s analysis of capitalism. For when one draws out the spatital implication and dimensions of Marx’s analysis，especially in Capital，the basis of uneven development theory is then ready at hand. Thus the analysis begins with more general philosophical categories which must be renovated before building up to the actual analysis of uneven development.

In developing the theory of uneven development I shall follow the logico-historical procedure employed by Mars. In Capital he ‘assumed that the laws of capitalist production operate in their pure form. In reality there exists only approximation; but, this approximation is the greater, the more developed the capitalist mode of production.’ In other words, this assumption of a pure form is no arbitrary abstraction but one that actually occurs historically; this assumption ‘expresses the limit [of the process] and … is therefore constantly coming closer to an exact presentation of realitry.’6 Whether it proceeds from the messy historical legacy of feudalism or from an assumed ideal plain, the uneven development of capitalism becomes increasingly acute, both in the geographical landscape and as an inner necessity of capital. This work attempts a theoretical analysis of the processes by which this comes about.

AfterWord：

The Beginning of Geography

In this history of the ‘discovery’ of geological time , Stephen Jay Gould refers to James Hutton’s famous conclusion--‘no vestige of a beginning,-no prospect of an end’ -as the most significant single announcement of what he calls , in John McPhee’s ponderous phrase, ‘deep time’ . Whereas, in the seventeenth century, discovered time stretched a mere 6000 years into the past, by the beginning of the nineteenth century a scientific consciousness of time stretched millions of years. ‘Deep time is so alien’, Gould tells us, ‘that we can really only comprehend it as a metaphor’ . He recounts the metaphor of the ‘geographical mile’ in which human history occupies only the last few inches; a Swedish portrayal of geological time as the trace of a pet snail set down at the South Pole during the Cambrian and permitted to proceed toward Malmo; and McPhee’s own metaphor whereby the earth’s history can be measured as old English yard, namely the distance from the king’s nose to the tip of this outstretched hand, and where all of human history can be erased by a single stroke of a nail file across the end of the royal middle finger. By ‘visualizing time as geography’, space becomes the metaphorical bearer of time’s meaning. It is likewise with the most abstract depiction of time，the clock；time is rendered measurable and given meaning via the spatial arrangement of the clock’s hands.

The twentieth century has ushered in the discovery of deep space，or at least its social construction，and yet it is only as the century draws to a close that this fundamental discovery is becoming apparent. By deep space I do not mean simply the sheer immensity of absolute space，the physical extent of the near-infinite universe as measured（appropriately）in light years. That conception of space is owed most clearly to Newton，and is explored，defined，and refined by physics and astronomy，space science and cosmology. Rather I refer to the relativity of terrestrial space，the space of everyday life in all its scales form the global to the local and the architectural in which，to use Doreen Massey’s metaphor，different layers of life and social landscape are sedimented onto and into each other. Deep space is quintessentially social space；it is physical extent fused through with social intent，Henri Lefevbre’s ‘production of space’ in its richest sense. In the emerging spatial language of social theory，geographical time is more aptly a metaphor expressing the fluid meanings of space than vice versa.

Deep space and its production are crushingly real. As a means to ground a later conceptual discussion，I would like to discuss two events from the 1980s that give some sense of the meaning and immediacy of ‘deep space’.First，the question of economic crisis.Speaking a year prior to the October 1987 stock market crash，even as the Reagan administration continued to hail the economic boom of the mid-1980s，one banker portrayed the potentially profound consequences of the looming financial crash as a kind of geographical holocaust. With banks‘overexposed’，everyone holding excessive volumes of bad debt，and the gap between real and paper value growing ever more cavernous，Thomas S. Johnson，President of New York’s Chemical Bank，anticipated an imminent maelstrom：‘There is the possibility of a nightmarish domino effect’，he predicted gravely，‘as every creditor ransacks the globe attempting to locate his collateral’. That such a global rampage did not unfold a year later，and that the financial system effectively held as a containment vessel for the ‘financial meltdown’（as it was called by John Phelan，president of the New York Stock Exchange）dose not mean that such a scenario is impossible or even unlikely. More than his recognition of the crisis at the economic core of global capitalism，our banker’s haunting nightmare recognizes the fundamentally spatial construction of global capital and the geographical destruction that will be wrought in efforts to ‘solve’ the crisis，at least under the present economic rules of private property. The globe is to be ransacked by inexorable economic forces just because the books on Wall Street cease to add up ；the furthest villages plundered because the economic system has stopped making sense.

The largely peaceful revolution from below，throughout Eastern Europe in 1989，gives additional richness to the notion of deep space. The festive destruction of the Berlin Wall by East Germans on 9 November 1989 has come to symbolize the opening of the iron curtain to a new politics in the East. Blythely interpreted by many in the West as an exuberant and long overdue embrace of capitalist democracy，the layers of spatial meaning in these events are multifold. These quiet revolutions open up genuinely new political spaces in Eastern Europe - to a lesser extent so far in the Soviet Union - but they are limited spaces. To the extent that it was mass struggle with only embryonic organization，virtually everywhere outside Poland，that tore down the walls from the East， the limits on these new political spaces are circumscribed only by the imagination and organizational effectiveness of new democratic forms of governance and presumably continued struggle. But to the extent that these revolutions were enabled in part through the non-intervention of the Warsaw Pact and various national armies- or indeed their active intervention on behalf of the opposition - the limits of the new political spaces are also in part established by the way in which the military hierarchies are reconstructed （or not），permitted to participate in social reconstruction（or otherwise），or indeed force a central role for themselves.

In fact，the premature closure of the revolutions throughout much of Eastern Europe in early 1990s suggests that neither the political limits of the popular imagination nor the military limits of intervention are likely to be the decisive constraints, at least in the short term, Whereas Czechoslvakia moves toward a social democratic posture, more conservative regimes have been elected in Hungary and East Germany amidst widespread signs that unemployment and homelessness come hand in hand with the capitalist market. Poland’s is the most aggressive conservatism as an erstwhile labour union, Solidarity, pursues the most unabashed embrace of capital. ‘Is this all there is?’ very soon became the common grumble throughout most of Eastern Europe.

The political results of the 1989 revolts are not simply regional. While they potentially affect every facet of everyday life in every home, factory, and street in Eastern Europe, the results are the same time resoundingly global. Within hours of the astonishing broadcast of film footage from Berlin, the Bush administration and the Defense Department faced a clamour of congressional demands that the extraordinary $300 billion defense budget be substantially reduced. The endangerment of jobs for American workers in defense plants across the country comprised the first cynical and hardly sustainable line of ideological defense; as ever, ‘jobs for American workers’ should be decoded as ‘profits for American companies’. The end of the Cold War in geopolitical terms was hailed around the world as a stunned Washington administration squirmed in search of new global enemies, finally alighting on Panama. Margaret Thatcher, herself no friend of the defeated regimes of official communism, revealed her class colours admirably with an extraordinary paean to the Secretary General of the Soviet Community Party, Mikhail Gorbachev (anointed by Western leaders as author of a ‘democratization’so far forbidden in his own country), while at the same time admonishing the masses in Eastern Europe to ‘take it slowly for goodness sake’ lest national and global ‘stability ’ be disrupted.

The prospect of a reunited Germany has resurrected an obsolete national and geopolitical essentialism，partly within Gemany,but also among theruling classes of France，Britain，and especially the United Stated. But German reunification today, in reality,has little to do with geopolitics. Simple spatial propinquity is of limited consequence in the age of IBMs and ICBMs. It is an economic question；the fading of the‘American Century’，to use Henrt Luce’s phrase of 1941（rather optimistically，it would now seem），would progress that much faster with a reunited Germany（within a confederated Europe），doubling with the already prevalent competition from Japan. And yet, in the context of the globalization of production，capital，labour and commodity markets，and financial capital，an open Eastern Europe becomes a virtual vacuum into which crisis-ridden capital may willingly be sucked. The see-saw of capital takes a definitive lurch to the East. In the eyes of many optimistic businessmen, the opening of Easter Europe could be a shot of economic adrenalin to global capital, a new world to conquer, one more spatial fix, a new and empty economic space divined from outside the previously resistant geo-economic boundaries of global capital. With cheap labour and expanding markets, Hungary in particular is widely equated to a ‘gold mine’. And just in time. Their hope would be that substantial investment in and for Eastern Europe might provide sufficient opportunities to resolve or at least attenuate the crises of overproduction and financial indebtedness that Mr Johnson of Chemical Bank so accurately feared.

But there are many other scenarios. The technics of integrating non-hard currencies, different wage rates, market prices, and conditions of labour into the European and global political economies are formidable. However these arrangements are worked out, it seems indisputable that even if specific states re-erect comparatively closed economic and political boundaries，Eastern European will become far more closely integrated into the global market. In this respect, the Marxist analysis that has traditionally diagnosed Eastern European and Soviet societies and their histories as itinerant toward state capitalism, may well prove prophetic. And yet, after 1989, this would be the pessimistic argument. Grassroots working class and popular resistance bear the true authorship of the Eastern European revolt which certainly anticipates political and economic alternatives to an oppressive state and economy. But as E.P. Thompson has so forcefully put it, East Berliners did not break down the Berlin Wall just instigate privatized housing or privatized health care, British or American style.At the present conjuncture in Eastern Europe, therefore, it is still not an economic logic that orchestrates the production of space, but quotidian political struggles, at one and the same time separate and yet more and more closely connected: struggle over political rights defined in Class, ethnic, gender, and national terms; struggles over economic rights of employment shelter and consumption; struggles over environmental conditions and social services; and struggles over rural development Economism (but hardly economic analysis) is given the lie not so much by philosophical critique as by the practical dramas of uneven development. The world historic importance of the 1989 revolts in Eastern Europe will eventually be measured according to the ways in which the intermeshed political, cultural, and economic struggles (both within the Eastern bloc, and concerning the integration of these societies into an already unstable global capitalism) reconstruct the local, national, and global spaces of which they are a part.

Stephen Kern has argued forcefully that the essential foundations of our experience of space and time were dramatically restructured around the finde-siecle. Today, almost a hundred years later, it may not be untoward to suggest that we are undergoing another such shift in which the meaning of space is even more thoroughly imbricated in its social construction. Nor is this simply a global event. Gentrification and homelessness increasingly etch the simultaneously global and local contours of deep space in restructuring urban centres throughout the West. The regional scales of production are equally restructured through both deindustrialization and reinvestment in new industrial spaces from Silicon Valley to Taipei. The agricultural regions of the Great Plains in the US are being fragmented amidst a tumultuous economic and financial, environmental and climatic crisis in the production of nature, leading some to advocate a return of the Plains to a buffalo commons. And in Europe the advent of 1992 threatens to dissolve the national scale of social organization.

But it may be at the global scale that the reconfiguration of space is most clamorous. And nowhere is this intensified production of space as profoundly destructive as in the so-called Third World. While the 1970s, and indeed the 1980s, witnessed the partial integration of several Third World economies and their strong states (the Newly Industrialized Countries) into global capitalism, it also attested to the unprecedented destruction of everyday life elsewhere. Even more profound, if less commonly recongnized is the utter redlining of this region by global capital, whereby needed capital is systematically denied. In the early and mid-1980s, when Third World debt led the list of economic crises, sub-Saharan Africa was revealed in utter silence as so poor that it did not even have the luxury of indebtedness. While private investment in Africa has dropped 25 percent in the 1980s, and will fall even further as capital re-orients to Eastern Europe, the 14 nations of sub-Saharan Africa has amassed a mere $4.8 billion in debt to the US. In these places, international institutions – the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the IMF, the World Bank – together with national organs like the Peace Corp and the Agency for International Development all promised progress, modernization, the influx of capital, political stability, improved living conditions if only the Western capitalist models were followed. Translated from on high into the daily practice of African peasants, the holy texts of progress have wrought nothing less than a swath of satanic geographies across sub-Saharan Africa. Between theory and practice the message underwent an inevitable mistranslation’, integral to modernization theory itself, at a cost of millions of lives. Such is the power of the ideology of uneven development.

II MATERIAL AND METAPHORICAL SPACE

Contemporaneous with the material reconfiguration of geographical space has come ‘the reassertion of space in critical social theory’7.The art historian John Berger may have expressed it best when he argued that the spatial ‘simultaneity and extension’ of evens now must command our attention: the range of modern means of communication: the scale of modern power: the degree of personal political responsibility that must be accepted for events all over the world: the fact that the world has become indivisible: the unevenness of economic development within that world: the scale of the exploitation. All these play a part. Prophecy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection; it is space not time that hides consequences from us. To prophesy today it is only necessary to know men [and women] as they are throughout the whole world in their inequality.

In his Postmodern Geographies, Ed Soja incisively chronicles and illuminates the rediscovery of space in the work of Foucault and Poulantzas, Sartre and Althusser, Giddens and Habermas to name only a few. With Foucault he asks: ‘Did it start with Bergson or before? Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic’. And he follows Foucault’s recognition of space: ‘The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed’. Pointing out the engrained historicism of social theory on the one hand, Soja also indicts the inward looking isolation of most twentieth-century geography on the other; in the last decade and a half, however, he detects an imminent rapprochement between the two. Where social theory detects strives to grasp the profundity of what we are here calling deep space, a growing movement of geographers has been reaching toward social theory in an effort to reconnect spatial with social discourses. For Soja this reconnection fundamentally involves a ‘spatialized ontology’ which redresses the balance away from historicism and toward a new, philosophically grounded, spatialized discourse of social change8.

Perhaps the most dramatic recentering of space from outside the geographical discourse has come from Frederic Jameson who argued in 1984 that ‘a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern’. Crediting the unlikely source of Kevin Lynch, he goes on to suggest that an ‘aesthetic of cognitive mapping’ is the appropriate focus for this cultural politics. From within geography, David Harvey’s work has undoubtedly had the greatest influence. Throughout the 1980s Harvey has sought to establish a ‘geographical historical materialism’. If there is a ‘new spatiality implicit in the postmodern’, as Jameson suggests, this may account for the broad-based excitement generated by Harvey’s The condition of Postmodernity which seeks to connect the cultural lexicon in which seeks to connect the cultural lexicon in which postmodernism has been played out with a sense of the political, economic, and social shifts accompanying the restructuring of late capitalism.9 The parallels between Jameson and Harvey, coming from different sides of the reassertion of space, are unmistakable.

But let us pause for a moment, that the full import of some of these statements does not escape us:

‘The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space’ (Foucault).

‘Prophecy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection’(Berger).

‘A model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as tis fundamental organizing concern’(Jameson).

If Soja is correct about the dominance of historicism, and so many others have made the point (if in different contexts) that on its own it seems incontrovertible，then the shift toward space and geography announced by this array of author ，and numerous others，is no minor event。what could this reassertion of space actually mean？And what are we to make of the comparative silence with which such a far reaching historical and intellectual realization seems to have been met? Who has taken Foucault at his word and explicated the present for us as the epoch of space? Where are the geographical prophecies required by Berger? And who has developed a fundamentally spatial strategy for political struggles based on class, race, and gender? Where are the breathtaking dissertations announcing the spatial and political substance of 'cognitive mapping' or for that matter geographical historical materialism?

In the introductory discussion of deep time, we are found Gould and others ‘visualizing time as geography’. Space was the metaphorical mirror that imbued time with meaning. And here, I think, is a clue to the silence with which the reassertion of space has been greeted. Whatever the reality of a political and intellectual reassertion of space in social theoretical discourse, it is clear that there are very different understandings of space afoot. For those of us trained in geography, the materiality of space (socially as well as physically constituted) is such a central assumption – an assumption made throughout this book – that it goes virtually unchallenged. This is by no means to exclude alternative understandings of space, but rather to and especially literary theory, However, space intervenes largely as metaphor. It is not that material space ceases to exist in these discourses; rather its materiality is, for them, so unproblematic (absolute space) that it raises few if any worthwhile questions. The interesting questions emerge instead from a gamut of personal, psychological, social and conceptual ‘spaces’ - arenas, realms, contexts, fields, conjectures - in which the dramas of human thought and interpersonal relationships are played out.

Certainly the poststructuralist and postmodernist language of ‘subject positions’, ’conceptual space’, ’theoretical space’, ’contested spaces’,’ space of negotiation’, ’space of signification’, ’ideological space(s)’, and so forth makes fruitful reference to space in purely metaphorical tones. ’Mapping’ seems to cover virtually every kind of plausible translation from one test to another. Why should this be a problem? Here Jameson inadvertently hints at an answer when he admits his own spatial metaphors: ‘” cognitive mapping”’, he tells us, ‘was in reality nothing but a code word for “class consciousness”’. Is the commitment to a spatialized politics really only metaphoric, then? And if this is possible for an explicitly political thinker such as Jameson, how much greater might the dangers be that with literary and cultural discourses arguably coming to lead in its reassertion, and with some social and spatial theorists eagerly adopting such discourses as a retreat from an explicitly oppositional politics, space will be reduced to metaphor, its materiality still unrealized.10

And yet I prefer to think that the project is indeed coherent – not merely metaphorical – and that perhaps despite the erudite metaphors announcing geographical space on the intellectual and political agenda, we nonetheless remained confused about the richness of possibilities; there is indeed a nascent commitment to spatialized politics, but largely because of a lost discourse on space it is difficult to see clearly through a powerful mask of spatial metaphors – difficult to understand the mutuality of material and metaphorical space. In part I am convinced of this from Jameson’s own work. The insight and thrill of Jameson’s analysis for me (and I think for many others rooted in geographical conceptions of space) lay in his broad decoding of the spatial vista of the city as an expression of the cultural, social, political, and economic upheavals of ‘late capitalism’. This was paradigmatic of precisely the project that a growing number of geographers had embarked on, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and if Jameson only dimly comprehended the restructuring of the urban landscape as social and built environment, he made a wealth of incisive connections that offered a relatedness of urban vision as yet unrealized. The use of metaphor was central to his success. The asymmetry of criticism with which Jameson was met is equally revealing. From the side of politics and geography, critics lamented his confusion of culture and economy, unfamiliarity with the urban restructuring literature, and wrongheadedness about the timing of the advent of late capitalism. From more cultural circles, however, the dominant critique would appear to be his resilient orthodoxy, as indeed he now concedes in explaining ‘cognitive mapping’ as metaphor.11

What would be the dangers of a purely metaphorical conception of space? In the first place, just as our conceptions of material space are enhanced by metaphor, so metaphorical uses of space inevitably refer to material space; the one is constructed from within the other, and so we are not dealing with a crude dualism. In traditional social theory space usually intrudes as the self-evident: as the site, the ground, the stable foundation that lets history move. It defines a fixed set of coordinated that renders historical change coherent. The relationship is thereby asymmetrical; history is the independent variable, geography the dependent. It is to this conception of space as ground (or as combination of separate grounds) that spatial metaphors invariably appeal; space serves to animate time, to imbue time with a life that can be gauged, measured, appreciated against the deadness of space. Whatever the power of spatial metaphors to reveal especially the fragmented unity of the contemporary world, they work precisely by reinforcing the deadness of space and therefore by denying us the spatial concepts appropriate for analyzing that world. Metaphor is inherently juxtaposition; it reveals one truth by asserting it as another. If we are to get beyond the reassertion of space, then, in search of rapprochement between the spatial and social, it will be necessary to fill in the conceptual abyss between metaphorical and material space.

In this light it makes sense to conceive of deep space as combining the inherently social processes and produced structures of space together with the most superficial refractions from space in any given fixed form. Metaphorical and material are thus inseparable in deep space yet remain distinct. To the extent that metaphor dominates our conceptions of space it is the latter refraction of fixed form that informs us; metaphorical appropriations of space are ‘real’ enough but they conceal the life of deep space as effectively as a mirror hides the world behind it. The question that confronts us then is this: what are the translation rules between the material and metaphorical meanings of space, and how can we unearth material and metaphorical meanings of space, and how can wo unearth them in such a way as to further the development of a spatialized politics?

III THE PRODUCTION OF SCALE

Henri Lefebvre tackles some of these questions in his definitive and highly original work, The Production of Space, which provides the most sophisticated exploration of our knowledge and understanding of concepts of space. If in his earlier work, metaphorical and material conceptions of space were at times unselfconsciously intermixed, there is here a more explicit effort to separate out three kinds of space: real or social space; ideal or mental space; and metaphorical space. He chides Foucault and others for eliding theoretical space and practical space, mental space and real space. He defends mental space insofar as he posits ideal and real space as mutually presupposive, and yet he keenly perceives the self-flattery in which ‘mental space’ can indulge.

Most if not all authors ensconce themselves comfortably enough within the terms of mental (and therefore neo-Kantian or neo-Cartesian) space, thereby demonstrating that ‘theoretical practice’ is already nothing more than the egocentric thinking of specialized Western intellectuals – and indeed may soon be nothing more than an entirely separated, schizoid consciousness.

Likewise spatial metaphor is mutually implicated within conceptions of material space; they are unavoidable means of constituting meaning but succeed only insofar as they ‘assimilate space to things and thus relegate its concept to the realm of abstraction’. Spatial metaphors thrive on fetishism, in Marx’s sense, and reaffirm ‘abstract space’.12

There is in Lefebvre a sense that the contemporary space of capitalism is metaphor. Borrowing the phrase with which Habermas describes modern-ism, we might say that with the advent of twentieth-century capitalism, space becomes ‘dominant but dead’, for Lefebvre. The death of space is brought about by its being rendered abstract at the hands of capitalism. The world of commodity production and exchange, the logic and strategies of accumulation, the oppressive rule of the State, the extension abstract space that is simultaneously disconnected from the landscapes of everyday lives, and at the same time crushes existing difference and differences. Space is ‘run into the ground’. ‘The State crushes time by Hegelian form comes back into its own’. Hegelian space is indeed dead insofar as it is a purely conceptual imposition through the state, but by the same token it is dominant. Space dominates in the dual sense that it is a primary producer and reproducer of social relations and simultaneously a source of oppressive violence: one facet of ‘the production of abstract space’ is ‘a general metaphorization which, applied to the historical and cumulative spheres, transfers them into that space where violence is cloaked in rationality and a rationality of unification is used to justify violence’.13

For Lefebvre, the capitalist ‘trinity’ of land, labor, and capital are made concrete in a ‘tri-faceted institutional space’. Space is: global, the space of sovereignty, homogeneity, fetishism, and the reduction of difference; fragmented, which separates, disjoints, and establishes localities to facilitate control or negotiation; Hierarchical, in terms of power and symbolism.

The compulsive homogeneity and violence of abstract space is never total for Lefebvre. If space has undergone a kind of grand fall from absolutism to abstraction, historical spaces do not disappear but are continually recycled. A constant struggle shapes the production of space, and the purpose of this struggle – the ‘strategic hypothesis’ as Lefebvre calls it – is to defeat those ideologies that promote abstract space, to reverse the abstraction of space, and to produce spatial difference that is not ate the same time fragmentation:

Today more than ever, the class struggle is inscribed in space. Indeed, it is that struggle alone which prevents abstract space from taking over the whole planet and papering over al differences. Only the class struggle has the capacity to differentiate, to generate differences which are not intrinsic to economic growth qua strategy, ‘logic’ or ‘system’, that is to say differences which are not either induced by or acceptable to that growth. The forms of the class struggle are now more varied than formerly. Naturally, they include the political action of minorities…. The strategic hypothesis based on space excludes neither the role of the so-called ‘underdeveloped countries’ nor that of the industrialized nations and their working classes. To the contrary, ts basic principle and objective is the bringing together of dissociated aspects, he unification of disparate tendencies and factors…It implies the mobilization of differences in a single moment (including differences of natural origin, each of which ecology tends to emphasize in isolation); differences of regime, country, location, ethnic group, natural resources, and so on.

A new theoretical code is required which would reconstruct and assemble oppositional differences as systems of knowledge connected to, but distinct from, political practices.14Alternative concepts of space will be circumscribed until space can be produced differently, difference worked into space as the deliberate strategy guiding a liberatory production of space.

Although first written nearly two decades age, Lefebvre’s focus on difference as the crux of political strategy and (although within the rubric of class struggle) his inclusion and affirmation of what wo would now call different subject positions (sexual difference obviously needs to be includes as does sexual orientation) is in broad sympathy with contemporary political theories built around the social construction of difference, notwithstanding the fact that much of his work has abandoned a Marxist framework, which Lefebvre clearly retains, in favour of a post a post-Marxism/ structuralism/ modernism. If the central arguments in this recent work revolve around the integration of class, race, and gender, the negotiation of different subject positions, the theorization of multipositionality that avoids paralyzing relativism –all this in an analytical framework that remains open, provides ‘space’ of intervention, avoids totalization, and nurtures political empowerment – if these are the central issues, then it seems clear that Lefebvre’s conception of the production of space might provide some possible signposts. Space is a means by which to bind as well as separate, to include as well as exclude, and precisely by binging to life a critical conception of space, he provides some of the tools for decoding the spatial metaphors that ‘script’ our efforts to integrate, negotiate, and theorize different ‘positions’. This is the brilliance of ‘the production of space’. It mandates the critique of metaphor, but at the same time provides a basis for connecting very different experiences, themselves understood in part through metaphor.

More concretely it is the gravest of errors in the critique of Marxism to throw out, as so many now want to do, Marx’s argument privileging the working class because of their direct experience of exploitation. We can admit that other subject positions (however defined and bounded) are unique and in that sense privileged, but they are privileged in different ways. The particular privilege of working class, Marx said, was to be able to understand exploitation ‘from both sides’. By extension wo can argue that other forms of oppression according to race and gender, for example, carry their own privileges as integral to their subject position. There is then a negotiation of privileges in opposition, which can be carried out in part through mutual critique, but Lefebvre offers the opportunity to see these as negotiated in the wider sphere of social space and as, consequently, constitutive of that space.

And yet it is not immediately clear what the production of space implies for political strategy. This translation remains to be done, partly because Lefebvre never escapes the terrain of philosophical critique, and partly because in his own history of space, there is an almost serendipitous deemed to accompany them. The translation still needs to be made that takes the philosophical critique as given and connects to the production of geographical space which, as was argued in chapter 3, integrates the social and physical construction of space. I want to suggest one line of argument that both picks up an earlier discussion in the theory of uneven development and at the same time advances the notion of the production of space.

As a crucial plank in deriving the theory of uneven development in chapter 5, it was found necessary to establish a geographical framework could take and make place. It was found necessary to establish a geographical framework through which the opposing tendencies of equalization and differentiation could take and make place. It was argued that three primary scales emerge in the capitalist production of space, namely the urban,15 national and subdivided were discussed. Although in general, geographical scale was conceived as a kind of momentary geographical fixation of the dialectic theorized as virtually internal to capital, and while these arguments probably still stand at an appropriate level of abstraction, the production of scale and the politics of scale are more complex than such a theorization would suggest. For scale is as much the project of opposition as it is the project different societies produce geographical scale integral with the production of space.16Whereas we have a modest set of languages for discussing historical difference, we are concept-poor when it comes to geographical differences. Scale, in fact, is the most elemental form of spatial differentiation, from the demarcation of the home to that of the globe. If at one end, global space is the product of the economic relations of the market and political struggles to exclude, attenuate or encourage the market, the space of the home is the inscription primarily of the reproduction of social relations in which sexual difference and gender-based struggles predominate. Indeed, we might even argue that to the extent cognitive mapping, in its straightforward sense, is to be taken as a serious political strategy, its first task would presumably be to establish borders that differentiate places from each other. How else could we even know what to map? If this is not to be done arbitrarily, a theory of scale – that is a theory of social production of scales –is a prerequisite.

Geographical scale is political precisely because it is the technology according to which events and people are, quite literally, ‘contained in space’. Alternatively, scale demarcates the oppressive and emancipatory possibilities of space, its deadness but also its life. Equally, scale provides a distilled expression of spatial ideologies: nationalism, localism, regionalism, and in some forms, racism and xenophobia. The production and representation of scale therefore lie at the centre of a spatialized politics even if in much political discourse this spatial struggle is often implicit in arguments over nomenclature, naming places, as much as explicit in boundary struggles. Let me offer a brief example, which involves uneven geographical development within the city.

As elsewhere, the gentrification of New York City has focused initially on neighborhoods located close to the centre. Manhattan’s Lower East Side came under serious attack following the end of the 1974-5 recession and the easing of the fiscal crisis in 1977, and as financial pressure on housing intensified in the 1980s. With the virtual cessation of Federal funds for new hosing under the Reagan administration, the city government essentially adopted gentrification as New York’s housing policy. Apart from programs aimed directly at housing rehabilitation, the city adopted a two point strategy for ‘taking back’ the Lower East Side, a neighborhood that had been ravaged by absentee landlordism, massive disinvestment, and cuts in social services. One prong of the strategy involved a neighborhood safe again for the white middle classes. A second prong involved ‘cleaning up’ the parks which were increasingly used by the city’s growing homeless population and as a venue for drug business, as well as by a wide cross-section of local residents. The City felt it had lost control of these spaces, especially Tompkins Square Park, and said to explicitly.

Various neighborhood groups organized against the threatened police curfew designed to retake the park – its return to State controlled abstract space, in Lefebvre’s terms – and the struggle culminated in August 1988 when a force of 400 police rioted against demonstrators. The police conceded the park after several hours of cavalry and baton charges, and this space immediately become the focus of tenant, housing and homeless organizing in the city. At first the Mayor described the park as a ‘cesspool’, and he joined the Chief of the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association in blaming the riot on ‘anarchists, social parasites, druggies, skinheads and communists’. The New York Times meanwhile, not generally known for its Marxist language, billed the riot as ‘Class Struggle on Avenue B’. Within days, a number of organizational links were established both within a virtually unorganized homeless population based in the Park, and with new and existing tenant and squatter groups and organizations. New rounds of squatting began, Spreading out from the park throughout the Lower East Side: ‘Tompkins Square Everywhere’ was one of the new slogans. At firs the City moved only gingerly against squatters and housing demonstrators, and the Mayor’s acrid denunciations had broadened to include the whole Lower East Side, not just the Park. New discriminatory park rules were adopted then hurriedly shelved, and after sixteen months of defensive harassment by the police, the park was the site of a shanty town housing between 200 and 300 predominantly African-American and Latino homeless people. In December 1989,with temperatures in single figures, and on the pretext that the presence of the homeless was preventing anyone else for using the park, police in full riot gear moved in, dispersed homeless residents from the park, discarded people’s shanties along with any rescued private belongings, and dumped the lot in ten garbage trucks. The attack on surrounding squats was also intensified.

The point of this example is to highlight the role of scale in the struggle to control space. It began as a struggle over the park but its scale expanded geographically until it defined the whole neighborhood as part of the political expansion of the struggle to include different groups and kinds of organizing as well as different locations. It suggests that a spatial politics not only puts into practice the metaphor that events ‘ take place’, but that the true contest concerns the locus of the power to determine the scale of the struggle” who defines the place to be taken (the fragment or fragments for Lefebvre) and its boundaries. It also suggests that successful struggles against abstract space proceed by ‘jumping scales’. By organizing the Fractal spaces at one scale into a coherent, connected place, struggles elevate themselves to the coherent, place, struggles elevate themselves to the next scale up the hierarchy. Hence the importance of understanding the production of space as the production of a nested hierarchy of scales within the global scale, and how these hierarchies are constructed. There are also question. In particular, once events ’take place’ as part of a political struggle, how is the transition organized to the more constructive task of making place? This happened at only a very rudimentary level in Tompkins Square Park, partly because of the continual threat of external attack, the internal fragmentation of political organization, and the general lack of resources.

IV THE END OF HISTORY OR THE BEGINNING OF GEOGRAPHY?

With presidents and prime ministers and football coaches seeming to use every press conference to announce that humanity, or that realm of history, it may have been refreshing to have a State Department bureaucrat announce amidst the tumult of 1989 that actually, history has ended. According to Francis Fukuyama, the dismantling of official communism in Eastern Europe and the consequent end of the ideological struggle between East and West marked the ‘universalization of Western liberal democracy’ and the fruition of Hegel’s concept of history in its own negation. Struggles would undoubtedly continue but they would be localized and peripheral; the future promised little but boredom, historywise.18

More interesting perhaps than the article itself which, in its fidelity to Hegel, reveals for all to see the political opportunism of that philosopher, is the extraordinary currency that the ‘end of history’ received. Form the point of view of the reassertion of space it may not be difficult to uncover the rationale behind the apparent desperation with which Fukuyama has been put at the centre of efforts to explain Eastern Europe.

The claim of the end of history is outwardly silly. An anti-Stalinist joke in East Germany records that history will never will stand still. The history of the future, everyone knows, is set; it is the past that keeps changing. Put another way, the revolts of 1989 open up for the first time in four decades at least the possibility that history might be made by the people. It represents the beginning of history again for millions of East Europeans. Nor surely can the arrogant ethnocentrism of the argument pass anyone’s attention. Just because US and USSR leaders have toned sown their megaton nuclear threats to each other, hardly justifies depriving history to Zimbabwean peasants, to the Palestinian Intifada or indeed the of New York who are all in very different ways struggling for the chance to have the merest say over their own historical destiny. At the very least, this end of history will intensify rather than dissolve the production of satanic geographies insofar as the war economies of both sides recede.

And yet despite its reactionary idealism, one can glimpse a logic to the proposal. Where Hegel sensed a certain primacy of space over time linked to the rise of the (nation) state, Marx reasserted ‘historical time as revolutionary time’.19If the defeat of official communism in Eastern Europe is seen to mark the end of revolutionary time (despite the glaring historical fact that none of these societies had communist revolutions – but then history is only an idea) then indeed historical time would seem to be over. Indeed Marx himself followed this logic in part, but as with much of Hegel, turned it on its head. For Mars, the end of capitalism marked the end of a pre-history in which social; change was directed not by the citizens but by abstract social laws akin to laws of nature, e. g the economic laws of only began with the overthrow of capitalism. The accomplished social and political determination of history only began with the overthrow of capitalism. Ideed Lefebvre, who himself penned a book called La Fin de l’ Historie just four years earlier than The Production of Space, concludes: ‘For Hegel space brought historical time to an end, and the master of space was the State.’20

The reassertion of space today, however, is not dependent on any Hegelian justification, whether in the form of Fukuyama’s doctrinaire idealism or Lefebvre’s more critical engagement. It is a much more practical affair and as such more immediately political. The death of geography in the mid-twentieth century did indeed follow self-inflicted wounds, as Soja suggests, but it als represented a response to actual events: the accelerating annihilation of space by time; the tendential equalization of spatial conditions in the global, regional and urban/suburban realms, as seen from the vantage point of postwar (especially American) capitalism, rendered an already underdeveloped geographical knowledge increasingly marginal to contemporary affairs. Modern capitalism, as Marshall Berman tells us (in another work laden with metaphors and wonderfully revealing of the geography of capitalism) is attended by a certain ‘nihilism of the bottom line’ which incorporates a geographical nihilism, in the construction of space as much as in its destruction.21

It is not at all accidental, therefore, that the contemporary reassertion of space in social theory is historically consonant with the reconfiguration and reproblematization of geographical space in the post-postwar world. Nor is this the merely esoteric recognition of a few social theorists. The United States Congress, in 1987, resolved to celebrate ‘Geographical Awareness Week’ (now an annual event) as a means to encourage geographical education which was deemed vital to the economic and military interests of the nation. Less tokenistic but potentially much more influential, ex-Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger penned an end-of-decade editorial in Forbes magazine (‘Capitalist Tool’) urging Harvard and other American universities to ‘bring back geography’ on the grounds that ‘we [America] can profit in every sense of the word from these amazing changes’ taking place in global affairs.’ All of this starts with geography’.22

The revival of space in social theory is hardly unproblematic, then. It involves basic political oppositions over who controls geographical knowledge, who uses it and how, and how is it produced and for whom. Others who might have been supportive will simply not comprehend the subversiveness of a spatialized politics. But in part, also opposition can be expected from more progressive quarters among those determined to open up a universe of diverse ‘subject positions’ in which the white male, the working class and economics are for ever vanquished in favour of a Heraclitean world with everything in flux. The only thing that prevents this stance for falling forward in time from Heraclitus ’dilemma to Dante’s Inferno in which subjects are condemned to purse eternally shifting and ultimately unattainable positionalities – no vestige of an origin, no prospect of a destination – is the ground guaranteed by a fecundity of spatial metaphors.23 It was Heraclitus, after all, who demanded amidst the flux‘a place to stand’. But if, as is claimed here, spatial metaphors can no longer be used innocently, if space is no longer stand, no automatic geographical recourse for anchoring or disguising subject positions; geography too precious to be sacrificed blindly in this way; the solution to multi-positions must be sought in a more directly political fashion rather than smuggled in as unexamined metaphor among the dead.

From the most popular to the most philosophical discourse, then ,the struggle for space is acutely political. The stakes are anything but academic. In the epic movie Fitzcarraldo, set in the turn-of-the-century Peru and Brazil,the director Werner Herzog draws on actual events to depict early European efforts to open up Amazonia, extract its resources ( especially rubber), and settle the interior in the image of upper-class European society. The cultural production of nature was awesome. The movie begins with the 1896 opening of the Teatro Amazonas – an opera house – in Manaus, 1000 miles into the Amazonian jungle. Enrico Caruso and Sarah Bernhardt are brought in to perform at the opening. Because the river water is ‘impure’, the gentlemen of Manaus send their shirts and collars to Lisbon for starching. At the opera their horses are watered sown ‘with the best champagne’. Fitzcarraldo (played by Klaus Kinski), the protagonist, is a rough cut Irish adventurer whose name comes from the local pronunciation of Fitzgerald.His love is opera, and he paddles 1200 miles down the Amazon from Iquitos to see Caruso: ’It’ll be the best opera in the jungle.’ Fitzcarraldo is driven by the physical as well as cultural production of nature. On a rare map that comes into his possession he notices that two north flowing tributaries of the Amazon, the Ucayali and the Pachitea, flow so close that they almost converge; only a narrow neck of land separates them. The Ucayali reaches well south into the uncharted Amazonian jungles of Peru, but is impenetrable because of a series of rapids –Pongo des Mortes – leaving thousands of square miles unexploited. But the Pachitea is navigable.

Fitzcarraldo,whose previous failures include a ‘Trans-Andean Railway’, is obsessed with the ambition to traverse the neck of land and open up a river route into Peruvian Amazonia for rubber exploitation. ‘I shall move a mountain,’ he promises. With a large crew and iron riverboat, he sets off up the Pachitea and soon encounters the Jivaro people, renowned as cannibals, whose unseen presence on the jungled river banks becomes increasingly loud and threatening. Firzcarraldo calls them ‘the bare-asses’. When an attack seems imminent, he plays a Caruso opera from a phonograph on the bow of the ship and the Jivaro Indians are soothed. More than soothed, they sail to the boat and cautiously join his project, signing on to help move the mountain for the great white God. It will be an awesome technical feat to haul the boat over the saddle and connect the watersheds but Fitzcarraldo anticipates a massive fortune. At the point of furthest European exploration, he encounters two missionaries who recount the fate of the handful of Europeans who ventured further. The missionaries ask the purpose of Fitzcarraldo’s trip but he is evasive. Pressed for specifics he eyes the dark jungle and says quietly: ‘I’m planning something geographical’.

Capitalism has always been a fundamentally geographical project. It may not be too soon to suggest, and I hope not too late, that the revolt againt capitalism should itself be ‘planning something geographical’.

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