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What Space Is This Time?

Historiography in the Space of History

If the role of time in history cannot be seen as transparent and self-evident, the part space plays in our arrangement of the historical record seems both too present and too absent. “Of course, history is about space,” Clio mutters. “For what else have humans fought throughout time if not for space? For what do they contest now? For what will they struggle in the future?” Yes—but the too present space of history operates without a historiographically fixed nature, thus we contest for space when we understand it in different ways. Perceiving that difference throws us into a state of calamity (of perceived misfortune, of disaster, of reversal), the state of what we think Walter Benjamin means by “catastrophe” in likening this “state of emergency” to a storm.¹

¹ Clio (or Kleio) is called “the Proclaimer,” and her name is taken to mean “to recount,” “to make famous,” and “to celebrate.” She is known as the muse of history, to which her name, in Greek, is related.

In the ninth of his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Benjamin evokes Paul Klee’s monoprint *Angelus Novus*—I would say the “new annunciation,” but I see the “new annunciator” (like “terminator”), in that this is news we do not want to hear. Benjamin bought Klee’s 1920 oil transfer and watercolor drawing from the artist in 1921 and often called it his most treasured possession. It hung in Benjamin’s Berlin office and accompanied him into exile in France in 1935. When Benjamin fled Paris in 1939, he left his papers and Klee’s *Angelus Novus* with the philosopher Georges Bataille for safekeeping. (Bataille hid them from the invading Germans in the Bibliothèque nationale.) Following Benjamin’s death in 1940 and the end of the war in 1945, Bataille passed the salvaged materials to Theodore Adorno in New York. Observing Benjamin’s wishes, Adorno gave the monoprint to the mystic philosopher and poet Gershom Scholem. Scholem had composed a poem for Benjamin’s twenty-ninth birthday (15 July 1921), which Benjamin uses as preface to his ninth thesis on “The Philosophy of History,” often called “Angelus Novus.”²

Both Scholem’s poem and Klee’s monoprint anticipate action. English-language iterations of the poem suggest the speaker is stalled on the point of flight:

My wing is ready for flight,
 [But] I would like to turn back.
 If I stayed everliving time,
 I would still have little luck.³

Considering that the poem was written for a birthday, specifically a twenty-ninth birthday, it is tempting to speculate what this threshold moment suggests, either of Benjamin’s life or Scholem’s perception of it in 1921, but so over-written is that moment by subsequent events and by the ninth thesis itself that I will side-step interpretation here and capture only the idea of “poised for flight.” Benjamin describes Klee’s drawing in the thesis, giving the *Angelus Novus* movement and direction, in short—a dramatic narrative Klee’s work does not itself have (though his angel is poised dramatically enough on the paper). Benjamin says:

² Klee’s *Angelus Novus* was given by Scholem’s widow to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The “Theses” were posthumously published in German by Adorno and Max Horkheimer with other writings by Benjamin in 1955, and in Hannah Arendt’s well-known English edition of *Illuminations* in 1968.

³ The translations of Scholem’s poem is drawn from Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4: 1938–1940, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 392. The German version of Scholem’s birthday poem is given in Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257, as follows: “Gruss vom Angelus”

Mein Flügel ist zum Schwung bereit,
 ich kehrte gern zurück,
 denn blieb ich auch lebendige Zeit,
 ich hatte wenig Glück.

There is a picture by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm.⁴

If the Annunciator is having a really bad day, the “we” for whom Benjamin’s (and perhaps Klee’s) bell tolls—the Angelus is a devotion commemorating the annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel—well, we are experiencing, I would argue, not the catastrophe of a storm—storms come and go, they create wreckage, leave debris, we clean it up, and history moves on—but the catastrophe of an earthquake, the ruin of what we thought was a settled whole, was chained matter, and now we see smashed up pieces and dead ideas which defy our ability to re-assemble as was, not the end of history, but the beginning of a historiography, one marked spatially by catastrophe. In this “state of emergency,” the past is the wind in our face, while the Angel of History-in-need-of-a-fix, to be affixed, remembers Paradise, where one stays, where dead history is awakened, remembered, and where we reassemble our fragments into wholes.⁵

Space. Let me back up and make a point of entry into this discourse before Marx, so implicated in Benjamin’s historiographical practice—“probably the most peculiar Marxist ever produced by this movement,” Hannah Arendt writes of Benjamin, “which God knows has had its full share of oddities,”⁶ Benjamin, dope-slapped by Adorno for seeing the relationship between superstructure and substructure as a metaphorical one. “Before Marx”—much to talk about here, but not enough time—the view had been of space (and time) as a category, the space of science and mathematics. Descartes fixes space, making it the container for *all* senses and bodies. “Was space therefore,” Henri Lefebvre asks of this—the English translation of his *The Production of Space* (1991) illustrated on its cover by Klee’s

⁴ Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” 392, italics original. My thanks to Loren Kruger for reminding me that Benjamin’s attributions of movement are not features of Klee’s drawing.

⁵ The Angelus has been rung at morning, noon, and nightfall since the seventeenth century, but bells from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries bear inscriptions indicating the peal is much older. There are some associations of these “Ave bells” with peace, but neither Benjamin’s nor Klee’s “wake-up call” have calm in mind, rather the reverse. Gwyneth Shanks uses the earthquake to good effect in her “The Ground of (Im)Potential: Historiography and the Earthquake,” in *Theatre/Performance Historiography: Time, Space, Matter*, eds. Rosemarie K. Bank and Michal Kobiakka (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 219–235.

⁶ Hannah Arendt, introduction to Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 11.

watercolor *Uncomposed in Space* (*Nichtcomponiertes im Raum*, 1929)—“a divine attribute? Or was it an order imminent to the totality of what existed?”⁷ Descartes’s absolute space spins on to Spinoza, Leibniz, the Newtonians—I am following Lefebvre here—to Kant, who turns his face toward the past, recapturing category to separate space (and time) from the empirical sphere, and to put it in the *a priori* realm of consciousness, with its internal and ideal structure, “transcendental and essentially ungraspable,” another, but different, “end of history.”⁸

Lefebvre continues to follow the trail from Descartes to Marx, in his own quest to put physical space, mental space, and social space on the same page. How Lefebvre does this in *The Production of Space* is well-worth reading and pertinent to the historiography of space, but I am going to sashay, flâneur-like, over and around this particular pile of debris toward the contradictory space Lefebvre discusses, where he asks if there is a logic of space, and answers that “a logic merely determines a network of relationships constitutive of the ‘object.’” Lefebvre sees these relationships as contradictory, characterized by “inclusion and exclusion, conjunction and disjunction, implication and explication, iteration and reiteration, recurrence and repetition, and so forth.” As relationships, “propositions, judgments, concepts or chains of concepts may include one another, and result from inclusions, or else they may be mutually exclusive. Such logical relationships imply neither a pre-existing ‘reality’ nor a pre-existing ‘truth.’”⁹

In Lefebvre’s production of space, humans are “situated in a series of enveloping levels, each of which implies the others, and the sequence of which accounts for social practice.”¹⁰ These chains of events, of concepts, present the angel of history with in-dwelling contradictions and supply the fracturing pressure, the wind that propels the debris or the earthquake that cracks the enveloping levels, lifting some up while suppressing others (*Aufhebung*), making a pile of ruins of what previous views of space saw as *the* logical order. Loren Kruger, in a well-wrought article about the Haymarket protest in Chicago in 1886, suggests that performance does not so much disappear as reappear. “If the investigation of past performance makes any sense,” Kruger writes, “it is because performance from the past is neither inevitably nor wholly in the past.”¹¹ Theater historians excavate and reanimate an always fragmentary ruin every time we produce historic space; indeed, we have, in this respect, a catastrophic social practice.

⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. David Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 1.

⁸ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 2. Loren Kruger observes, in a letter to the author 22 October 2015, that Klee’s *Uncomposed in Space* “invites movement toward the vanishing point, as it is thoroughly composed in the classical manner, despite its title. It could be said to illustrate more effectively the backward movement of the angel into the wind of progress.”

⁹ Lefebvre, 293–294.

¹⁰ Lefebvre, 294.

¹¹ Loren Kruger, “What Time Is This Place? Continuity, Conflict, and the Right to the City: Lessons from Haymarket Square,” in *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology*, eds. Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz (New York: Routledge, 2013), 49.

Ideas of history, more strictly of the historiography (arrangements, relationships) of history, come to us since Benjamin's day (at least) as fractured space, as debris, not in the sense of waste, but of pieces that we recognize but cannot reassemble, since, even if we were able to piece historical materialities together, which we could not do in any significant sense, we can neither piece mental space together, nor is there such a transcending whole as an era's single "mental space." We have believed the past, and worked it, as though history was not a catastrophe to begin with, but capable of historiographical repair—"the Angel wants to go back and fix things"—not facing that the arrangements of the historical record, the relationships we forge between its parts and ourselves, cannot be fixed. The past is both here and there. It is present in spaces foreign to it, which we attempt to temporally chain together, but time is an element of space, not the reverse, and certainly not the space itself.

Lefebvre crafts a "science of space" concerned with the political use of knowledge, the ways that use is concealed by ideologies camouflaged as knowledge itself, and the ways such "knowledge" is integrated into productions of space (e.g., in architecture, social planning, and the like).¹² Anxious to distinguish between ideology and practice, Lefebvre tries mightily to make contradictory space have logic so that we can distinguish between the conceived and the perceived, between what he calls "representations of space" and "representational spaces."¹³ While the attempt produces a fine analysis of Picasso and the space of modernity—in which Klee plays a leading part in detaching space from the artistic subject, so as to make the surroundings of the object visible and allow us to see the object-in-space as "a presentation of space itself"—Lefebvre is not wholly successful in connecting this level to that of social practice. At that, Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983) is more adept, but I want to stick here to space, to ask the question "what space is this time," rather than the reverse. To that end, a performative example may suggest the complexity of the relationship between space and time, and the challenges they pose to arrangements of an historical record.¹⁴

In the 1870s, a civilian army scout named William F. Cody began to theatricalize life on the American frontier, then a loosely defined area in the trans-Mississippi west of the United States localized by the kinds of events likely to be reported in the newspapers—mail delivery by Pony Express riders, attempts by desperados to rob stagecoaches, battles between the US Army and Amerindians, or the North American bison ("buffalo") hunts of European princes and emperors.¹⁵ Over time,

¹² See Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 8–9.

¹³ See Lefebvre, 296–299.

¹⁴ See Lefebvre, 300–304.

¹⁵ There is a very large archive of material about William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody; indeed, he has a library of his own in Cody, Wyoming. Four excellent book sources are: Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960); L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

Cody augmented these events with trick riding and fancy shooting acts derived from equestrian shows, circuses, carnival acts, and sports competitions, and moved the whole from theaters to outdoor arenas, tents, or covered amphitheatres. Beginning in the 1880s, Cody toured these acts nationally and internationally as “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” with himself as the star of what was advertised as

not a “show” in any sense of the word, but it is a series of original, genuine and instructive OBJECT LESSONS in which the participants repeat the heroic parts they have played in actual life upon the plains, in the wilderness, mountain fastness, and in the dread and dangerous scenes of savage and cruel warfare.¹⁶

The insistence upon authenticity is a red flag, alerting historians to the emergence of a phenomenon that is a retrospective, and, indeed, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West looked backward to a frontier that was often discussed and portrayed as vanishing. In 1893, at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Wild West’s most successful season, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, one of many scholarly “congresses” held on and near the Exposition fairgrounds.¹⁷ His paper, based upon 1890 US census data, announced that the American frontier, whose significance Turner’s paper explored, was now, indeed, closed. The past that was resurrected from the debris of nineteenth-century US history in both Cody’s and Turner’s venue was a catastrophic past, one which each man sought to order as a chain of events. Turner’s moved from simple to complex societies and can be seen as a “chain of civilization” explanation. Cody’s moved from site to site and can be seen as a “chain of culture” explanation. If civilizations move from simple to complex in “chains of civilization” explanations, as Turner argues, “chains of culture” explanations, as Cody’s show demonstrated, present cultures as simultaneous and linked. The anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, as we shall see, blends these explanations together in a discussion of lines of cultural affinity, an explanation that is itself chained to the concealed presence of the political use of knowledge to which Lefebvre alerts us. For their parts, Turner and Cody each arranges a past that suits the needs of his present, using the same or similar material to reach the same and yet dissimilar ends.

While “chains of culture” explanations offer a temporal fluidity “chains of civilization” explanations do not, the earthquake offers a mode of thought that subsumes the temporal into the spatial. Though we think of earthquakes in terms of the ruin they cause at the surface, their significance geologically lies in

¹⁶ The “Object Lesson” is reproduced in Jack Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill* (New York: Darien House, 1976), endpapers.

¹⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 197–227.

what goes on subsurface, where plates shift, pressure is released, and enveloping levels of relationship come to light. Their “logic,” that is, their history, with all its contradictory characteristics, reappears at the time of the quake. At the level of human affairs, history is both the surface ruin and what time has brought to light, both space and time, a relationship similar to what Lefebvre means by differential spaces, or, from a different perspective, the struggle between exchange value and use value. As an extension of this materiality, social geographers have called for a view of time and space that is not only variable and socially produced, diachronic and synchronic, but which also takes account of the different rates of turnover or change that mark those moments in history when several materialities break the surface at the same time. Like the earthquake, relentlessly thrusting rock strata upward, while liquefied stone oozes across the surface and gaping holes suddenly appear, historical materialities captured in the same event reflect different dynamics. As Robert Dodgshon explains, in *Society in Time and Space: A Geographical Perspective on Change*, cognitive structures at a socio-biological level change at a different rate than cognitive structures at a cultural level (where norms, rules, practices, and relations are found), than cognitive structures at the socio-organizational level (with its systems of roles, codes, and functions), or than cognitive structures at a socio-technical level (where the physical or technical means through which systems sustain themselves can be studied).¹⁸

To be sure, the variability of time and space is not a new discovery, but here is a return to structural change to get us to think again, both about the operation of history and about what we have accumulated from Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Michel de Certeau (1984), Edward Soja (1989), Homi Bhabha (1990), Henri Lefebvre (1991), Fredric Jameson (1991), and, more recently Alain Badiou (2005), who have discussed disruptive space and the broken “signifying chain” between past, present, and future, the force of which makes it impossible for the angel of history to close its wings. In order to see change in cognitive structures, social geographers evoke inertia, a measure of the rate at which the elements of “the earthquake” are moving. Inertia in this context doesn’t mean inactive—it takes energy to stay at rest—still less does inertia mean inert (that is, without active properties). Here, new practices and institutional forms that emerge relatively easily are “juxtaposed with areas in which [the new] is prevented, retarded, or constrained by structural inertia.”¹⁹ Inertia provides “lag or relaxation time in the switch between qualitatively different structures or systems.”²⁰ We do not know what structures, codes, institutional forms, practices, roles, etc., will turn out to be

¹⁸ Robert Dodgshon, *Society in Time and Space: A Geographical Perspective on Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12.

¹⁹ Dodgshon, *Society in Time and Space*, 16.

²⁰ Dodgshon, 164.

successful, or simply viable, and because societies invest in the choices they have made, of whatever kind, they put more and more inertia into play that constrains change and limits flexibility.²¹

Nineteenth-century US theater offers many examples of the interplay between inertia and change, of which the American frontier play serves as an illustration. Characters from frontier spaces appear early in plays set in US cities. James Kirke Paulding's 1831 *The Lion of the West; or, The Kentuckian* offers an example of a figure of change, Col. Nimrod Wildfire, inserted into the inertial space of a New York drawing room.²² Wildfire's function is to emphasize by contrast the extent to which American society is corrupting itself by aping "European" values of class and money over moral character and industry. The frontier character activates cultural and socio-organizational relationships affecting the norms, rules, practices, roles, codes, and functions of socio-cultural space, a space morally cleansed by the frontier figure, but not fundamentally changed by his presence. Rather, more inertia is put into play to widen the parameters of drawing room society to take in the Wildfires the culture produces. It is a relationship still evident in Frank Murdock's 1872–1873 *Davy Crockett*, but Murdock has to set the play "backwards," into the early nineteenth century, in order to accommodate the type.²³ At the same time, the frontiersman now has a frontier space, where he has the advantage, a reiteration of a space perceived to be more righteous than the space of representation (the 1870s) itself. Inertia is overcome by change, but at such a remove in time, with respect to contemporaneous life, that the inertial state has already included the frontier iteration (Kentucky) and passed on to other spaces, such as the trans-Mississippi west. At the moment of appearance, then, as Dodgshon suggests, different rates of change are visible in the same inertial structure.

The implications of inertia with respect to class and the politics of space will be evident, but notice that it is the more complex society (complex in the sense of having more stuff), not those designated as primitive, that displays the most inertia, and, so, must expend the energy it takes to maintain the flow of given and received forms of knowledge. The New York drawing room of *The Lion of the West* is stuffed with the materialities marking financial and social success in 1831. In *Davy Crockett*, the "stuff" is that of class—the Squire's daughter, cultured, educated in Europe, apparently well-to-do, stands in contrast in all but pureness of heart to the illiterate backwoods hero of the play. Inertia holds the "stuff" of

²¹ See Dodgshon, 180.

²² James Kirke Paulding, *The Lion of the West; or, The Kentuckian*, ed. James N. Tidwell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954). The words "morally cleansed" and "upright" in this paragraph do not obviate Wildfire's or the play's racist characteristics.

²³ Frank Murdock, *Davy Crockett; or, Be Sure You're Right Then Go Ahead*, in *America's Lost Plays*, vol. 4, eds. Isaac Goldberg and Hubert Heffner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940). Despite theatrical success in the nineteenth century, both these plays were lost until recovered for publication in the twentieth century.

both plays in place until the forces of change forge new relationships, in *The Lion of the West* away from the social pretensions of the nouveau riche and toward the virtues of the gauche but upright Kentuckian, and, in *Davy Crockett*, toward the renunciation of the privileging of inherited wealth and position in favor of the return to simpler, more American living. Fundamental differences in attitude exist both within and among societies about what kinds of socio-cultural knowledge, values, or structures should be maintained, developed, or abandoned, not only in the present but across geographies and throughout a system's history, as we see in these plays and in the variations in where systems are located, who runs or serves them, how inertial they are, and how much freedom there is to change them. Rather than thinking in terms of core and margin, and related binaries of difference and "othering," inertia and change is focused on the dynamics that affect social systems and structures, preserving some systems in order to conserve the energy it would take to change everything—language, for example, which stores the relationship of inertia and change—while introducing or forsaking other systems and structures.

Ordering information geographically—spatially—is a timehonored way to store cultural information.²⁴ (Think of Simonides of Ceos [ca. 500 BCE] who developed a memory system based upon associating words with visual images, or Camillo [sixteenth century] who built a memory theater in Venice, or Tommaso Campanella who proposed the walls of his utopia would illustrate the knowledge of history, or the television "Sherlock's" twenty-first century version of a "mind palace.") While geographers like Dodgshon mourn the irrecoverable loss of energy committed to creating forms, structures, rules, codes, and processes, the expended choice,²⁵ we may, perhaps, feel less marooned in the present than Jameson felt in 1991, when he wrote *Postmodernism*, doomed to life among a "rubble of unrelated signifiers,"²⁶ because the past is never wholly in the past nor is the present wholly in the present. What space is this time, then, if we carry our "archaeology"—our debris, our ruins, the remainders/reminders of past earthquakes—in our historically-constituted, spatially-constructed knowledges, in what is deeply rooted no less than in what is proximate?

What would a space of inertia and change do to continuity and change, to the timely and untimely, to the need to forget to remember and to remember to forget, to the endless dance of time and space that is history? The American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan worked in an era when the United States had accumulated enough time to look backward and enough space to map a topography of the future. By the time his *Ancient Society; or, Researches in the Lines of Human*

²⁴ For temporal memory systems, see Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 54–55.

²⁵ Dodgshon, *Society in Time and Space*, 177.

²⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 26–27.

Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization was published in 1877;²⁷ Morgan had lived the transition of anthropology from a pursuit for hobbyists, fraternal societies, and government bureaucrats into a scholarly discipline lodged in America's museums, research societies, and universities. Morgan's interest in anthropology was awakened in 1843 when he and fellow members of a literary club created the Grand Order of the Iroquois, a bogus Indian society that came to have multiple "lodges" and hundreds of members in up-state New York. Morgan's goal in engaging in what Philip Deloria identifies as "playing Indian" was to create a brotherhood between the Native American past and the Euro-American present through which the "companions in space" think together across time, not in thinking alike, but in thinking simultaneously.²⁸ The young Morgan—he was twenty-four when the Grand Order of the Iroquois was organized—wanted to articulate an American past, which he saw as rooted in Amerindian rather than in ancient Greek or Roman culture, a society that was not shaped to the needs of a market economy, as Morgan felt his own society to be.²⁹ The mature Morgan cast an embarrassed yet grateful eye upon the invented rituals of the Grand Order of the Iroquois and his own amateur efforts for having stimulated his life-long interest in Indian studies (Amerindians make up thirty percent of the evidence in *Ancient Society*, more than any other data base).³⁰ Morgan's research into pre-class social relations in ancient societies, in the Americas and worldwide, propelled the angel of history toward Karl Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*, a project left unfinished by Marx's death in 1881 and taken up by Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, in Light of the Researches of Lewis Henry Morgan* (1884), the earthquake that the materialist concept of history bequeaths to the late-nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.³¹

Inertia and change are large-scale projects with small-scale ramifications. In Morgan's case, whereas change is the primary outflow in Marx/Engels' Europe, Morgan's reception in the US, specifically in American anthropology, takes change to inertia in a decade and a half. The change Morgan effected was to further the idea of monogenesis, which struggled in America to evade the grip of powerful polygenesist voices like Louis Agassiz's, installed as professor and museum director at Harvard. Morgan and younger anthropologists like Frederic Ward Putnam

²⁷ Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society; or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, ed. Leslie A. White (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1964).

²⁸ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), see chapter 3 for Morgan.

²⁹ See Rosemarie K. Bank, "Friedrich Engels, Lewis Henry Morgan, Capitalism, and Theatre-Making in Nineteenth-Century America," in *To Have or Have Not: Essays on Commerce and Capital in Modernist Theatre*, ed. James Fisher (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2011), 10.

³⁰ For Morgan's reflection on the Grand Order see White's introduction to Morgan, *Ancient Society*, xiv, and p. xx for Morgan's data base.

³¹ Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, in Light of the Researches of Lewis Henry Morgan*, ed. Eleanor Burke Leacock (New York: International Publishers, 1972).

of Harvard's Peabody Museum and the Director of Anthropology and Ethnology at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 (where Cody and Turner also appeared), did not follow Darwin's lead toward explanations of biological history, but pursued the course of cultural history through "lines" of cultural expression rooted in kinship ties and the development of clans.³² Pre-capitalist societies show these lines in abundance, Morgan argued, and, because the clock of history is not wound everywhere the same, Morgan's own age could perceive societies at each of the major stages of development Morgan envisioned: savage, barbaric, and civilized. Because Morgan tied this diversity to a temporal wheel—"human progress"—the virtues he saw in "savage" and "barbaric" cultures (freedom, equity, compassion, etc.) could never make them as "progressive" as "civilized" cultures, even though those cultures were disfigured by a rapacious capitalism bent on the production of an inequitable class system (hence the contrasting appeal of "ancient societies" to Marx and Engels). In a handful of years, then, the liberation of change (simultaneous diversity) became one more weapon in the arsenal of cultural inertia, that is, in "civilized" societies' attempts to stabilize a status quo, the diverse but not free presentations of, for example, the Columbian Exposition. There, the rate and direction are place-specific in terms of what is being "thought together" about ancient societies as staged by American anthropologists—and the 1880s and 1890s is the historic moment when that discourse in the US emerges in its modern form.³³ As theater historians think through historiographic dynamics that are timeless *and* timely, then, we also contemplate their different spatial properties in a given place.

The given place of the Columbian Exposition of 1893 serves as an earthquake site enabling us to ask what space is this time, what is being re-membered in *this* mind palace, what is reappearing, how is the return of history never a repetition of what has gone before, but always a different space? Thus far, historians have approached the fair's "white city" as a whole, making much of its stately buildings, its projections of the nationalist and imperialist views of its displaying cultures, its own "progressive" view of civilization, and its exploitation of ethnicity and amusement, largely on the exposition's Midway Plaisance. It is a wholistic view of the past that emerges, the opposite of Lefebvre's differential space, as if there were unity not only of effort, but of effect. If, instead, we viewed the Columbian Exposition site and earlier ideas of a frontier-inflected American culture as earthquake-affected archaeological finds, what would we see? Now, the wild men and drawing rooms collapse into each other, the orderly buildings lie, ravaged,

³² For Morgan's career, see Daniel Nash Moses, *The Promise of Progress: The Life and Work of Lewis Henry Morgan* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009). For Putnam's work, see Joan Mark, *Four Anthropologists: An American Science in Its Early Years* (New York: Science History Publisher, 1980), chap. 2.

³³ For a broader view of anthropological issues in the later nineteenth century, see George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

over piles of unrelated debris—a collection of knives from all over time and space, for example (“why are these together?”), an Inuit kayak from Greenland (“why is this here?”), pieces of statuary (“who or what do these represent?”), or a stretch of land at an angle to the larger site with the ruins of a great wheel on it (“was this the monument to a god? a king? was it a machine for moving water?”)—and this scenario piles the debris on the surface, uncovered by the layers of earth and subsequent habitation that mark such sites in life. What would we think of uncovering the nearby campground of the performers of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, a simultaneous presence mocking the ideas of savage to civilized development, or if we found the manuscript of Turner’s “frontier thesis” in the fantasized ruins of a somewhat less damaged Art Institute (“what is *that* doing here?”), folding events upon each other, an illustration of anachronic time? At the same site, something we might call anatopic space is revealed in the tension between inertia and change, a space that prompts us to ask what space is this time, what is being re-membered in *this* mind palace, what is re-appearing, how is the return of history never a repetition of what has gone before, but always a different space?³⁴

If Benjamin is right, catastrophic change is a norm, not because it happens all the time (though it does), not because we desire it (though we do), but because the angel in Klee’s painting “is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating.”³⁵ That angel, whom Benjamin appropriates and pictures as the angel of history, is about to move away from the past, although he would like to stay there, awakening the dead (Gabriel, Michael) making the fragmented whole, re-linking the chain (though he knows history is fragmented), to move away from a past where we, on the other hand, perceive wholes or chains of events. Benjamin’s point is that the angel of history does not see history our way. In Greek, a *katastrophé* is an overturning. Whether we perceive the “chain of events” because we think it is *in* history or because we think it up, making history “appear [linked] to us,” the overturning is what counts. It is the moment that reveals to us the tension between inertia and change in a historical site, the moment of perceiving that the shifting plates and consequent ruins have something new to tell us, something that, historiographically, lies ahead. As Benjamin saw it, the wreckage is *in front* of the angel’s feet, and the mound that is *before* him grows skyward. The past at which the angel gazes fixedly has blown into the present—Dodgshon says “there is a case for arguing that we live in the past in the belief that we are really living in the present,” and surely the opposite applies as well. The angel of history, wings held open by the dynamics

³⁴ We could as well use Foucault’s term heterotopia rather than anatopic space, but I want to lean here on the idea of anachronistic as well as simultaneous spaces.

³⁵ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 257.

of the past-in-the-present, is irresistibly propelled backward (how else?) into the future, thrown upward by the earthquake of what we call progress, but still moving. The wings are *inert* in the midst of catastrophe, the midst of overturning *change*. There can be no end of history in mere smashing, not even in profound overturning and seismic upheaval. Rather, that is the space of the irresistible future, the space of this time, and the space of history.³⁶



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³⁶ Dodgshon, 201.

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Abstract

What Space Is This Time? Historiography in the Space of History

In asking the question embedded in the title, this article explores the tension between inertia and change in cultural historical studies. Inertia in this context does not mean inactive or inert (i.e., without active properties), but the structural constraints that are

revealed when codes, forms, practices, roles, etc., contest. What kinds and forms of socio-cultural knowledge, values, or structures are maintained, developed, or abandoned across geographies and throughout a system's history? Rather than thinking in terms of core and margin and related binaries of difference and "othering," inertia and change as historiographical strategies focus on the dynamics that affect social systems and structures, preserving some systems to conserve energy while introducing or forsaking others. In the process of exploring these spaces in historiographical time, this article draws historical examples from attempts among scholars and performers in the United States in the latter nineteenth century to stage "American" histories that stored, rejected, and created past and contemporaneous historical spaces at such sites as Lewis Henry Morgan's view of *Ancient Society* (1877), the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Keywords

historiography, Lewis Henry Morgan, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, inertia and change, Henri Lefebvre, catastrophe, Columbian Exposition, earthquake

Abstrakt

Jaką przestrzenią jest ten czas? Historiografia w przestrzeni historii

Poprzez pytanie zawarte w tytule artykuł analizuje napięcie między inercją a zmianą w badaniach nad historią kultury. Inercja w tym kontekście nie oznacza beczynności czy bezwładności (czyli braku aktywnych właściwości), ale strukturalne ograniczenia, które ujawniają się, gdy kwestionowane są kody, formy, praktyki, role itp. Jakie rodzaje i formy społeczno-kulturowej wiedzy, wartości lub struktur są pielęgnowane, rozwijane, a jakie porzucane na różnych obszarach geograficznych i w całej historii systemu społecznego? Inercja i zmiana jako strategie historiograficzne umożliwiają rezygnację z myślenia w kategoriach istoty i marginesu oraz związanych z nimi binarnych opozycji opartych na różnicy i inności, by skupić się na dynamice, która wpływa na podtrzymanie niektórych systemów i struktur społecznych w celu zachowania energii oraz na porzucanie bądź wprowadzanie innych. W procesie badania przestrzeni w czasie historiograficznym autorka czerpie historyczne przykłady z podejmowanych przez uczonych i performerów w Stanach Zjednoczonych w drugiej połowie XIX wieku prób inscenizowania „amerykańskich” historii, które przechowywały, odrzucały i tworzyły przeszłe i współczesne przestrzenie historyczne: wizja *Ancient Society* Lewisa Henry'ego Morgana (1877), Columbian Exposition z 1893 roku i Dziki Zachód Buffalo Billa.

Słowa kluczowe

historiografia, Lewis Henry Morgan, Dziki Zachód Buffalo Billa, inercja i zmiana, Henri Lefebvre, katastrofa, Columbian Exposition, trzęsienie ziemi

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