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Placiality : the renewal of the significance of place in modern cultural theory

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Let me begin with a brief lexical digression. 'Placiality', the word which appears in the title to this article, and the adjective 'placial', from which I have derived the substantive, are not words which appear in most, if any, dictionaries of English, though 'spatiality' and 'spatial' are common enough usages. Given that we have a relatively commonly used adjective 'spatial', derived from 'space', why do we not have one derived from the equally commonly used word, 'place'?

At least part of the answer to this question is provided by Edward Casey's *The Fate of Place*, a recent history of the philosophical conceptualisation of both 'space and 'place' from the time of the ancient Greeks, and earlier, to the present day. In addition to introducing terms such as 'placial' and 'placiality', Casey examines the way in which, despite a constant concern with matters of place in philosophical discourse for over more than two thousand years, 'space', as opposed to 'place' has, until quite recently, come to dominate philosophical thinking . And not only, it might be argued, philosophical thinking.

My aim in this article will be to look at certain aspects of how a number of twentieth century cultural philosophers have approached questions pertaining to space and place in a way which can be regarded not simply as a return from space to place but rather a placialising or a complex populating of a hitherto conceptually emptied space. A further look at both the dictionary and at Casey's philosophical history will help to better explain what this might involve.

If we look at the entries for place and space, respectively, in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, we find that 'place' has four main headings. The first definition is, interestingly, that of an open 'space' in a city, a square or market place. The second is of a material 'space' a particular part or portion of 'space', the portion of 'space' occupied by a particular body, a locality. The third definition relates to position in some scale, order or series either socially or in more abstract, mathematical terms. The fourth main heading is something of a combination of the first two, referring to 'proper, appropriate or natural place' mainly in social or professional terms.

When we come to 'space' we find only two main headings, the first of which, even more interestingly is 'denoting time or duration'. The second, less surprisingly, comprises terms 'denoting area or extension'.

There are a number of points to be made here. Firstly, while the two overall entries are of roughly similar length, place would appear to have a richer, more varied application, referring as much to the social as the abstract. Secondly, place is more often than not defined in terms of space. Thirdly, space is initially defined in terms of, not place, but time. Why, again, should this be?

Again, Casey's philosophical history can provide us with some of the answers. To cut a considerably long and complex story somewhat brutally short for pragmatic reasons, Casey's essential argument is that Western philosophising, from the time of Plato up to and partly including Kant, found itself involved in a process whereby that which we are in and surrounded by became increasingly abstracted. In very simplistic terms, we move, in one sense, from mythologising to philosophising. As a student of literature, one can note that it is poets rather than philosophers who tend to promote the significance of place, particularly from around the second half of the eighteenth century. Space or spacing, tends to belong to a system of measurement. This becomes particularly apparent with the intensification of methods of scientific measurement from the time of the Renaissance onward and, in Casey's view, reaches its pinnacle at the time of the Enlightenment, with philosophers such as Locke and Leibniz. Already, with Newton, we have the first instance of the dictionary definition we have already encountered 'Place is a part of space which a body takes up' (Casey 1998:150).

The 'rediscovery' of place, as Casey puts it, begins, in his view, with Kant, who, on the one hand, reduces place to nothing more than a point in space, in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science,* but on the other hand, in his now increasingly quoted essay, *Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Regions in Space,* provides the beginnings for a modern philosophising of the significance of place as opposed to the measurement of a supremely abstracted 'space'. Kant's crucial development, as Casey sees it, in this essay, is to consider the importance of the human body and the way it is organised and orientated. As in so much of his philosophy Kant draws particular attention to the way in which our perception and conceptualisation of anything is naturally dependent on our physical situation. Kant is fascinated by the symmetries of human, as well as other, bodies, but equally by the fact the idea that we are not completely symmetrical. We have, for instance, a right hand and a left hand, but they are by no means interchangeable. How we are physically constituted makes a difference to how we perceive where we are.

Insights of this kind were not, Casey claims, fully taken up in European philosophising, even by Kant himself, until the beginning of the twentieth century when the phenomenology of Husserl and his philosophical descendants, including Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, among others, begins to more fully explore the relation of the physical situation of the human body to the organisation of its perceptions. Interestingly, Casey notes, A. N. Whitehead, nota-

bly in his magnum opus, *Process and Reality,* but elsewhere too, develops a theory of the significance of location for the 'prehending body', quite independently of Kant, whose essay would not have been available to him and of whose philosophy in general he tended, in Casey's view, to be 'unremittingly critical' (Casey 1998:216).

Husserl, on the other hand, is more obviously Kantian in philosophical orientation, but develops a series of interesting notions of the relation of place to perception. Particularly important is his notion of 'kinesthetic activity' in human perception. Like many Romantic and subsequent poets, Husserl the philosopher displays a particular interest in the significance of walking as a mode of perception since, in his view, it is illustrative of the way in which I must unify myself as an organism before developing a coherent sense of my environs. In order to orientate myself I must co-ordinate myself and vice-versa.

Casey goes on to consider a whole series of ways in which subsequent philosophers have developed such insights and increasingly initiated a return to the significance of place. The most obvious of these is Heidegger, clearly a major influence on his own perspective. Heidegger begins, like many philosophers of the early twentieth century, with a primary preoccupation with questions of time but moves increasingly to consideration of the significance of 'place'. Casey does not consider in any detail the political implications of this approach, though it may be worth mentioning that a contributor to a recent BBC programme on Heidegger, his philosophy and his increasingly clear support for Nazism, suggested that part of the reason for Heidegger's appallingly enthusiastic and thorough support for the Nazi party may be partly found in his deep involvement with the area he came from and remained deeply attached to. This does not mean, it should be immediately pointed out, that there is any easy connection between particular areas and political views; people from the same place, including some of Heidegger's own relatives, were both horrified and mystified by the extent of his involvement with the Nazi party. It does, though, offer the hint of an intriguing connection between place and perception, in one who had, perhaps more than any other philosopher, thought through the relations between them.

At this point, though, I want to leave, for the moment, Casey's 'philosophical history' and move more in the direction of later twentieth century cultural theorising, though beginning with a contemporary of Heidegger's, Walter Benjamin.

Benjamin, Lefebvre and the 'production' of space

The philosophical developments which Casey analyses did not, of course, occur in a social and cultural vacuum. The kinds of insight those developments provide help us to understand the dangers as much as the advantages of lifting particular processes out of their context, necessary as this may be for the pursuance of a particular notion. The turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth saw an intensification of the intellectual exploration of problems and phenomena

associated with the development of an increasingly urban society. The dangers of an increasingly mass-produced form of social being, dominated by the demands of technology and capitalism are explored by a series of writers, including Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel and by most of the members of the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt. In some ways, the most interesting 'member' of that institute is one who was not a member at all, but whose work is strongly connected with it, Walter Benjamin.

Benjamin, unlike Heidegger, was fascinated as much as appalled by big cities and modern technology. The aim of much of his cultural critique, as some recent analyses, such as those by Susan Buck-Morss and Howard Caygill, have revealed with particular perspicacity, was to find ways of 'reading' not just established literary texts but also the developments of modern life, particularly as they found expression in the metropolis, in such a way as to reveal their potential for positively liberating the human spirit, and the body of which it was part. This involved, as Howard Caygill has incisively demonstrated, the development of a form of 'immanent critique' in which the cultural critic tries to engage a particular work on what he finds to be its own terms, not those of any established cultural doxa, and then attempts to relate the insights gained to a broader view of the potentialities of the social and cultural world from which they emerge.

In a fashion which prefigured much of the concerns of cultural criticism of the later part of the century, Benjamin moved from a consideration of literary texts to an increasing preoccupation with architecture and the city via an analysis of the significance of technological innovation for cultural production and the way in which it could read and influence the organisation of everyday life.

One aspect of this concern was his writing on cities, first in the form of essays on a number of cities, Naples, Moscow, Berlin and Paris. As both Buck-Morss and Caygill note, these were not chosen randomly but formed part of an orientation, with Berlin, his home town, at the centre and forming 'north', Naples to the south, Moscow to the east and Paris to the west. While the first three were covered in relatively short essays, the last, Paris, where Benjamin claimed he always felt more comfortable than in Berlin, while beginning as the topic of a fifty page essay, gradually became the subject of a vast and unfinished study, the Passage-Werken or Arcades Project, which remained unfinished at his death.

My main concern in this section will be with the work of Henri Lefebvre rather than Benjamin, but Benjamin's approach and interests provide a useful prelude to aspects both of Lefebvre's work and that of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who I will come to later. Susan Buck-Morss, in her book, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, provides a thorough introductory analysis of the Arcades Project, its beginnings, concerns and developments. Howard Caygill, in *The Colour of Experience*, an astute analysis of how that project is the culmination of a complex and rigorous form of cultural critique, derived from a development of Kant's work. Both agree that there is a strong connection between the approach adopted in his relatively early work on the German Mourning-Play or *Trauerspiel* and that employed in the Arcades Project.

Caygill provides a helpfully orienting observation for a reader not well-versed in German literature by noting that the rather better-known English play, *Hamlet*, can be seen, to some extent, as an example of *trauerspiel*. In both cases what we have is not so much a tragedy as bewilderment among a proliferation of signs. In these plays history dispenses with its heroes without providing them with any real tragic dignity, the only certainty or secure meaning that can be found is in the master-signifier of Death which reminds us that all, even the most powerful, are puppets.

Buck-Morss suggests that, in his interpretation of processes of modern social and technological development, Benjamin transforms this melancholic observation into a potentially enabling one by noting, as many Marxist analysts of modern social relations have, that capitalist social relations and their productions, are dependent on constant change; the death of the present system is written into its life since capitalist social relations depend upon a constant development of the mode of production. This does not mean that we sit around and wait until things get better but rather that we avail ourselves of the inbuilt opportunity to change things in a system of social relations which keeps trying to persuade us that this is the way things are—that there is no past or future, only an eternally enchanting present. Both Buck-Morss and Caygill agree that while Benjamin is fascinated by the city, his aim is to find ways of dis-enchanting the magic world of commodification, hence his final project of an analysis of the already out-dated and disappearing ur-shopping-malls produced in nineteenth century Paris. The possibility of keeping a better future open can best be found in opening up the past and its ghosts. Places have histories, even though processes of modernisation may try to deny them.

Benjamin was, as is well-known, very interested in the attempts of the Surrealists to dislodge everyday commodities out of their fixed positions in the process of commercialising human subjects into un-discerning consumers and in many ways the Situationists of the post-war era, with their more aggressive political stance are as much his heirs as they are the Surrealists'. One cultural philosopher who began his writing career as Benjamin's was drawing towards its violent, untimely end, who both allied himself with the Situationists and took a strong interest in urbanism and the culture of everyday life, was Henri Lefebvre.

Lefebvre's prolific output covers many areas: studies of numerous philosophers and aspects of philosophy, various meditations on Marxism, studies of modernity and, particularly from 1968 onwards, studies of the nature and significance of urban development and the social nature of space. Perhaps his single most significant work is *La production de l'espace* published in French in 1974 and, in its English translation, *The Production of Space* in 1991. Like Benjamin, Lefebvre is determined to get to the heart of the problem of social exploitation in its contemporary, urban form but his angle of approach is somewhat different, looking not just at the production of images but, as his title indicates, at the production of an even greater mirage, that of space.

He begins his book by commenting on traditional notions of empty, geometrical space before moving on to deal with what he considers to be significant—

the *production* of *social* space. His approach to this notion falls into two essential halves. In the first half we are introduced to a series of basic conceptualisations and a critique of existing approaches to the relationship between society and space. In the second half we pursue a more historical trajectory, moving through a series of different kinds of space.

Lefebvre's principal object of attack in this approach is what he terms 'abstract space', rather than empty space; these are not quite synonymous but amount to two ways of seeing (or making people see) the same thing: abstract, empty, geometrical space is, like any other kind of space, produced and is thought of, primarily due to what Lefebvre terms 'representations of space'. Lefebvre has a habit of analysing processes by means of conceptual triads; the basic triad in this case consists of: *spatial practice*, essentially the way people use, move and live within the space of a certain social order; *representations of space*, by which is meant the way in which space is charted and conceptualised by experts who identify with the socio-spatial order of which they are a part, and, finally, *representational spaces* which hare not quite the same as *representations of space*, since they are the images and symbols through which people live the space they are in. Lefebvre suggests that the former is the *dominant space* of a society and 'tends towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs, whereas the latter are more instinctive, belong to *dominated* space and 'tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs' (Lefebvre 1991:39).

Lefebvre's basic point, then, is that space is not given or natural, but socially produced, organised, lived and represented. It is more fundamental than verbal language since such language is part of the social space produced. But if this space is, in many ways, repressive or repressive, at least for many of its inhabitants, and for Lefebvre it is, then the problem is how to verbally analyse such space in a way which will neither collaborate with or submit to the dominant aspect of social space. His approach is somewhat more direct and aggressive in mode than the more subtly speculative essays into the labyrinthine nature of the modern urban mosaic provided by Benjamin but has much in common with them despite its tendency towards a more totalising interpretation. Like Benjamin, Lefebvre, moves, if more directly, towards the significance of images and architectonics and their relation to the organisation of everyday life and like Benjamin, he finds it important to introduce a strong historical dimension into his analysis.

This historical dimension becomes increasingly significant in the second half of the book, which essentially provides a history of space, or social spatialisation from the earliest times to the present. As in Benjamin, the ghosts of the past can always be found to be haunting the present if one is prepared to look dark, historical opacity of what is often presented as a natural, transparent present:

> Nothing disappears completely... nor can what subsists be defined solely in terms of traces, memories or relics. In space, what came earlier continues to underpin what follows. The preconditions of social space have

their own particular way of enduring and remaining actual within that space. (Lefebvre 1991:229)

Consequently in the second half of his book, Lefebvre attempts a history of such preconditions, from which three kinds of space, in his terms *absolute, abstract* and *differential* space, not entirely unrelatable to past, present and possible future, stand out as particularly significant.

The first term, *absolute space*, refers to processes by which a relatively 'natural' space becomes increasingly socially organised. A direct quotation might again prove helpful here:

> The cradle of absolute space—its origin, if we are to use that term—is a fragment of agro-pastoral space, a set of places named and exploited by peasants, or semi-nomadic pastoralists. A moment comes, when, through the actions of masters or conquerors, a part of this space is assigned a new role, and henceforward appears as transcendent, as sacred (i.e. inhabited by divine forces), as magical and cosmic. (Lefebvre 1991:234)

Though, what has actually occurred, in Lefebvre's view, is a political appropriation of a certain space which is then used to form the dominant centre of a new, more organised kind of social space. Lefebvre then proceeds to illustrate the working of this space in different forms and phases of Western civilisation, namely the Greek, the Roman and the Mediaeval, considering always how this space is worked through the trialectics of the three categories of *spatial practice, representations of space* and *spatial representations* referred to earlier.

By the time we reach the Renaissance, we begin to move into the creation of what Lefebvre will term *abstract space*. This is the future space of modern capitalism. Its most important characteristics are that it is global, reductive of difference but at the same time fragmented according to the needs of the abstract order: '...a space that locates specificities, places or localities, both in order to control them and in order to make them negotiable...' (Lefebvre 1991:282). It is this space which Lefebvre both characterises and seeks to challenge, in what can be argued to be very much more directly and conventionally Marxist terms than those of Benjamin, in order to move to what he considers to be a more desirably *differential* space. As with Benjamin, the crucial area for analysis is the signs produced by such a space and the way in which such signs represent difference without allowing differences to really exist. Towards this space Lefebvre is aggressively contemptuous and introduces a distinction between 'true space' and 'the truth of space'.

The latter, 'truth of space' is something referred to right at the beginning of the book and contrasted with the space of truth in which philosophy and other dominant verbal discourses operate. As numerous commentators on Lefebvre's work have noted, there is a strong relation between much of his conceptualising in these areas and the work of the psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan, who is

hardly ever directly referred to in the book but with whose ideas Lefebvre seems to be in considerable dialogue. There are many references in the central sections of the second half of the book to ideas of the mirror and its distorting qualities, and even the appeal to the truth of space, has a Lacanian ring to it, reminiscent of Lacan's notion of the Real, but with a stronger emphasis on the socio-political sphere than that provided in Lacan's work. At this latter stage of the book, 'true space' is treated to a damning invective:

> True space is a mental space whose dual function is to reduce 'real' space to the abstract and to induce minimal differences. Dogmatism of this kind serves the most nefarious enterprises of economic and political power. (Lefebvre 1991:398)

Lefebvre sees most of science and philosophy participating in the creation of this space but calls for a way out of this imprisoning organisation of social space by means of a 'theory beyond system-building'. Here, despite Lefebvre's own strongly and openly Hegelian mode of theorising, we seem to be close to the mode of much so called post-structuralist thinking and it is to one aspect of this I now wish to move in aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, which would seem to adopt a more flexible approach to what Lefebvre has characterised with considerably negative aggression as 'abstract' space, despite sharing much of his antipathy to what is represented by it. Interestingly, Lefebvre himself concludes his chapter on the move towards 'differential space' with a combination of quotations from Nietzsche and Marx:

> The truth of space... leads back (and is reinforced by) a powerful Nietzschean sentiment: "But may the will to truth mean this to you: that everything shall be transformed into the humanly conceivable, the humanly-evident, the humanly-palpable! You should follow your own senses to the end... Marx, for his part, called, in the *Manuscripts of 1844* for the sense to become theoreticians in their own right. (Lefebvre 1991:400)

It might be argued that Deleuze, in many ways the philosopher most responsible for the re-instatement of the significance of Nietzsche in post-war French thinking, and along with Derrida, the most consistently rigorous thinker of the significance of difference, in his collaboration with Guattari, leads us further along the path suggested by those quotations.

Deleuze and Guattari: 'smooth' and 'striated' space

Even the title of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* has a placial ring to it. Both writers, both in this book and elsewhere, evince an active scepticism towards the totalising narrative claims of conventional historicising, one

which is often expressed with reference to geography, as, for instance, in their later collaboration, *What is Philosophy?*, where they provocatively claim that

> Geography wrests history from the cult of necessity in order to stress the irreducibility of contingency. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994:96)

Consequently, *A Thousand Plateaus* is divided into plateaus rather than chapters and the reader is encouraged to read them in any order. There are not in fact, a thousand, but the implication is that there could have been; as elsewhere in Deleuze's philosophical writing, a very strong emphasis is placed on the significance of multiplicities and movement. In fact, space as a methodical term does not figure largely in the book until the 'later' plateaus, but as the reader has already been told that they can be read in any order, this does not make any great difference. Deleuze and Guattari use two conceptualisations which have an obvious reference to questions of place and space; one is territorialization, a usage actually derived from Lacanian psychoanalysis, and the other is the distinction between 'smooth' and 'striated' space, a usage adapted from that of the composer, Pierre Boulez.

'Territorialization' and the related concepts of 'deterritorialization' and 'reterritorialization' appear in the first half of the project, whose overall title is *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, of which *A Thousand Plateaus* forms the second half. These terms reappear in the later book, along with 'smooth' and 'striated' space, in the 'later' plateaus, namely 'Of The Refrain', 'Treaties On Nomadology—The War Machine', 'Apparatus and Capture', and 'The Smooth and the Striated'.

Unlike the work of Benjamin and Lefebvre, despite the shared interest in how to combat the effects of modern capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari's work expresses itself very much in relation to what can be called, for want of a better word at present, the 'natural' world. It would be more precise to say that they very deliberately discourage the drawing of any strong boundaries between the natural and the social, though the closest they come to a term close to what might, in a more conventional vocabulary, be termed 'nature' is the 'chaosmos', a term lifted from Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. Though Deleuze and Guattari are by no means entirely hostile to Marxist analyses of modern social relations, their own approach is equally informed by a development of Bergson's conceptualisation of the nature of biological development in works such as *Creative Evolution*, one which lays much greater stress, with the help of concepts derived from aspects of modern process philosophy and ethology, on the significance for a contemporary cultural politics, of such an approach.

While very great emphasis is laid, as in Lefebvre, on developing the possibilities of 'the body', this concept is pursued in much more rigorous and adventurous detail than in his writing. An earlier plateau is entitled 'How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?'. This deliberately monstrous-sounding concept (the approach adopted in *A Thousand Plateaus* is considerably theatrical, and the term itself is taken from the dramatist Antoine Artaud), of which the

most obvious example would be an egg, which in its egg-state has not yet developed any organs, is meant to indicate the multiplicity of possibilities which can be open to a given form of being. 'Organ' in Deleuze and Guattari's work, tends to be associated not merely with 'organism' but more with 'organ-isation', whose repressive rather than ordering functions are focused on since one of their main aims is to combat the over-organisation of the world by modern capitalist relations. The terms they refer to use are ones such as 'machine' and 'assemblage', though not just in relation to modern forms of industrial technology but in relation to anything, as in the example of the equally monstrously-sounding 'desiring-machines', which play a very major role in the earlier book, *Anti-Oedipus.*

There is not room here for more than this very preliminary introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's complexly eclectic development of aspects of Bergsonian vitalism, but it in the second part of the book it increasingly connects with conceptualisations of space, firstly in 'On the Refrain', a plateau which deals with 'nature' and art, or nature as art, particularly with reference to song and the behaviour of birds.

The plateau begins with the following sentence: 'A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988:311). The child, like many other animals, orders himself and creates the boundaries of his world from the total dis-order of chaos, by singing. The rest of the plateau goes on to develop this notion in relation to the world of birds and that of Classical, Romantic and Modern music, among other things, looking at how 'the refrain' creates and protects a 'home' for various forms of being, but also how it often keeps a door open to the outside, so to speak, for purposes of development; thus, a bird will develop a less aggressive form of refrain when advertising for a mate. Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari, characteristically, the most interesting aspect of the refrain is not the creation and maintenance of boundaries, but the re-opening of them—'Produce a deterritorialized refrain as the end of music, release it in the Cosmos—that is more important than building a new system' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988:350).

The most significant aspect of the refrain for Deleuze and Guattari is its rhythm. Rhythm functions as a kind of relay between chaos and what they term a 'milieu' , the immediate circumstance in which a being is situated: 'Chaos is not the opposite of rhythm, but the milieu of all milieus.' And the pulsing, beating, moving world is 'between two milieus, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos' (313). From this beginning, a refrain can develop from a combination of motifs and allow a creature to develop a 'territory' in relation to the milieus in which it finds itself. The refrain is thus an example of what Deleuze and Guattari would term a kind of assemblage, a temporary bringing together of certain elements to form a certain kind of body, or in this case territory, though there is no clear border between the two. An assemblage is something that 'holds heterogeneities together without their ceasing to be heterogeneous' (329). Its consistency gives it the impression of a certain, permanent stability, but it consists of entirely mobile and still powerfully differentiated elements, just as highly complex assem-

blages such as human bodies do. 'Territorialization', Deleuze and Guattari claim. 'is an act of rhythm that has become expressive, or of milieu components that have become qualitiative' (315) , a specific act of differentiation, as it were.

Such a discussion and its terms would seem to be a long way from the world evoked in the discourses of Benjamin and Lefebvre, but in the following plateau on 'nomadology' and 'the war-machine' we come closer to a more primarily human world, though as in all of Deleuze and Guattari's discourses, the beyond-human will always be present in multiple fashion. One of the primary concerns of this plateau is to refute the claim that there is a gradual evolution from primitive forms of human social life to that most organised of social spaces, 'the State' (nearly always in the singular and always given a capital latter, perhaps to distinguish it from other states, which in decapitalised form look much more temporary). Deleuze and Guattari claim that the State does not gradually evolve but appears suddenly and much earlier in history than we think, so early that historians keep on finding earlier versions. In contrast to the State, which they partially define as forming 'a milieu of interiority', they produce, with particular reference to the work of von Kleist, the notion of 'the war machine', which they claim 'it is necessary to reach the point of conceiving... as... a pure form of exteriority' (354). The complexity of these partial definitions is due to their reluctance to simply define the State as inside and the war-machine as 'outside', since these are all inter-dependent processes involving numerous other elements, of which this is one and probably the most significant aspect. The other major aspect of their argument is that the State (always singular and capitalised) does not and cannot 'contain' the war-machine but can only 'appropriate' it. These two forms of human assemblage are compared to the use of pieces in two games, chess and Go:

> ...in chess, it is a question of arranging a closed space for oneself , thus of going from one point to another, of occupying the maximum number of squares with the minimum number of pieces. In Go, it is a question of arraying oneself in an open space, of holding space, of maintaining the possibility of springing up at any point: the movement is not from one point to another but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival. The 'smooth ' space of Go, as against the 'striated' space of chess. (353)

This is the first major appearance of the concepts of, or distinction between, smooth and striated space. One suggests the priority of occupying a 'closed' space, the other of 'maintaining the possibility' of being able to move freely within an 'open' space. Most of Deleuze and Guattari's subsequent developments of the theme depend on this initial distinction (one which can be found in a rather simpler form, it might be useful to mention, in de Certeau's distinction between 'place' and 'space' in the central, 'Spatial Practices' section of his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*).

A further distinction, which Deleuze and Guattari make in their very next

sentence, is between 'The *nomos* of Go against the State of Chess' (353), thus introducing their related theme of 'nomadology'. The *nomos* in Deleuze and Guattari functions as a kind of 'back country' surrounding the polis but is, as its name suggests, the space of the nomad. In a later, more direct discussion of the nomad, further on in the plateau, Deleuze and Guattari indicate the nature of their distinction between the ordered, striated space of the State and that of the nomad:

> The nomad, nomad space, is localized and not delimited. What is both limited and limiting is striated space, the *relative global*... what is limiting... is (the) aggregate in relation to the smooth spaces it 'contains', whose growth it slows or prevents, and which it restricts or places outside. Even when the nomad sustains its effects, he does not belong to this relative global, where one passes from one point to another, from one region to another. Rather he is in a *local absolute* that is manifested locally, and engendered in a series of local operations of varying orientations: desert, steppe, ice, sea. (382)

One of the interesting, or perhaps for some, irritating, aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's mode of discourse is one can never be quite certain when they are speaking metaphorically and when literally. They themselves tell us that they are not being metaphorical but their treatment of historical facts or scientific theories is usually highly opportunistic and suggestive. It is a mode of discourse which itself suggests the smooth space of the nomad that they describe in that it moves around and inside the spaces of more conventional forms of academic theorising. Everything is connected to not everything else but to a great many other things in a way which suggests opening up rather than fixing or closing down spaces of speculation. Thus, in the above passage, we are presented with an apparently historical-ethological description which at the same time resonates with a series of other conceptualisations we have already encountered.

This is clearly, in many ways, an intentional process, but a much more slippery, elusive method than Lefebvre's much more head-on confrontation with what he considers forms of collaboration with processes of social exploitation by academic practices and discourses. In the subsequent plateau, *Apparatus of Capture*, Deleuze and Guattari consider the relation of the State and its rise to the development of modern capitalism. There is not space here to go into the details of their argument but one of its main strands, previously developed in *Anti-Oedipus*, is that capitalism proceeds by means of a series of 'axiomatics' that can decode the stable striations of more traditional forms of social organisation but then by organising everything in terms of a denumerable exchange-value, can sufficiently, though never entirely, master the 'flows' or movements it releases for its own purposes. The problem is to find ways of evading this mastery which in the view of Deleuze and Guattari has enslaved the planet in a global 'peace' which in its way is as or more terrible than the relatively localised ears of wars which preceded it. I do not intend here to delve into the obvious

contentiousness of various elements of such a view but only to point out their own counter-strategy. For them

> The issue is not at all anarchy versus organization, but a calculus or conception of the problems of nondenumerable sets, against the axiomatic of denumerable sets. Such a calculus may have its own compositions, organizations, even centralizations; nevertheless, it proceeds not by the States or the axiomatic process but via a pure becoming of minorities. (471)

This looks like a very fuzzy, indeterminate kind of proposition to pit against the kind of massive process of enslavement they characterise as the axiomatic process of capital, but it is entirely characteristic of their 'method' or discourse and consistent with their primarily , though never simply, positive valorisation of 'smooth' space and the figure of the nomad.

The penultimate plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus* deals directly with 'The Smooth and the Striated', not only in terms of space, though it finishes with a further reference to space, emphasising 'the forces at work within space' and how striation always produces new forms of smooth space. Liberation, they note, is not produced by these spaces, but they afford new possibilities for the struggle against striation '...and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries' (500). In short, life is change, but change which is outside the mastery of striation, at least temporarily.

There would seem here to be a strong overlap with Lefebvre's approach but there is perhaps the suggestion, despite the sophistication and complexity of the arguments, of a rather easy neo-romanticism which says that as long as you can do something really different you are winning. Deleuze and Guattari constantly warn of the difficulty of the processes they are describing but if Lefebvre's rather more simplified version of social space is less obviously impressive, one might wonder if it does not ultimately offer more practical horizons.

What, though, does all of this have to do with placiality? This is a question we can begin to address by returning to Edward Casey and his philosophical history of space.

Concluding

In the final main chapter of his philosophical history of place, Edward Casey includes *A Thousand Plateaus*, as an example of recent philosophical writing which has treated with considerable sensitivity issues relating to placiality and to 'implacement'. He notes that their approach to the state and to imperial science in their discussion of nomadology and the war-machine, is close to his own characterisation of the indifference of dominant philosophical trends towards placial issues and considers their characterization of smooth space to be close to what he would term 'place-as-region' (Casey 1998:305). Because the absolute

has become the local, place is itself everywhere in the context of a smooth space. He also notes that Deleuze and Guattari produce the notion of '...a peculiar but important form of dwelling that breaks with the paradigm of the settled, to which Heidegger and Bachelard still cling' (307).

If Casey's philosophical perspective on place would seem to stem from an initial interest in the work of philosophers such as Heidegger, the last comment of his I have quoted shows that he is more than willing to accept the notion of place as being something which does not necessarily involve being rooted to a particular place. His survey does not include writers such as Benjamin and Lefebvre who do not seem to fit the slightly narrower notion of philosophy he adopts for the purposes of what is already a considerably lengthy history.

I have noted that Deleuze and Guattari in their treatment of nomadology adopt an approach which hovers between ethology, history and philosophy, as well as producing an approach which fully integrates human activity into a perspective which includes the context of the broader natural world. I want to end this article with a limited consideration of the work of another writer who, like Deleuze and Guattari, and unlike Benjamin and Lefebvre, focuses on cultural patterns outside of the city and indeed outside of modern Western imperialism, generally speaking, but who ends up producing an approach which is eminently comparable with theirs but which places a more direct and historically concrete emphasis on the significance of place.

Paul Carter, in his book, *The Lie of the Land*, focuses primarily on the encounter between Western and native cultures in Australia, though one of the four long and inter-related essays of which the book is comprised is situated in renaissance Italy. Carter's book is very much concerned with the sensitivity of art and culture to place and the lack of sensitivity of so much Western culture towards it. One of the main themes in the opening parts of the book is the tendency of processes of Western imperialism, here in the Australian context, to pave over the contours of the land, both literally and metaphorically. This is contrasted with the art and culture, including the language of Aboriginal tribes, such as the Aranda, who are deeply sensitive to the contours and other details of the land, as well, as he shows in another, later essay, the air and atmosphere. He also indicates a number of ways in which Western European figures both in the past and the present have shown a comparable sensitivity. Two of the main productive oppositions he produces in his argument relate to the difference between *mimesis* and *methexis* and between *linear* and *curvilinear* space.

The first distinction is introduced in an essay which examines the work of the anthropologist T. G. H. Strehlow and his attempts to observe, record and integrate himself into the life and culture of the Aranda people of Central Australia. Carter looks at the ways in which Strehlow began, if imperfectly , to appreciate the differences between an image-based, mimetic art and the methektic patterning of Aboriginal art. The distinction is best brought out by Carter's quotation from Strehlow's in relation to an understanding of Celtic art as evoked by the English cultural historian and philosopher, R. G. Collingwood:

> Suppose an artist wanted to reproduce the emotional effect of a ritual dance in which the dancers trace a pattern on the ground. The modern traveller [*sic*] would photograph the dancers as they stand at a given moment. A conventional modern artist, with a mind debauched by naturalism, would draw them in the same kind of way. This would be a silly thing to do, because the emotional effect of the dance depends not on any instantaneous posture but on the traced pattern. The sensible thing would be to leave out the dancers altogether, and draw the pattern by itself. This certainly is the explanation of much 'primitive' art, which at first sight appears altogether non-representative: spirals, mazes, plaits and so forth. (Strehlow, quoted in Carter 1996:50)

This evocation by Strehlow and particularly the ways in which Carter develops and critically refines some of his observations comes very close to aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's evocation of notions of tactile and haptic space in their later plateau on the smooth and the striated. The distance between the human activity, be it linguistic, artistic, or architectural is lessened; many of the principal characters in Carter's studies, merge, as it were into their landscapes, dissolving the barrier of interiority between their self and the world they inhabit. They come closer and closer to in-habiting the world they are in before the physical dis-integration of their body and its re-integration or dispersal into it. (Interestingly, in another context and a different plateau, Deleuze and Guattari produce a similar characterisation of the line of flight from social interiority taken by the American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald).

The distinction between linear and curvilinear space, while also introduced in the essay on Strehlow and the Aranda is pursued in more detail in another essay exploring the significance of Giorgione's painting, *La tempesta*, where it is combined with the distinction between mimesis and methexis. Here Carter connects Giorgione's sensitivity to the need to use specific techniques, notably that of *macchiare*, a mosaical, tactile way of dabbing blots of oil-paint onto the canvas, to developments in the contact between Western European and more distant cultures as the great age of colonisation began to develop. He notes, in contrast to Giorgione's sensitivity to place, the inability of Columbus, to see a place, as it was, always looking for it to be somewhere else. Columbus could not be in place:

> He was intent on looking through, as if whatever he came across could only be an inadequate, therefore deceitful, representation of Cathay. It was as if he could only conceive of journeys in terms of destinations; as if the curvature of the earth were nothing to him except a hypothesis of coming back, a residual nostalgia for staying at home. If, say, Columbus's ships were spears, it was as if he could attribute no value to the flight-path itself... (Carter 1996:189)

The comparison in the last sentence is not a casual one, as the last essay in Carter's book is devoted to the cultural significance of Australian Aboriginal

interpretations of the flight-paths of the spears they use for hunting. The air in which the Aboriginal spear moves is as thick and complex as the kinds of space evoke by the writers earlier in this chapter and 'emptied', so to speak by the philosophers described by Casey. Carter sees this as the great tragedy of Western imperialism and colonialism, its paranoid fear of other cultures and its inability to merge and negotiate wit their spaces, instead 'clearing' them in order to make one which expressed their nostalgia for familiar origins.

I have moved, very rapidly, in this short article from a history of the loss and re-emergence of place in philosophical thinking, through two explorations into the significance of modern urban space to two very recent analyses which move beyond the city to consider in new, less static ways, the significance of the relationship between space, place and human activity and perception. All ·of these perspectives, I would claim, indicate the renewal of an interest in the vital significance of a detailed attention to the significance of place which is not by any means an expression of cultural nostalgia, of getting back to any, natural, proper place, but rather a concern with what Deleuze and Guattari term. 'exteriority', of going beyond and between the contours of a complex spatiality, or, in Casey's neological wording, exploring a new sense of 'placiality'.

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