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# Space, Place, and Scale: Human Geography and Spatial History in *Past & Present*

## A Virtual Issue by Courtney J. Campbell

### I. Introduction

Just as, in Nigel Thrift's words, space is the 'fundamental stuff of human geography', time, one might add, is the 'stuff' of history.<sup>1</sup> While this separation seems neat, historians tend to study time and place as parallel concepts; when they merge, spatial history (and historical geography) follows. Important within spatial history are the concepts of 'place' (that is, physical spaces that people naturalize through patterns, behavior, and communications) and 'scale' (the representation of any area, as produced and defined by social process, from the smallest unit – the body – to the largest – the universe).<sup>2</sup> This essay presents how authors within *Past & Present* have studied space, place, and scale. It emphasizes that spatial history can serve as methodology, approach, and object. It contributes to a small, but growing pool of essays outlining the historiography of spatial history. By examining spatial history in *Past & Present* – a journal with an explicitly social character – it shows that, while the study of human geography turned away from social concerns from the 1940s through the 1960s, it was concern with social history that made the space of *Past & Present* a place for spatial studies. Further, the linguistic turn and postmodernism opened the door to innovative articles that examine or employ space, place, and scale.

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<sup>1</sup> Nigel Thrift, 'Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography', in Sarah L. Holloway, Stephen P. Rice, and Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Concepts in Geography* (London, 2003). For example, according to Peter Gould and Ulf Strohmayer, 'Geography and space appear to be taking their rightful place alongside history and time after a century of neglect'. Peter Gould and Ulf Strohmayer, 'Geographical Visions: The Evolution of Human Geographical Thought in the Twentieth Century', in Ulf Strohmayer and Georges Benko (eds.), *Human Geography: A History for the 21st Century* (London: 2004), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Henri LeFebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1984); Joanne Sharp and Linda McDowell, 'Scale', in *A Feminist Glossary of Human Geography*, 242.

In looking through the pages of *Past & Present*, we see that it is not just time that is the ‘stuff’ of history, but that historical inquiry is frequently concerned with space and place. The purpose of this argument is not to propose a hierarchy between human geography and history nor to suggest that one discipline gives origin to the other, is more relevant, or even is more concerned with space. Indeed, while several *Past & Present* articles deal with historical geographies prior to the linguistic turn, the number of innovative, exciting articles with a spatial focus produced after 1980 multiplies to the point of overshadowing previous study. Instead, this article suggests that including social history in the historiographical narrative of interdisciplinary approaches to space and place emphasizes the relationship between history and human geography as an intertwined narrative with ebbs and flows, rather than a linear story of borrowing and gradual approximation.

After a brief historiographical presentation of human geography, space, and place, this essay outlines ten *Past & Present* articles that, in some way, approach space, place, and scale in their study. The articles were published from 1954 to 2014, though all but two appeared after 1980, reflecting the linguistic and spatial turns. The articles are not introduced in strict chronological order, but are, rather, grouped according to approach or method. In my analysis of these articles, I emphasize the authors’ contributions to the study of space and place. I do not dwell much on definitions beyond those the authors offer, focusing instead on approach, method, and object of historical inquiry. As Phil Hubbard states in his essay ‘Space/Place’, ‘the key question about space and place is not what they are, but what they do’.<sup>3</sup>

## **II. Human Geography, Space, and Place**

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<sup>3</sup> Hubbard, ‘Space/Place’, 47.

Historiographical studies of human geography outline a disjointed narrative: geography emerged in the early nineteenth century, characterized by environmental determinism and historicism.<sup>4</sup> It became an arm of European imperialism, and fell into a crisis of disciplinary definition until the publication of Richard Hartshorne's 'Nature of Geography' in 1939.<sup>5</sup> Hartshorne urged geographers to focus on spatial distributions rather than time. Though some had turned to social interests, World War II, the Cold War, and McCarthyism in the United States presented significant obstacles. In the 1960s, geography was overcome by technical, statistical, and quantitative study and did not return to qualitative methods and a humanistic focus until the 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1970s, what Phil Hubbard has described as two 'very different strands of geographical inquiry' emerged: humanistic accounts that emphasize that different settings have a different sense of place and Marxist/materialist accounts that look at domination and resistance across varied spaces, tending to focus on the importance of space as 'both socially produced and consumed'.<sup>7</sup> The philosopher Henri Lefebvre was perhaps the most influential of the materialist writers. Lefebvre published *The Production of Space* in 1974, introducing the terms spatial practice (or how we move within and around space), representations of space (the architectural plans, city plans, and other such cartographies of our everyday existence), and representational

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<sup>4</sup> Barney Warf and Santa Arias, 'Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences', in Barney Warf and Santa Arias (eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London and New York, 2009), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Gould and Strohmer, 'Geographical Visions', 3–4; Richard Hartshorne, 'The Nature of Geography: A Critical Survey of Current Thought in the Light of the Past', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 29, 3 (1939). Felix Driver, for example, argued that the voyages of travelers like Henry Morton Stanley, Livingstone, Richard Burton, and Samuel Baker, often with the support of geographical societies, helped to chart out distant territories. Yet, they did not simply 'overcome distance'; they also created 'imaginative geographies' producing 'particular ways of reading unknown landscapes'. Felix Driver, 'Henry Morton Stanley and his Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire', *Past & Present*, cxxxiii (1991): 135-136.

<sup>6</sup> Gould and Strohmer, 'Geographical Visions', 10–15.

<sup>7</sup> Phil Hubbard, 'Space/Place', in David Atkinson (ed.), *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London and New York, 2005), 41.

space (or the symbolic associations that overlay geographic spaces).<sup>8</sup> Lefebvre emphasized that spaces change over time as do our use of them, representations of them, and symbolic associations with them. In the words of Hubbard, in the materialist accounts, ‘place emerges as a particular form of space, one that is created through acts of naming as well as through the distinctive activities and imaginings associated with particular social spaces’.<sup>9</sup> Building on Lefebvre’s work, a number of studies reference what has been termed ‘thirdspace’ – that is, geographical imaginaries, or space that is both real and imagined.<sup>10</sup> Another important Marxist interpreter of space and place is David Harvey, who points out a paradox: globalization depends on a sense of place, because history, culture, and landscape are ‘crucial in perpetuating special processes of capital accumulation’.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, writers of humanistic accounts ‘shifted the analytical focus of human geography from social space to lived-in space’.<sup>12</sup> The influential geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, in *Space and Place*, adds that space does not have inherent scale but instead is created by emotional attachment through ‘fields of care’.<sup>13</sup> Place, on the other hand, is imbued with meaning and, according to Tuan, how we create a ‘sense of place’ deserves focused study.<sup>14</sup> Another humanist, Edward Relph urges scholars to seek a more human-centered and empathetic understanding of ‘the lived experience of place’. Relph stresses that there can only be a ‘sense of place’ when the bond between people and place is ‘deep-rooted’.<sup>15</sup> Hubbard summarizes the distinction between materialist and humanist accounts in this way:

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<sup>8</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

<sup>9</sup> Hubbard, ‘Space/Place’, 42.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Oxford, 1996, 56–57.

<sup>11</sup> Hubbard, ‘Space/Place’, 45–46.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective’, in John Agnew, David N. Livingstone, and Alisdair Rogers (eds.), *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Hubbard, ‘Space/Place’, 42–43.

Suggesting that (bounded) places are fundamental in providing a sense of belonging for those who live in them, humanistic perspectives propose a definite but complex relationship between the character of specific places and the cultural identities of those who inhabit them. Against this, materialist perspectives propose that cultural battles create explicit inequalities in the way that space is occupied and used by members of different groups.<sup>16</sup>

As with all other disciplines, human geography took a postmodern turn in the 1990s, producing a form of inquiry that bound the study of geography with social justice and focused on pluralities, binaries, positionalities, and deconstruction. Space, in the 1990s, appears as a social construct in constant transformation. Postmodern scholars emphasize the ‘slipperiness and instability of language’ and the impossibility of universal definitions for space and place.<sup>17</sup>

Within the pages of *Past & Present*, postmodernism caused debate, but also yielded fascinating studies in spatial history. In 1991, Lawrence Stone opened a discussion on postmodernism and history in a closing note. Stone’s concise of less than two pages spurs a four-part response. Stone identifies ‘the crisis of self-confidence’ into which history was thrown by the postmodern ‘threat’ posed by what he identified as ‘linguistics’ (Saussure and Derrida), ‘symbolic anthropology’ (Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Mary Douglas), and ‘New Historicism’.<sup>18</sup> Stone feels that the discipline of history – which, his note informs, is rooted in truths that lie outside of the text – is at stake, and recommends an article by Gabrielle M. Spiegel

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>17</sup> Hubbard, ‘Space/Place’, 46.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Stone, ‘Notes’, *Past & Present*, cxxxi (1991), 130. It is Stone that identifies Derrida as a linguist.

that can offer a ‘way out of the ever-narrowing trap in which we historians find ourselves’.<sup>19</sup> Stone’s appraisal received immediate response from Patrick Joyce and Catriona Kelly. In his response, Joyce recognizes the postmodern conundrum for historical inquiry: if the ‘real’ only exists as transmitted to us discursively, then historians have no access to the ‘true’ past, but only to discursive representations of it. Joyce proposes breaking ‘out of this circularity and banality’ by taking the linguistic turn ‘seriously’, that is by ‘questioning received categories of the “social”’.<sup>20</sup> Kelly introduces to the debate the perspective of women’s history, stating that ‘reading historical material for information about women automatically means reading against the grain’; otherwise, women would be left out of most historical discussion.<sup>21</sup> Kelly offers another option: to read texts for their language and lexicon, but to also look into their context and intertextuality. In doing so, documents become ‘an over-flavoured broth of dubious provenance, whose precise quantities of ingredients must be established, and process of culinary preparation determined’.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the meaning of historical texts exists both discursively (within the text) and contextually (from without). Both Stone and Gabrielle M. Spiegel offer lengthy, sophisticated rejoinders that accept the contributions of the linguistic turn, in that it has provided historians with more sophisticated ways to read texts, but insist that there must be a middle ground in which reality is not defined only as language.<sup>23</sup> As is revealed throughout the course of this essay, the linguistic turn and postmodernism within the pages of *Past & Present* provoked innovative articles that examine space, place, and scale. Spatial social history, in this sense, owes its existence to this kind of debate.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 131. The text Stone recommends is Gabrielle M. Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, lxxv (1990).

<sup>20</sup> Patrick Joyce, ‘History and Postmodernism, I’, *Past & Present*, cxxxiii (1991), 208.

<sup>21</sup> Catriona Kelly, ‘History and Postmodernism, II’, *Past & Present*, cxxxiii (1991), 212.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 213.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Stone, ‘History and Post-modernism, III’, *Past & Present*, cxxxv (1992); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, ‘History and Post-modernism, IV’, *Past & Present*, cxxxv (1992).

What scholars now refer to as the spatial turn is ‘the perception that social change can no longer be satisfactorily explained without a re-conceptualization of categories referring to the spatial component of social life’.<sup>24</sup> While many scholars have limited their discussions of the spatial turn to methodological questions inspired by the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies for the study of human geography and history, the turn toward spatial study also focuses on how spatial meaning is constructed and how space is represented.

Now, according to the dominant historiographical narrative, human geography exports the concept and study of space to other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, human geography and history have long enjoyed each other’s influence. Yet, when studies of human geography veered into a decidedly technical, statistical realm, history did not follow; in fact, as seen through very emergence of *Past & Present* in the 1950s, social history emerged at precisely the time that human geography moved away from social issues. In the ‘Introduction’ to *Past & Present*’s first issue, the editors eschew the statistical/technical form of scholarship that overcame fields like geography, stating that, ‘while no doubt stimulating’ these methods ‘are unable to deal with any but the simplest forms of historical change’ and instead mislead by way of ‘technical sophistication’.<sup>26</sup> Importantly, history in *Past & Present* was to be relevant:

We should perhaps to-day rely, not on discovering past parallels but on understanding how change took place in the past; but we share the belief of Polybius in the value of history for the present, and in particular his conception of

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<sup>24</sup> Martina Löw, ‘O *spatial turn*: para uma sociologia do espaço,’ *Tempo Social*, xxv, ii (2013), 17.

<sup>25</sup> Barney Warf and Santa Arias, ‘Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences’, in Barney Warf and Santa Arias (eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London and New York, 2009), 1.

<sup>26</sup> The Editors, ‘Introduction’, *Past & Present*, i (1952), i–ii.



historical discipline as an instrument enabling us ‘to face coming events with confidence’. In a generation which, as Friedrich Meinecke demonstrated, has history in its marrow, and for which an historical mode of thought is second nature, we believe that it is to history that the great majority of thinking men and women look for strength and understanding.<sup>27</sup>

History had – needed to have – value for the present. Further, history had to encompass not just Europe or the English-speaking world.<sup>28</sup> Historical inquiry in *Past & Present* refused the narrowing of scale that human geography underwent in the 1950s. Within issues that followed, space and place (though not necessarily referred to in those terms) imbued urban, micro-, regional, national, global, social, and cultural histories.

### **III. Space, Place, and Scale in *Past & Present***

Underpinning many articles in *Past and Present*'s earliest issues is an unspoken agreement with the nation-state as container of historical process. These articles often expose this tendency within their title, including the name of the nation along with indication of the period studied. While this tendency reflects practical intra-disciplinary divisions (as in divisions of departments and research areas into broad geographic regions within which figure our national specializations), it also reveals a tacit agreement that national borders delimit bounded spaces within which social and economic practices unravel.

Nonetheless, in these early issues of *Past and Present*, there are deviations from this pattern. The most obvious divergences occur in articles focused on the pre-national period in Europe, which refer, instead, to regional designations of space. In these articles, the focus is on

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, iii.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, iv.

the process studied, often interpreted through the lens of social class. These studies do not emphasize local meaning, but instead treat the space within which processes occur as absolute. Eric J. Hobsbawm's work in this early period deserves special mention, as his work focused on social processes that crossed national borders, giving more importance to the role of class than to the national space within which it existed.<sup>29</sup>

While Hobsbawm's work presents an implicit tendency to look beyond the nation as container, G. Barraclough's 'Metropolis and Macrocosm', published in 1954, offers an explicit argument for sliding the geographical scale of historical inquiry.<sup>30</sup> According to Barraclough, the scale and center of history were shifting. Prior to World War II, in his assessment, the field of modern history had focused mostly on Europe. On the rare occasion that European historians looked beyond their continent, they considered non-European histories as 'distinct units or spheres moving in a separate axis ... [history] seemed to be lost in a world of nationalities which has disintegrated visibly before our eyes'. Fortunately, a new generation of historians had begun to present the history of the Americas, Russia, and Western Europe as 'directly related' and products of a world that 'since the Industrial Revolution, has become ever more closely integrated'.<sup>31</sup> As a product of this new vision, historians were coming to accept that the 'European Age' (1492-1914) was not the culmination of modern world history, but rather a phase that rested between the 'Mediterranean' and 'Atlantic' ages. Further, this new view saw no distinction between European and American histories, recognizing instead that the European Age cannot be studied in isolation.

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example: E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers', *Past & Present*, i (1952); E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The General Crisis of the European Economy in the Seventeenth Century', *Past & Present*, v (1954); E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Crisis of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century – II', *Past & Present*, vi (1954).

<sup>30</sup> G. Barraclough, 'Metropolis and Macrocosm: Europe and the Wider World, 1492–1939', *Past & Present*, v (1954).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

Barracough dedicates most of the article to a presentation of Walter Prescott Webb's book, *The Great Frontier*, recognizing it as a 'bold attempt' to examine modern history through the frontier formed by the arrival of Europeans in the Americas in 1492 and the centuries of interactions generated by this encounter.<sup>32</sup> For Webb, it was Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World that made the Renaissance and the Reformation possible and it was the 'windfalls', or commodities, produced through this frontier that created the foundation for the Industrial Revolution, making the frontier 'the matrix of the modern world'.<sup>33</sup> Barracough does not fully agree with Webb's conclusions and spends the bulk of the article offering detailed criticism; yet, he does agree with Webb on one main point: that the conquest of the frontier brought the world together as one, binding the history of modern Europe to that of the Americas.<sup>34</sup> Barracough argues that as the European Age came to a close the world became 'frontierless', creating an environment within which fascism, dictators, and, namely, Hitler, arose. Writing during the Cold War, Barracough warns that there are only two options for the modern world: Communism ('a plausible solution for the countless millions of "under-privileged" in Asia and Africa as well as in Europe') or the path of conquest of 'living-space' at the expense of others ('a solution which entails famine, bloodshed, want, destruction, and its result can only be the survival of the least fit, the crudest, earthiest and least civilized').<sup>35</sup> Barracough's desire to slide the scale of historical inquiry from the national and European to an integrated, world history was not just academic; it was a moral imperative which he saw as having drastic consequences.

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<sup>32</sup> Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Boston, 1952); Barracough, 'Metropolis and Macrocosm', 79.

<sup>33</sup> Barracough, 'Metropolis and Macrocosm', 81.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

In these early years of *Past & Present*, writers of the Annales School – particularly Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel – with their focus on change over a vast period, social history, and geography, were highly influential.<sup>36</sup> A. Soboul’s ‘The French Rural Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, for example, relied heavily on Marc Bloch’s *Les caractères originaux de l’histoire rurale française* in its examination of the decline of the French rural community.<sup>37</sup> Soboul recognizes work on the rural community in other disciplines, particularly geographical and ethnographical studies, and urges historians to draw from related social sciences.<sup>38</sup> Importantly, Soboul offers defining characteristics of the rural community, following Bloch in accepting it as based on collective property ownership and communal regulation of agricultural and forestry practices.<sup>39</sup> For Soboul, the parish and the community ‘were the same, their boundaries and their interests being for the most part identical’.<sup>40</sup> Soboul defines the community economy as a ‘natural’ agricultural economy that, though hierarchical, is precapitalist.<sup>41</sup> He argues that while the French Revolution accelerated the community’s decline, the seeds of the French rural community’s downfall were planted much earlier with the intrusion of a capitalist mode of production.<sup>42</sup> In sum, it was not the fall of the old régime that brought the French rural community to an end; it was modern capitalism.<sup>43</sup> Soboul’s article, then, is an example of the materialist conception of space. The community was defined

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<sup>36</sup> This tendency is not limited, however, to the early years. See also, James Fentress and Elizabeth Fentress, ‘The Hole in the Doughnut’, *Past & Present*, clxxiii (2001); Molly Greene, ‘Beyond the Northern Invasion: The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century’, *Past & Present*, clxxiv (2002). Nonetheless, in these later articles, the tendency is to criticize or revise Braudel’s arguments. For more on Braudel, see: E. J. H., ‘Notes’, *Past & Present*, xxxix (1968); Olwen Hufton, ‘Fernand Braudel’, *Past & Present*, cxii (1986).

<sup>37</sup> Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l’histoire rurale française*, vol. ii. (Paris, 1956).

<sup>38</sup> A. Soboul, ‘The French Rural Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Past & Present*, x (1956), 78.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 88–89.

not by sentiment or psychological bond, but by its hierarchies, land use, and mode of production. Change in any of these would shake the community at its very definition.

In this sense, Soboul's article stands in opposition to an article on the French rural community that appeared in *Past & Present* twenty-five years later. In 'Parish, Seigneurie and the Community of Inhabitants in Southern Central France during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', P. M. Jones also focuses on the notion of the French rural 'community'.<sup>44</sup> Jones attributes the weakness of prior studies of the community to 'economic and geographical determinism' and interpretations of France based only on studies of the North or North-east.<sup>45</sup> Like Soboul, Jones points to geographers and ethnographers, especially those who offer 'important insights into the mental domain'.<sup>46</sup> With this in mind, Jones turns to the southern central region of France that he refers to as the 'Massif Central', describing it in terms of its physical geography, economy, patterns of human settlement, and demographics.<sup>47</sup> Considering the region's varied geography and sparse settlement and offering convincing evidence from letters and travel diaries, Jones finds that the contours of the community in the Massif Central did not necessarily follow 'ecclesiastical, nor seigneurial, nor natural boundaries'.<sup>48</sup> Jones refutes the notion that the rural community was defined by commonly owned property, showing that in the 'provinces of the center', while sometimes lands were communally managed, they were rarely communally owned. Further, naturally occurring barriers of terrain often made communal management impossible.<sup>49</sup> Instead, Jones finds the 'heart-beat' of rural society in the parish.<sup>50</sup>

The community in the southern Massif Central, Jones argues, 'was a spiritual or rather

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<sup>44</sup> P. M. Jones, 'Parish, Seigneurie and the Community of Inhabitants in Southern Central France during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Past & Present*, xci (1981).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 74–75.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 78–83.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

psychological condition’ that ‘implied a communion of the living and a communion of the living with the dead’, with the church, the cemetery, and the bell tower figuring centrally as reference points.<sup>51</sup> The rural community, according to Jones, gathered in the cemetery ‘around the tombs of their ancestors in order to consult them, commune with them and pray for them’.<sup>52</sup> The community, then, is a sentiment, ‘emancipated from the constraints of physical space’ that cannot be defined by the borders of a village, but instead existed as ‘a complex of values and beliefs which can best be analysed at the level of *mentalités*’.<sup>53</sup> While for Soboul, the community was a space determined by geography and mode of production, for Jones, it was a place bound to its inhabitants by sentiment, psychology, and history. Both saw the parish as defining this space: for Soboul as boundary; for Jones, as soul.

Clearly influenced by the linguistic turn and postmodernism, beginning in the early 1990s, the method of studying space and place – whether materialist or humanist – shifts toward a historical examination of naming and mapping. An article by Robin Okey titled ‘Central Europe/Eastern Europe: Behind the Definitions’ examines the idea of ‘Central Europe’, or *Mittleuropa*, highlighting its borders as arbitrary. The centrality of Central Europe, he shows, has nothing to do with its location to the East or West of other regions. Where Central Europe begins and ends depends on whether the scholar employs religious, social, or political criteria.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, while the term ‘Central Europe’ presents a ‘definitional bog’ in which ‘Geographers speak with uncertain voice’, it had entered into popular use. Some geographers, Okey states, suggest that the murkiness of regional definition points to ‘arbitrary’ bonds and others suggest that the region was a ‘concept of political will’. Okey sees in the study of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>54</sup> Robin Okey, ‘Central Europe/Eastern Europe: Behind the Definitions’, *Past & Present*, ciiiivii (1992), 102.

geography a way out of the definitional confusion, arguing that Central Europe should be understood as a ‘historical region’.<sup>55</sup>

Okey offers an exhaustive survey of European debates on *Mitteleuropa* throughout the twentieth century. Importantly, he recognizes that borders are arbitrary, but he still accepts and asserts that the category of *Mitteleuropa* is valid.<sup>56</sup> The question, for Okey, is not whether it exists, but what factor unites and defines it. He discards culture, religion, politics, and economics as categories that could define the region.<sup>57</sup> Instead, he finds that geographical studies revealed ‘a transitional zone of mountains, basins and counter-flowing river systems, shaping a pattern of ethnic splintering implausible in the vast plains of the continental east or extensive peninsulas of the Atlantic west’.<sup>58</sup> These geographic formations funneled migrations, exposed groups in open spaces, and led to ‘attempts of a clutch of small and medium-sized peoples to assert their identities against more powerful neighbors on their flanks’. These in-between groups have consistently dealt with pressure from either side, pushing them into the East or the West. Importantly, a common characteristic is that of dominant German influence over this region. The historical region of Central Europe then, is ‘characterized by its fragmentation’.<sup>59</sup> In terms of self-perception, Okey finds that this historical region is ‘a sense of grievance, of European destiny denied and merit unperceived’.<sup>60</sup> In sum, absolute space provides the context within which social processes unfolded, leading to a region defined not by culture, politics, or economics, but by geography, fragmentation, and a sense of grievance. Okey’s acceptance of the arbitrariness of borders and method of studying spatial discourse show clear influence of

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 103–105.

<sup>56</sup> He states, for example, that ‘It was an idea used by different groups for their own purposes, whether in their various searches for identity or, as in Konrad’s phrase, for an “anti-politics”, a symbolic challenge to the power bloc system that knew only an east and a west’. Ibid, 128–129.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 130–132, quotation from 130.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 130.

postmodern debates, while his argument for a historical region based on physical geography and sentiment fit within a humanist narrative of place.

In contrast, in ‘The Power of Naming, or the Construction of Ethnic and National Identities in Peru: Myth, History and the Iquichanos’, Cecilia Méndez-Gastelumendi demonstrates that a term used at times to describe a place and at others a people has no stable meaning.<sup>61</sup> Initially, Méndez-Gastelumendi set out to study the ‘Iquichano Rebellion’ which took place from 1826–1828 on the south-central Andes, waged by a multi-class group opposed to the newly formed Republic of Peru.<sup>62</sup> She, like other scholars, governmental groups, anthropologists, and novelists, had accepted the Iquichanos as ‘a hereditary “ethnic group” of the “Chanka Confederation”’ – a pre-hispanic people that had resisted Inca expansion.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, exhaustive archival research in governmental documents, reports, maps, missionary diaries, lawsuits, land disputes and tributary records of the Huanta province, returned no mention of ‘Iquicha’ or its resident ‘Iquichanos’.<sup>64</sup> Instead, Méndez-Gastelumendi found first written use of the term ‘Iquichano’ during the 1826–1828 rebellion.<sup>65</sup> Further, she found that Iquicha did not appear as an official (or unofficial) town, community, or region in these documents.<sup>66</sup> Instead, within the documents, ‘Iquichanos’ were all peasants who opposed the Republic.

The peasants initially resisted this definition, associated as it was ‘with the quality of being a rebel, a “traitor to the *patria*”’, but this situation would change as did the relationship between the peasants of the Huanta province and the republican state.<sup>67</sup> Méndez-Gastelumendi explains that, beginning in 1831, nine communities of the Huanta province requested exemption

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<sup>61</sup> Cecilia Méndez-Gastelumendi, ‘The Power of Naming, or the Construction of Ethnic and National Identities in Peru: Myth, History and the Iquichanos’, *Past & Present*, clxxi (2007).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 133–134.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 135.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 138.



from paying tribute, presenting themselves as victims of the deception of the ‘Iquichano party’ that had fooled them into rising up against the republicans. As a result of this alleged deception, they had participated in the rebellion, and as a result of participating in the rebellion, the government’s repression had left them devastated and unable to pay the tribute. During the 1830s, ‘Iquichano’ military in subsequent national battles brought national glory, changing their designation from the traitorous ‘Iquichanos’ to ‘brave Iquichanos’. The ‘Iquichano’ peasants finally received exemption from paying tribute.<sup>68</sup> Examining the history of one village, Méndez-Gastelumendi shows that Indians migrated out of their communities to join the ‘Iquicha’ who were exempt from tribute. In so doing, they created an ‘inconspicuous area’ referred to as Iquicha which ‘had come to signify something greater and more visible than anything it could thus far have been: a core settlement around which groups of peoples, hitherto unrelated to this name or place, would establish and seek to identify themselves’.<sup>69</sup> Subsequently, Iquicha appears in documents as a geographical location with political boundaries; today, only a village remains.<sup>70</sup>

The Iquichano identity ‘remained variable’ with peasants of the Huanta province at times referring to themselves as ‘Iquichano’ and at others with adjectives referring to more specific place names. Reminiscent of Jones’ study of the French rural community in the Massif Central, Méndez-Gastelumendi states that ‘in the Andes, the concept of community has not necessarily been tied to the idea of a contiguous territory, but rather has coexisted with notions of non-contiguous territoriality and ever-flexible boundaries’.<sup>71</sup> According to Méndez-Gastelumendi,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 139–141.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 147–149.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 146.

the insistence, particularly by anthropologists and the state, that the Iquichano are an ethnic identity, instead of a historical identity, has modern consequences. Referring to it as an ethnic identity inadvertently associates the group with the Inca or even the pre-Inca, that is, with a rustic and distant past.<sup>72</sup> As such:

it is not just a ‘chronology’ or an understanding of the past which is at stake here, but rather the way it shapes (and is shaped by) the language with which we perceive and define society and humanity in the present. For it is precisely the fixation on the European conquest as the ultimate source of historical explanations of the present that lies at the base of the binary construct which has denied historicity to Andean peoples, while conceiving of them as ‘remnants’, vestiges, unevolved and, ultimately, ‘ethnic’.<sup>73</sup>

In sum, it is not that the peasants of Huanta do not have an ancient past, that Méndez-Gastelumendi emphasizes, but rather that it is commonly forgotten that they also have a very modern history.<sup>74</sup> Further, like Barraclough, Méndez-Gastelumendi sees her interventions as having moral consequences for the present community.

Méndez-Gastelumendi’s article shows the power of naming to produce a sense of place, even when the physical space to which the place name refers is ambiguous. Christine R. Johnson’s ‘Renaissance German Cosmographers and the Naming of America’ also takes up the subject of place naming, but does so to show how Europeans created knowledge about what came to be called ‘America’, arguing that ‘the reality of a New World’ was founded within the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 160.

context of cartographic, mathematical, and scientific data, theories, and conventions circulating throughout Europe in the sixteenth century.<sup>75</sup> Johnson studies the naming of America through maps created in the sixteenth century, beginning with the 1507 map by German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller that first gave America its name. Waldseemüller worked in collaboration with Matthias Ringmann and Walther Ludd, who ‘all placed their explications in the well-established system of cosmography, that is, the mathematical description of the universe’.<sup>76</sup> While cartographers relied on Amerigo Vespucci’s travel narrative *Four Voyages* and his *Mundus novus* letter (both of which have since been accepted as forgeries) for ‘empirical information’, such data was subordinated to mathematical models set forth in Ptolemy’s *Cosmography*, which Waldseemüller and Ringmann newly edited in 1513.<sup>77</sup> Vespucci’s figure was prominent in the 1507 map, but his ‘accomplishments were seen as simply part of the whole enterprise of discovery’ and ‘did not in any way strain the mathematical framework of Ptolemaic cosmography’.<sup>78</sup> The choice of Vespucci’s name for the map, then, was not due to his intellectual, convention-breaking insights (as some scholars have claimed), but to the voyager type he represented and the accessibility of his texts at a time when ‘information was a resource both highly prized and difficult to acquire’.<sup>79</sup>

According to the conventions of Renaissance cosmography, the landmasses needed a name. In future versions, Waldseemüller did not use the name ‘America’; yet, where Waldseemüller desisted, other cartographers continued to employ it in maps and books. The name ‘America’ provided ‘a chronological and etymological anchor’ for their maps, but also fit

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<sup>75</sup> Christine R. Johnson, ‘Renaissance German Cosmographers and the Naming of America’, *Past & Present*, cxcii (2006), 6.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 and 23, respectively.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 27, and 26. Quotation from 27.

in the ‘conservative nature of cosmographical publishing and scholarship’ which found that there was no need to change texts that were well-received by the audience.<sup>80</sup> Finally, Flemish and Dutch acceptance of the name sealed its fate.<sup>81</sup> The naming of America, then, did not reflect group identity nor did it create a sense of place. It reflected cosmographical and cartographical scholarly techniques and limited empirical data.

While Johnson studies maps and the context of their creation, in ‘The Geography of Revolution in Ireland 1917-1923’, Peter Hart creates them.<sup>82</sup> Hart focuses on the ‘uneven geography’ of the revolution of 1917-1923 in Ireland, showing that the violence of the revolution (which he measures in terms of ‘those killed or wounded by bullets or bombs’ on a county-to-county basis) was regional, not national.<sup>83</sup> To carry out his study, Hart harvested data from a vast array of sources, including constabulary reports, Royal Irish Constabulary tabulations, military reports, casualty lists, and several newspapers.<sup>84</sup> In doing so, Hart is able to apply new data to older hypotheses, including those offered by David Fitzpatrick in a *Past & Present* article published in 1978.<sup>85</sup>

Hart maps out the violence of the revolution in several ways. He provides a table displaying data and a map showing the overall frequency of violent acts per county. He also offers maps that display the numbers of violent acts per county in shorter periods. Through his analysis, Hart is able to show that ‘the Cork IRA emerges as the strongest overall, chiefly in virtue of its consistency’, while the rate of violence in other cities and counties shifts over time.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 38 and 40.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Hart, ‘The Geography of Revolution in Ireland 1917–1923’, *Past & Present*, clv (1997).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 143. Parenthetical quotation from 144.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 145.

<sup>85</sup> David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Geography of Irish Nationalism, 1910–1921’, *Past & Present*, lxxviii (1978).

Meanwhile, ‘Munster and Dublin bore the brunt of the revolution at every stage’.<sup>86</sup> After presenting this quantitative data, Hart contributes qualitative analysis, examining the reasons that different groups gave for the uneven distribution of violence. According to the experts of the GHQ, the unevenness was due to the ‘slackers’ who did not contribute but still claimed glory.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, for the men in the field, it was a lack of access to rifles and other arms, physical terrain, and the presence of the Protestants and Unionists that determined the frequency of violent acts.<sup>88</sup> Historians, in turn, have focused on rurality, with Fitzpatrick claiming that the more rural the area, the more violent, but, Hart rebukes, nearly half of the British victims of the revolution were produced in Dublin, Cork, and Belfast.<sup>89</sup> Further, Hart does not find a correlation between poverty, prosperity, voting patterns, and violence.<sup>90</sup> Instead, agreeing with Fitzpatrick, Hart finds that ‘as an organization, the IRA tended to be more violent where the police and courts were least effective, which in turn may have been related to a tradition of resistance inherited from the agrarian rebels of Victorian Ireland’.<sup>91</sup>

Hart’s study relies on quantitative data, statistical know-how, and technical map-making skill – all generally related to what scholars have come to call the ‘spatial turn’. Yet, while Hart’s article (along with Gregory Downs and Scott Nesbit’s ‘[Mapping Occupation](#)’ project, the maps provided by ‘[Colored Conventions](#)’, or the ‘[Spatial History Project](#)’ at Stanford University, among many others) demonstrates that historical inquiry can benefit from the inclusion of datasets and mapping technologies, spatial history and the study of maps need not intimidate the

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<sup>86</sup> Hart, ‘The Geography of Revolution’, 154.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 155

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 156–159.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 160 and 162.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 163 and 168.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 172.

technophobe. In the twenty-first century, many studies in spatial history analyze maps as texts, rather than creating them.

For example, following a similar method as that of Johnson, in ‘A Plague on Bohemia? Mapping the Black Death’, David C. Mengel studies maps that have represented the progression and geographic reach of the Black Death alongside the texts that accompanied them.<sup>92</sup> Mengel traces how the scholarly consensus that Bohemia was left unscathed from the Black Death developed through ‘the most influential account of plague in Bohemia’: a map.<sup>93</sup> In 1962, Élisabeth Carpentier published an article on the plague in *Annales*.<sup>94</sup> She provided a map that ‘has shaped all subsequent discussion of the Black Death in Bohemia’.<sup>95</sup> The map includes lines showing the march of the plague across the continent in six-month increments and identifies cities that were ‘partly or entirely spared by the plague’, including Milan, Nuremberg and Liège, parts of the Pyrenees, sections of the Low Countries, and large portions of east Central Europe. Carpentier presented the map tentatively, warning that it was incomplete and would require further study. Despite the creation of other maps by other scholars, Carpentier’s map has been widely reproduced – without her caveat – in popular magazines, scholarly studies, and Western Civilization textbooks.<sup>96</sup> The only scholar who took exception with Carpentier’s map was František Graus, who, in 1963, objected to the ‘exceptional regions’ of southern Poland and Bohemia.<sup>97</sup> Graus ‘crammed the footnotes of his dense, five-page article with fourteenth-century evidence of plague in the Bohemian kingdom’, arguing that while the first appearance of the

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<sup>92</sup> David C. Mengel, ‘A Plague on Bohemia? Mapping the Black Death’, *Past & Present*, ccxi (2011).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>94</sup> Élisabeth Carpentier, ‘Autour de la peste noire: famines et épidémies dans l’histoire du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle’, *Annales ESC*, xvii (1962).

<sup>95</sup> Mengel, ‘A Plague on Bohemia’, 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 5–6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

plague in Bohemia was light, there was a second, much more devastating phase.<sup>98</sup> Graus situated the plague within a variety of other pestilences, emphasizing the feudal crisis as ‘a category into which a devastating epidemic fitted badly’. Despite Graus’ documentary diligence, Anglophone scholars ignored his work and the only argument that gained attention was one that he never actually made – ‘that Bohemia escaped from plague because of its geographical isolation’.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, Philip Zeigler included Carpentier’s map in his popular history book, *The Black Death*, in 1969, repeating that the plague left Bohemia untouched and sealing the fame of Carpentier’s map.<sup>100</sup> Though Zeigler’s account drew responses, Graus was the only scholar who effectively showed that the plague reached Bohemia, just in lesser extremes than in Italy and coastal Europe. Nonetheless, he did not provide a map and his conclusion ‘defies the clear cartographic representation which, we have seen, effectively disseminated the belief that Bohemia’s experience with the Black Death was exceptional’, and so, Graus’ criticism was not noticed.<sup>101</sup>

Mengel concludes that it is time for Carpentier’s map to retire; yet, he does not offer a map to replace it. In a new map, too many blank spaces would remain, since the additional studies that Carpentier suggested have yet to appear. ‘Well-designed maps’, Mengel warns, ‘communicate ideas powerfully’ and readers tend to read them as absolute fact.<sup>102</sup> Any new map would risk losing the textual caveats that Mengel would need to include, just as had Carpentier’s.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>100</sup> Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (New York, 1969); Mengel, ‘A Plague on Bohemia?’, 12.

<sup>101</sup> Mengel, ‘A Plague on Bohemia?’, 17.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 32–33.

Each of the essays outlined thus far focuses on geographical spaces, their associated place names, the communities that relate (or do not) with them, and the maps created to represent them. However, one historical study of space in *Past & Present* focuses on the spaces that lie behind closed doors. Amanda Vickery, in ‘An Englishman’s Home is his Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House’, studies privacy by examining the domestic space of everyday Londoners.<sup>104</sup> Vickery’s study ‘opens the door of the London house to consider how internal space was conceptualized, demarcated and policed’.<sup>105</sup> She relies on criminal records from London’s main criminal court, the Old Bailey, and examines the ‘claim and defence of private property’ and ‘the capacity and mechanisms to achieve seclusion, refuge, security, and secrecy’.<sup>106</sup>

Vickery first examines the external perimeter of the household, with the doorway as the ‘archetypal liminal boundary’.<sup>107</sup> Legally, an open door, open window, or poorly secured latch was an invitation to intruders, leaving the ‘classic responsibility of the head of household to patrol the boundaries and lock up fast at night’.<sup>108</sup> Vickery then turns to the interior of the home, emphasizing that regardless of social class, most of London’s inhabitants lived in rented accommodations and thus shared space with other individuals, sometimes even in the same room, leading to theft not just from intruders, but from within. Furthermore, nosy landlords often found clever ways to legally enter, or at least view, the rooms they let.<sup>109</sup> Homes had their own hierarchical geographies, as ‘certain rooms became synonymous with small incomes and

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<sup>104</sup> Amanda Vickery, ‘An Englishman’s Home is his Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House’, *Past & Present*, cxc (2008), 150.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 154.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 154–156, 157–158. Quotation on 156.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 158–159.



struggle'.<sup>110</sup> Among the household residents, servants had the least personal space, often sleeping on temporary, moveable bedding and carrying locked boxes carrying all of their worldly belongings.<sup>111</sup> At the boundary of the household, once over the threshold, and at one's locked box, the key was fundamental to securing each person a minimal amount of private space.<sup>112</sup>

Finally, Edward D. Melillo's article, 'Global Entomologies: Insects, Empires, and the "Synthetic Age" in World History', published in 2014, serves as a bookend to Barraclough's 1954 piece, with which this examination of *Past & Present* articles began.<sup>113</sup> Melillo studies the histories of shellac, silk and cochineal, documenting 'a series of long-standing productive relationships between humans and insects'.<sup>114</sup> These histories were studied through 'fragmented and episodic accounts', but Melillo urges historians 'to transcend approaches based solely on local or national comparisons and move towards models that emphasize transnational connections'.<sup>115</sup> Studying the histories of three products produced by domesticated insects shifts our perception of colonial spatial geographies by placing Europeans on the '*knowledge periphery*, incredulous that indigenous know-how beyond the boundaries of the Occident could be so central to global commerce'.<sup>116</sup> Melillo presents the transnational histories of each product, the rise of synthetics, the parallel rise of toxicity, and limits of synthetic substitution.

Studying the products within a global framework reveals as much about the epistemological geographies of empire as about insects. In each case, the metropole attempted to industrialize the domesticated insects and their production 'through radical simplifications of

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 163–166.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 172. Of course, private space stands in contrast to public space. For a historical treatment of public space in *Past & Present*, see: Neil MacMaster, 'The Battle for Mousehold Heath, 1857–1884: "Popular Politics" and the Victorian Public Park', *Past & Present*, cxxvii (1990).

<sup>113</sup> Edward D. Melillo, 'Global Entomologies: Insects, Empires and the "Synthetic Age" in World History', *Past & Present*, ccxxiii (2014).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 234.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 236.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 234.

complex ecological process'. These 'top-down attempts' were carried out with 'striking ignorance of local knowledge', producing 'a litany of embarrassing failures and unmitigated disasters over the centuries'.<sup>117</sup> Thus, the geographical imagination created by the insects and their human cultivators displaced European knowledge.<sup>118</sup> Like Barraclough, Melillo decenters a Eurocentric narrative by studying interaction and encounter beyond the confines of national borders. The scale shifted through this inquiry is not just geographic, nor merely epistemological; it is methodological, as Barraclough and Melillo urge us to shift the scale of historical inquiry.

#### **IV. Final Comments**

In the words of historian Richard White, spatial history (here he is referring specifically to GIS) is not just about representing what we have learned on a map; rather, 'it is a means of doing research'.<sup>119</sup> Herein lies an important contribution of the study of place, space, and scale in *Past & Present*: while at times what is gained from its historical study is a deeper understanding of geographical concepts and their associated processes, often it is other knowledge that is gained. Through spatial history, we learn about the routes of commodities and the structure of geographical knowledge. We learn about the values and shape of a community. We learn about privacy, plague, empire, insects, cosmography, violence, and peasants. In other words, space within the pages of *Past & Present* has presented itself as an approach to history, an object of study, and a methodology (employed to learn more about a distinct object of study). Similar to the field of human geography, spatial history in *Past & Present* responded to the influence of the postmodern and linguistic turns, though, unlike human geography, it never turned away from

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 263.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>119</sup> Richard White, 'What Is Spatial History?', Spatial History Lab Working Paper (Spatial History Project, Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis, Stanford University, 1 February 2010), 6. <https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29>.

social issues and only recently became a more technical venture. Yet, there is no overwhelming drive toward quantitative approaches or even mapping software that requires specific technical knowledge.<sup>120</sup> Instead, the articles on space, place, and scale in *Past & Present* have continually provoked their readers to consider how we relate to the space around us, how we make of it our own place, what hierarchies we create within it, how we imagine and relate it to other places, and how we represent it to others.

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<sup>120</sup> Mengel, 'A Plague on Bohemia', 33–34.