

Political geography I: theorizing history, gender and world order amidst crises of global governance

Gearóid Ó Tuathail

Department of Geography, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061–0115, USA

Of the 202 mosques in the Banja Luka region of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, only one has escaped not being dynamited, bulldozed or shelled out of existence. According to the vice president of the Banja Luka municipality, the systematic physical erasure of mosques from the landscape – some of which dated from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – is the only way to teach minorities to respect Serbian law (Pomfret, 1994). In 1994 this region was the site of a resurgent campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Bosnian Muslims and Croats who had lived there for centuries and survived the first waves of ethnic cleansing in 1992 and 1993. Once again, rape was used as a weapon of terror by the Bosnian Serbs against Muslim and Croat women just as it had been in the previous two years (Amnesty International, 1993). Women's bodies were brutalized to realize male fantasies of identity and purity.

This systematic erasure of history, organized sexual terrorism and relentless drive to create ethnically cleansed territory in the Banja Luka region of Bosnia is a microcosm of a world marked by crises of governance. As a result of war, persecution and human rights abuses, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that roughly one in every 130 people on earth has been forced into flight (UNHCR, 1993). An estimated 18.2 million people have been forced out of their state of residence while an estimated 24 million people are internally displaced within states. To these numbers, we must now add the horrific experience of Rwanda where government-sponsored genocide left an estimated 500 000 dead and produced the single largest refugee crisis in modern times in a matter of weeks, as over 1.4 million fled the country in the wake of rebel army advances. Refugees are the continual products of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Bhutan, economic collapse in Cuba, civil war in the Caucasus, Somalia, Liberia and Togo, state repression in Guatemala, Turkey, Iran and Indonesia, and random xenophobic terrorism in many other states. Despite moves towards uncertain peace in Angola, the Middle East, Mozambique, Haiti and Northern Ireland, the world political map in 1994 was sullied by genocide,

human displacement and the increasingly evident failure of systems of global governance to do anything about these horrors.

Recent political geography literature, which I understand in the broadest sense, has a great deal of relevance in helping us understand and mobilize against the political horrors of the contemporary world (Johnston, 1994). In keeping with my predecessor's policy, I plan not to survey this literature in its entirety. Rather I seek to engage a few salient works and sites of debate where theoretically challenging arguments pose questions of global concern. The three sites of literature I have chosen to examine in this first report are conjunctures of relevance not only to political geographers but also to the discipline as a whole. Indeed, at each of these three conjunctures (history, gender and world order), the discipline of geography is being politicized in new and important ways. This politicization is a positive development in that it pushes us to begin making connections between the history and concepts we interrogate in our disciplinary debates and the exercise of power and violence in our contemporary world. It also forces us critically to confront our public responsibilities as intellectuals who have the power to produce knowledge that can challenge power, even though this process is far from straightforward and simple.

I Geo-power: theorizing geography and governmentality

In a world where newly fledgling states are recycling myth as official history and where other states are violently imposing their history on minorities within their territory (most brutally in Turkey, Indonesia and Iraq), the need to interrogate critically the process by which official history is produced and alternative histories displaced is greater than ever. Since states are territorial entities, this production of history is inevitably also the political production of an official ideology of the nation's space and of the nation's place within larger imaginary geographies of civilization and ethnicity. A variety of literatures over the last decade has confronted the problematic of this production of history and space and has provided geographers with exemplary studies of the political significance of geographical knowledge in the construction of states, modernity and the development of capitalism (Todorov, 1984; Carter, 1987; Mitchell, 1988; Young, 1990; Pratt, 1992; Said, 1993). Within the discipline, the welcome emergence of critical revisionist histories of 'geography', conceptualized not as a self-evident discipline or body of knowledge but as a sign that names a heterogeneity of different historical practices, has led to a newly honed appreciation of the *politicalness* of the historical production of geographical knowledge in all its facets (Driver, 1992; Livingstone, 1993; Gregory, 1994; Smith, 1994). Yet despite this heightened awareness and widespread consensus that geographical knowledge is eminently political, we still lack the outlines of a genealogy of geographical knowledge as a form of power. A suitable basis for such a genealogy can, I believe, be found in Foucault's (1991) speculations on governmentality, the institutions, apparatuses and *savoirs* associated with the emergence of government as a preeminent form of power since the sixteenth century.

David Livingstone, in his superbly conceived book, *The geographical tradition* writes of geographical knowledge as '... a cultural product and a political resource' and calls for '... an approach to geography's history that will do full justice to the intellectual and social context within which geographical knowledge is produced' (1993: 3, 23). His situating of various episodes in the history of geography is a contextualization of geographical knowledge within the history of ideas and within communities of learning and broad political processes. While Livingstone is quite conscious of the political use of geographical

knowledge, the instrumentalization of geographical knowledge as part of government is not explicitly addressed by him. Because his primary concern is with geographical knowledge as an intellectual tradition of thought and practice, the possibility of treating geography as an ensemble of governmental technologies of power (surveying, cartography, regional description, statistics, education) never quite crystallizes in his work. Neither does it in Driver's (1992) linking of geography, the 'age of empire' and the making of modernity, though his article reviews the complexities and dangers of ever writing fully contextual histories of geographical knowledge in an admirably sensible manner.

The case for a systematic account of the connections between geographical knowledge and governmentality is compelling in the light of the essays in Godlewska and Smith's (1994) edited volume, *Geography and empire*. This book is a superb collection of 17 essays organized into five parts on various aspects of geography and empire. Part 1 is made up of essays on geography in Elizabethan England (Cormack) and France under Napoleon (Godlewska), both of which illustrate how geography as an ensemble of techniques of representing the world was crucial to state and empire formation. It is indeed a pity that there are not more essays on geography before the nineteenth century in the volume, for the transition from, in Foucault's (1991) terms, a feudal territorial regime to the administrative state of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and then to the governmental state of the eighteenth century – a state where the management of the population and the provisioning of security emerge as central preoccupations – is a suggestive framework within which a genealogy of geographical practices as techniques of governmentality could be constructed. What both Cormack and Godlewska's essays suggest is that geographical knowledge was central to the problems of government – namely, the rational administration and arrangement of territory and peoples within a state or empire – and that it changed as the forms of the state and philosophies of the art of government changed. One can also read Heffernan's (1994b) useful essay on Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–81) – a crucial figure in that he traverses the end of the administrative state and anticipates the beginnings of the governmental state – as making the same point. If this is the case, then the theme of 'geography and empire' may be misleading, for the relevant problematic is really the relationship between geography (in its plurality) and *government* as a way of organizing power. In Foucaultian terms, the problematic is one of regimes of geographical power/knowledge (geography as an ensemble of technologies of power or grids of intelligibility which geograph or 'world') and the historical forms of the state, a problematic usefully described as *geo-power* (Ó Tuathail, 1994a). Histories of geographical knowledge, I believe, are best theorized as part of the historical development of governmentality, one set of forms of which are concerned with the charting and surveillance of empire.

The essays in *Geography and empire* certainly provide ample evidence for speculating on the relationship between geographical *savoirs* and the imperatives of government in their broadest sense. Capel, Gami, Heffernan, Sander and Rossler provide excellent accounts of interconnections between late nineteenth-century geography and imperialism in Spain, Italy, France and Germany. Heffernan's chapter is particularly outstanding; he concludes, in a manner similar to Driver (1992), that seeking out a relationship between geography and imperialism is perhaps a misguided endeavour for there were many complex connections between different imperialisms and different geographies. Other noteworthy essays include Rothenberg on *The National Geographic* magazine (see also Bloom, 1993; Lutz and Collins, 1993), Myers on the framing of Zanzibar, Kirby on the OSS and Hartshorne, Wesso on geographic education in South Africa and Crush on post-

colonialism, decolonization and geography. These latter themes are also artfully pursued by Derek Gregory (1994) and by Matt Sparke's (1994a) review of Young (1990), which is a useful exploration of the difficulties surrounding the use of a spatialized language in postmodernism generally.

Complementing these critical interrogations of the politics of the production of geographical knowledge is work on the politics of scientific institutions (Heffernan, 1994a; 1995b), territoriality (Taylor, 1994; 1995), social movements (Cresswell, 1994; Routledge, 1993; 1994; Staeheli, 1994) and continuing work within critical geopolitics (Slater, 1993; Dalby, 1994; Dodds, 1994; Ó Tuathail, 1994b; Popke, 1994; Sidaway, 1994). Of relevance also are works which bring both history and geopolitics together into the study of landscapes of remembrance and memorialization (Charlesworth, 1994; Heffernan, 1995a; Johnson, 1994). Finally, the influence of revisionist perspectives on the history of geopolitics are evident in the first comprehensive *Dictionary of geopolitics* edited by John O'Loughlin (1994). The demythologization of geographical knowledge, institutions, practices, landscape and key words marked by all these activities is certainly to be welcomed, especially given the remythologization of space and place being pushed by certain nationalist groups as a response to the instabilities and dislocations of postmodernity.

II Geography/gender/textuality

In August 1994, Taslima Nasreen, a Bangladeshi doctor turned feminist writer, joined the ranks of the world's displaced after being forced to flee from governmental persecution, state censorship and angry mobs demanding her execution. Nasreen's public persecution began after she was quoted in a Bangladeshi newspaper suggesting that the Koran should be 'revised thoroughly'. Although she denied the statement declaring that she was misquoted, the very spectre of an educated and assertive woman calling for the revision of a foundationalist book (a book that re-presents the word of God) touched off a political firestorm in Bangladesh. A previously existing bounty for her murder was doubled by a leading member of the Islamic Preachers party while the government (headed by a woman) was pressured into charging her with outraging the sentiments of a religious group. Nasreen's case is not unusual but its meaning is not transparent. To some her story as a 'female Salman Rushdie' (as the story was packaged in the west) represents merely another instance of the threat of Islamic fundamentalism to western values, institutions and civilization. To others, it represents the backlash violence and terrorism that awaits those feminists who aspire to revise the textual sources of masculinist authority. To yet others, it illustrates how power and authority are dependent upon the discipline and control of meaning. To query, parody or question the institutionally embedded and officially sanctioned monological meaning of holy books is to shake the literal foundations of power. The solicitation of texts forces power to show its violent face.

The challenge of feminism to the discipline of geography is not a challenge to any singular holy book but it is, nevertheless, a challenge to the textuality and sources of authority of the discipline. The way in which feminism reads the textuality and power of geographical knowledge is a matter of considerable debate. Is the aim of feminism ceaselessly to disrupt the textuality of geographical knowledge or is feminism a new pretender to author-ity that still reads textuality in a pious and theological *qua* monological manner? Gillian Rose's (1993) challenging book *Feminism and geography* brings these questions into sharp focus for the discipline as a whole, while Joni Seager's (1993) *Earth*

follies: feminism, politics and the environment does so for political geographers. Seager's book is a useful introduction to the politics of feminism and the environment. In it she systematically addresses the role of three institutions – militaries, multinationals and governments – in the degradation of the global planetary environment. The key problem, for Seager, is that all these institutions are dominated by men and masculinist culture:

The institutional culture that is responsible for most of the environmental calamities of the last century is a masculinist culture. The 'expert structure' – of scientists, environmentalists, and bureaucrats – that interprets and assesses the state of the earth is, for the most part, one of men (Seager, 1993: 5).

While she invokes the foundationalist identities men/women and masculinist culture/feminist culture, Seager nevertheless describes herself as a feminist who is extremely leery of essentialism:

The fact that we all know individual women who thrive in the institutions I name, and that we all know individual men who suffer the predations of this institutional culture does not undercut the saliency of the argument that these institutions are structured around masculinist presumptions and prerogatives. The feminist environmental question that I pose is not so much about men *qua* men, nor even about women as individual agents, but rather whether it matters that the institutions that control virtually all decisions and actions that shape our environment are institutions shaped by male culture. The common-sense answer to this question is a resounding 'yes' – common sense suggests that a skew of power and representation in favour of men within these institutions has to 'matter': feminist theory and women's history tells us it matters (Seager, 1993: 5–6).

This passage is indicative of the identity politics feminism that Seager deploys to read the problematic of environmental degradation and destruction. The paradox of this type of feminism is that, though it renounces essentialism, it is predicated upon it. Essentialism, for Seager, is a problem of an appeal to an inherent and natural identity that is reified. But this is precisely what Seager's text does in its use of the categories of men/women, male/female and masculinist/feminist. These distinctions are taken to be immanently meaningful in and of themselves; they refer to a stable signified reality which speaks. This is a matter of 'common sense' for Seager, something 'feminist theory' (singular not plural) and 'women's history' *tells us*. Like Rose (1993), on occasion she writes in the name of 'women' as a universal and decontextualized identity. Similarly, her texts reduces the heterogeneity of a problematic to the essential (izing) question of gender and gender culture. The problem of environmental destruction is a problem of male culture.

But Seager is interested not only in those institutions which destroy the environment but also those that strive to save it. The latter half of her book is a fascinating examination of the environmental movement, from the ecological establishment (like the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club) to the 'ecofringe' (deep ecology and ecofeminism), green consumerist and grassroots environmental movements. But even among these groups, masculinist culture is at work defining the task of saving the earth in essentially masculinist terms. Male ecoestablishment environmental leaders do not want to be outsiders to the political process any more. 'They want to be invited to lunch' (with the boys) (1993: 189–91). 'Deep ecology is saturated with male bravado and macho posturing' (1993: 227). 'Blaming women for poor consumer choices is an undercurrent that runs throughout the green consumer movement' (1993: 258). For Seager, the gender of power in the institutions and groups on both sides of the environmental issue is crucial. 'It is folly to ignore the fact that virtually all of the institutions, bureaucracies, and groups fanned out across the environmental spectrum are run by men in pursuit of male-defined objectives' (1993: 6). The specificity of 'male-defined objectives' is undefined for the category is a polemical and not an analytic one.

Given the vastness of the problematic she has taken on, Seager's book can be excused of

a certain superficiality. It is a book written in the style of Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, beaches and bases* (1989) and will, I hope, be read and debated in a number of upper-level geography courses. But, for me, the book's arguments are frequently unconvincing for they are driven by an imperative to expose and decode the essential gender of power. Although Seager is very aware of questions of political economy and makes a series of telling observations on military and corporate culture, her reading strategy is one which reduces the question of power to the question of gender. Her own arguments are acts of power which, in seeking to decode and fix meaning along an essential gender horizon, do violence to the open-ended textuality of institutions, cultures and discursive practices. Nowhere is the gender policing imperative of Seager's strategy of reading more evident to me than in her reading of the Greenpeace/Lynx anti-fur ad campaign. Familiar to most by its original striking billboard poster and slogan 'It takes up to 40 dumb animals to make a fur coat . . . but only one to wear it' but also encompassing a sequel ad which juxtaposes a picture of a woman in a fur under the title 'rich bitch' with a picture of a bleeding dead fox caught in trap under the title 'poor bitch', Seager claims that the ad campaign is fundamentally misogynist. Arguing against the position that the ad was effective in changing the sign-value of fur, Seager states that this '... rationalist stance in the face of humanistic objections – the notion that the ends justify the means – is a familiar masculinist stance' (Seager, 1993: 203). The heteroglossic representational politics of the Greenpeace/Lynx intervention is reduced to masculinist culture.

It is here, perhaps, that we can begin to consider just how totalizing certain feminist strategies of reading can be. Armed with a variety of master concepts (patriarchy, masculinism, male culture, etc.) and common-sensical sets of appeals (x field is male dominated), a certain type of feminism can be flexibly deployed as a discourse of power to affix cultures, objects, situations and people within its disciplinary schema. Everything is decoded to reveal a certain gender bias: feminism becomes a pious, politically correct gender-alertism. Price-Chalita, evoking Massey (1991), expresses this intellectual disposition when she writes that patriarchy is a 'persistent threat'; '... though the strategies [of modern and postmodern scholarship] may change, the song remains the same' (Price-Chalita, 1994: 250). The power effects of this type of feminism are not necessarily progressive, critical and liberative. Meaning is often closed down rather than opened up. Objects are read as cites/sites of monologically conceptualized transhistorical feminist narratives (an ever-present patriarchy or how reason and the gaze are masculinist) rather than as cites/sites of perpetual contestation, indeterminacy and struggle. Texts are monological vehicles of a gender ideology while subjects and objects are reducible to a foundational gender. The *con-textuality of geography*, in the multiple senses of that phrase, is effaced.

Pointing out the problems with *certain forms of feminist theorizing* should not be seen as a rejection of feminism *tout court*. The larger issue here is not particular to feminism but a function of logocentrism (or phallogocentricism), the ineluctable drive for transcendent moments when all difference becomes unity, all flux is frozen into static presence and all ambiguity is reduced to identity. To the extent that feminist narratives disrupt and displace this logocentrism, they open up possibilities of subverting and dis-locating the disciplinarity of gender(ing) regimes. As many feminists have argued, and as Pile (1994: 268) recently reiterated, gender is more than a story about men and women, or about masculinity and femininity. 'It is not possible,' he notes, 'to distill an essence of, or an essential masculinity, or even to specify precisely what is the dominant masculinity, because forms of masculinity are located in socially (historically and geographically)

a certain superficiality. It is a book written in the style of Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, beaches and bases* (1989) and will, I hope, be read and debated in a number of upper-level geography courses. But, for me, the book's arguments are frequently unconvincing for they are driven by an imperative to expose and decode the essential gender of power. Although Seager is very aware of questions of political economy and makes a series of telling observations on military and corporate culture, her reading strategy is one which reduces the question of power to the question of gender. Her own arguments are acts of power which, in seeking to decode and fix meaning along an essential gender horizon, do violence to the open-ended textuality of institutions, cultures and discursive practices. Nowhere is the gender policing imperative of Seager's strategy of reading more evident to me than in her reading of the Greenpeace/Lynx anti-fur ad campaign. Familiar to most by its original striking billboard poster and slogan 'It takes up to 40 dumb animals to make a fur coat . . . but only one to wear it' but also encompassing a sequel ad which juxtaposes a picture of a woman in a fur under the title 'rich bitch' with a picture of a bleeding dead fox caught in trap under the title 'poor bitch', Seager claims that the ad campaign is fundamentally misogynist. Arguing against the position that the ad was effective in changing the sign-value of fur, Seager states that this '... rationalist stance in the face of humanistic objections – the notion that the ends justify the means – is a familiar masculinist stance' (Seager, 1993: 203). The heteroglossic representational politics of the Greenpeace/Lynx intervention is reduced to masculinist culture.

It is here, perhaps, that we can begin to consider just how totalizing certain feminist strategies of reading can be. Armed with a variety of master concepts (patriarchy, masculinism, male culture, etc.) and common-sensical sets of appeals (*x* field is male dominated), a certain type of feminism can be flexibly deployed as a discourse of power to affix cultures, objects, situations and people within its disciplinary schema. Everything is decoded to reveal a certain gender bias: feminism becomes a pious, politically correct gender-alertism. Price-Chalita, evoking Massey (1991), expresses this intellectual disposition when she writes that patriarchy is a 'persistent threat'; '... though the strategies [of modern and postmodern scholarship] may change, the song remains the same' (Price-Chalita, 1994: 250). The power effects of this type of feminism are not necessarily progressive, critical and liberative. Meaning is often closed down rather than opened up. Objects are read as cites/sites of monologically conceptualized transhistorical feminist narratives (an ever-present patriarchy or how reason and the gaze are masculinist) rather than as cites/sites of perpetual contestation, indeterminacy and struggle. Texts are monological vehicles of a gender ideology while subjects and objects are reducible to a foundational gender. The *con-textuality of geography*, in the multiple senses of that phrase, is effaced.

Pointing out the problems with *certain forms of feminist theorizing* should not be seen as a rejection of feminism *tout court*. The larger issue here is not particular to feminism but a function of logocentrism (or phallogocentricism), the ineluctable drive for transcendent moments when all difference becomes unity, all flux is frozen into static presence and all ambiguity is reduced to identity. To the extent that feminist narratives disrupt and displace this logocentrism, they open up possibilities of subverting and dis-locating the disciplinarity of gender(ing) regimes. As many feminists have argued, and as Pile (1994: 268) recently reiterated, gender is more than a story about men and women, or about masculinity and femininity. 'It is not possible,' he notes, 'to distill an essence of, or an essential masculinity, or even to specify precisely what is the dominant masculinity, because forms of masculinity are located in socially (historically and geographically)

specific forms of power' (Pile, 1994: 261). His attempt to specify a 'third space' – a cite/site that intertwines place, politics and hybrid identities – is a recognition that the multi-dimensional complexities and ironies of subject(ification)s and gender regimes extend beyond the dualisms that discipline how we think gender and identity, though this 'third space' could itself become in scholarship the predictable and controlled site for locating (dumping?) heterogeneous marginalities (who, in being corralled into a 'third space', are ironically homogenized).

Matthew Sparke grapples with these issues and the problematic of geography, gender and textuality in general in a sophisticated manner. In an article that is part of an excellent special issue in *Environment and Planning A* on 'Writing difference' edited by Marcus Doel, Sparke undertakes what is, at first blush, a self-absorbed deconstructive critique of an earlier article by him on the chauvinism of the Gulf war. But what was potentially a self-obsessed work-out on deconstructionist, feminist and psychoanalytic theory machines turns out to be an intellectually honest biographical journey through the limits of critique and difficulties associated with feminist readings, particularly feminist psychoanalytic readings of nationalism and war. In his earlier essay (reproduced in full within his article), Sparke seeks to make a connection between a decontextually specified male ego and its urge to dominate space in order to sustain its integrity:

Wielding together this ensemble of defensive emotions there is a systematic objectification of the other, and, whilst it is the feminized mother who forms the primary model of the undifferentiated object, numerous Others can be incorporated into the field. Blacks, communists, prostitutes, peace-protestors, gooks, gays, Sandinistas, women reporters, and, of course, berserk Iraqi sandniggers, all seem to be crushing in like so many clattering dominos, chaotically flooding towards the dry land, the father's-land, which the patriot must defend at all costs (Sparke, 1994b: 1071).

Sparke then reads this article in terms of his own desire at the time to posit a specific form of chauvinist identity which leads him to disavow complexity and discipline the Gulf war as an event within the fictive stories of feminist psychoanalysis. He further notes his own desire to write/right himself as a young male sensitive to feminist thought. But even as he critiques himself, he rewrites himself as even more sensitive. Anytime men use feminist thought there is a danger of homogenizing feminist thought, '... treating it as a simple component of explanation, ignoring its connections to the personal or, at least, to the writer's own person and body' (Sparke, 1994b: 1076). Feminism becomes (after Braiddotti) a phallicized and singularized 'pheminism'. Echoing Luce Irigaray, he links the activity of 'theory' (*theorein*, to look at, to make visible) to disembodied spectatorship and male privilege, to '... a society where it has always been the male prerogative to gaze and objectify women' (Sparke, 1994b: 1076). Such arguments, however, repeat the mistake of his earlier article for they reproduce the very decontextualization and essentialism (in the form of the concepts of 'pheminism' – is feminism only instrumentalized by men? – and a transhistorical 'male gaze') he wishes to put in question. Sparke quotes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who notes that

Without the risks and responsibilities of transference, at least diagnostic and taxonomic, ignoring geopolitical and historical details in the interest of making group behavior intelligible, and not accountable to any method of verification, the brilliance of psychoanalytic cultural criticism has always left me a bit suspicious (Sparke, 1994b: 1078).

The ignoring of 'geopolitical and historical details' is precisely the point, as Sparke notes, an effacement promoted by the identity categories of certain forms of feminist and psychoanalytic criticism. But it is also an irony of Sparke's whole article for, despite its title, it actually has very little to say about the 'geopolitical and historical details' of the

Gulf war. The value of the article is in its working through of the limits of feminism and psychoanalysis as a means of reading geopolitics (see Weber, 1994). Sparke concludes his article by echoing Spivak's warning that 'strategic essentialism' in feminist theory often 'gives an alibi to essentialism' and Judith Butler's (1990) point that '... strategies have meanings that exceed the purposes for which they were intended' (Sparke, 1994b: 1085).

III Theorizing the nature of contemporary world disorder

Given the contemporary world order where the authority of the nation-states is undermined by global capital flows, where recidivism is a matter of economic survival for millions and where the relatively affluent are haunted by insecurity, the possibility of a stable world order is probably gone forever. Thanks to global information flows, we are all now present at the disintegration (Ó Tuathail and Luke, 1994). Unfortunately yet understandably, this spectacle of global disintegration, combined with ruthlessly exploited fears domestically, has produced a new white male Republican-led xenophobic revanchism in the USA which, if crossed with the deepening backlash against the real market (mired in corruption and crime) in Russia and elsewhere, could produce some nasty results in the years to come. The intellectual and political task of theorizing the dynamics of this revanchism in the world disorder are pressing (Luke, 1994).

John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge's (1995) *Mastering space: hegemony, territory and international political economy* is an important work that seeks to provide an overview of the global political economy of the past two hundred years. The book is aimed at an upper-level undergraduate audience but, more than a mere synthesis, takes definite positions within the debates over critical geopolitics, hegemony, geopolitical order and the nature of the contemporary global political economy. The title of the book refers to the intrinsically geographical process of disciplining, subjugating, exploiting and developing places that characterizes international political economy (IPE). It is, they note, an appropriately masculinist metaphor for the process it represents. But Agnew and Corbridge also have a second meaning in mind concerning the need for students of IPE to understand the role of space in our global political economy. Part 1 of their book outlines a framework for understanding the mastering of space; Part 2 considers the contemporary crisis in the international political economy, while Part 3 discusses some ways in which the world can move beyond mastery to 'real reciprocity.'

Agnew and Corbridge make three significant contributions to understanding global political economy. First, they take discourse seriously and seek to integrate critical geopolitics into their materialist geopolitical economy account of the last two centuries. They appropriate Henri Lefebvre's work to outline a tripartite conception of space that distinguishes between the spatial practices (the material and physical flows that characterize economic production and political reproduction) that make up geopolitical orders, the discursive representations of space implicit in the practices of foreign policy and the representational spaces that are the 'imagined geographies' that inspire the future organization and articulation of spatial practices and representations of space. For them, critical geopolitics is not only discourse but the material spatial practices through which the international political economy is constituted, represented and contested (1995: 7). On the basis of their Lefebvrian distinctions and a nonstatist understanding of hegemony, they outline, in counterdistinction to the work of Robert Cox and Peter Taylor, three different geopolitical orders which constituted the geographical basis to the international

political economy since 1815. The first is the Concert of Europe–British geopolitical order (1815–75), the second the geopolitical order of interimperial rivalry (1875–1945) and the third the cold-war geopolitical order (1945–90). Corresponding in a rough manner to these dominant orders of spatial practices are three dominant orders of the representation of space which they specify as civilizational, naturalized and ideological geopolitics.

Their second contribution is their specification of the current geopolitical world order as a transnational liberal order of hegemony without a hegemon. Hegemony, for Agnew and Corbridge, refers to '... a cultural complex of practices and representations associated with a particular geopolitical order without the requirement of a dominant territorial agent. There is always hegemony, but there are not always hegemons' (1995: 17). Transnational liberalism is an order characterized by the internationalization and globalization of production, intense time-space compression, informational flows, glocalization and the internationalization of state activities. They summarize it thus:

We believe that a new form of hegemony is now emerging which is decreasing the likelihood of economic and political collapse in so-called global capitalism, but which is creating new conditions for 'order' by ignoring, tidying away and/or disciplining a group of countries, regions and communities which are not party to a new regime of market-access economics or which threaten it in some way. This new hegemony is still policed in part by powerful countries like the US, Germany and Japan, but it is also held together by the markets, by international institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, GATT and the UN and by a more diffuse network of overlapping powers and sovereignties that define a world of internationalizing state activities. (1995: 193)

Transnational business networks, global military alliances, international organizations, the G 7 and (most recently) APEC are also central to the regulation and ordering of the new deterritorializing world economy. Agnew and Corbridge sketch out a brief critical geopolitics of transnational liberalism which they trace to a generalized crisis of Keynesian ideology, the collapse of Bretton Woods and the rise of a neoliberal counter-revolution in economic theory and policy.

Thirdly, rather than simply ending with the contemporary geopolitical order of transnational liberalism as a powerful and uncontested reality, Agnew and Corbridge (1995: 212) strive to redeem the possibility for a progressive political engagement with the world by declaring that present conditions '... are more propitious than before for establishing a post-hegemonic order that is opposed to the domination of a few key states or the commands of a singular (and singularly asymmetrical) market'. Global informational flows have the potential for undermining conventional notions of spatial hierarchy while markets in theory are potentially liberative and empowering, even though they are often not so in practice.

Agnew and Corbridge's book does suffer from a certain stylistic unevenness. For me, their Lefebvrianization of the problematic of geopolitics sits uneasily with the more deconstructive ambitions of critical geopolitics. While their situating of geopolitical discourse within historical structures of geopolitical world order is useful at a very general level, it does tend to reduce geopolitical discourse to base common denominators. Take, for example, their characterization of the writings of Ratzel, Mackinder, Haushofer and Spykman as 'fixed-form' or 'naturalized' geopolitics. While such a description does have a certain justification, the historical specificity of each of these theorists is ultimately lost as is the dense textuality of their works (not to mention the practical geopolitics of the 1875–1945 period). In schematizing and periodizing geopolitical discourse, it is smoothed out and reduced to a transparent ideological expression of geopolitical world orders. The problematic of geopolitics, however, is not so tidy.

A second problem concerns their deployment of the concepts of hegemony and

transnational liberalism. In holding to the proposition that there '... is always hegemony but there are not always hegemons', Agnew and Corbridge (1995: 212) risk dissolving the specificity of the concept. We have no analytical means of concretely understanding when hegemony is in jeopardy and when it breaks down. Nor do we get an appreciation of the important differences within and across states concerning the meaning of open markets. Hegemony and transnational liberalism as concepts homogenize a heterogeneity of different kinds of transnational liberalism (e.g., the Japanese kind versus the Clinton administration version; and what are we to make of the 'liberalism' of Jesse Helms, Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot?). Furthermore, the specification of a geopolitical world order in terms of an ideology of open markets avoids the uncertainties concerning the governance of this world order.

Indeed, it is Agnew and Corbridge's failure adequately to deal with the crises of global governance that is perhaps the most significant failing of their book. The concentration of power in the hands of transnational corporations (Barnet and Cavanagh, 1994), globally connected élites and unaccountable institutions in the global political economy – a tendency not sufficiently stressed by Agnew and Corbridge – does not bode well for global stability in the long run. They tend to downplay the possibility of crisis but in casting the question in somewhat cataclysmic terms (total collapse versus no collapse) they underestimate the permanence of governance crises in increasing numbers of states whose fate and future prosperity is tied to 'the markets'.

Compounding the potential economic crises that might result from diminishing economic accountability and regulation of capital is the problem of geopolitical policing in a posthegemon world order where even small states have the technological capacity for catastrophic violence. As Iraq, Haiti, Rwanda and Bosnia demonstrate, the problems of geopolitical governance in the post-cold war world are already enormous and only likely to get worse. So far the power of an open-markets world order to generate institutions to regulate the power of dictators, ethnic cleansers or fundamentalism is not evident. A transnational liberal world order structured on the basis of unaccountable markets and an absent global hegemon is hardly a recipe for stability and world order. While certain global élites are committed to transnational liberalism, other are most definitely not. Agnew and Corbridge's optimism about the hegemony of the market to keep the peace and prevent 'irrational' political developments – especially in key states like Russia, the Ukraine and the USA – seems premature. (The fears and imagination of an insecure America are evident in the latest novel of the enormously popular right-wing novelist Tom Clancy (1994). *Debt of honor* is a technonationalist geofinancial thriller which features a sneak Japanese attack on the USA.)

A more empirical approach to the new world order which foregrounds *geoeconomics* (a concept Luttwak, 1993, arrogantly claims he invented) is O'Loughlin's (1993) article on the political geography of Japanese and USA exports between 1966 and 1988. Likewise, Grant (1993a; 1993b; 1994) also focuses on geoeconomics in examining the agricultural policies of the USA, EU and Japan, and the geographical dimensions of trade. Jan Nijman's (1993) slim volume *The geopolitics of power and conflict: superpowers in the international system 1945–1992* uses COPDAB and WEIS data (helpfully explained in an appendix) to construct a geopolitical account of the interactions of the superpowers with each other and 'third countries' during the cold war. Nijman's conception of geopolitics is neither orthodox nor critical but structurationist, a mix of the Sprouts and Giddens (see also Nijman, 1994). His main interest is to spatialize the scientization of the cold war by the quantitative international relations tradition (see also Hensel and Diehl, 1994). But

this spatialization produces a political geography which is devoid of a critical edge in that it becomes an accounting of patterns rather than an investigation of structures of power. Only in the final two chapters does Nijman consider the logic of the cold war as an 'imaginary war' that served the interests of both the USA and the USSR. But even here, political economy and class do not enter his narrative. In assuming that states are unproblematic entities, Nijman reproduces rather than questions the realist assumptions of the strategic discourse that was part of the cold war as an historic *bloc*.

The essays in Corbridge, Thrift and Martin (1994) offer a welcome geofinancial perspective on the dilemmas of world order and governance given that a crisis of regulation has been evident for some time in the global financial sphere (Strange, 1986). Of particular relevance, beyond some excellent historical and case-study essays, are the chapters by Corbridge, Roberts, Leyshon, Martin and Bond (see also Thrift and Leyshon, 1994). Corbridge's essay on inflation is particularly useful for its close engagement with monetarism and the academic arguments of the New Right. His observation that '... all forms of critique are weakened to the extent that they do not also provide plausible accounts of how human affairs might better be arranged or managed' (Corbridge, in Corbridge *et al.*, 1994: 87–88) is meant as a rebuke of radical (particularly Marxist) geography. Yet valid as the point may be for some radical geography in the past, it is also indicative of how Corbridge's reasoning internalizes certain aspects of the economism of the New Right. Useful correctives are Sue Robert's essay on offshore financial centres, Patrick Bond's essay on contesting the hegemony of financial power and Ron Martin's excellent overview of global financial integration which pointedly notes the politically engineered nature of global financial integration and deregulation. Discourses of financial markets should never be evaluated on their own terms for they are '... as much political as economic in character, founded on and shaped by unequal relations of power between lenders and borrowers' (Martin, in Corbridge *et al.*, 1994: 272). Martin's conclusion that global institutions of regulation are needed to redress the power of global financial capital is generalizable to the contemporary world order as a whole. From rape and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda to unchecked corruption and money politics in Britain, Italy, the USA and Japan, our existing institutions of governance and regulation are failing us. The right's response to global disorder is to intensify the politics of exclusion: xenophobia, isolationism and neo-Malthusianism. The progressive response must confront this politics of exclusion by building radical democratic connections worldwide and strengthening radical democratic activism (Greenpeace, Medecins sans frontières, the campaign for a more democratic UN; Schwartzberg, 1994) at the global scale.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all those who sent me reprints of their articles. For those interested, there is now a political geography discussion group available by email. Send the message: subscribe geopol <your name> to listserv@UKCC.UKY.EDU and leave the subject line blank. This article benefited from discussions with Brendan Gleeson, Cindi Katz, Paul Knox, Tim Luke, Sue Roberts, Neil Smith and Edward Weisband. The usual disclaimers apply.

References

- Agnew, J. and Corbridge, S.** 1995: *Mastering space: hegemony, territory and international political economy*. London: Routledge.
- Amnesty International** 1993: *Bosnia-Herzegovina: rape and sexual abuse by armed forces*. New York: Amnesty International USA.
- Barnet, R. and Cavanagh, J.** 1994: *Global dreams: imperial corporations and the new world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bloom, L.** 1993: *Gender on ice: American ideologies of polar expeditions*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Butler, J.** 1990: *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Carter, P.** 1987: *The road to Botany Bay*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Charlesworth, A.** 1994: Contesting places of memory: the case of Auschwitz. *Society and Space* 12, 579–94.
- Clancy, T.** 1994: *Debt of honor*. New York: G.P. Putnam.
- Corbridge, S., Thrift, N. and Martin, R.** 1994: *Money, power and space*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Cresswell, T.** 1994: Putting women in their place: the carnival at Greenham Common. *Antipode* 26, 35–58.
- Dalby, S.** 1994: Gender and critical geopolitics: reading geopolitical discourse in the new world disorder. *Society and Space* 12, 595–612.
- Dodds, K.** 1994: Eugenics, fantasies of empire and inverted whiggishness: an essay on the political geography of Vaughan Cornish. *Political Geography* 13, 85–99.
- Driver, F.** 1992: Geography's empire: histories of geographical knowledge. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, 23–40.
- Enloe, C.** 1989: *Bananas, beaches and bases: making feminist sense of international relations*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Foucault, M.** 1991: Governmentality. In Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P., editors, *The Foucault effect: studies in governmentality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 87–104.
- Godlewska, A. and Smith, N.** 1994: *Geography and empire*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Grant, R.** 1993a: Against the grain: agricultural trade policies of the US, the European Community and Japan at the GATT. *Political Geography* 12, 247–62.
- 1993b: Trading blocs or trading blows? The macroeconomic geography of US and Japanese trade policies. *Environment and Planning A* 25, 273–91.
- 1994: The geography of international trade. *Progress in Human Geography* 18, 298–312.
- Gregory, D.** 1994: *Geographical imaginations*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- Heffernan, M.** 1994a: A state scholarship: the political geography of French international science during the nineteenth century. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS 19, 21–45.
- 1994b: On geography and progress: Turgot's *Plan d'un ouvrage sur la géographie politique* (1751) and the origins of modern progressive thought. *Political Geography* 13, 328–43.
- 1995a: For ever England: the western front and the politics of remembrance in Britain. *Ecumene* 2.
- 1995b: The spoils of war: the *Société de Géographie de Paris* and the French empire, 1914–1919. In Bell, M., Butlin, R. and Heffernan, M., editors, *Geography and imperialism, 1830–1930*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hensel, P. and Diehl, P.** 1994: Testing empirical propositions about shatterbelts, 1945–76. *Political Geography* 13, 33–52.
- Johnson, N.** 1994: Sculpting heroic histories: celebrating the centenary of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS 19, 78–93.
- Johnston, R.J.** 1994: One world, millions of places: the end of history and the ascendancy of geography. *Political Geography* 13, 111–22.
- Livingstone, D.** 1993: *The geographical tradition*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- Luke, T.** 1994: Placing power/siting space: the politics of global and local in the new world order. *Society and Space* 12, 613–28.
- Luttwak, E.** 1993: *The endangered American dream*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Lutz, C. and Collins, J.** 1993: *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Massey, D.** 1991: Flexible sexism. *Society and Space* 9, 31–57.
- Mitchell, T.** 1988: *Colonizing Egypt*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Nijman, J.** 1993: *The geopolitics of power and conflict*. London: Belhaven Press.
- 1994: The VOC and the expansion of the world-system 1602–1799. *Political Geography* 13, 211–27.

- O'Loughlin, J.** 1993: Geo-economic competition in the Pacific rim: the political geography of Japanese and US exports, 1966–1988. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS 18, 438–59.
- , editor, 1994: *Dictionary of geopolitics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Ó Tuathail, G.** 1994a: (Dis)placing geopolitics: writing on the maps of global politics. *Society and Space* 12, 525–47.
- 1994b: The critical reading/writing of geopolitics: re-reading/writing Wittfogel, Bowman and Lacoste. *Progress in Human Geography* 18, 313–32.
- Ó Tuathail, G. and Luke, T.** 1994: Present at the (dis)integration: deterritorialization and reterritorialization in the new wor(l)d (dis)order. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84, 381–98.
- Pile, S.** 1994: Masculinism, the use of dualistic epistemologies and third spaces. *Antipode* 26, 255–77.
- Pomfret, J.** 1994: Fear grips a mosque with no name in Serb stronghold. *Washington Post*, 23 August.
- Popke, J.** 1994: Recasting geopolitics: the discursive scripting of the International Monetary Fund. *Political Geography* 13, 255–69.
- Pratt, M.L.** 1992: *Imperial eyes*. London: Routledge.
- Price-Chalita, P.** 1994: Spatial metaphor and the politics of empowerment: mapping a place for feminism and postmodernism in geography. *Antipode* 26, 236–54.
- Rose, G.** 1993: *Feminism and geography*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Routledge, P.** 1993: *Terrains of resistance: nonviolent social movements and the contestation of place in India*. New York: Praeger.
- 1994: Backstreets, barricades, and blackouts: urban terrains of resistance in Nepal. *Society and Space* 12, 559–78.
- Said, E.** 1993: *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Knopf.
- Schwartzberg, J.** 1994: Editorial: towards a more representative and effective security council. *Political Geography* 13, 483–91.
- Seager, J.** 1993: *Earth follies: feminism, politics and the environment*. London: Earthscan.
- Sidaway, J.** 1994: Geopolitics, geography, and 'terrorism' in the middle east. *Society and Space* 12, 357–72.
- Slater, D.** 1993: The geopolitical imagination and the enframing of development theory. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS 18, 419–37.
- Smith, N.** 1994: Geography, empire and social theory. *Progress in Human Geography* 18, 550–60.
- Sparke, M.** 1994a: White mythologies and anaemic geographies. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12, 105–23.
- 1994b: Writing on patriarchal missiles: the chauvinism of the 'Gulf war' and the limits of critique. *Environment and Planning A* 26, 1061–89.
- Stacheli, L., editor,** 1994: Special issue: empowering political struggle. *Political Geography* 13, 387–476.
- Strange, S.** 1986: *Casino capitalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Taylor, P.J.** 1994: The state as container: territoriality in the modern world-system. *Progress in Human Geography* 18, 151–62.
- 1995: Beyond containers: internationality, interstateness, interterritoriality. *Progress in Human Geography* 19, 1–14.
- Thrift, N. and Leyshon, A.** 1994: A phantom state? The detraditionalization of money, the international financial system and international financial centres. *Political Geography* 13, 299–327.
- Todorov, T.** 1984: *The conquest of America*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** 1993: *The state of the world's refugees 1993*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Weber, C.** 1994: Shoring up a sea of signs: how the Caribbean basin initiative framed the US invasion of Grenada. *Society and Space* 12, 547–58.
- Young, R.** 1990: *White mythologies: writing history and the west*. New York: Routledge.